



A Resolution of Support for Tribal Sovereignty in Maine

Submitted by the Social Action Committee and the Anti-Racism Resource Team
Maine Conference United Church of Christ

1 *Whereas*, the injustice, abuse, and suffering imposed upon the tribes of native peoples in what are now the
2 United States and Canada are well known, well documented, and not excusable in any way, either now or in the
3 time of European conquest and colonization; and
4

5 *Whereas*, in a recent book-read of *The Gatherings* hosted by the Social Action Committee of the Maine
6 Conference United Church of Christ participants were confronted with the following citation:
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8 Too few Americans know that the Indian nations ceded millions of acres of lands to the United States, or
9 that ... the promises and commitments made by the United States were typically made in perpetuity.
10 History has recorded that our great nation did not keep its word to the Indian nations, and our
11 preeminent challenge today ... is to assure the integrity of our treaty commitments and to bring an end to
12 the era of broken promises. – the late Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D-Hawaii) member, chair and vice
13 chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.¹
14

15 And,

16
17 *Whereas*, since enacting the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act and the Maine Implementing Act in 1980,
18 “differing interpretations of the Acts have caused disagreements between the State and the tribal nations and
19 have negatively affected the Wabanaki Communities and hindered their ability to exercise tribal sovereignty for
20 the benefit of their people”²; and
21

22 *Whereas*, in 2019 the 129th Legislature of the State of Maine appointed a *Task Force on Changes to the Maine*
23 *Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act* that, in its final report of January 2020, offered twenty-two
24 “consensus recommendations” to improve the Act (a consensus recommendation being a recommendation
25 supported by “representatives of the Tribe or Tribes affected by the suggested changes and a majority of the
26 other voting members of the task force”³). The consensus recommendations⁴ address the following objectives:
27

- 28 • Affirming tribes’ rights to regulate hunting, fishing, land use and other natural resource activities.
- 29 • Formally recognizing tribal courts’ jurisdiction over certain crimes committed on tribal lands, including
30 in cases of non-Indians accused of domestically abusing Indians on tribal lands.
- 31 • Enabling tribes to tax non-members on tribal lands and exempting members from the state income tax
32 for money earned on tribal lands, as allowed under federal law.

¹ Shirley N. Hager and Mawopiyane, *The Gatherings: Reimagining Indigenous-Settler Relations* (Aveo UTP, Toronto, 2021), 164

² *House Paper 1307, Joint Order, Establishing the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act* (129th Maine State Legislature, accessed July 5, 2022, http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_129th/billpdfs/HP130701.pdf), 2

³ *Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act* (Final Report, January 2020, accessed July 5, 2022, <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3815>, i

⁴ *Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act* (Final Report, January 2020, accessed July 5, 2022, <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/3815>, ii-v (summaries) and 33-57 (details)

- 33 • Allowing tribes to operate casinos with table games and slot machines under a “compact” negotiated
34 between tribal leaders, the state and the U.S. Department of the Interior.
35

36 All but two of the 22 recommendations were unanimous.
37

38 *Therefore, be it resolved* that we, delegates to the 91st Annual Meeting of the Maine Conference United Church
39 of Christ, stand in favor of: reparations for past harms; restoration of sovereign tribal lands, life, and culture;
40 and always supporting the expressed will of the tribes on matters of tribal sovereignty; and
41

42 *Be it further resolved* that the Maine Conference support the consensus recommendations in the January 2020
43 report of the *Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementing Act* and take
44 appropriate action, including legislative advocacy, as encouraged by the Wabanaki Alliance and Wabanaki
45 Tribal Government to have the consensus recommendations become law. This will include offering education
46 and encouraging support and action from members, congregations, and associations of the Maine Conference.
47

48 Implementation: The Social Action Committee and the Anti-Racism Resource Team are primarily responsible
49 for developing the strategy and program to implement this resolution, funded by their respective budgets and
50 assisted by Conference staff designated by the Conference Minister.