



Maine-Wabanaki REACH

Newsletter
Summer 2015

Heartfelt Thanks and Farewell

We wish to express our deep appreciation to the Commissioners and staff of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC). We honor them for their hard work and dedication over the past 27 months as they carried out the tasks and fulfilled the intent of the Mandate.

Each one of them brought their unique skills, talents and resources to their role and their collective work. They were a strong, efficient team, who engaged in this process with their hearts and minds and with tenacity.

REACH proudly worked alongside the TRC through quarterly potluck meetings, weekly phone calls, community meetings, public presentations and media appearances – in more ways than we can recount. We developed meaningful relationships and it is bittersweet to have reached the end of our official time together. We know that we will meet one another on the path ahead and yet, we want to pause to honor this momentous work which they have completed.

They took on the challenge of the Mandate, with a limited timeframe and very little financial resources. They took on this challenge willingly and with integrity. We are grateful for what they have done.

Please join us in wishing the Commissioners and their staff the very best in their next endeavor. We hope that the universe allows us to stay connected in some way.

Inside this issue:

ICWA Workgroup	2
Ally Building in Maine Communities	2
Healing & Resiliency Building in Wabanaki Communities	3
Health & Wellness Coordination	3
Wabanaki Community Organizing	4
Wabanaki Corrections Organizing	4



Maureen Harris, Rachel George, Gkisedtanamoogk, Matt Dunlap, Carol Wishcamper, Sandy White Hawk, Gail Werrbach, Charlotte Bacon (Erika Bjorum not pictured)

REACH Website:
www.mainewabanakireach.org
Facebook: MEWabanakiREACH
Twitter: @MEWabanakiREACH



Check mainewabanakitrc.org in the coming weeks to view and download a copy of the TRC Report

Indian Child Welfare Act Workgroup - A tribal-state partnership

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a 1978 federal law that created legal protections for native children involved in state child welfare. The effective implementation of ICWA is a very critical part of REACH's work.

The ICWA Workgroup began in 1999 when the Muskie School of Public Service, in collaboration with the State Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) reached out to tribal child welfare staff to collectively create training for case workers.

The group trained over 500 caseworkers across the state

in the spring of 2000 and has since delivered in-service and pre-service training on ICWA to many more case workers.

The Workgroup developed an Indian Child Welfare policy, case review tool and established lasting relationships between State and Tribal child welfare representatives.

Realizing that the harms of the past were still impacting child welfare practice and Tribal-State relations, in 2008, the Workgroup began convening the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare TRC to uncover the

truth about what happened with Wabanaki people in the state child welfare system.

The Workgroup is now eager to support the implementation of the TRC findings and recommendations.

The ICWA Workgroup is committed to promoting best child welfare practice with Wabanaki families and children, with the following goals and priorities:

-Expand membership of the ICWA Workgroup to include key stakeholders and community members

- Evaluate staff knowledge and skill around ICWA

-Strengthen relationships with Wabanaki communities in each OCFS District

-Explore the creation of an ICWA Expert in each OCFS District office

-Support Tribes in responding to the needs of their communities related to child welfare

REACH is very excited to continue this important tribal- state partnership.

Ally Building in Maine Communities



"Truth, healing and change is a collective responsibility; it is not a spectator sport"

~Maria Girouard

To date nearly 200 people have participated in REACH Ally Trainings in various Maine communities (Portland, Bangor, Trescott, Lewiston/Auburn, Houlton). Many of those who completed the Ally Training are participating in ongoing Ally Groups (four groups in Portland, two groups in Bangor, one group in Washington County).

Allies in these groups strive to deepen their understanding of the shared history between Native and non-Native Mainers and how that impacts their lives today.

Discussions include understanding the concept of privilege, who non-Natives want to be as a community,

and state government's relationship to Wabanaki people, as well as identifying what actions allies can take to create a more just relationship between Native and non-Native people in this state.

This spring many Allies supported Wabanaki people at legislative hearings and rallies, in letters to the editor, letters to legislators and volunteering at Truth Commission events.

REACH continues to develop ways to support the growing numbers of people who wish to act as allies to Wabanaki people.

We are grateful for volunteer facilitators; they are an important part of providing this support.

In response to multiple requests, REACH will be scheduling presentations and Ally Trainings in the summer and fall.

For more information contact:

Barbara Kates
(Northern/Eastern Maine)
947-6858 or barbara@mainewabanakireach.org

Tom Reynolds
(Central/Southern Maine)
783-7421 or tom@mainewabanakireach.org

Finally, we offer our heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Arla Patch who will be leaving us at the end of June. Her work with REACH has been filled with passion, commitment and incredible talent.

Healing & Resiliency Building in Wabanaki Communities

REACH Healing and Resiliency Building is a vital part of truth, healing and change. Our goal is to provide education about historical trauma and promote collective efforts for healing ourselves and our communities.

Historical trauma, or inter-generational trauma, is trauma inflicted on any group of people over multiple generations which still affects them today.

History shows us that Wabanaki people have been targeted for destruction for centuries. Wabanaki lives

have been disrupted by having to cope with and clean up the aftermath of this trauma.

The fact that Wabanaki people still remain shows our resiliency* and our ability to persevere despite adversity.

**resiliency - the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.*

REACH believes in the strength and capacity of Wabanaki people to not only heal from trauma but to thrive in spite of it.

Our work in Wabanaki communities is focused on health & wellness coordination and organizing in tribal communities and the corrections system.

REACH is focused on creating opportunities for Wabanaki people to connect, support one another and build capacity for individual and collective resilience.

Together we build solid foundations and strong Wabanaki communities!



"We are at a critical mass - at the tipping point, of a tremendous movement to take place in the healing effort."

~The Wellbriety Journey to Forgiveness

Health and Wellness Coordination

Over the past year, REACH has offered wellness workshops focused on resilience and capacity building in all tribal communities in Maine.

Most recently, we hosted a HERstory women's writing workshop at Wabanaki Health and Wellness, an Art & Healing mask-making workshop at Indian Island, Justice in the Body workshop at Indian Township, and an Art & Healing presentation and workshop at Sipayik.

We will host a second mask-making workshop this summer with the Aroostook Band of Micmacs in Presque Isle.

We would like to hear your suggestions about the type of programs that would be most helpful to your community.

We are also interested in exploring possible community collaborations. Some of our current work focuses on restorative justice and peacemaking circles; creating connections to our incarcerated relatives through a prison book drive and pen pal initiative; and expanding on topics presented at the 2014 Wabanaki Wellness Gathering - reclaiming our birth and death rituals;

decolonizing our diets/ food as medicine; and strengthening communication. A second Wabanaki Wellness Gathering is being planned for October 12 and 13, 2015.

If you would like to discuss Wabanaki wellness, share an idea for your community, or organize a showing of our presentation "Transforming Trauma through Truth," REACH would love to hear from you!

Health and Wellness Coordinator, Maria Girouard may be contacted at 852-2541 or maria@mainewabanakireach.org

Wabanaki Community Organizing

"As far as I know, no indigenous culture has yet been found that does not have the practice of sitting in circles and talking."

~ Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community

Over the past few months, REACH has been especially busy assisting with the TRC visits to tribal communities and we are looking forward to a busy summer.

Organizers are offering peace and healing circles in three tribal communities and hosting educational film and discussion events around topics of history, wellness and healing.

Krista Stevens and Dena Joseph are engaging with the Micmac Youth

Department to provide educational and wellness activities throughout the summer. This will include a trip to the Petroglyphs, where children can feel the strength of our ancestors.

Wenona Lola is spending time connecting with community members on Indian Island about their vision for wellness and sharing information about the value of individual and collective indigenous healing practices.

Stephanie Bailey has been busy providing ongoing support to statement providers in both Sipayik and Indian Township.

As REACH's work with our incarcerated relatives evolves, organizers will be sharing information and leading discussion events on this topic.

Organizers email addresses consist of their first name @ mainewabanakireach.org



"Create conditions that feed the healing vortex."

~Sage Hayes,
Justice in the Body

Wabanaki Corrections Organizing

REACH is pleased to welcome to our team, Sandra Bassett, Roger Paul and Katie Tomer!

They will be leading healing circles with Wabanaki men and women in the Maine prisons and each bring a unique skill and quality to this work.

REACH is offering a summer session healing circle for men at Maine Correctional Center and will be providing education on history, trauma and healing and also leading circles with the women at Southern Maine Re Entry Center.

What we have learned about the incarceration of our Wabanaki relatives and the impacts on families and our communities has led us to focus on restorative justice, healing and prisoner re-entry. We hope to increase the numbers of Wabanaki people who leave prison and never go back.

We believe that providing inmates, their families and communities with education and opportunities to heal and build resiliency will help us welcome our relatives home and keep them there.

REACH is committed to fostering connections between prisoners and their communities, which is crucial to their well-being. Regular connection with the outside world increases inmates' chances of staying out of prison once released.

We are developing a prison pen pal program and are looking for people who are willing to develop friendships and provide support and encouragement to inmates. For more information, contact Maria Girouard or Esther Attean at 615-3189 esther@ mainewabanakireach.org