An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §12004-G, sub-§9-B is enacted to read:

9-B.

Education Wabanaki Studies Commission Legislative Per 20-A MRSA
Diem and Expenses Only §13

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §13 is enacted to read:

§13. Wabanaki Studies Commission

The Wabanaki Studies Commission, referred to in this section as "the commission," is established to ensure the inclusion of Wabanaki studies in education curricula as required by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 4.

1. Membership. The commission consists of the following 19 members:

A. Two members appointed by the Chief of the Penobscot Nation;
B. Two members appointed by the Chief of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians;
C. Two members appointed by the Chief of the Mi'kmaq Nation;
D. Two members appointed by the Chief of the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik;
E. Two members appointed by the Chief of the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk;
F. One member appointed by the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission;
G. Seven members appointed by the Commissioner of Education, including an elementary school teacher; a middle school teacher; a high school teacher; a curriculum director; a superintendent or principal; and an employee of a nationally accredited or state-approved teacher education program, after consultation with deans, directors and chairs of those programs; and
H. One member appointed by the Chancellor of the University of Maine System.

2. Terms; vacancies. The terms of office of commission members are as follows.

A. All members are appointed for 3-year terms.
B. Members shall serve until their successors are appointed and take office.
C. Vacancies must be filled in the same manner as original appointments, except that any person appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacancy.

3. Compensation. The members of the commission are entitled to receive legislative per diem plus compensation for travel costs associated with participation in commission meetings and other activities of the commission.

4. Duties. The commission shall:

A. Assist school administrative units and educators in the exploration of a wide range of educational materials and resources relating to Wabanaki studies;
B. Identify materials and resources for implementing Wabanaki studies;
C. Involve other knowledgeable organizations and individuals able and willing to assist with this work, including, but not limited to, museums and educators; and

D. Make recommendations to the department regarding:

(1) Wabanaki studies curricula;

(2) Funding Wabanaki studies in regional school units;

(3) Wabanaki studies courses that count toward teacher certification; and

(4) Implementation of teacher education programs and summer teacher institutes.

5. Reporting. The commission shall annually report its findings to the Commissioner of Education for implementation and shall provide a copy to the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, regarding:

A. Educational materials that are appropriate to assist school administrative units and educators in the State to include Wabanaki studies as required by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 4; and

B. Opportunities for professional development, training and technical assistance that must be provided to assist school administrative units and educators in the State in implementing Wabanaki studies as required by the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 4.

6. Staff assistance and resources. The Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission shall provide staffing assistance to the commission. Each entity appointing members to the commission shall assist in identifying and securing resources to enhance the work of the commission.

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §4706, as amended by PL 2021, c. 247, §1 and affected by §3, is further amended by amending the section headnote to read:

§4706. Instruction in American history, African American studies, Maine studies, Maine Native American history Wabanaki studies and the history of genocide

Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §4706, sub-§2, as amended by PL 2021, c. 247, §1 and affected by §3, is further amended to read:

2. Maine studies. Maine history, including the Constitution of Maine, Maine geography and environment and the natural, industrial and economic resources of Maine and Maine’s cultural and ethnic heritage, must be taught. A required component of Maine studies is Maine Native American studies. Maine Native American studies and Maine African American studies must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4. Maine Native American studies must address the following topics:

A. Maine tribal governments and political systems and their relationship with local, state, national and international governments;

B. Maine Native American cultural systems and the experience of Maine tribal people throughout history;

C. Maine Native American territories; and

D. Maine Native American economic systems.
Sec. 5.  20-A MRSA §4706, sub-§4 is enacted to read:

4. Wabanaki studies. Wabanaki studies must be included in the review of content standards and performance indicators of the learning results conducted in accordance with section 6209, subsection 4. Wabanaki studies may include English, language arts, mathematics and science in accordance with this subsection. Wabanaki studies must address the following topics:

A. Tribal governments in the State and political systems and their relationship with local, state, national and international governments;
B. Wabanaki cultural systems and the experience of tribal people in the State throughout history;
C. Wabanaki territories;
D. Wabanaki economic systems; and
E. Other curricula recommended by the Wabanaki Studies Commission pursuant to section 13, subsection 3.

The department shall, in a representative sample of schools, periodically study the Wabanaki studies curricula under this subsection. The department shall publish its findings.

The department shall provide ongoing funding for the inclusion of Wabanaki studies in nationally accredited and state-approved teacher preparation programs and school administrative districts, including funding that school administrative districts can apply for to fund Wabanaki studies resources, such as coordinators.

Sec. 6.  20-A MRSA §13011, sub-§11 is enacted to read:

11. Wabanaki studies requirement. The state board shall adopt rules to require the completion of a Wabanaki studies component in the qualifications for certifying teachers in accordance with sections 13012-A and 13013.

Sec. 7.  20-A MRSA c. 513 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 513

TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN WABANAKI STUDIES

§13961. Teacher education programs

The department shall establish and provide funding for a state teacher education program in Wabanaki studies, as described in section 4706, subsection 4. The department shall provide funding for a nationally accredited teacher education program in Wabanaki studies, as described in section 4706, subsection 4. The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

§13962. Summer teacher institute in Wabanaki studies

The department shall establish a summer teacher institute in Wabanaki studies, as described in section 4706, subsection 4. The department shall adopt rules to implement
this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 8. PL 2001, c. 403, §4 is repealed.

Sec. 9. Convening the Wabanaki Studies Commission. No later than 30 days following the effective date of this Act, the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission shall call and convene the first meeting of the Wabanaki Studies Commission established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 13 and preside over the selection of a chair.

Sec. 10. Staggered terms. Notwithstanding the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 13, subsection 2, at the initial meeting of the Wabanaki Studies Commission members shall draw lots to determine members' initial term lengths so that the initial terms of 7 members expire after one year, the initial terms of 6 members expire after 2 years and the initial terms of 6 members expire after 3 years.

Sec. 11. Implementation of Wabanaki studies required. School administrative districts shall implement Wabanaki studies in accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 4706, subsection 4.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Wabanaki Studies Commission to ensure the inclusion of Wabanaki studies in education curricula. It amends the statutes relating to required courses about Wabanaki studies, including amending provisions relating to the substance of the courses and the requirement that the courses be funded. It directs the Department of Education to establish and fund teacher education programs in Wabanaki studies. It directs the State Board of Education to adopt rules to require the completion of a Wabanaki studies component in the qualifications for certifying teachers.