

April 22, 2025

Dear Maine State Legislators:

My name is David Shane Lowry. I am an enrolled member (citizen) of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. I am the first tenure-track/tenured professor in any discipline at University of Southern Maine (USM). During the Fall semester of 2023, students surveyed the USM community. They asked a list of questions, from which they began to interpret the state of relationships between USM's student community and Native American realities. Here are the results:

Over 50% of the respondents did not know that USM has an organization of Indigenous students. 85% of respondents believed that "Native history...should be required in higher levels of education and part of the process of learning for people immigrating to" the United States. 80% of the respondents did not know that USM was built on the site of a massacre of American Indian (Native American) peoples. 72% of respondents did not "feel confident" in their knowledge of "Native history". 90% of respondents knew that the United States government "held treaties with many Native tribes" but did not honor them. 92% of respondents believed that a "history degree" from USM ought to require at least one course about the Indigenous peoples of North America.

While it might be necessary to understand these specific conditions of dis-relationship and mis-relationships within USM, we must understand that they occur under the shadow of a wide-scale disobedience of Maine State law from 2001 (LD 291) that required/requires Wabanaki Studies across schools in Maine. Across Maine, there is a dearth of peoples who are properly re-educated, educated and prepared to pedagogically enact Wabanaki and Indigenous Studies. As such, I have advised USM ought to commit itself to being the center space/institution for welcoming and preparing students who will, over the next decades, be in control of ensuring that LD 291 comes to life in the form of a new state of education within/across Maine. Meanwhile, I am in strong support of LD 1474 because it contains proper and sufficient funding for Wabanaki officials to work within the Maine DOE to *enact* Wabanaki studies.

The State of Maine is unlike any other state in the United States. For example, it was the last state in the entire nation (!) to allow American Indians to vote. This should not be a comfortable history. This should be a spark within a much larger pedagogical turn within the State of Maine toward justice. I am available to answer any questions or to serve as a consultant.

Sincerely,



David Shane Lowry

David Shane Lowry
University of Southern Maine
LD 1474

Hearing for LD 1474 April 22, 2025
State of Maine

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