



Permanent Commission RACIAL, INDIGENOUS & TRIBAL POPULATIONS

LD 1349 “An Act to Review State Lands and Waterways That Have Sacred, Traditional or Other Significance to the Wabanaki People ”

January 09, 2024

Senator Ingwersen , Representative Pluecker, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry.

My name is Rae Sage, and I am the Policy Coordinator for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. The Permanent Commission’s role is to examine racial disparities across all systems and advise Maine State Government on ways to improve the status and outcomes of historically disadvantaged racial, Indigenous, and tribal populations.

The Wabanaki tribes, indigenous to what is now called Maine, have existed on this land for over 10,000 years; however, they currently only hold 1% of the land.¹ As sovereign nations, each Wabanaki tribe should have the opportunity to access and protect lands significant to the health and wellness of their people. The Permanent Commission supports LD 1349 as it creates a process for the review of state-owned lands and waterways-helping us learn more about the Wabanaki community and their unique land-based needs.

The use and protection of sacred sites is a human right that has been identified by international law. Article 25 of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states:

¹ Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous & Tribal Populations. (2022). “Land Access for Indigenous & African American Farmers in Maine. https://www.pcrtp.me/sites/default/files/inline-files/LD%20870%20Report%20to%20Legislature_PCRITP%20%284%29.pdf

“Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.”²

The efforts of LD 1349 align with the pursuit of this right. Its passing would continue the work many organizations throughout Maine have already begun. Working directly with Wabanaki representatives, Nonprofits like Land In Common³, Trust for Public Land⁴, and Dawnland Return⁵ work to address disparities in land access for tribal populations by returning land to Wabanaki stewardship.

Making more space to hear directly from the sovereign people of the Wabanaki Confederacy helps the state make better decisions about the management of land. Our collective future is tied to the land, and its management is of concern to us all. Indigenous led land stewardship has been recognized as a critical component of addressing climate change the world over.⁶ The Permanent Commission firmly supports all efforts to safeguard the prosperity and religious freedom of this historically disadvantaged population. Thank you.

² United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP_E_web.pdf](#)

³ Land In Common [Building a collective land base for just and resilient futures in Maine \(landincommon.org\)](#)

⁴ Trust for Public Land [Support Trust For Public Land - Trust for Public Land \(tpl.org\)](#)

⁵ Dawnland Return [Our Model | Dawnland Return](#)

⁶ Indigenous People and the Climate Crisis [As climate crisis alters their lands, Indigenous Peoples turn to the courts \(unep.org\)](#)