

Mia Dawbin
Gardiner
LD 1474

Honorable members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

My name is Mia Dawbin, and I am a student, currently living in Gardiner. Research that I have done for my Interdisciplinary Studies degree, and presented at the University of Maine at Augusta research conference last week, has underscored the importance of learning from indigenous culture.

I am testifying in support of L.D. 1474, "An Act to Strengthen the Teaching of Wabanaki Studies in Maine Schools," because the existing Wabanaki Studies law is not followed by all Maine public schools in good faith. I was a public school student of MSAD11 from 2nd through 6th grade, and a public charter student at Maine Connections Academy from 7th-12th. Besides the hint of native history we glossed over during US History I cannot recall class time devoted to indigenous studies. The closest thing I can remember involved an hour or two of class time spent making dioramas or pictures of what Wampanoag lifestyles may have looked like - a tribe local to New England, but not particularly Maine.

As I set out to do my research, I was under the false impression that information about indigenous culture, especially those most local to the beautiful lands we now appreciate as "Maine," was lost to distant history. I had even met with local librarians to procure book recommendations to help me in my research - one local librarian told me there wasn't much to be found, and that they "keep it all on the reservations". Contrarily, the information exists and is readily accessible, yet it simply doesn't get the attention it deserves.

On the matter, Siobhan Senier (a professor at the University of New Hampshire, formerly employed as a professor of Native American literature at the University of Maine) wrote in the introduction of *Dawnland Voices* - an anthology of texts by indigenous writers from New England - "aside from two repeatedly mentioned early writers—the Mohegan minister Samson Occom and Pequot minister-activist William Apess—I kept hearing that "there just aren't any" Native American authors in this area. Now, I had been taught in graduate school that "there just aren't any" is almost always a lie. So I kept looking. [...] I found, in fact, more indigenous New England authors than I could read, teach, or even count."

My coursework in anthropology has emphasized to me the importance of preserving other cultures and teaching future generations to treat others with kindness, acceptance, and cultural competence. This attitude was not always afforded to the native people, and they experienced violence, dehumanization, and erasure because of it. To correct these historical wrongs and impart a desire to preserve the ecological security of our beautiful rivers and woodlands, we must prioritize Wabanaki Studies in our public schools.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage you to support L.D. 1474. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

Sincerely,
Mia Dawbin