

**Presentation to the Standing Committee for the Main State Legislature by Hugh M. Akagi
(Chief of Passamaquoddy Peoples in Canada)**

I would like to thank the Penobscot People for the opportunity to stand and speak in their territory.

Testimony before the Maine State Legislature, April 27, 2015 in opposition to LD800

Name: Hugh Michael Akagi, St. Andrews, New Brunswick

Title: Elected Chief of the Passamaquoddy Peoples (St. Croix/ Schoodic Band; Canada)

Credentials: 49 years studying, teaching, working career in Science (including 35 years with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Research Institute).

As a Native:

- I represent a People who have existed in this territory for the past 12-15,000 years.
- We are the Indigenous People of this territory.
- We have the inherent right to exist within our territory in a manner to which we have become accustomed. This is to guarantee and protect our existence as Indigenous peoples to maintain the integrity of the territory and the ecosystem which has evolved over the past 15,000 years.
- This right to exist is closely integrated and dependent upon the existence of the creatures (our ancestors) which evolved with us to create a system which would last for thousands of years, the last truly healthy, successful ecosystem which included "man".
- This right has been recognized through Supreme Court decisions, Treaties, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as recently endorsed by Canada and the United States, leaving no nation state opposed to said rights.
- One such Treaty, the Watertown Treaty between the United States and the Wabanaki Nations, may have been the first recognition of the United States of America as a Nation, after the war of Independence, by another Nation.
- The Right to exist is also considered a basic "Human Right" as defined by the UN convention on Human Rights.
- To destroy any part of the fabric, often referred to as the "web of life", is to threaten the very existence of the People themselves, something which has happened all too often leaving a culture fragile in its survival in a world compromised by another culture based on economics and profit.
- The culture we wish to save, to which we need to return if we are to restore "health" to our territory, is of course what Indigenous Peoples around the globe refer to as "Our Mother Earth", a term returning to the UN through the Permanent Form on Indigenous Issues.

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As a science person:

- Science is truth, however, the interpretation of science is easily abused requiring both a ground truthing, usually through experimentation, and peer review of the highest order in credited journals and papers. Arguments in favor of LD800 have not met this standard.
- Despite modern technology, science still relies heavily on trial and error. Here I might suggest the St. Croix River is an experiment which has gone tragically awry for over more than a century. The experiment: take what you want, disregard any impact to the system, and do not worry about the future of the river or the generations which might depend on the river. All of this is counterproductive to any science I was taught, which is to improve the lives of all. The idea that science might improve on “nature” is neither a thirst for knowledge nor a goal of science, rather it is a human greed that can no longer be ignored and is fostered by the belief that man can be godlike in his behaviour with little or no consequence to the planet on which he lives. This arrogance has produced today’s dilemma causing species to be put at risk, extirpated, or even extinguished from the planet itself.
- A basic solution to the needs of every species which has suffered within our territory is to return the fish which-feeds-all to its homeland, its indigenous territory. This high fatty content forage creature is critical to the survival of Whale, Porpoise, Cod, Haddock, even Pollock; all of which have faced some degree of extinction from our River and Ocean environment. Remember, as Passamaquoddy we are “People of the Pollock”.
- Advocates for LD800 who believe alewives, which are present in the watershed, are not a native species and demand their removal, then logically would agree that all non-native fish species should be removed, which would include smallmouth bass.

To bring the two dimensions of my world together I simply apply the following:

Knowledge, such as science, is a powerful tool, but the application of knowledge without wisdom, such as that of our elders, would be a travesty and injustice which could easily lead to disaster.

The disaster I refer to here, today, is of course the present condition of the river system which has nourished my People throughout our existence, and I am here seeking justice for a People, a river, and a relative, the sequanomeq, our alewife!

Thank you.