

Jason Grundstrom-Whitney
Monmouth
LD 2007

To: Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Jason Grundstrom-Whitney, Monmouth

Re: Support for LD2007 An Act to Advance Self-Determination for the Wabanaki Nations

Mending Anew:

Due to restrictions imposed in the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, The Wabanaki People of Maine have been denied the growth, self-determination, development, and economic potential that the other federally recognized tribes have enjoyed for the last thirty years.

This has had far-reaching implications, adversely affecting children (poverty rates for the Passamaquoddy are 40 percent, Micmac at 77 percent), disallowing economic growth (whereas by having access to self-determination and laws that have increased economic growth among the other 570 federally recognized tribes, those tribal members have experienced economic growth of 61 percent while Maine tribal members have experienced only a 9 percent growth), disallowing the self-determination aspects of a sustainable economic structure that would allow a boon to Maine with a projected 330 million dollars to Maine's Gross Domestic Product.

Like all legislation, the Settlement Act is fluid and subject to change. In fact, the framers of the act termed it a "living document". Being so it is time to mend anew the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. We can all agree that poverty is vicious in its implications, far-reaching and devastating for those affected, particularly for the young and old. Not having what Maslow claimed as the foundation for human development, the unequal distribution of poverty affects the Wabanaki needs for food, shelter and a sustainable economy that would enrich children's lives and make a future possible. This is a strand to be considered by mending anew the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.

We can all agree another thread that makes sense is to be able to capture the economic growth potential that has for so long been denied the Wabanaki People. These are difficult times economically for Maine citizens, the State, and the Nation. To start the process of absolving the difference between all other tribal citizens in the U.S. and the Wabanaki People (a 52 percent differential), there will be 2,700 created jobs and a 39-million-dollar boon to State and Local tax revenue. We simply cannot afford not to take this moment to mend anew the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act. We can all agree that self-determination is highly valued among nations and peoples. I have had the good fortune to spend a lot of time with my adopted family at Motahkomikuk for decades. My family and all the Wabanaki People are hardworking, conscientious, environmentally conscious (they have cared for the land for thousands of years which we should model in thought and action, with increasing environmental degradation due to climate change), incredibly creative, and have well-designed governance. The Wabanaki People are poised and have been ready for decades to enjoy the self-determination of the other 570 federally recognized Tribes of the U.S. This is a powerful thread to be woven.

Given these threads articulated, and more, we have the rare opportunity with LD 2007 to actually change and support lives allowing the "Living Document" of the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act to be mended anew with these threads, thus making a stronger document and in doing so, a stronger Maine.

Thank you, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, the time is now for self-determination for the Wabanaki People, and the economic boon awaits this mending of the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act.