

RECOGNIZE TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

The State of Maine should recognize the Wabanaki tribes' inherent sovereignty.

The Wabanaki tribes in Maine have a different, more restrictive status than all 574 other federally-recognized tribes in the United States.

- Federal legislation ensures tribes' inherent rights to govern themselves. Under Maine law, the Wabanaki tribes are excluded from that and other rights and protections guaranteed by Federal Indian Law.
- The Wabanaki tribes are not asking for special privileges. They are asking for fairness and equity to be treated like the other federally-recognized tribes across the country.
- Since the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 was signed, 151 federal laws benefiting Indian Country have been passed that the tribes in Maine have not benefited from.

The Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 has harmed the Wabanaki tribes.

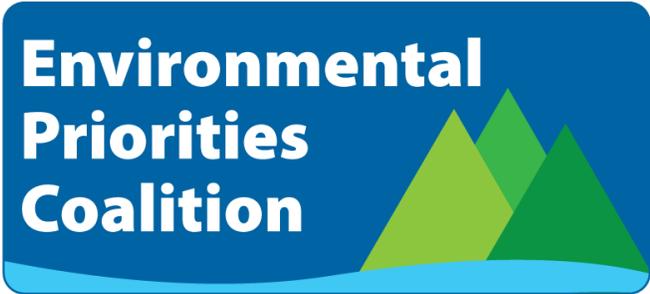
- In the 1970s, Wabanaki tribes still had legal claim to more than one million acres of land that were then owned by private landowners and the State of Maine. Returning that land to the tribes would have likely led to extreme hostilities and neverending legal proceedings, so the U.S. brokered a deal with the State of Maine on behalf of the tribes– the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980.
- This act was intended to provide funds and outline a process for the tribes to purchase land to replace the land they had unlawfully lost. In exchange, the tribes gave up their legal claim to those dispossessed lands. Due to many factors, the tribes have not been able to purchase nearly the amount of the land that was intended by the Act.
- In addition, the State of Maine has interpreted that act differently than the tribes. This has led to many conflicts–often legal–and has harmed the tribes and cost Maine taxpayers unnecessary legal costs for 40 years.
- Last year, a bipartisan task force recommended 22 changes to the Act to avoid and help settle future disputes between the State and tribes, to remove some of the barriers preventing the tribes from purchasing land, and to restore the tribes' inherent rights. Those include the tribes' rights to regulate hunting, fishing, natural resources, and land use on tribal lands, as allowed by federal law.

The Wabanaki tribes' sovereign rights should never have been revoked and urgently need to be restored.

- The Wabanaki tribes–the Penobscot Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Houlton Band of Maliseet, and Aroostook Band of Micmac–as well as the Abenaki and other tribal communities living in diaspora outside of Maine have lived in what is now Maine for up to 16,000 years. Throughout those millennia, the tribes have lived in relationship with the land and waters here – managing natural resources so that future generations could thrive.
- In just a few hundred years since the Wabanaki tribes welcomed European settlers to these shores, the Wabanaki have lost 98% of their population, access to most land and waters, their ability to sustain themselves in traditional ways, and so much more.
- Recognizing the Wabanaki tribes' inherent sovereignty is a first step to recognizing and beginning to heal the deep suffering that European settlers and the State of Maine have inflicted.
- At a time when climate change and environmental degradation are accelerating at terrifying rates due to Western ways of living, restoring the Wabanaki tribes' ability to manage tribal lands, waters, and resources will help protect all children and future generations.

SUPPORT FAIRNESS, EQUITY, AND SOVEREIGNTY FOR WABANAKI TRIBES.

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Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition is a partnership of 32 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations representing over 100,000 members who want to protect the good health, good jobs, and quality of life that our environment provides.

We are counting on Maine policymakers to take the important steps needed to protect Maine's extraordinary environment so Maine people and Maine communities can thrive.

