

Martin Chartrand
Lewiston
LD 785
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Dear Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Martin Chartrand. I am here to testify in support of LDs 785 and 395. I am a lifelong Maine/Wahpohnakiyk—I was raised in Rockland, spent time in Bangor, and currently live in Lewiston. I plan to spend the rest of my life in Maine/Wahpohnakiyk also. I love our wild, natural places, our lakes and rivers and ocean, our springs and summers and falls and even winters, our unique local crops like wild blueberries, as well as the creative and resourceful spirit of so many of our residents. Through my role in family, community and my work as a Behavioral Health Professional, I am committed to doing my part to raise the next generation of Mainers to also feel pride in who they are and have a commitment to this place and its people. I know, however, that as a settler Mainer, I am a newcomer and a guest here. The Wabanaki are my gracious hosts and my role models in caring for this place we call home. They cared for and sustainably harvested its wildlife and non-human assets for thousands and probably tens of thousands of years before any of my European ancestors touched this continent. They taught the earliest settlers how to navigate the lakes and rivers, how to survive the winters, how to tend and harvest the native plants and hunt the animals for food. In short, Maine would not be Maine without the Wabanaki.

In the years since colonization, Wabanaki land and knowledge has formed the basis of Maine's economy and culture. Settler Mainers like myself continue to benefit greatly from this. However, the Wabanaki have faced many losses due to our presence. They now only control a tiny portion of the land and waters they once lived in relationship with. The 1980 Settlement Acts which were meant to offer the Wabanaki some compensation for this loss, cut the Wabanaki out of many beneficial policies at the Federal level and also limited their ability to self-govern. Meanwhile, childhood poverty in Wabanaki communities ranges from 40% to 77%, compared to Maine's overall rate of 15%. These facts are connected, and together they leave a mark of shame across what it means to be a Mainer.

We are all here together now. Wabanaki, settler, more recent migrant or those whose ancestors were brought here as slaves, we all share the responsibility to care for this land so that it remains beautiful and bountiful for—let's try to be hopeful—many more millenia. Part of that means making sure our laws are just so that all kids, and particularly Wabanaki children who are the bearers of the culture that has given so much to us all, grow up with the opportunities to become all of who they dream themselves to be. This is why I support LD 785, to implement the recommendations of the bipartisan commission to amend the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, and LD 395, to give the Wabanaki access to all Federal policies that can benefit them.

We cannot fully face each other and work together if we do not have a relationship of equals. These bills will not salve all the harm that the Wabanaki have experienced, but they are a valuable step that will benefit us all. Respecting the Wabanaki nations' right to self-govern and access Federal policies will unleash the Wabanaki's full creativity, and resourcefulness, bringing jobs and opportunities for our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, along with theirs. And, it will help settler Mainers begin to heal the historical injustices we have been part of and move towards right relationship with Wahpohnakiyk and its people. I urge you all to vote ought-to-pass on LDs 785 and 395. Thank you for your leadership.