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LD 958

In 1925 the State of Maine decided to claim eminent domain over the Passamaquoddy land at Sipayik, dividing Route 190 through the heart of the community. The Passamaquoddy Nation was not consulted.

This was in direct violation of the sovereignty of the Passamaquoddy Nation and an affront to the meaning of the land to the Wabanaki People. Land is a gift from the Creator. To not consult with the Passamaquoddy disallowed their input on the importance and relevance to the land. This was an unconscionable act, looking for self-interested needs through the lens of a colonial 'land as owned' viewpoint.

The land, as with most cultures around the world, is part of the cultural identity of the people living there. It provides a sense of place, history, cultural and spiritual teaching and belonging. The land is not to be indiscriminately carved up without any consideration of the effects this might have on the land and for the people that live there.

The Wabanaki view the land with a sense of responsibility and stewardship. To care and protect the land is important for the current generation and the generations that will live on the land long after them. In not consulting the Passamaquoddy Nation about this decision, a sacred bond was discredited and dismissed. As we all look at the degradation of the environment, the incredible sanity of how the Wabanaki live on the land should be modeled widely.

The well-being of the land is directly tied to the well-being of the people and all living beings. Interconnection is very important to the Wabanaki people. If the Passamaquoddy had been consulted in 1925 in the use of eminent domain, all these considerations would have been brought to the fore and the impact that would be made to the land, the people and all beings before a decision was made.

LD 958 would amend the 1980 Settlement Act, making sure that The Wabanaki Nations would have the protection that other federally recognized tribes enjoy. It would allow the Wabanaki to regulate their own territories and if an issue of land use arose that might impact Wabanaki lands then the Tribal leaders and the state would work towards a solution, not using eminent domain without consultation as happened in 1925.

I am writing today in support of LD 958.