

Jules Thomson
Bucksport
LD 785

To: Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

I'm Jules Thomson, Bucksport resident and current Collections Manager at Castine Historical Society, with a lifelong passion for both history and the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty, culture, and ecological stewardship in North American and the wider world. This statement is in support of LD 785.

Passing LD 785 is obviously the right thing to do from a compliance standpoint since it would bring Maine in line with federal standards. However, the real issues at stake are much deeper and more important than compliance. Passing this bill would go some way toward addressing the fundamental injustices perpetuated on the sovereign governments of the territory all of us are currently fortunate enough to live on - that is, the Wabanaki Nations. To pretend otherwise is a continued violation of international treaties and a betrayal of both ethics and legality.

Just because these treaty violations first began to occur over 200 years ago doesn't mean they can now be conveniently ignored. There is no expiration date on illegal occupation and genocide, both of which were heavily perpetuated by ethnically British settlers, the direct ancestors of many current Maine residents, against Wabanaki men, women, and children. All of this is extremely well documented and settled history, including the continued and intentional erosion of Indigenous sovereignty, culture, and identity in the aftermath of overt massacres and land theft in the 18th century.

Whenever I write in about Indigenous issues I find myself retreading this history, because I feel these conversations must be informed by it, and that it is too easily forgotten in favor of more palatable discussions around recent legal precedent and other minutiae. The big picture historical view is necessary because what we are actually talking about with bills like LD 785 is long-term restitution, albeit incremental, of the fundamental human right to national and cultural sovereignty. It took a long time to erode these rights, and it will take a sustained and concerted effort to provide justice and to begin healing the all-pervasive rift of colonialism, which continues to fundamentally harm all of us, human and non-human alike, both physically and spiritually.

I came to Maine, my forever-home, by way of Oklahoma where tribal sovereignty has been recently expanded by Supreme Court rulings (*McGirt v. Oklahoma*, 2020). Believe me, if deeply red Oklahoma - by some metrics the most conservative state in the US - was able to accommodate these changes and still thrive, Maine should welcome them as a matter of course. To do otherwise puts us to shame, and I would rather not be ashamed of my adopted state. Please do the right thing and expand tribal sovereignty to the bare federal minimum in Maine.