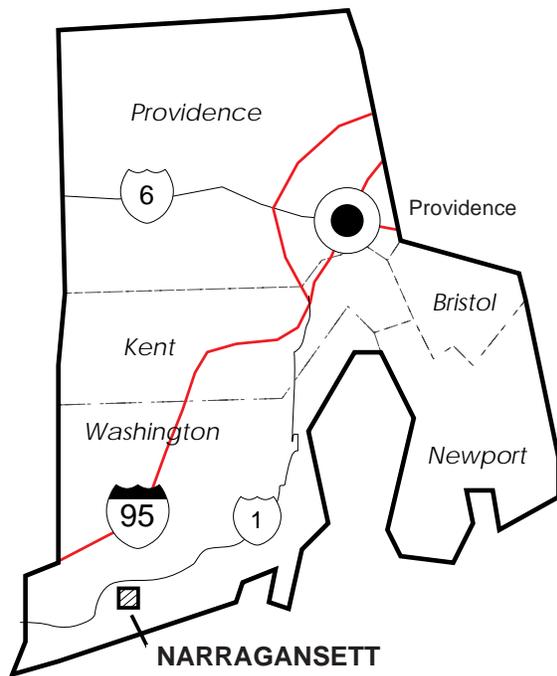


# RHODE ISLAND



forested, dotted with ponds, swamps, and wildlife refuges. Charleston lies just east of the reservation along scenic U.S. 1. Other towns near the reservation include Kingston (10 miles northeast) and Westerly (7 miles west). Major cities near the reservation are Providence (approximately 45 miles north), and New London, Connecticut (approximately 35 miles west).

In 1983, the Narragansett Tribe of Rhode Island took control of lands awarded to the tribe in an out of court settlement in 1978. The reservation currently consists of 1,943 non-contiguous, tribally owned acres held in federal trust.

## CULTURE AND HISTORY

The Narragansett Indians are descendants of the aboriginal people of present-day Rhode Island. During his visit to Narragansett Bay in 1524, Giovanni de Verrazano described the Narragansetts as a large tribe who practiced horticulture, hunted, and organized under powerful kings (Sachems). At the time of first European settlement around 1635, the Narragansett Tribe was comprised of five sub-tribes. Rhode Island founder Roger Williams acquired land use rights to Providence from the Narragansett Sachems. In 1675, English settlers massacred the Narragansetts and confined the survivors to a reservation in southern Rhode Island.

During the 18th century, the colonial government abolished the positions of the five Sachems. Most tribal land was simultaneously lost to non-Indians through incurred debts. The Narragansett clung to 15,000 acres until 1880, when the state of Rhode Island "detrribalized" them without federal sanction. The tribal land base quickly thereafter eroded. However, the tribe maintained its traditional government, recognizing sachems, medicine men and women, and the tribal council. The Narragansett Tribe of Indians incorporated in December, 1934 under the Indian Reorganization Act. With federal recognition, the Narragansett Tribe was finally able to work towards economic self sufficiency and cultural revitalization. A longhouse was constructed during the 1940s to provide a meeting place for tribal members. Today, it serves as the center of tribal activities.

In 1975, the tribe filed suit against the state of Rhode Island and several land owners for return of approximately 3,200 acres of former reservation lands. The tribe eventually received 1,800 acres in an out of court settlement. This land was placed in federal trust during the 1980s.

Today, the Narragansett Tribe serves members through its economic development and social services, while nourishing the tribe's rich culture and heritage. A tribal housing authority, with assistance from HUD, is currently constructing 50 housing units on tribal land. A two-phase community center project is underway, as are plans to open a gaming facility. The tribe holds numerous celebrations and pow wows, including the traditional August Meeting, and also offers cultural, historical, and language classes for the benefit of tribal elders and youth.

## Narragansett Reservation

Federal reservation  
Narragansett Tribe  
Washington County, Rhode Island

Narragansett Indian Tribe  
P.O. Box 268  
Charlestown, RI 02813  
(401) 364-1100  
Fax: 364-1104

Total area	1,943 acres
Federal trust	1,943 acres
Tribally owned	1,943 acres
Total labor force	13
High school graduate or higher	80.0%
Per capita income	\$10,524
Total reservation population	30
Tribal enrollment	1104

## LOCATION AND LAND STATUS

The Narragansett Reservation is located in southern Rhode Island, north of Block Island near Ninigret Pond. The reservation is largely

GOVERNMENT

The principal governing body is the nine-member council composed of a chief sachem, a medicine-man, tribal secretary, tribal treasurer, and five members; this body is elected at large by enrolled tribal members. The tribal government also includes several regulatory and oversight boards including Housing, Natural Resources, Finance, Health and Human Services, Personnel, Planning, Special Projects, and Genealogy. The Narragansett Tribe of Indians incorporated in December, 1934 in accordance with the Indian Reorganization Act.

ECONOMY

AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

The tribe utilizes approximately five acres of trust land for a community garden, and 20 acres of field for haying.

CONSTRUCTION

The Narragansett Indian Wetuomuck Housing Authority has organized a tribal development team to provide construction services for tribal development. Projects include a community center and HUD housing. Tribal members and non-tribal members are employed on these projects on a temporary basis.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Aside from the construction activities of the NIWHA Development team, the tribe rents land to NYNEX for a communication tower. Proceeds support infrastructure development on the reservation. In the planning stages are a gaming facility, electric power development, and the reuse of warehouse facilities at a former naval base.

FORESTRY

1,250 acres of tribal trust land are forested with several tree species including white, black, and northern red oaks, red maple, eastern white pine, and Atlantic white cedar. The tribe harvests approximately 50 cords of wood per year.

GOVERNMENT AS EMPLOYER

Tribal administration employs 48 staff members, of whom 33 are tribal members. Tribal government is the single largest employer associated with the tribe.



Traditional Gathering Place—Two Tribal Elders Under Pine Shade

SERVICES

Many tribal members are in business for themselves, mostly in the building trades, but not through tribally run programs. Dover Indian Trading Post, located along Main Street in Rockville, sells leatherwork, jewelry, beadwork, and pottery.

TOURISM AND RECREATION

The Narragansett Indian Longhouse, located along Route 2 in Charlestown, offers presentations, lectures, and tours. The tribe holds two pow wows during the summer—a commercial pow wow associated with a July Health Fair, and the traditional August Meeting. The August Meeting, an historical and religious occasion, includes dancing, drumming, singing, craft sales, traditional foods, games and competitions. Two other celebrations, the Harvest Thanksgiving Ceremony and the Nickomoh Celebration, are held annually at the Longhouse.

TRANSPORTATION

The tribe's Health and Human Services Department provides van transportation to medical appointments.

INFRASTRUCTURE

RI-112 and RI-2 run north-south just east of the reservation, connecting RI-138 and U.S. 1, the major east-west routes to the reservation. Interstate 95, which passes approximately 20 miles west of the reservation, provides easy access to New York, Providence and Boston. Commercial air facilities are located in Warwick, approximately 20 miles north of the reservation. Private air facilities are located at Westerly, seven miles west of the reservation. Rhode Island Public Transit Authority provides public transportation to the reservation area via Richmond, six miles northwest of the reservation. Bonanza Bus Lines, Inc. also provides inter-city services. UPS and Federal Express package carriers serve the tribal area. Passenger and freight rail service is available along the Shore Line route. Amtrak passenger trains stop at Kingston Station; freight service along the shoreline is provided by Conrail. The Narragansett Reservation is bounded by the navigable Pawcatuck River on the north. Tribal lands lie within two to five miles of Block Island Sound, where dock and mooring facilities for small commercial and pleasure crafts are available.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The first phase of a two-phase community center development has been completed, and funding has been secured for the second. The facility houses a senior mealsite and a child care center. No one currently lives on tribal lands. However, the NIWHA currently has 25 units of elderly and 25 units of family housing under construction. Electricity will be provided to these homes by the Narragansett Electric Company (no connection to the tribe). All tribal facilities utilize individual septic tanks and wells. Local telephone service is provided to the reservation by NYNEX.

The Narragansett Indian Health Program provides limited coverage for medical services. Direct medical services are limited to outreach nursing visits nutrition and substance abuse counseling services. Hospitals are located in the Providence area. Most children attend public schools in the reservation area.