

Clara Porter
Portland
LD 2007

I am writing to express my strong support for LD 2007, an Act to

When I was 50, I visited the lands of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians on a grantee trip with the Maine Women's Fund. Something I learned that day has stayed with me and become a personal driving force. The life expectancy for the Maliseet, was and remains, 55 years. Fifty Five. I knew then that whatever time I had after reaching 55 was stolen time and that I should use it to make positive change where and how I could.

The State of Maine has that chance in the form of LD 2007, a bill that would finally bring full tribal sovereignty to the Passaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation. The Settlement Acts did not resolve disputes between the state and the tribes but rather deepened divides and resulted in even greater economic disparity in these communities.

Since the Settlement Acts passed, only one federal law, the Violence Against Women Act, has been successfully extended to the Wabanaki, and then fully 17 years after provisions to protect Indigenous women were included. It is with the funding provided by this law that my organization, Prevention. Action. Change. has been engaged with tribal communities. In collaboration with the Wabanaki Women's Coalition, we have been traveling to all 5 indigenous communities, teaching empowerment self defense to women and youth impacted by sexual and intimate partner violence. Our goal is to build a cohort of teachers in these communities who can make this proven approach to preventing, interrupting, responding to, and healing from violence and make it their own.

LD 2007 is a consensus bill, supported by over 100 lawmakers from all parties and based upon the recommendations of the bi-partisan commission called for by Governor Mills in 2020. The tribes have acted in good faith, and it is now on the state to do so as well. The Passaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, and the Mi'kmaq Nation have been kept from true sovereignty for far too long. LD 2007 is an important step towards righting that wrong and finally giving the tribes access to the rights and funds they have been long denied.

Thank you,

Clara Porter, Director
Prevention. Action. Change.