

Testimony on LD 785
D. Gordon Mott
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Feb 17, 2026

Chairmen Sen. Carney, Rep. Moonen, and Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is D. Gordon Mott. I reside in Lakeville, Penobscot County. I am Maine Licensed Forester 772, I have been a Maine Land Manager in private practice here for 44 years. I was previously employed by Canadian Forest Service and US Forest Service with degrees from University of New Brunswick and Yale. I have been a resident and citizen of Maine for 50 years.

In my professional career I had the challenge and the privilege to work for the Passamaquoddy Tribe in some of the years when it was acquiring their lands as a result of the Indian Land Claims Case, and in the years as it was gainfully dealing with the spruce budworm outbreak of the 70's-80's. The Tribe was one of the pioneering users proving the value of the biological insecticide BtK.

In addition, as a resident and voter of Lakeville, I also had the experience of participating in the local municipal process that brought the Penobscot Nation land claims land in Lakeville from fee to Trust status.

In the span of my brief 94 years in the Maritime Provinces and as a citizen in Eastern New England, I grew up as a child in New Brunswick next to a Mi'gmaq First Nation community on the salt water shore at the mouth of the Restigouche River, then as a young forester to come to know some of the still natural undeveloped forestland and some of the historic woodland trails established by the original people on those Restigouche watershed lands. I then have experienced some of the wonderful culture of the current Wabanaki communities of our region in which the original language is still spoken and where ancient customs and principles of life and values still exist.

Professionally, I know these people strive to be good stewards of their natural resources. Their communities and forest economies are under the same economic stresses and influences as everybody else. But there are management principles put in place by themselves and Bureau of Indian Affairs that ensure that good road access, careful forest pest control, good forest regeneration, young stand development, and allowable harvest levels are sustained – while providing a flow of income to tribal members and tribal government in some of the same excellent ways management of Maine Public and Park lands are tended. Some members of the Tribes have become professional foresters of distinction who contribute their employment to Tribal, State

and Federal Agencies – and in significant ways work for preservation and documentation of Native historical and archaeological artifacts.

I remember with pleasure the day I visited a dig being conducted to find and document the history of their occupation of the lands since the last ice age in Washington County. I was invited to go down in an excavation pit at a historic campsite to see and touch a beautiful just-revealed scraper carved from rhyolite from Moosehead Lake's Mount Kineo. With one hand on it, I reached the other hand across 5,500 years to a Passamaquoddy Tribal Member for a lift up out of the pit. The people have been here in their communities on their land for longer than anybody. Their rights and privileges on their own lands after a longer ownership on this continent than anybody else should be recognized.

That evening I taught one of a series of classes in how to use personal computers including one person who was constructing a database to catalog the known grave sites of Tribal Members in the Tribal cemetery. Those Tribal members were spoken of in that class who in the past had voluntarily isolated themselves away to a lake island to protect the others when they were infected by officially provided smallpox-infected blankets and were fed with food left on the shore by the community. That class member was also a gifted artistic basket-maker who has passed her artistry along to her son both of whom have enriched our Nation today through their work and the outstanding work of others.

While I found there are differences among the individual people as there are among all of us in the principles they adhere to – in many ways reflecting the difficult things they have had to endure over the 422 years since Champlain spent on the island in the St. Croix, there are unique historic understandings about living on the particular lands and ownership traditions that merit understanding and deep respect for their inherent rights to live life freely as is described in the proposed legislation. It is time to do right.

I urge you to give your strongest support to enacting these carefully developed proposals.

It is the absolute fundamental right of these, our Wabanaki neighbors, to have these rights today.

They themselves have joined in defending and dying for our Constitutional rights in global conflict as distinguished members of our armed services.

They have patiently, carefully, respectfully and deliberately gone forward, together with a large consensus of us, to define the principles, craft the language, and find these fair agreements and bring the clear and simple actions before you to be acted upon.

Please advance this significant part of Maine's justice with your supportive votes.

Thank you for your consideration.

D. Gordon Mott