



Maine-Wabanaki REACH

Newsletter
Winter 2016

Strengthening Systems and Organizations Wabanaki Restorative Justice

On Monday, November 14, at the Aroostook Band of Micmacs tribal office, we held the first of three regional events focused on Wabanaki Restorative Justice. We offered the presentation: "The System is Broken: Native Americans, Mass Incarceration, and Restorative Justice" to members of the Micmac and Maliseet communities and partner organizations that serve Wabanaki people. In attendance were members of Aroostook County Tribal Triage, an interdisciplinary team whose goal it is to keep juveniles out of the correctional system and in their homes and communities. All participants are invested in "making Maine a restorative justice state" and we had a wonderfully engaging discussion focused on how to embed restorative practices into tribal communities.

Restorative justice is a way of being that focuses on relationships and resolving harm. Restorative practices recognize and acknowledge harm caused by crime and acts of wrongdoing and provide a different way to deal with the harm that is caused. Instead of focusing solely on the individual that caused the harm and how best to punish that person, restorative justice is focused on the victim that was harmed, the impacted community and ways to make things right. It is justice that promotes healing.

This event in Aroostook County is the first of three; the Washington County event will be held on January 18th and the Penobscot County event will be held on February 16th.

These events help build capacity for restorative justice practices that benefit Wabanaki people. Each event fosters connections that will provide much needed support as our work moves forward.

We are excited to join the growing restorative justice community in Maine.

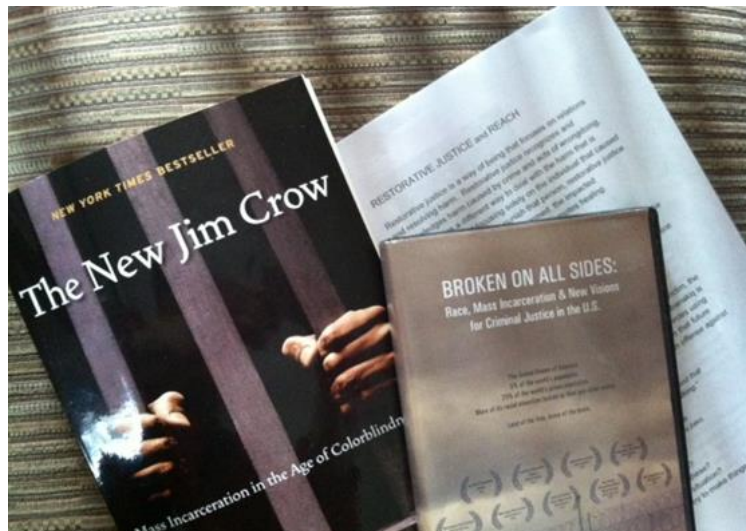
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Website:
mainewabanakireach.org

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The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander and Broken on All Sides: Race, Mass Incarceration & New Visions for Criminal Justice in the U.S. are two resources used by REACH to help educate about mass incarceration and the disproportionate rate of imprisonment for People of Color.

Ally Building

At REACH, ally building is a simple process. We offer non-Native Mainers experiences and tools designed to grow their understanding of the ally role and skills for promoting change in their communities. The experience changes peoples' perspectives.

We have provided presentations and information at dozens of events each year across the state. Over 500 Mainers have completed our daylong ally workshop. Over 120 Ally Workshop participants came to a statewide Convening and a similar number have participated in monthly groups in their communities. Hundreds more connect through Facebook pages, emails, the website, informational tables, and phone calls. REACH ally work connects people to information, each other, and their own stories of who they are and want to be.

Though the process is simple, it supports a more complex progress in changing how Mainers as individuals and as a state relate to Wabanaki people, and, more specifically, how Mainers support Wabanaki self-determination. REACH is supporting a long-term movement recognizing the urgency of this time when the state continues to take and endanger Wabanaki territory.

With new knowledge, perspective, skills, and friends, Mainers are organizing events to bring their communities into the ally building process. Often, REACH staff first hear from an ally, "I have an idea" and the ideas grow into actions that provide learning and tangible support.

Some Mainers are organizing educational events like our Truth, Healing, and Change 90 minute presentation, or our new Wabanaki-Maine Interactive Blanket Exercise. Others are forming panels on topics like "How I got involved in Ally Work". Some are showing films and facilitating discussions.

Mainers are bringing their ally perspectives to their organizations including child welfare services, mental health agencies, environmental protection organizations, church communities and political and civic organizations.

Many people are bringing information to their neighborhoods and friends through social media, local events and meetings, and around the supper table. Mainers are infusing their activism on multiple issues with a new understanding of our shared history and its impact on our current relationships.

All of this work brings us a step closer to REACH's vision of Maine and Wabanaki people joined together, acknowledging the truth, promoting healing, and creating change.

If you are a Mainer who wants to get involved – go to our website and learn about upcoming events or write to us with your questions.

You can email Barbara Kates at barbara@mainewabanakireach.org

"This changes everything. How will I talk to my family about it?"

~ Ally Workshop Participant



"I want to do something, but now

*I know that I need to **listen** first and take time to*

***understand** what would be right."*

~ Ally Workshop Participant

Wabanaki Health, Wellness & Self-Determination

The 3rd annual Wabanaki Wellness Gathering held at Motahkmikuk/ Indian Township October 10 and 11 was a great success. As with past wellness gatherings, we tapped into our own vast network of knowledge to learn and to connect with one another. The theme for the gathering was “food is medicine ~ decolonizing our diets” and dozens of Wabanaki and friends attended.

Passamaquoddy Elder Wayne Newell gave the opening prayer, followed by a guided meditation to start the gathering. The rich collective knowledge in our tribal communities was made evident during a Community Sharing circle.



Huntley Brook Singers and Spirit Circle

Those sharing updates of work and initiatives in tribal communities included Alivia Moore (Penobscot) Peoples’ Garden/ Apothecary and All Our Relations Thriving, Janet Lola (Passamaquoddy) Indian Township Food Pantry Garden Expansion, and Tim Shay (Penobscot) and Shiwa Noh of the Nibezun Earth Project.

Presentations throughout the two-day gathering included “Rebuilding Cooperative Food and Medicine Systems” by Jonah Fertig of the Cooperative Development Institute; “Restoring Relations - Steps toward Decolonization” by Suzanne Greenlaw (Maliseet), and “Natural Medicines for Children” by Dr. Jus Crea Giammarino (Penobscot).

Other highlights of the gathering included “Demystifying Acudetox” - a demonstration of acupuncture detoxification, a form of acupuncture which helps curb anxiety, fight cravings, and improve sleep. A dozen people volunteered to experience acudetox as part of the demonstration by Jeri Singer of the Pleasant Point Health Department. An evening Shared Supper and drumming by Huntley Brook Singers and Spirit Circle brought community together to celebrate Indigenous Peoples’ Day and to fundraise for the Indian Township Food Pantry.



*Dr. Jus Crea Giammarino and her son,
Kinape ready to make medicines*

Tuesday afternoon was devoted to a medicine-making workshop with Dr. Jus Crea Giammarino. In preparation for cold and flu season, participants were guided in making elderberry cough syrup, plantain and spruce gum salve, and a cold/ flu tea blend. Everyone was able to bring home medicines for themselves and for sharing.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make the gathering special, it was wonderful to connect, learn and celebrate together. We are already looking forward to next year!



2017 Peace and Healing Circles

*"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*

We will host a series of Peace & Healing Circles throughout Maine beginning in January 2017. The Circle symbolizes equality and encourages people to speak freely and listen deeply.

While there is much to be saddened by and fearful of in our current times, there is also much to be hopeful about. REACH wants to provide safe space to support one another, nurture our relations, and build bridges toward more peaceful coexistence. Sharing with one another helps free our minds for more rational thinking and clearer action.

Please stay tuned for dates and locations.

REACH Participates in Grants for Change

This summer Maine-Wabanaki REACH staff took part in Grants for Change, a unique participatory grant making and decision-making process sponsored by Maine Initiatives. This unique process engaged the broader Maine community and Maine-based nonprofit organizations who work to advance racial justice and equity in Maine communities.

Maine Initiatives set out to make general operating grants over the next three years to a cohort of ten organizations and to offer them training, capacity building and collective learning around issues of racial justice and equity.

REACH was excited to be part of the Grants for Change process; we submitted a grant proposal and several staff members participated as grant readers, evaluating grant applications from other nonprofits and submitting feedback.

The Grants for Change Cohort includes: In Her Presence, Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition, Maine Inside Out, Maine-Wabanaki REACH, Mano en Mano, Martin Luther King, Jr. Fellows, New Mainer's Tenants' Association, Raise-Op Housing Cooperative, Somali Bantu Mutual Assistance Association of Lewiston/Auburn and Tree Street Youth. These ten organizations will receive a \$25,000 general operating grant over a three-year period.

This educational, networking and grant making process was a first for Maine Initiatives. We are grateful to them for their vision and innovation in creating this unique approach to making grants and creating community and look forward to our work together.

"Each of these 10 organizations embody a unique approach to racial justice and racial equity issues in Maine. Chosen through a radically participatory community-based process, Maine Initiatives hopes this cohort will offer all Mainers inspiration and opportunities to advance justice and equity."

~ Phil Walsh, Maine Initiatives Executive Director