

Testimony in support of LD 2007, *An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations*

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

From: Jennifer Comeau, 268 Beachwood Avenue, Kennebunkport, ME 04046, (207) 229-4136

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Jennifer Comeau and I live in Kennebunkport. I am a former Engineer/Corporate Executive, now a Certified Nature & Forest Therapy Guide, a children's book author and novelist, singer-songwriter, Trustee for TreeSisters.org, a reforestation and women's leadership charity, and workshop host. I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007, an Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

Testimony:

In my life's work, my mission is to inspire humans to remember and restore our sacred partnership with the rest of the natural world. My mother, Mary Mattimore Elwell taught me to "do right by situations and people." My father, Gordon Elwell, taught me "to take responsibility, and keep commitments." In both their teachings, I experienced a profound sense of ethical and moral guidance.

As many of you in the Judiciary and Legislature are aware, the unintended consequences of Maine's *1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA)* are grave and unjust. Unlike the other 570 federal tribes in the US, Wabanaki Nations have been prevented from achieving significant economic growth, because they have not had full access to federal policies of self-determination.

We need your help to remove these obstacles, to help the Wabanaki Nations take advantage of federal self-determination policies, programs and funding that every tribe outside of Maine has had access to.

As someone who "did a 180" from Masters-Degreed Engineer to Certified Forest Therapy Guide, I know how difficult it takes to "do a 180," and yet, this courage is precisely what is required of you, and of all of us, in order to "make right" the unintended injustice that has cost Maine tribes thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services.

Closing:

In closing, I wish to thank you for reading my testimony, and for considering the passage of LD 2007. Restoration matters across the board, and restoring tribal self-governance matters deeply.

Thank you,

Jennifer Comeau

Kennebunkport, Maine