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LD 2007

As the author of *Exceptions to Their Rule: Basques and Wabanaki in an Age of Autocrats*, I've learned a thing or two about both cultures over the last five years.

First, their small-d democratic traditions extend back to the mid-1400s, if not earlier. They have, in fact, been governing themselves for twice as long as we have. Yet we have the audacity to deny them their own legacy of successful self-governance?

Second, the Wabanaki always exhibited a universal validity, a thing of beauty if we only had opened our eyes. They began with cosmology centered on seeing that of God in all things, animate and inanimate. So, harmony and reciprocity, kindness and trust governed their interactions. And from those precepts flowed their "talking democracy."

On almost a daily basis, except at harvest time, every adult, male and female, had a chance to be heard around the council fires. From the village to the clan, from the nation to the confederation, everyone's views were taken into consideration. They reached consensus by persuasion, not by shouting down each other or resorting to the force of arms.

Third, unlike the autocracies they fought against, their leaders were not "born to rule." They were elected. And they were elected because of their integrity and wisdom, their moral strength and common sense, and the example they set in peace and war.

And yet, we deem them somehow unworthy of self-government? We would deny the Wabanaki the rights we so often take for granted and seem so willing to give up on these days?

Why, after six centuries of proving their commitment to small-d democracy and their acceptance of the rule of law, are we so afraid to do what's right by them. Is it our fear of the unknown? Or is it our shame for not having done so decades ago?

I urge you to support LD 2007.