

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Wabanaki REACH Newsletters

Wabanaki Collection

Winter 2022

Wabanaki REACH Newsletter, Winter 2022

Wabanaki REACH

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/wabanaki_reach



Part of the [Native American Studies Commons](#)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wabanaki REACH Newsletters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.



Woli pili k'ton! Happy New Year!



A Dozen Good Things About 2021

Many of us paused in the last hours of December. With a collective sigh of relief, we joined countless others who were glad that 2021 was finally over while wondering what 2022 would hold in store.

As we reflected on this and remembered the question periodically asked by a friend, "What's new and good?", we stopped to consider all that was good in the twelve months that just passed. We laughed at the thought of turning the *Twelve Days of Christmas* into a more prolonged *Twelve Months of Gratitude*, then realized it was perfect! So here is our list of a dozen good things about 2021:

1. Following Wabanaki tradition, we started the year asking for and offering forgiveness for anything we may have said or done that caused hurt. This simple, humble, regular practice of seeking and offering forgiveness keeps us strong together as a community.
2. We turned our thoughts to the community of volunteers that support REACH and showed our appreciation by sharing REACH swag. Many have volunteered for years; some just began volunteering in 2021. These volunteers answer emails, write articles, deliver goods to people in need, serve on committees, and facilitate REACH educational programs.
3. Ah, the REACH programs! This year more than 1,000 people participated in at least one of the seven REACH programs we currently offer. As Heather says each time we invite participants to the journey of truth, healing, and change "we're changing the world".
4. Truth Telling! In 2021, REACH launched its newest truth telling initiative, Beyond the Claims, to gather personal stories about the land claims. This begins as various members of the REACH family are connecting with truth telling across this land.
5. We hold with gratitude the people who remind us of the children who never came home, buried in marked or unmarked graves at places that someone dared to call schools. Gratitude for Interior Secretary Deborah Haaland, who leads the investigation to find those children and bring them home.
6. Each month we are thankful for the next episode of Dawnland Signals for the conversation, laughter, and learning. We started the year talking about teaching Wabanaki cultural values and ways of being to children and ended with poetry.
7. We were so glad to have a time of serenity and contemplation during a slowdown in the month of July. As many have said, "we are human beings, not human doings."

A Dozen Good Things in 2021 continued....

8. We hold in high esteem the donors, big and small, who support REACH. We are gratified to witness the philanthropy community in Maine make strong commitments to support Indigenous, Black and Brown led initiatives, challenging themselves to begin decolonizing philanthropy.
9. Members of the REACH Board and committees worked hard to strengthen our organization, to support staff, and engage the community. REACH now has a new website, outstanding newsletters and blogs, strong administrative and financial systems, innovative programming coming to life, and we have been learning how to evaluate success in a decolonized way.
10. We count our blessings for the REACH staff who demonstrate leadership, passion, knowledge, hard work, creativity, and loving hearts for the benefit of Wabanaki people every day.
11. We are thankful for reciprocity in life. We celebrate the birth of children, recognize the farmers who grow vegetables to feed community members, and are honoring creative partnerships using a gardening approach to replenish the clam flats.
12. We appreciate the family and structure of support we have created that enables us to come together to share our memories, love, and gratitude for those who passed on. We miss their voices, their love for their communities, and how they made a difference in this world. We remember them and honor their memories in our good work.

While we can all agree that 2021 was a difficult year, we believe that in such times we are called upon to be a force for love and to recognize with gratitude that so many others are doing the same. We hope you join us in looking forward to 2022.

Truth Telling Beyond the Claims

Our newest truth-telling initiative is an oral history project that goes Beyond the Claims to get at the heart of the land, its people, and their stories. At the center is the long and complicated history of the Maine Indian land claims, which still deeply impacts folks in Wabanaki and Maine communities today.

Our dedicated Story Collectors have learned and practiced how to conduct personal oral history interviews and are now connecting with the project's first Storytellers– Wabanaki

elders. We are so grateful to this team for all they've done to prepare and to all those willing to share their story with us.

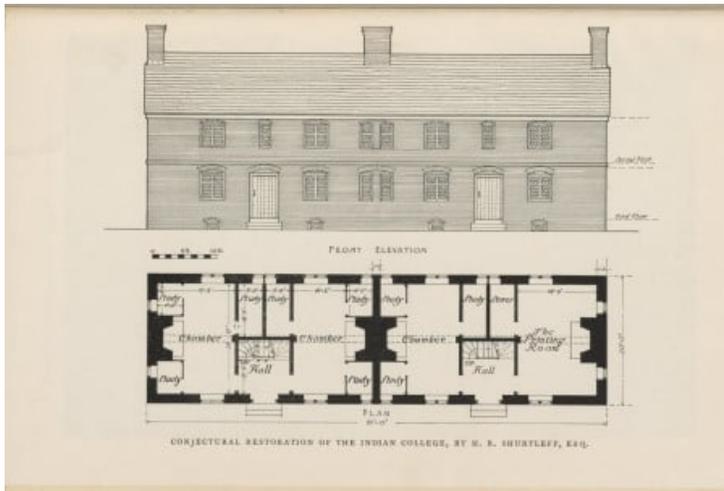
Stories will be recorded and housed safely in a web-based digital archive controlled by Wabanaki REACH. We will honor these stories by preserving, sharing, and using them to help create future educational resources. If you want to add your memories of and experiences during the land claims era to the archive, please message us through our website. We'd love to hear from you.



Resurgence through Cultural Strength by Nolan Altvater

Kahnawá:ke Mohawk citizen Taiakeke Alfred shares with us that “when we think of colonization in real terms, we realize it’s a process that shapes people. Their understanding of themselves, their feelings about other indigenous people, and their emotional and psychological positioning in the dominant society and between each other.”

As a peskotomuhkati citizen studying at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, this spiritual and psychological molding of colonization is a process that I experience in my education. It is a dynamic that is rooted in the foundation in which institutions are built upon and found throughout the history of education. However, despite this ongoing colonial presence, the Waponahki and other Indigenous groups across turtle island have built intellectual traditions that provide frameworks for an Indigenous resurgence that works towards effective transformational changes within our communities. These frameworks are shaping the future through changing the direction of research and public policy and have provided me with a pathway in my education to be accountable to my Waponahki relations in our bringing of a new Dawn.



Here I share with you a short history of colonialism at Harvard, my experience in the struggles of finding pathways of resurgence from this history, and how Waponahki intellectual traditions have helped me find them.

The beginnings of Harvard University, and that of education and its policy, is rooted in the ongoing project of settler colonization, with its main purpose for Indigenous people being assimilation and dispossession.

Assimilation into the perceived “civilized” lifestyle and religion of the settler society, and dispossession of our land and our cultural ways of being and knowing that are interconnected to it. Additionally, these efforts were being heavily funded and assisted by missionaries, which was exactly the case for Harvard.

In 1646, the school was going bankrupt and asked the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England for funding, who agreed under one condition: That they be used for the “spiritual and educational advancement” of Native students. This led to the construction of “The Harvard Indian college” in 1655, which was the second educational building to stand on its campus. Harvard’s charter, which is still in place today, established a purpose to “the education of English and Indian youth of this country in knowledge and godliness” (emphasis added). Through this purpose, Harvard implemented both assimilationist and sexist policy by only enrolling Native scholars who were the sons of leaders to absorb Puritan teachings and bring them back to their tribes. The Indian College would then house the Harvard/Cambridge press and publish the first Bible in the United States in the Algonquian language.

The Indian college only housed five Native students as the red bricked building stood, with only one graduating before being torn down in 1698. It wouldn’t be until about three centuries later until another cohort of Native students would attend and graduate from the institution again. Among this cohort was Passamaquoddy’s own Wayne Newell (Ed.M. ’71), who would begin to lay a foundation for a new era of resurgence through cultural strength in education for Waponahki and other Indigenous students.

Resurgence Through Cultural Strength continued...

Wayne applied and was accepted into Harvard without a bachelor's degree, recognizing that real strength was in his life experiences as a Passamaquoddy and not in the form of any titles. Growing up, Wayne embraced his culture despite times of racism and poverty, never giving up the Passamaquoddy language and becoming an advocate of Indigenous rights. He won a Ford Fellowship for leadership development and spent a year in Washington DC as an intern at the Economic Development Administration in order to help his communities during times of poverty. This experience then brought him to Harvard, where he laid the foundation for the current Native American Program (HUNAP) and worked on developing a writing system for the Passamaquoddy language in order to return to his Motahkmikuk community and teach future generations the language.

After Harvard, Wayne did just that, returning to Peter Dana Point to lead a program in bilingual education at the elementary school. His success with this program came shortly after its beginnings, with the government offering to fully fund the program only halfway through the year. He made it his job to make sure the language would reach all classrooms, hiring other community members to help teach the language and provide culturally relevant jobs to the community. Newell's dedication and energy in language revitalization would then take the form of a published wikhikon (book) titled *The Passamaquoddy-Maliseet Dictionary: Peskotomuhkati Wolastoqewi Latuwewakon*, which has an online portal.

Beyond the classroom, Wayne has helped set up a health clinic on the reservation, was the president of Northeastern Blueberry Company, was the first native trustee for the University of Maine System and was appointed to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education. With all of these accomplishments, he carried himself humbly and always showed up to community events to sing, drum, and share stories. Undoubtedly a person who carried a vast amount of knowledge, Wayne didn't view it as something he possessed.



Rather it is something that connects people. "Well, it is not my knowledge that I have contributed", he shares, "I like to think of it more like this: the knowledge is the energy created between us when we have these discussions...that is actually Waponahki knowledge."

Sadly, Wayne passed onto the spirit world at the beginning of the new year. However, the energy he brought into this world will continue to reach across time and space across generations through our language, cultural ways of being, and the story of his experiences. For me, Wayne has shown a pathway built on intellectual traditions to shape my own future in my own terms as a Passamaquoddy citizen in a space that manifests the spiritual and cognitive shaping of settler colonialism. If it wasn't for his action on campus 50 years ago in organizing what would become the Native American program at Harvard, myself and other Native students wouldn't have the space to connect, share our experiences, support one another, and advocate for the justice and visibility of Indigenous people.

Resurgence Through Cultural Strength continued...

Listening and reflecting on his story has pushed me to not only think, but to live through the question "How do you want future generations to remember you?". His experience taught me to not conform to the shape that the institution tries to make of me, but to ground myself in our community values and culture to transcend colonialism on an individual basis. With this teaching from Wayne, I have been able to stay connected with Wabanaki communities through my schooling by advocating for myself in the classroom and around campus with other indigenous students.

I believe I was the only Indigenous student in all of my classes last semester and was afraid to share my perspectives or speak up. In one of my courses, *Researching in Community*, we were told to select from a list of current research projects to work on that were happening in the schools around Cambridge, none in which involved indigenous communities, realities, theoretical frameworks, or methodologies. I viewed this scenario as an example of the innocent shaping of settler colonization in the contexts of an institution. The course was designed to take control of my capacity to imagine ways to build onto my experiences as a student, all for the "common good" of the course and the non-native communities that they were working with.

As a Passamaquoddy student who wanted to stay connected to his community and culture through research, which Wayne taught me was possible, I spoke up and advocated for the option to work with Wabanaki communities in a project of my own, which the teacher allowed. I wasn't going to be complicit with the colonial shaping of the institution that had been practiced since its foundation, I was going to follow the path that Wayne and other Indigenous students before me had created: A resurgence through cultural strength in a colonial space. This led me to work with Wabanaki REACH and Wabanaki Youth in Science to develop a youth program we are calling WaYS to REACH Truth, which is a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) initiative.

Our youth today experience realities and challenges that vastly differ from the realities of those making decisions and policies. Actively listening to them will help shape a new world as Waponahki people and help them envision what it means to be Waponahki in our homelands. The purpose of WaYS to REACH truth is to build capacity for youth to lead a research process that gives them an understanding of their experiences through critical and indigenous theories, investigate a problem or interests within our communities, and take collective action in order to work towards improvements in our communities.

As adults, the REACH and WaYS staff are providing them with the necessary organization, connections to elders and community members, frameworks, and cultural support. As youth, they are building the project from the ground up. They are the ones leading and designing the research questions, methodologies, data collection, analysis, and action steps. Through engaging with our stories and thinking critically about settler colonialism in their experiences as indigenous youth, WaYS to REACH Truth hopes to help build what is called the Fourth World: "The Fourth World is founded on active relationships with the spiritual and cultural heritage embedded in the words and patterns of thought and behavior left to us by our ancestors. The legacies of their struggles to be Indigenous form the imperatives of our contemporary struggles to regenerate authentic Indigenous existences" (Alfred, 2005).

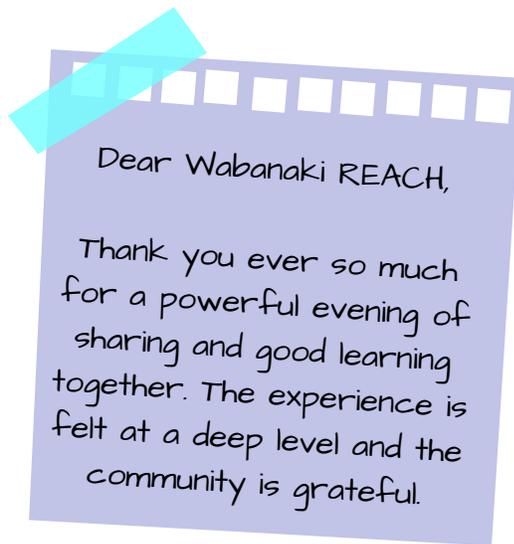
Just as Wayne and other Waponahki people have helped me engage in this Fourth World, I want to build capacity for youth to do the same. I believe it is in this fourth world where a new dawn is approaching.

Woliwon Woliwoni Walalin Thank You

Wabanaki REACH is grateful to many people: everyone who donates to REACH - large and small, monthly or one-time, foundations; everyone who makes time to participate in REACH programming; our wonderful volunteers who bring their time, skill, and energy to REACH; and everyone in our larger REACH community who is engaged, learning, and on this truth, healing, and change journey with us.

Your steadfast support and love continue to carry us through these challenging times.

Because of your generosity, we have been able to continue to deliver educational programming, launch our new truth-telling project, engage in Wabanaki wellness work, and provide assistance to Wabanaki families through Grandmother's Love. Thank you all.



Visit our website to learn more, read the blog, engage with resources, find out about events, join our listserv or make a donation:

<https://wabanakireach.org>

Visit our Facebook page for the latest in truth, healing, and change

www.facebook.com/wabanakiREACH

Access all episodes of Dawnland Signals on the WERU archive here:!

<https://archives.weru.org/category/dawnland-signals/>

