

Zoë Lidstrom
Lewiston
LD 294

On April 15, 2008, the Maine Legislature passed a resolution in support of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which declares in part that “Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites...” Yet, a decade and a half after the passage of this resolution, the indigenous peoples of Maine--the Wabanaki--are excluded from participating in ceremonies and decision-making around Mt. Katahdin, an especially sacred site to them.

Across North America, there is a growing movement of Indigenous peoples working with public agencies toward arrangements for Indigenous involvement in the management of public lands, sometimes referred to as co-management. LD 294 would add a citizen of the Wabanaki nations located in Maine to membership of the Baxter State Park Authority, which currently consists of three members: the Attorney General, the Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Director of the Maine Forest Service. Adding a Wabanaki citizen to the Baxter State Park Authority would recognize and affirm the longstanding relationship of the Wabanaki peoples to Mt. Katahdin, one that has existed for vastly longer than any relationship of the State of Maine to the mountain.

I urge you to support LD 294 as a small yet important step toward imagining a future in which the original peoples of this land we all share are able to participate fully in decision-making around public lands and related issues of access and resource management. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Zoë Lidstrom
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