

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lisa Montgomery. I am an enrolled member of the Penobscot Nation and grew up on Indian Island. I am a service-connected disabled veteran and a former member of the Penobscot Nation's Tribal Council. I am testifying today neither for or against LD 812 and want to share a few comments.

Over 400 years ago a French trading post among the Maliseet on the St John River provided regular and intimate contact-facilitated trade alliances. Back then the Eastern Abenaki were beginning to realize that siding with the French would mean hostile treatment by the English. Tribal people have chosen alliances for survival often at odds with each. This continues into 2025 as I have witnessed the continuing influence of the Diocese of Maine on Wabanaki affairs through the formation of the Wabanaki Alliance who formally called for action against state recognition of the Kineo St. John Tribe. Perhaps if the Kineo people had endeavored their financial resources and time into engaging in a Sunday service church circuit like the Wabanaki Alliance has done since 2020 they too would have the support for this bill.

It seems that any lukewarm alliance has always been preferable to English treachery. We all know how that turned out. There have been intertribal tensions prior to European contact and because of European contact which continues today. Instead of scalps we trade in social media posts and comments to encourage the denial of recognition of lineage prior to the forming of this country and state. I will take first amendment speech over physical violence any day.

These are not pretend Indians as inferred by the fear mongering about other state's recognition processes. This is a threat to those who have self-proclaimed themselves as the only subject matter experts on Wabanaki people. The Wabanaki Alliance is a nonprofit 501(c)4 corporation that serves as a political lobbying group. They have no legal mandate from any enrolled tribal membership through community consensus as is our traditional custom and tradition. They have named Wabanaki chiefs as advisory board members and further encroached and immersed themselves as de facto spokespeople for all Wabanaki tribes. They are not. In over 5 years of existence, they have not even engaged directly with membership of the tribes preferring to legitimize themselves with non-tribal partner organizations. This by proxy sovereignty has been passed through by the executive branch of sovereign nations with no consultation with enrolled tribal members taking away the involvement of the General Meeting Council body which is the sole authority to make laws. It reminds me of when France and England flippantly disposed of our homelands like chess pieces in the Treaty of Utrecht.

I ask that you considered these comments and give at least the opportunity for healthy dialogue around the recognition of all tribal people who can establish their presence in what is now called Maine.