

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

From: Peter Garrett, 202 Eames Road, Winslow, ME 04901.

Re: Support for LD 785, An Act to Advance Self-determination for Wabanaki Nations.

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Peter Garrett and I live in Winslow. I am here to testify in support of LD 785.

I am a relative newcomer to Maine, having come from England, yet married to a descendant of a passenger on the Mayflower. I have delved into Maine history enough to realize that the colonization of North America by Europeans does not present a pretty picture. Guns, germs and steel benefitted the colonizers, not the native peoples.

My wife and I own hundreds of acres of beautiful land in Winslow. We often think "this beautiful land was once Wabanaki land" and we wonder how we can share with our neighbors in ways equivalent to the Wabanaki way of not owning but sharing land. We do so to the extent we can, and are now making arrangements to donate the land to the Sebasticook Regional Land Trust under a conservation easement.

Though your predecessors in the Legislature worked on the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICSA) in 1980. Yet tribes in Maine have been unable to benefit from more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980. They missed out on opportunities for economic development, access to health care, response to natural disasters, and expansion of environmental protections. The federal law has helped all other tribes create thousands of jobs and much economic activity, while tribal incomes and economic activity in Maine has been stymied. However, your predecessors called the 1980 Settlement Act a "living document", expecting that revisions would come as necessary.

I trust that LD785 will achieve what is necessary. I am not alone: more than 1,600 Mainers testified in support of tribal sovereignty legislation based on the consensus recommendations of a bipartisan legislative task force. It's time to remove the barriers that have kept the Wabanaki and their rural Maine neighbors from the economic resurgence achieved by tribes elsewhere in the US.