

Dear Sen. Rafferty, Rep. Brennan, and members of the Joint Stand Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dolores Crofton Macdonald, I am Wolastoqey/Maliseet with the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, I am a Wolastoqewi Latuwewakon teacher and have completed a four-year degree program in Wabanaki Elementary Education with the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, Canada. In addition to receiving my diploma I have received a Wolastoqey Latuwewakon certificate to teach the Wolastoqey Language. I was born in the United States and chose this degree program because it is designed to teach in a cultural context and to incorporate Wabanaki Studies within New Brunswick Anglophone opposed to the Francophone school curriculum. While completing the required practicum course to teach in a school setting, I taught kindergarten in a K-5 school and grades fourth and fifth at the Kingsclear Bilick First Nations School. The degree program required university students to prepare lesson plans incorporating Wabanaki worldviews, stories, and culture.

As a student in the Wabanaki Elementary degree program, creating lesson plans is a requirement and being indigenously connected with tribal communities eases the arduous task of creating lesson plans. However, it is not easy for a seasoned schoolteacher who has created lessons years ago that only need to make minor adjustments from year to year for their students in their classrooms. To ask teachers to recreate lesson plans from scratch is an enormous task to research content an intensive, and time-consuming process especially if you have zero experience in Wabanaki Worldviews, stories, and culture. There is no time or budget for these teachers to add additional tasks to their already full schedules. But for those who want to teach in a cultural context there needs to be a pathway forward to receive certification and to add to professional teaching careers. Those teachers I would recommend starting with indigenous stories, and book choices. Wabanaki studies can be incorporated in all subject areas, language arts, mathematics, science, government and civics, history, physical education, and music. The question is not whether to teach Wabanaki Studies, but how to teach Wabanaki History, traditions, and culture. This is the only correct answer. The State of Maine Education website has Moose Modules a website dedicated to indigenous studies that is prepared in collaboration with indigenous scholars, elders, and Wabanaki citizens. This is a good start, but it is not enough. There are simply not enough resources to provide access to the Wabanaki context. We need a budget for these resources and for the creation of teaching lesson plans and content.

Tribal Nations are not a race or an ethnicity but a political entity. Their political structure is what sets Tribal Nations apart from other entities and their unique relationship with the state and federal governments. Recently Public Law 95-608 enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America cited as the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) was challenged on the constitutionality in 2022. It is this unique relationship that tribal nations have with the United States of America that is at the core of this decision where the United States Superior Court upheld this Public Law. This Supreme Court Case is a prime example that can be talked about in classrooms all over the nation on the process of the American Judicial System, and how laws are made and who makes them, how they get challenged and the process of appealing a court decision. By using Wabanaki/Indigenous examples to incorporate Wabanaki Studies throughout the curriculum. Another example of how to teach Wabanaki Studies is in Music. for example, incorporate the 4/4 beat in the Wabanaki Welcome Song in addition to or substitute an existing song. Science is probably the easiest to incorporate because education can be land based. Land based learning is, for instance, a forest school where you can incorporate the out of the

classroom experience and incorporate physical education in the process. Pointing out the genus of fern that is edible the Wabanaki name for this fern is Fiddleheads. The common English word for this plant is ostrich fern. Not all ferns are edible, and it is important to properly identify a fiddlehead. Once you correctly identify a fiddlehead you also must know how to cook it to remove toxins. This idea of two-eyed seeing is (edoo-ahbt-mum-g) Etuaptmumk a Mi'kmaq word meaning looking with two eyes with science and tradition knowledge; where science catches up with the Wabanaki Worldview.

Including indigenous content across all subject areas in a meaningful way enables students to make connections to the curriculum that helps retain the information resulting in higher test scores. Which is what we all strive for in the classroom, making connections and learning from our discovery.