

Testimony of Gina Sawin, small business owner, in Support of LD 2007

I am testifying in support of LD 2007. Conferring self-determination and undoing the other wrongs associated with the 1980 Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement legislation will advance Maine's identity and values as a state that embodies the best

We run a thriving business as an event venue in New Gloucester, the success of which is based on owning 65 acres of an iconic Maine landscape that resonates with our clients as they envision the dream setting for their wedding or other event. When I tell our clients about the history of the farm as a thriving 19th century apple business, I realize more and more how I am profiting on land that comes with all the charming New England trappings, but I am increasingly aware of our land as something much more interesting and with far deeper roots, so to speak. I look forward to telling our clients, with a bit of irony, that they will be saying their vows on the sacred land of people who were here and thriving much much longer ago. I look forward to a time when the Wabanaki presence on every inch of this land is something we will celebrate with pride and not feel shame in the way the tribes have been treated.

As owners of a small business, we are also concerned about the damage to Maine's image that continues as long as the state denies its Indigenous people a fair deal and the same rights and privileges enjoyed by Indigenous people elsewhere.

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