

Remembering 9/11
through service **A4**

The Aquinnah
Wampanoag Powwow **B8**

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NICHOLAS VUKOTA

New faces on first day of school

Three new administrators take the reins this school year. **BY SARA CREATO**

Parents and their children — from pre-school to high school students — across the Island kicked off a new school year on a sunny Tuesday morning this week.

Outside the Oak Bluffs School, Principal Jeremy Light and Oak Bluffs Police Chief

Jonathan Searle greeted the incoming families. As children happily reunited with their friends and teachers in the background, Light emphasized that the first day of school is about teachers forming connections with their new students.

Lydia Heath, whose daughter, Nikita, is entering the first grade, said that this year will be marked by new friendships, growth, and learning. “She’ll be able to tell the time by the end of the school year,” Heath

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Nonprofit unveils plan for former Aquinnah Shop

Wampanoag women-led organization presents mission to restore tribal relationship to land.

BY HAYLEY DUFFY

It was standing-room-only at Stillpoint in West Tisbury last Wednesday night when a group of Aquinnah Wampanoag women publicly unveiled a mission years in the making: to restore the relationship between tribal people and the land throughout Martha’s Vineyard, or Noepe.

The event was also an introduction to the Aquinnah Land Initiative (ALI), a nonprofit land conservation organization formed in 2023 and led by five women of the

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The forensics of a shark bite

Q and A with marine biologist Greg Skomal who confirms Island’s first unprovoked shark bite.

BY HAYLEY DUFFY

It’s now confirmed that a woman in her late 20s who was pulled from the water off Norton Point last Monday with wounds to her lower leg suffered the first unprovoked shark bite on the Island in recent memory.

Greg Skomal, a marine biologist with the state Division of Marine Fisheries and a top shark expert, told The Times Wednesday that the wounds were undoubtedly caused by a shark bite, most likely from a sandbar shark, also known as a brown shark.

Skomal worked closely with hospital staff on Martha’s Vineyard over the past week to examine medical photographs to get a sense of the nature of the wounds, uncover any other details that were relative to the incident from first responders and others on the scene, and confirm whether this was indeed the first unprovoked shark bite on the Island in recent memory.

Though Skomal’s conclusion is based on conversations with first responders, hospital staff, and some others on the scene, there was no evidence at the time of the bite that there



HAYLEY DUFFY

was a shark, like commotion at the surface, birds feeding, or bait fish in the area. Still, he confirmed this was a shark bite. He theorized that the shark was moving through the edge of the beach at Norton Point, on the South Shore in Edgartown, and the victim was moving in a way that triggered the shark to think she was a “potential prey item,” but based on the extent of the wound, “it was not to the extent that the shark was trying to feed.”

The Times’ environmental reporter and managing editor Hayley Duffy spoke to Skomal in a brief interview Wednesday afternoon. Here is an abbreviated transcript.

Hayley Duffy: What is your conclusion? Do you think it was a shark bite?

Greg Skomal: I have no doubt that it is definitely

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