



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Jennifer Poirier introducing
L.D. 812, "An Act to Provide State Recognition of the Kineo St. John Tribe"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

March 12, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

I am Jennifer Poirier, and I proudly represent House District 70, Skowhegan. I stand before you today to present LD 812, "**An Act to Provide State Recognition of the Kineo St. John Tribe**".

I find myself, for the third time, at this podium advocating for the Kineo Tribe's recognition. Since 2012, they have sought our help in preserving their culture for future generations.

LD 812 is straightforward. The Kineo Tribe is not requesting state funding, land claims, jurisdictional authority, or the right to conduct gaming. They seek only state recognition, which would allow them to access grants for cultural preservation and economic development.

You will hear from the Honorable David Slagger about the extensive historical data supporting their lineage. In past discussions, there has been no dispute that the Kineo people are Native Americans.

I have spoken with Kineo members and former chiefs of recognized tribes who recall stories of gathering at Kineo Mountain to collect flint for arrowheads. I have heard from elders who longed for recognition but passed away before it could be granted. The Kineo people, a small community of fewer than 100 members, include veterans, retirees, and hardworking citizens. Their small numbers make cultural preservation efforts financially daunting, but that does not make them any less a tribe.

Now, let's address potential opposition. Some may claim the state lacks the authority to recognize tribes. This is false. Many states, including Massachusetts, Vermont, Virginia, and others, have state-recognized tribes. There are over 100 state-recognized tribes in the U.S., in addition to the 574 federally recognized ones.

Others may argue that this recognition would interfere with ongoing Wabanaki relations or settlement act amendments. But when will the timing ever be right? Two years, ten years, fifty years? This is not a valid reason to deny recognition.

Some may suggest that the Kineo must endure the lengthy and costly federal recognition process. However, the four federally recognized Maine tribes did not follow a singular path—some gained recognition through court rulings, others through acts of Congress. It is unfair to demand that the Kineo take a route not required of others.

It is not uncommon for recognized tribes to oppose new recognitions, often due to concerns over funding and resources. Historically, when the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq sought recognition, they faced opposition from the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy. The Kineo people now find themselves in a similar position, feeling overlooked by their fellow Native Americans rather than supported.

LD 812 is not a complicated request, but for the Kineo people, it means everything. They do not want to be forgotten. They want to share their history, their sacred culture with all of us. I urge you to support their efforts.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions, though those following me will provide more details on lineage, funding, and economic development.

Jennifer Poirier
State Representative