

Jacquelyn Brannen
New England Conference of the United Methodist Church
LD 1626

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
An Act to Implement the Recommendations of
The Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act
February 15, 2022

Senator Carney, Representative Harnett and Members of the Committee:

My name is Reverend Dr. Jacquelyn Brannen and I am the District Superintendent of the Katahdin District of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church in the state of Maine is comprised of 141 churches with 13,016 members and many more constituents. We serve the people of our state from Kittery to Limestone and Greenville to Eastport. I am testifying on behalf of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church. in support of LD 1626.

United Methodists have a long-standing understanding of the sacredness of the Native American peoples including their languages, culture and impact upon the world. Our 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions states, "Tribal sovereignty is an inherent international right of Native nations. It encompasses various matters, such as jurisdiction over Indians and non-Indians on tribal lands, education and language, child welfare and religious freedom. Land is both the physical and spiritual foundation of tribal identity, as stated by Kidwell, Noley, and Tinker (2001) in their book, A Native American Theology: "Land is today the basis upon which tribal sovereignty rests, the rights of Indian people to live upon, use and to govern in a political sense the members of the tribe who live on the land and those whose tribal membership gives them an association with it" (p. 15). "

While other tribes within the United States have been recognized as sovereign by the federal government, the US constitution, and our jurisprudence system, our Maine tribes have yet to attain that recognition. I write to you today in support of legislative action to rectify this situation and allow the Maine tribes the respect and dignity to which they deserve. In denying our Native brothers and sisters the rights that they deserve, we continue to harm those whose land we have colonized. We continue to act in racist behaviors that deny the human dignity that all of God's children deserve. Surely, we are better than that!

United Methodists feel it is the obligation of all of our states, including Maine, to bring justice to this untenable situation. I call upon all of you to acknowledge the sovereignty of our Maine Native tribes and bring equity back into our state's relationship with those whose land we now occupy. In doing so, we not only restore the dignity of our indigenous neighbors, we also restore a bit of our own dignity with this act of restoration.

Sincerely,
Rev. Dr. Jacquelyn

Brannen