

LD291 was passed in 2001 requiring Maine schools to teach Wabanaki Studies. But often it is not implemented. My daughter is now 14 and has grown up in the Waterville Public School system. The first time she ever encountered Wabanaki Studies was when she was in 5th grade with Miss Jeni at the Albert Hall school. That means, 6 years of her schooling in Maine had no Wabanaki Studies education whatsoever despite the law. She had to wait again until she was in 8th grade for any other lesson in Wabanaki history and present.

I myself grew up in Montana where there are state-funded employees working to support statewide instruction of Indigenous studies. I took Montana history in high school where I learned about the Nez Perce and Chief Joseph chased across the territory by the US army, The Cheyenne and Lakota, Crazy Horse and the Greasy Grass River battle. It wasn't perfect—we learned about many tribes in Montana through a settler lens. But since I graduated in 1997, there has been increased investment in Indigenous Studies, and Native sourced instruction for K-12 education in the state of Montana has only increased. Maine falls far behind.

Now, I am a professor of Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies at Colby College, a College that has in the past few years, really tried to increase the number of Mainers who go to our small liberal arts school. I start my classes on the first day with an anonymous survey asking first: "can you name the indigenous peoples of the land you are from?" And secondly "Can you name the indigenous peoples of the land you are on." I tell my students this is not to shame them, but to help them understand that we need to reorient ourselves as the majority of students and professors at Colby are settlers and start each class by centering native voices and tribal sovereignty. Because we are not free unless all of us are free. And every semester, the vast majority of my students—including my Mainers—cannot answer these two questions.

I am a member of the Waterville k-12 social justice and equity group. We have heard from many speakers including Sarah Sockbeson on Wabanaki basketry, Starr Kelly on decolonizing education, and Daren Ranco on Maine State Wabanaki Policy. This speaker series gives teachers contact hours, but it is an optional program. (attended mostly by women and the same women each time). But I will say that each time we hear a speaker, teachers are wanting to implement what they've learned into their classrooms. Each time.

LD 1474 includes funding that school administrative units can apply for to fund Wabanaki studies resources. Which would be invaluable to Waterville schools who are already trying to buy books for classrooms and provide them free for teachers—in addition to funding out speaker series. This bill also directs the State Board of Education to adopt rules to require the completion of a Wabanaki studies component in the qualifications for certifying teachers. This would mean that my daughter and many more students in Waterville and throughout Maine wouldn't have to wait 6 years for one excellent teacher to teach Wabanaki Studies. It would mean that all our teachers in Waterville and throughout Maine would be excellent. Please pass LD 1474.