

**Testimony in support of: LD 2094: An Act to Implement the Recommendations of
the Task Force on Changes to the Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement
Implementing Act**

Submitted by Vice Chief Elizabeth Dana
Passamaquoddy Tribe-Pleasant Point

Dear Senator Carpenter, Representative Bailey and members of the Judiciary
Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Dana. I am the Vice Chief of the Passamaquoddy Tribe at
Pleasant Point and I support LD 2094. Thank you for the opportunity to address this
Committee.

I belong to the Wabanaki Confederacy.

This is Wabanaki territory that we stand on and we still recognize this as our homeland.
We always will.

We have fished these waterways and protected this land for more than 11,000 years.

The Wabanaki people are a resilient people. We have survived despite displacement,
sicknesses, poverty, trauma, and war. We survived, but we have paid a severe price
over many, many generations.

No matter what we have endured, we have adapted, and I credit this to our cultural
belief system.

Our beliefs are rooted in natural laws, they are rooted in the relationship we have with
one another and in our connection to this earth. Our ancestors were always willing to
come forward to help, to share, and to be good neighbors.

Our sovereignty before the contact with European settlers was much different than it is
now. It was unquestioned and respected.

We have kept peace despite broken treaties and empty promises.

In 1776, General Washington wrote the Passamaquoddy Tribe a letter asking them to
send him warriors. The Penobscot Nation and the Passamaquoddy Tribe responded by
providing 600 warriors to defend what is now the northern border between the United
States and Canada.

In 1777, Passamaquoddy Chief Francis Joseph Neptune reportedly fired one of the first shots of the Battle of Machias, hitting and killing, from a considerable distance, a British officer standing on the deck of the British frigate Mermaid.

These important contributions that the Wabanaki tribes made to the American Revolution are why Maine is a state and not a province of Canada or Great Britain.

Early agreements with the Passamaquoddy Tribe were never ratified by Congress, and repeated petitions for federal aid were rejected.

The state governments took Indian lands and sold timber in exchange for promises to provide for the maintenance of Tribal members.

By the mid-1830s, the Tribe had lost everything except for a 100-acre block of land along Passamaquoddy Bay and 23,000 acres of forest land on the west branch of the St. Croix River.

State-appointed Indian agents exercised total control over the dispensing of food, clothing, shelter, health care, and other necessities. For many generations, the Passamaquoddy people lived at a bare subsistence level.

Not until two hundred years after the Revolutionary War did the Federal Government acknowledge its obligation to the Passamaquoddy.

When I think of the Land Claims Settlement Act, I cannot help but think about the word "Settlement."

This was a land deal, but this land deal had a clear intent to limit our tribal sovereignty.

In hindsight, this settlement of a land claim went way beyond land issues and became an attempt to control us and to keep us dependent on the State of Maine.

If you understand the history, you will understand that our people were under duress and experienced much trauma when we negotiated this agreement.

As a result, our relationship with the State of Maine is uncertain and in order to reconcile, we must work together.

Just as Tribes have formed alliance like the Wabanaki Confederacy, we can build an alliance with the State of Maine. Make no mistake, we are in treaty negotiations once again.

In her State of the State Address, Governor Mills stated mentioned that she wants Maine to be the cutting edge and the leader in many ways.

Maine is far from the cutting edge on tribal-state relations. It's the opposite of cutting edge actually.

LD 2094 would modernize our relationship and would change this historical fact.

We want to work with our neighbors and we want to build stronger rural communities.

Let's do it as partners, because together, we can do so much more.