

Valerie Watson  
Old Town  
LD 2007

My name is Val Watson. I'm from Old Town Maine, and I am writing in support of LD 2007. Like many of you, I have only recently learned about the details of Wabanaki sovereignty. For me, it was when I heard a recent Harvard economics study, which found that Wabanaki people are staggeringly behind the rest of Indian country: average income growth since 1989 has been 61% for tribal citizens not located in Maine, but only 9% for Wabanaki citizens in Maine; Maine's overall income growth for the same period was 25%. Wabanaki childhood poverty rates are an astonishing 40-77% as compared to 15% in the rest of Maine. I was blown away. How can we allow our fellow Mainers to suffer so horribly when we have the power to fix it? Recognizing Wabanaki sovereignty would return tribes' access to federal Indian Law, including the financial and structural tools to self-govern and determine their own destiny. Especially in this era of rapid climate change, it is incredibly important that Wabanaki peoples be able to care for their land and their people without unnecessary obstacles put in place by the state. Passage of LD2007 could benefit the rest of Maine as well: sovereign tribes, especially in rural areas, have been documented to bring hundreds of millions to the economy. Hundreds of millions of dollars! And Mainers like me and thousands of others support it as well. I urge you to pass LD 2007. Thank you.