

RECOGNIZE TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

LD 1626 will recognize the Wabanaki tribes' inherent rights to self-govern.

The Wabanaki tribes in Maine have a different, more restrictive status than all 570 other federally-recognized tribes in the United States.

- Federal legislation ensures tribes' inherent rights to govern themselves. The Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 excludes the Wabanaki tribes from that and other rights and protections guaranteed by Federal Indian Law.
- According to the Wabanaki Alliance: "[The] tribes in Maine have been unable to benefit from more than 150 federal laws passed since 1980, missing out on opportunities for economic development; to increase access to health care, respond to natural disasters, and expand environmental protections; [as well as] opportunities to foster job creation, protect safe drinking water, and take action under the Violence Against Women Act against the epidemic of violence against native women."
- 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.

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.
- Through the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980, the U.S. brokered a deal with the State of Maine on behalf of the tribes to provide funds and outline a process for the tribes to purchase land to replace some of the land they had unlawfully lost. In exchange, the tribes gave up their legal claim to their dispossessed lands.
- Due to many factors, the tribes have only been able to purchase two-thirds of the land intended by the act, which was already only a fraction of the land unlawfully taken.
- The act has also led to many legal disputes between the State of Maine and the tribes, which have harmed the tribes and cost Maine taxpayers unnecessary legal costs for 40 years.
- In 2020, a bipartisan task force recommended changes to the act to avoid and help settle future disputes between the state and tribes; remove some of the barriers preventing the tribes from purchasing land; and restore the tribes' inherent rights, including the rights to regulate hunting, fishing, natural resources, and land use on tribal lands, as allowed by federal law. Those recommendations, excluding the gaming provisions, are contained in LD 1626.

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 Micmacs – as well as the Abenaki and other tribal communities living in diaspora, have lived in what is now Maine for thousands of years. Throughout that time, the tribes have lived in relationship with the land and waters, managing natural resources so that future generations can thrive.
- In the few hundred years since European settlers were welcomed to Maine by the Wabanaki tribes, they, directly and indirectly, killed 98% of Wabanaki people, unlawfully took almost all of their land and waters, and separated children – some of whom are still alive today – from their families.
- Recognizing the Wabanaki tribes' inherent rights to self-govern is a first step to end the ongoing and deep suffering that European settlers and the State of Maine have inflicted.

Support LD 1626. Restore fairness, equity, and sovereignty for Wabanaki tribes.

For more information, please contact
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Environmental Priorities Coalition

Maine's **Environmental Priorities Coalition** is a partnership of 37 environmental, conservation, and public health organizations representing over 120,000 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 all Maine people and Maine communities can thrive.

