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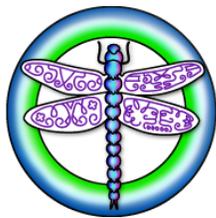
Wabanaki REACH

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Maine-Wabanaki REACH

Newsletter
Summer 2018

Maine-Wabanaki REACH: Incorporated!

It is official! After many years discussing the possibility, REACH is becoming its own non-profit organization. REACH is long-standing, Maine-based, Wabanaki-led, and dedicated to decolonization that supports Wabanaki health, wellness, and self-determination.

On April 25, 2018, Maine-Wabanaki REACH established a Board of Directors: Penthea Burns and Luke Joseph, Co-Chairs; Denise Altvater, Treasurer; Esther Anne, Secretary; Alivia Moore and Elise Bolda are board members at large. We will be adding more board members in the weeks to come.

We are grateful to Wabanaki Health and Wellness for serving as our fiscal sponsor for the past several years. Their assistance, guidance, and support has enabled us to continue our work and build a strong, sustainable organization.

Thank you all for joining us on this journey of truth, healing, and change. We are excited to move forward together!

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Wabanaki Health, Wellness, and Self-determination

The month of May and the promise of Spring turns the focus of REACH's health and wellness work on gardens for nourishing both body and soul, and for building and beautifying community. This year we worked collaboratively within the Penobscot community at Indian Island to help create gardens at the tribal daycare. Many community members turned out to help turn over the soil for new garden beds and to plant flowers, vegetables, and berries with the children. The children continue to enjoy visiting their new gardens each day to water and identify plants.

We also held "Open House at the Hoop House," a community wellness event, at The People's Garden, the community garden located on Indian Island. We designed the day with tribal youth in mind. We invited them to come tour the gardens and to learn how to get involved. A few REACH friends joined us as well and gifted medicine plants to add to existing medicine gardens. While the rain came down outside, it was warm and dry underneath the hoop house. Some of us finished planting the second half of the hoop house while others visited, drummed and sang, and we all learned Penobscot language terms related to planting with Language Master and Elder Carol Dana.



Friends of The People's Garden,
Deb Soule and Kathy Pollard
place new medicine plants.

On another note, we are busy planning our 5th Annual Wabanaki Wellness Gathering. This year we are holding the gathering on Indian Island and our theme is Restorative Justice, Restorative Practices. Our annual gatherings serve as a place where Wabanaki people, our friends, and our colleagues can come together to nurture connections, share our ideas, our work with one another, and enrich ourselves with the wealth of knowledge that exists within our communities and traditions. The tentative date for the 5th Annual Wabanaki Wellness Gathering is Friday, September 21, 2018 and, as always, we invite tribally-focused organizations and programs to table and share their work. If you would like to have a presence at the gathering, please email maria@mainewabanakireach.org.

Dawnland – A Story of Stolen Children

The full-length documentary about Maine's truth commission process premiered in Wabanaki communities in April and at several film festivals since. REACH has been working closely with the directors and producers of the film, participating in post-screening discussions and working to bring Dawnland to the Maine public in the fall and organize an event on November 5, 2018, the evening of the film's broadcast on PBS' Independent Lens. To view the trailer, to request a screening or to explore available learning resources, visit dawnland.org.

The Path to Decolonization

Since colonization involved white people taking the land and waters, does decolonization involve White people giving it back? Yes and No. Decolonization certainly involves a changed relationship with each other and the land and waters. However, it is not so much about ownership. How we will live in this territory today and into the future is what we need to figure out as we progress in decolonizing relationships.

Okay, so where do we start to decolonize our relationships? – What does this look like? We end the dominance of the colonizers' story of who we all are and listen to the many true stories needing to be heard. Through this experience, we learn truth and open up opportunities for change. This is the experience that Maine-Wabanaki REACH offers communities like schools, faith groups, workplaces, libraries, and many other organizations providing services and advocacy, across Wabanakiland here in Maine.

We are currently scheduling into 2019 four different programs focused on decolonization. We designed these programs for adults and high school aged teens. Most programs run 90 minutes to 2.5 hours each.

- Exploring Wabanaki Maine History: an interactive learning experience: involves participants reading a script as a way to share the story of events over 450 years of history. Everyone is on an artwork map representing the Maine part of Wabanakiland. This program works for diverse groups. Participants take a bit of a risk - to experience themselves differently, to listen together supporting each other in community to understand themselves in this Wabanaki land called home.
- Truth, Healing and Change in the Land of the Dawn is a presentation offering an understanding of colonization and decolonization through the history of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It is supported with discussion, video and PowerPoint. We look at how is it that Wabanakiland Maine is the location of the only government mandated TRC in the United States and consider where we go from here.
- Dawnland is a professional documentary film about the TRC scheduled for release in the fall of 2018. It explores the experience of Wabanaki participants and the Commission itself. REACH will be supporting film showings with volunteers ready to answer questions and support discussion after the showings.
- The Maine-Wabanaki REACH Workshop, a six-hour program designed specifically for non-Native people, includes discussion, presentation, and activities which examine history and present day realities of privilege, colonization, and decolonization within ourselves, community, and institutions. People leave with an understanding of how decolonization offers a framework for positive change.

If you would like to bring a program to your community, please contact REACH through our website:

http://www.mainewabanakireach.org/contact_us



Powerful Change Happens in Community!

Diana Furukawa and Hanna Baldecci collaborate with REACH to educate their community.



The Truth Commission Three Years Later

On June 14, 2015, the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission released their report *Beyond the Mandate: Continuing the Conversation* that provided fourteen recommendations giving Mainers a roadmap for the journey of truth, healing, and change. This overview begins our ongoing discussion about what is happening and what needs to happen.

The tribal-state ICWA Workgroup is focused on the Commission's child-welfare related recommendations and have been implementing strategies with great success (e.g., engaging all DHHS Districts, developing data tracking plans related to ICWA to better measure progress or challenges, engaging Wabanaki people as resources for children and families in need through Protect the Children initiative, and more).

REACH's work, focused on decolonization and restorative practices, is alive in Wabanaki and non-Native communities. REACH staff conduct peace and healing circles with Native people in Maine's prisons and organize the Annual Wellness Gathering for Wabanaki people that celebrates and teaches about traditional health and wellness. REACH supports individuals who wish to contribute a statement to the Commission's archives at Bowdoin College. Among other strong organizations (Upstander Project, Abbe Museum, Portland School District), REACH is engaged with educational institutions to develop ways to expand on the work of Chapter 403 of the Public Laws of Maine of 2001, "An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools."

We all bear a collective responsibility and all have contributions to make the Commission's recommendations come to life. When we explore the Commission's first recommendation to 'respect tribal sovereignty', we cannot ignore the stolen land and children, contaminated waters, oppression, and domination that non-Native Mainers, like me, have benefitted from. Maine government (AG, Governor, and legislators) do not recognize and affirm the inherent, sovereign status of the Wabanaki, but rather continue to treat Wabanaki as a municipality, dismissing Wabanaki acts of self-governance. I can use my voice – call my legislator, talk with the people in my life, write letters to the editor. I can educate myself and others about what happened here and advocate for State government to stop being an occupier and become a good neighbor with the Wabanaki. Until I demand more - until we demand more, nothing will change. ~Co-Director Penthea Burns



Woliwon ~ Woliwoni ~ Walalin ~ Thank You

Thank you to those who sponsored programs for their communities this past year:

- Libraries and Community Centers such as Lubec and Camden libraries, Sipayik Community Center, Damariscotta REACH group, Penobscot Nation, and Indian Island School;
- Colleges including Colby, Bates, Bowdoin, College of the Atlantic, UMaine, and USM;
- Advocacy groups including Southern Maine Workers Center, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, Maine Initiatives Racial Justice Cohort, and Maine Democratic Party;
- Faith communities such as Unitarian Universalist communities in Bangor, Pittsfield, and Brunswick, St. Joseph Catholic Church in Ellsworth; Friends Meetings in Central and Northern Maine, and Congregation Beth El in Bangor;
- Land Trusts including First Light Learning Journey and Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative;
- Schools and Teacher Training including Washington County Leadership Team, Calais High, Leonard Middle and Cheverus High.