

Barbara Baker  
Bradley, Maine  
LD 2007

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: Barbara Baker, Bradley, Maine

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Barbara Baker and I live in Bradley, Maine on the banks of the Penobscot River within unceded Wabanaki Territory. I am testifying on behalf Indivisible Bangor which promotes democracy - of, by, and for the people and I am grounding my remarks in my own experience. As a retired University of Maine Extension Associate Professor having worked about 50 years in Youth Development across the country, I am writing to testify in support of LD 2007.

In making my case for LD 2007, I refer to my years of experience working with three of the over 570 federally recognized tribes who have had full access to federal policies of self-determination over the past 40 years.

I began working for the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes in Montana around 1980 at a small alternative school created by the tribe characterized by human relationships and respect for cultural diversity that would help an individual learn the positive attributes of each culture and develop the confidence and skills necessary to achieve their own sense of personal success. Those Montana tribes, over 40 years, have gained economic, environmental, and governmental success as referenced in the Harvard Report by Dr. Kalt about the economic impact of the 1980 Settlement Acts on the Wabanaki Nations and surrounding communities.

Like most other federally recognized tribes, the Salish and Kootenai tribes started on a 30-year economic boom after 1980. That small alternative school became an accredited Tribal High School followed by a student built Community College now a leader in the Tribal College system granting doctoral degrees...still holding true to the way it was developed to give students realistic goals, to foster self-respect, and give students an opportunity to continue their education and to learn their cultural heritage.

The tribes now run a large dam and electric company, the National Bison Range, multiple electronics companies with national defense contracts and a conference center on Flathead Lake - all started and acquired since 1980.

When I moved to Maine I looked for prominent Indian-owned businesses and educational institutions. However, I learned the Settlement Acts prevented the tribes in Maine from exercising self determination to the extent the vast majority of tribes elsewhere in the United States do.

I have joined the Wabanaki Alliance and visited public celebrations getting to know families, enjoy the dancing and eating delicious foods with each of the five tribal locations within the Wabanaki nations. Working with young people to intentionally build social capital has given me a perspective of communities interacting. I see and admire how persistently the people and their leaders are in seeking tribal sovereignty beyond the restrictive bounds of the Settlement Act. The most astonishing thing to me is that a group of Maine Legislators was tasked with studying the Act and produced 22 recommendations that have come forward with continuing conversations among chiefs and legislators and attorneys and the Governor several times in different iterations to be resolved, but were stopped short.

Today, I hope this Committee will move ahead, learning from testimony and soaking in sentiments, to forge ahead with LD 2007 - recognizing the Wabanaki Nations' inherent right to self-govern helps move the Wabanaki Nations and the state of Maine forward together, with improved economic opportunity, careful stewardship of the

land, and renewed partnership among neighbors.

In closing, I thank each and every committee member and urge you to vote unanimously that LD 2007 "ought to pass".