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The right to sovereignty shouldn't be something that is granted — it should have always been something that newcomers respected. Instead, we scarred not only the land but its personhood, and not only a people, but all the people of this place, human and all other living beings.

I'm not sure if you have seen Gina Adams' installations, where she repurposes old quilts to recreate word for word various broken treaties with Native peoples throughout time. As white people, colonizers, we knew we wouldn't be held accountable for losing the paperwork amidst the rubble in our wake, and we took full advantage. From our own generational European histories of forced starvation, war, colonization, we didn't find common ground or kinship or engage our curiosity with those we met afterward, we took it as an opportunity to shift our position from oppressed to oppressor instead.

We have never upheld our end of agreements that we made as a consolation prize after committing genocidal crimes for centuries, so shouldn't we start to mend whatever we have the power to as soon as we can? What a simple thing, to permit a culture, a community, a place, thrive in a way that only they know how to provide for themselves. Why would we want to see the future of such a vibrant and tenacious community continue to be wrought with hardship and uncertainty? Shouldn't we make decisions that allow for those around us to thrive, the way we all want to thrive? If kindness is not innate but instead a muscle, why don't we start putting it to use? And perhaps if we start, we'll recognize that hatred is in fact a feeling and a concept that is not innate in us, but brought into being by trauma, and to rediscover the kindness and lifelong pursuit of joy that has lived within us since birth. We aren't born hateful and sticky-fingered, these things are learned.

It's time to end our centuries of tyranny wrought by generational trauma, pain, and displacement. It's time to acknowledge the way we harm others in order to feel safe, which is a long road that will bear no fruit. We need to relinquish what we think is control and recognize it for what it is: racism, violence, petulance, childishness. What if we could replace all our capitalist intent for choices made to ensure that all of us have access to everything that we need? What if we all felt safe and secure in our pursuit of everything from stable home space and daily meals to bodily safety to self-determination and sovereignty within our communities? What if instead of saying the laws don't allow for it, or that there isn't the money to do so, we realize how many laws have historically been trod over and continue to conveniently forgotten, to fit our own purposes and to gain access to more protections and resources?

What the Wabanaki Nation is suggesting is not to displace all non-Native residents or force us back to where we came here from generations ago, but rather for us to respect that we have different values, different needs, and that they cannot thrive within the system that we have created and to which we expect all others near us to conform. What they ask for is not hard to grant, and it shouldn't be within anyone's power to grant this in the first place. Everyone deserves a life with as much space to explore, grow, practice, and flourish. Everyone on this planet has the right, from birth, to seek and find as much security, joy, purpose, and connection that they can. Indigenous sovereignty allows for the recognition of laws and customs and securities that aren't provided them through the systems white settlers have enforced throughout time. We already accept that cultures vary in this country from region to region, so why not within the different parts of our state? At a certain point we all have to admit that this really is all just common sense.

You don't need to understand the minute scientific details, for example, to know that a toxic trash dump isn't good for our water systems or any part of this place — it's just common sense.

I urge you stop thinking about the policy that exists and just use your compassion,

empathy, and common sense. How can we change current policy to actually fit the needs of the people we claim to serve? And on a related note, how have some of your elders or ancestors struggled in ways that they shouldn't have had to? How can we ensure a present and future for anyone who asks that is void of any of these unnecessary hardships? It's really as simple as that. Try to find within yourself some sympathetic understanding, and recognize how easy it is to respect an ask within our community for those in need. These are our neighbors, friends, family — they deserve our help, and we have the resources — their resources — to spare. Let's not take advantage of our position any longer and give back what was never ours to take.

Thank you.