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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[8/7/2026] — Greetings to All Members of the Nipmuc Community,

We write to share an important update regarding recent litigation brought against the Nipmuc Nation Tribal Council. before the Massachusetts Land Court.

Earlier this year, the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band filed a five-count lawsuit against the Tribal Council concerning the Hassanamesit Reservation at 80 Brigham Hill Road in Grafton. Among its claims, the Band asked the court to declare that the Tribal Council is not a state-recognized tribal entity and has no stewardship authority over the Reservation. The Band also brought claims to quiet title and to require the Tribal Council to try title to the land.

On July 31, 2026, Chief Justice Gordon H. Piper of the Land Court dismissed the case in its entirety. The court's written decision explains that it lacked subject matter jurisdiction to hear the Band's claims, and separately found that the Band lacked standing to bring them in the first place. The court noted that the Band conceded it does not hold fee simple title to the Reservation, and it rejected the Band's alternative "constructive trust" theory of ownership as a basis for the court to intervene.

Significantly, the court recognized that this dispute was never really about land title at all, it was about who has the authority to govern the Nipmuc people. As the court put it, the real question is "what people or what entity is in control of the Hassanamisco people, enabling those people or that entity to hold the power and authority to control, conduct, and govern the use of, access to, and activities on, the Reservation." The court concluded that questions of tribal governance and political legitimacy fall outside the jurisdiction of a Massachusetts land court.

The court's decision also notes that in January 2026, the Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuck Tribe attempted to intervene in the case, raising its own concerns about how a judgment might affect

government recognition of various Nipmuc groups. That motion was denied without prejudice, but the court observed that it, too, underscored that this case has always been about governance and recognition, not about who holds title to a parcel of land.

The case was dismissed without prejudice, meaning it may be refiled by a party with proper standing in an appropriate court. No party was awarded costs, fees, or damages.

We are gratified that the court did not accept the Band's request to declare the Tribal Council illegitimate or without authority. We remain committed to our work on behalf of the Nipmuc people and to resolving questions of governance and recognition through the proper channels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tenah Richardson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tenah" being more prominent and the last name "Richardson" written in a smaller, more connected script.

Tenah Richardson
Chairperson, Nipmuc Nation
Hassanamisco Tribe