



Wabanaki REACH

Truth • Healing • Change

Winter 2021

Woli pili k'ton! Happy New Year!

from the desk of Maria Girouard, Executive Director

Wabanaki REACH looks forward to a fresh year with many new opportunities. Thank you to those who reach out and invite us in. Our educational programming remains strong, with several new online program offerings available thanks to committed REACH staff and volunteers. In the national arena REACH has been gaining attention as people look to healing solutions for old wounds. Our experience and expertise with the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission may prove invaluable to others seeking truth and healing. For this purpose, we are creating a TRC portfolio to help us share our work with others considering similar action. REACH work continues organically and we continue to plant seeds, sprout new ideas, grow, and blossom. Grateful to be on this journey of truth, healing, and change with you.



Beginning the new year with a new look!

We are excited to launch our new brand identity this month, and we are extremely grateful to the Sewall Foundation for providing us with a subscription to Catchafire, where we were matched with a stellar volunteer, Rosa Cohen, whom we have since hired as our branding and website consultant.

In true REACH fashion, what began as a simple project evolved into a wonderfully rich experience of reflection and connection for our staff, board, and volunteers. This year we took considerable time to revisit all the ways in which we have engaged in truth, healing, and change in the evolution of our organization, proving once again that the process is often as valuable as the product. We are proud that we have reaffirmed our mission, vision, and values, created a beautiful new symbol and logo, shortened our name to Wabanaki REACH, and reclaimed the tagline Truth, Healing, Change.

We hope you will join us in celebrating these changes. The new symbol is a simplified version of the original dragonfly, complete with the distinct Wabanaki double curve designs. We like the variant shades of purple and high contrast white lines that make the symbol easily recognizable and very beautiful.

Since to identify this territory as both Maine and Wabanaki is redundant, we decided to decolonize our name to Wabanaki REACH. Our mission, vision, and values all reaffirm our commitment to truth, healing, and change.

You will also notice updates to our website over the next few weeks, including a fresh look and layout, making it easier to find the resources and information you need.

REACH Welcomes Our Newest Board Member!

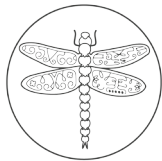
Tyler-Ann Harris is a Penobscot tribal citizen who joined the REACH Board on September 21. She is already serving as Secretary of the Board.

Tyler-Ann graduated from the University of Maine with a B.A. in Social Work and completed an internship with Maine State Senator Geoffrey Gratwick (District 9). While serving in Senator Gratwick's office, she learned about the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, and recent federal court rulings that put this important law in jeopardy. Learning as well about the Maine TRC process led by Wabanaki REACH, she recalls that "it was apparent that the staff at Wabanaki REACH are working from a place of understanding and healing. These values guide my daily activities; I believe that REACH is an organization whose mission is to better the lives of all people, which is something I also work towards every day."

Since graduating, Tyler-Ann has been elected to the Penobscot Nation Census Committee, carrying on a family tradition as the fourth generation to serve in that capacity. As a volunteer at the Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine, she created and led an art camp for vulnerable youth, effectively engaging them in healthy activities and making it possible for them to receive school credit.

Her values align with those of Wabanaki REACH, sharing the vision of truth, healing, and change. Tyler-Ann understands Wabanaki sovereignty as "the inherent right to self-govern and self-identify solutions that better the world around us, creating welcoming, sustainable, and nurturing environments."

We are looking forward to all the creativity, passion, energy, and perspective that Tyler-Ann brings to our team. Please join us in celebrating and welcoming Tyler-Ann!



"Decolonization, to me, is central to moving forward as a healthy community and towards Wabanaki sovereignty. The process of colonization and the traumas it caused are still seen today, many generations later. Many of our traditions were stripped from us by force, causing this generational trauma. Restorative practices help us as people return to our roots and ground us in the traditions of our ancestors."

—Tyler-Ann Harris

Truth Telling

When we created the *Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, we were fortunate to be able to learn directly from the leaders of the truth commission processes in Greensboro, NC and Canada. In turn, we graciously share our experiences with other groups who are embarking on a similar journey.

We know truth telling is the first crucial step toward healing and change and we know firsthand the restorative potential of this process. Our new truth-telling initiative — on the topic of Wabanaki-State relations, with a particular focus on the Maine Indian land claims settlement and its aftermath — will be another opportunity to move the conversation from the head to the heart. This truth-telling oral history project is our response to the legislative effort embodied in LD 2094 that ran into delays and difficulties.

We are encouraged to see truth-telling initiatives emerging across the country. There are bills in Congress and various state and local initiatives that are taking this crucial first step toward restoration and healing.

Congresswoman Deb Haaland and Senator Elizabeth Warren have introduced bills in the House and Senate to establish *The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy in the United States*. [By 1926, nearly 83 per cent of American Indian and Alaska Native school-age children were enrolled in Indian boarding schools.] This commission will examine the impact of the United States boarding school policy on Native people and communities. We send our best wishes and stand ready to help in any way we can.

* * *

To date, we have accepted invitations to lend our expertise in the following forums:

What Are Truth Commissions and Why Are They Important?

The National Center for Civil and Human Rights led a discussion this past October on how to address our history through a process of truth telling, to allow for racial healing and societal transformation. Moderated by Jill Savitt, President and CEO of the Center, the discussion included panelists Esther Anne, Rev. Nelson and Joyce Johnson of the Greensboro TRC, Dr. Gail Christopher, and a representative of Congresswoman Barbara Lee's office.

Learning from Experience

The Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation at George Mason University facilitated a webinar on truth and reconciliation experiences in the United States in December. We participated in this forum with Rev. Nelson and Joyce Johnson; David Ragland of the Truth-Telling Project; and Dr. Christina Cowger and Catherine Read of the North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture.

Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation

TRHT is a national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism. The TRHT Leadership Group, facilitated by the Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation, led a conversation in



Rep Haaland, then Vice Chair of the Natural Resources Committee. Her grandparents were taken from their homes and forced into Boarding Schools. Wabanaki REACH welcomes her appointment as U. S. Secretary of the Interior!

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December to explore how the TRHT process can be meaningful to and inclusive of Indigenous people. We participated in the discussion along with Liz Medicine Crow from the First Alaskans Institute, Bill Hoff, and Kitcki Carroll of United South and Eastern Tribes.

California Truth and Healing Council

In June of 2019, California governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order apologizing for the state's genocidal past, and establishing the Truth and Healing Council "to bear witness to, record.... and receive California Native American narratives...in order to clarify the historical record...in the spirit of truth and healing." We attended their December Council meeting along with Darren Ranco, Penobscot citizen and Chair of Native American Studies at the University of Maine..

Truth and Healing

In October 2020, we participated in this final webinar of a six-part series entitled *Working Towards Right Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*, hosted by Pendle Hill and co-sponsored by Canadian Friends Service Committee, Decolonizing Quakers, and Friends Peace Teams and were joined by Marie Wilson, former Commissioner for the Canadian TRC. The event description included the following:

"The enormity of the depth and the breadth of the intergenerational trauma inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples and people is hard to fathom. Yet some experiments in truth telling and listening are opening the way for healing and further reparative action."



* * *

We believe in the restorative power of truth telling and know that sharing our stories with intention, care, and support is a first step toward healing. We hope you will join us on this new journey as we engage with the memories and impacts of the Maine Indian land claims settlement.

"...I think jurisdictionally the tribe has lost some things that were important in terms of our being able to take care of ourselves. The bottom line on jurisdiction is that we gave up enough to make it difficult to do things that other tribes do in terms of development or their rights as a sovereign nation, and the state got something that didn't belong to it. It got something just to satisfy the governor, basically, the politicians who didn't want to be perceived as being soft, who wanted to be perceived as, 'Yes, the Indians have to do everything that everybody else does, they're citizens of Maine.' For them, it was a game. For us, it was actually giving something up to them that didn't belong to them. It was ours by federal law, by the Constitution..."

*— a Penobscot man, quoted in the mid-1980s in
The Wabanakis of Maine and the Maritimes, 1989, p. C-99.*

REACH Online Interactive Educational Programs

After many months of hard work from our amazing staff and volunteers, we are excited to offer several online programs, with unique opportunities to learn and engage. We have already received positive feedback about the quality of the interaction and the level of genuine connection that are the foundation of Wabanaki REACH programs.

- ***Interacting with Wabanaki-Maine History*** - We engage in a story of particular events in the history of 400 years of colonization of Wabanaki people by Europeans in this territory now called Maine.
- ***Healing Begins with Truth: Understanding Colonization*** - Participants explore the differences between the worldview and culture of Indigenous peoples and that of settlers and their descendants. This 2-hour program is intended to serve as a safe space for participants to join with peers and identify strategies to support healing in relation to each other and to the land.
- ***Decolonizing Non-Native Communities*** - A 6-hour program (in segments) to provide participants with an introduction to Wabanaki/Maine history and relations including awareness of privilege, micro-aggressions, and examination of decolonization.
- ***Decolonizing Conservation Communities*** - Highly interactive 12-hour program (in segments) providing participants with the unique opportunity to understand the concepts and impact of continuing colonization, and identify strategies for repair, healing, and working through the challenges of shifting to a culture of decolonization.
- ***Decolonization and the Role of Faith Communities*** - During this program, participants explore the role of churches in the colonization of this country and its harmful ongoing impacts. Intended for people of faith who desire to repair the harm done to Wabanaki people (three 90-minutes segments).
- ***Dawnland Film and Discussion*** - View this documentary about the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Both the 86-minute feature film and the 54-minute broadcast film are available for programming, followed by a panel discussion with members of Wabanaki REACH.
- ***Five Years Later: The Historic Truth Commission in Maine*** - A 90-minute program for participants to view videos of Commissioners and REACH Founders reflecting on the Maine-Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission process and interact with its creators to share stories and provide updates.

For more information or to schedule a program for your organization, agency, place of worship, or community, please contact Maine Community Organizer Heather Augustine:

heather.augustine78@gmail.com

"Today we are creating a community together. We are not experts, you are not experts. We will learn from the materials we experience together and from what we share with each other about our own experiences and thoughts."

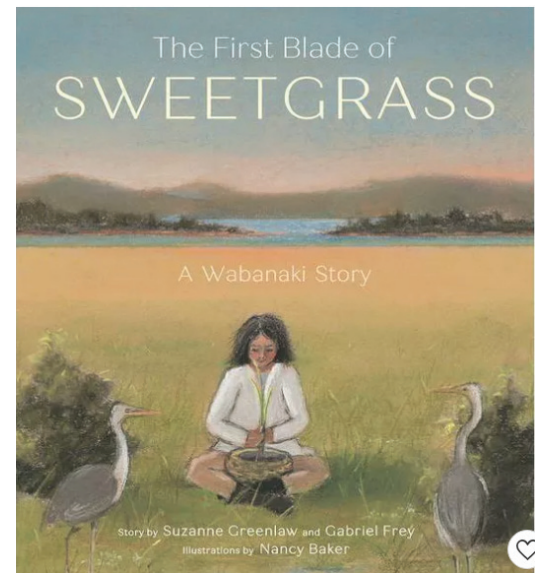
Summer Reading for Young Ones

The First Blade of Sweetgrass, a new children's book by Suzanne Greenlaw (Maliseet) and Gabriel Frey (Passamaquoddy), will be published this August.

The story, part of the *Own Voices Native American* series, tells of a modern Wabanaki girl who's excited to accompany her grandmother for the first time to harvest sweetgrass for basket making.

Musqon must overcome her impatience while learning to distinguish sweetgrass from other salt marsh grasses, but slowly the spirit and peace of her surroundings speak to her, and she gathers sweetgrass as her ancestors have done for centuries, leaving the first blade she sees to grow for future generations.

This sweet, authentic story from a Wabanaki couple also includes information about traditional basket making and a glossary of Wabanaki words. The book can now be pre-ordered online.



National Conference Activity

Wabanaki REACH was invited to participate in a national conversation about truth commissions, restoration, and healing, as part of The King Center's virtual observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day:

Truth Telling as a Major Step Toward Justice, Reconciliation and Creating the Beloved Community - Friday, January 15, 2021 at 11:30am (55 minutes)

During this session, panelists shared information on their respective Truth Telling experiences and why it is one of the most critical steps in Creating the Beloved Community. Participants received practical steps for creating truth telling sessions.

The Beloved Community, as defined by King Center founder Mrs. Coretta Scott King, "...is a realistic vision of an achievable society, one in which problems and conflict exist, but are resolved peacefully and without bitterness. In the Beloved Community, caring and compassion drive political policies that support the worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence. The Beloved Community is a state of heart and mind, a spirit of hope and goodwill that transcends all boundaries and barriers and embraces all creation."

*To our wonderful staff and volunteers who
carry the work forward, we thank you!*

*During 2020, the following organizations have
believed in the work of Wabanaki REACH, and lent
their invaluable support to make a real difference in
Wabanaki lives and communities. They have enabled
wider understanding of our true, shared history.*

Maine Initiatives

Quimby Family Foundation

Rocking Moon Foundation

Life Comes From It

Bia-Echo Foundation

Philoge Fund

of the

Rockefeller Family Foundation

2004 Carita Foundation

Nellie Mae Education Foundation

Elmina B. Sewall Foundation

Maine Humanities Council

The Betterment Fund

, , , and several donor-advised funds

of the

Maine Community Foundation

"Please accept this donation from Black Lives Matter - Ellsworth, with gratitude for the racial justice work you are doing in our communities."

I was fortunate to be able to attend one of your workshops in May 2019. I learned so much in that workshop about the true history of this country and the experience of Indigenous Nations. The workshop also provided resources so that I can continue to educate myself. I am grateful everyday that I had this opportunity and I am grateful for the work that you continue to do.
—Meghan Miers

"Enclosed please find our annual contribution. We wish it could be more. We are committed to your mission of peace, happiness, forgiveness and well-being. We would be glad to participate in any volunteer activities you have available in the town of Norway. Thank you."
—David and Elise Wilson



For more information or to make a donation, please go to
<http://wabanakireach.org>

You can also find us at
www.facebook.com/wabanakiREACH

and at https://youtube.com/results?search_query=wabanakiREACH