



Maine-Wabanaki REACH

Restoration • Engagement • Advocacy • Change • Healing

Woli pili k'ton!

from the desk of Maria Girouard, Executive Director

Winter 2020

Happy new year! 2020 and Maine-Wabanaki REACH is hitting the ground running! Already nearly 40 educational programs are scheduled from Eliot, to Limestone, to Sipayik, and everywhere in between.

We begin the new year celebrating growth and are excited to welcome Brian Altvater, Sr. to our team. Brian brings decades of experience in health, wellness, and community organizing, and will lead our Wabanaki Wellness work. Last year, one highlight of this work was hosting a three-day Indigenous Peacemaking workshop with the Native American Rights Fund's Indigenous Peacemaking Institute. It wasn't long after the workshop that ripple effects were evident, with Wabanaki participants applying what they'd learned in their respective fields and holding their own Circles. 2020 is expected to be a year of continued growth in becoming more grounded in Circle work and building solid foundations for restorative justice.

Speaking truths and elevating difficult conversations with grace and hope is ongoing in REACH's work. Much gratitude to those who hold space and invite us in, such as Maine Philanthropy Center and Maine Initiatives, which hosted a powerful panel discussion on Decolonizing Wealth in Philanthropy with guest Edgar Villanueva (Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and author of "Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance.") Also, we thank Maine Farmland Trust and Land in Common for organizing a plenary session at the Maine Farmland Access and Transfer Conference in Augusta entitled "Land Justice: Acknowledging Our Past, Changing Our Futures." Opportunities for connection, learning, healing, and change continue and we are anxious to see what 2020 has in store for us.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I failed to mention a moment that caused us to pause and celebrate. In September, Team Dawnland received an Emmy Award for Best Research, at the News and Documentary Emmy Awards. Heartfelt thanks to all Wabanaki people who contributed to the making of this film, giving themselves so deeply in the hopes that no other children will have to needlessly suffer. We are shining the light of truth far and wide from the Dawnland. As film producer Adam Mazo stated, "The greatest recognition belongs to the Wabanaki people....."



The Indigenous contingent representing DAWNLAND at the Emmys, L to R: Dawn Neptune Adams, Chris Newell, Tracy Rector, Esther Anne, Denise Altvater, Woli, and Jennifer Kriesberg



*"Barn Party "
Fundraiser for Maine-
Wabanaki REACH
hosted
by Carol Wishcamper
September 8, 2019*

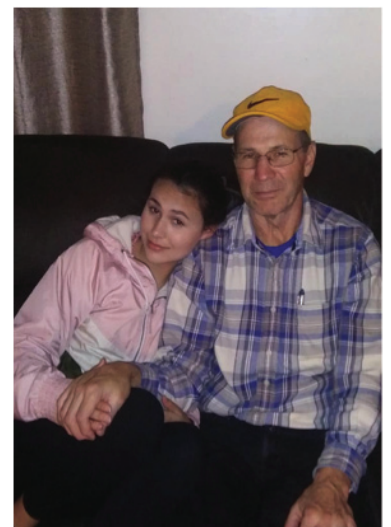


*REACH leadership in attendance, L to R:
Alivia Moore, Penthea Burns, Andrea Francis,
Esther Anne, and Maria Girouard*

Welcome

We are pleased to announce that **Brian Altvater, Sr.** has joined Maine-Wabanaki REACH as a Health and Wellness Coordinator in Wabanaki communities. A community organizer and member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe in Sipayik, Brian served as Director of the Pleasant Point Health Center for 18 years, and was Coordinator of the Drug Elimination Program for the Sipayik Housing Authority for 13 years.

As a pipe carrier and Sweat Lodge keeper, Brian has conducted hundreds of Sweat Lodges for Wabanaki communities and more than 70 Sweat Lodges in the Maine State Prison System. He is President of the Passamaquoddy Blueberry Company and founder of the Sipayik Schoodic River-keepers, which has been successful in obtaining millions of dollars to bring real and positive change for restoring the natural balance, abundance and biodiversity within the Schoodic (St. Croix) River watershed, Passamaquoddy Bay, Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine ecosystems.



*Brian with his granddaughter,
Noela Raine Altvater.*

Wabanaki Wellness Gathering October 4-5, 2019

by Andrea Francis, REACH Staff Member

For the first time, we held our annual Wabanaki Wellness Gathering outside tribal communities. We acknowledge that many Wabanaki people live throughout the state and many in the Southern Maine area. We see you!

The event began the evening before with a staged reading of the play “Indian Radio Days: An Evolving Bingo Experience,” a fun and outrageous way to begin the gathering. The next day we focused on the theme of “belonging”... spending the day connecting, nurturing ourselves, and growing the movement of wellness in our Native communities.

Saturday began with some wonderful, nourishing food from local bakeries in the area, and a special donation from Coffee by Design. To round out our morning, local massage therapists joined us and offered participants a chance to experience the healing arts.

We want to highlight organizations that support or are run by Wabanaki people. We were delighted to have groups such as Four Directions Development Corp., Mid-Coast Indigenous Awareness Group, the Cooperative Development Institute, and the Native American Student Alliance (USM) bring information for tabling.

Making art is one way we share our culture and heal our communities. Mihku Paul (Maliseet) shared some of her creativity with a workshop on journal making, and Danielle Sanborn of ThanksDeer Beading taught an earring-making workshop to community members. We included craft tables with materials to make cards for our brothers and sisters that are incarcerated, as well as materials to fill pouches with our four sacred medicines to take home.

Art comes in many forms and Chef Joe Robbins (Penobscot) is truly an artist of his craft. It was a real treat to be able to share such nourishing, delicious food together before we heard from our keynote speakers Donald Soctomah and Dwayne Tomah. These cultural historians from the Passamaquoddy Tribe have been listening to, digitizing, and translating the oldest known recordings onto wax cylinder of the Passamaquoddy language made in 1890. Hearing these old songs and translations from the two tribal historians truly grounded our message of belonging and our place on this land.

To finish our day, we listened, danced and sang with the Huntley Brook Singers, who share their voices, drumming and talent throughout Wabanaki land. It was a perfect end to the day. The presence of community members contributes to the success of our gatherings and to the success of growing wellness in Wabanaki communities. Many thanks to all of our volunteers and to all who attended.



“Belonging is the most important first lesson a person must learn to live comfortably and to work effectively. We need to know how we belong.”

*– Native American Center for Excellence
Substance Abuse Prevention*



At the October 5 Wellness Gathering, Passamaquoddy historian Donald Soctomah presented details about his tribe's resistance in court to tribal land being taken arbitrarily in the mid-1800s.



At right, language keeper Dwayne Tomah described his current work with the Library of Congress, transcribing wax cylinder recordings of Passamaquoddy songs.

Rolling Out "Voices of Decolonization"

The REACH Blog in 2020

We are pleased to announce that a new format for our online blog at mainewabanakireach.org will launch shortly. The idea is to alternate Native and non-Native voices each month. We'll send out an email announcing each new blogpost, and welcome your ideas and feedback. Please feel free to contact Diane Oltarzewski at 338 1502 / dianeolta@gmail.com.

Our new interactive history map, produced in Rockland at Karin Spitfire's studio, features silkscreened images drawn by students from Beatrice Rafferty School in Sipayik.



Statements continue to be added to the archive of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. To access these Statements, go to digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/maine-wabanaki-trc-statements

The Wheels of Decolonization

by Gregory Brown



Maine Roller Derby on November 9 in Portland

Historically, roller derby is a pioneering feminist sport, that seeks to empower women, smash gender norms, and get out from under the shadows of privilege. Roller derby players are tough. They cultivate swagger, feed on contact, and have cool nicknames.

They also face stereotypes and judgments, all while fighting against fringe status as athletes. So imagine the dismay felt by Maine Roller Derby (MRD), Maine's first women's flat track league, when it realized the dark cultural history one of its own team names carried: The Calamity Janes.

April Fournier skates for MRD as 'Jumpy McGee'. She's also Diné and co-founder of Team Indigenous, which includes players who descend from Indigenous cultures, and plays across the globe. "Last spring we got an email from a fan, asking that if, in light of LD 944 (Maine's law banning Indigenous mascots or team names), we'd considered the figure of Calamity Jane. And I hadn't."

Martha Jane Cannary ("Calamity Jane") was a frontierswoman and cultural figure during westward expansion. Her true history is clouded with tall tales and conflicting accounts, though she claimed to ride with General George Custer to hunt Indigenous people on the plains.

"We started doing research and found there was a way more violent history than we'd thought," said Elizabeth Gartley (skating as 'Luke Skyblocker', and an MRD board member). Once MRD knew the harm the name truly carried, it knew change was needed. "What Calamity Jane stands for, those aren't character traits that live within our league," said Melissa Prescott (skating as 'Frida Rocket'). The realization of harm is one thing – change is where the hard work happens. As we've seen throughout the state, in places like Skowhegan, doing the right thing is often messy.

In the end, the league did vote to retire the name. It told fans why the change was happening, online and in match programs. And instead of immediately adopting a new team name, it skated for the first part of its season with no name, hoping to draw space for the change process and keep the conversation going.

In November, after its experience of facing a perpetuated cultural harm and working to make positive change, MRD selected Maine-Wabanaki REACH as the recipient and honoree for its annual Thanks-For-Giving Charity Game.

Fournier is now looking at MRD's experience as a case study in change that can be shared with other sports teams and communities struggling with decolonizing work around language and mascot representation. "We want to look to other teams and leagues and say, 'You know what? It's not that hard. And if you need help or if you need a guide in how to do it, we actually have lived experience to share with you. People who have really hard times with these mascot identity changes,'" Fournier added, "often don't see their own privilege, or what it's like to be someone who's marginalized. It's really hard to influence some of those changes without allies. I think that's why REACH is such a great organization. It can elevate Indigenous voices and carry that work forward."

*Thank you to the **communities who came together to support REACH programming** during 2019. With your help we reached 2000 people. Here are samplings of the communities who promoted learning:*

Schools in Portland (including King Middle School, host of our Wellness Gathering), Old Town, Penobscot, Cutler, Dover-Foxcroft, Gray-New Gloucester, Whitefield, and Cumberland.

Higher Education communities such as University of Maine and The Wabanaki Center in Orono, University of Southern Maine, Bowdoin College, Bates College, Colby College, and Thomas College.

Faith communities including Yarmouth, Bangor, Ellsworth, Augusta, Sanford, Belfast, Cumberland, and Gorham.

Local community education groups in Liberty, Sanford, Dover-Foxcroft, Kittery, Whitefield, and Bethel.

Statewide and collaborative organizations including VISTA-AmeriCorps, Maine Youth Action Network, The Nature Conservancy, Community Partnerships for Protecting Children, 350 Maine, Southern Maine Conservation Collaborative, Maine Library Association, Maine Philanthropy Center, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Corrections, Maine Historical Society, AFSC Wabanaki Programs, Penobscot Nation Healing to Wellness Court, Land in Common, Maine Farmland Trust, and many more.

Public libraries in Blue Hill, Yarmouth, Camden, Boothbay, and South Berwick.

*Thank you to the **people who worked with REACH to nurture healing and growth in Wabanaki communities:***

The cast and crew of “Indian Radio Days: An Evolving Bingo Experience” – a staged reading performed as part of our annual Wabanaki Wellness Gathering, including Dawn Neptune Adams, Woli, Nickie Sekera, Esther Anne, Heather Augustine, Penthea Burns, Andrea Francis, Maria Girouard, Cissy Harrington, Greg Mitchell, Mihku Paul, Tom Reynolds, Dwayne Tomah, Ashlyn Tomer, and Josh Woodbury.

*Thank you to the **many people who volunteered with Maine-Wabanaki REACH** this year:*

Heather Westleigh and Erika Bjorum, for taking on volunteer administrative work responding to the many requests for Maine Community programs.

For tabling, facilitating, or assisting the facilitator at a REACH presentation in 2019: Meagan LaSala, Carla Hunt, Susan Howe, Jeffrey Hotchkiss, Diana Furukawa, Julie Beckford, Mary Therese Duffy, Myke Johnson, Dan Marks, Ashley Bahlkow, Marjorie Dowzer, Jake Kulaw, Erica Buswell, Jon Falk, Sara Moscoso, Carol Wishcamper, Erika Bjorum, Heather Westleigh, Linda Swackhamer, Margo Lukens, Carie Johnsen, and Maggie Edmondson.

Karin Spitfire and Diana Furukawa, Deb Soule, Izik Dery, Iggy Parker, and Mary Alice, for creating the large new art map for our REACH interactive history exercise.

*And thank you to **our awesome donors** in 2019, who help us to sustain and expand our work in Native and non-Native communities. You are opening the door for truth, healing and change.*