




Tilbury House Publishers
1 Mechanic Street
Gardiner, Maine 04947
603-582-1399 www.tilburyhouse.com
First paperback edition 1998
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

IN THE SHADOW OF THE EAGLE

A Tribal Representative in Maine

Donna M. Loring

TILBURY HOUSE  PUBLISHERS GARDINER, MAINE



Tilbury House, Publishers
2 Mechanic Street
Gardiner, Maine 04345
800-582-1899 ¥ www.tilburyhouse.com

First paperback edition: April 2008
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Loring, Donna M., 1948-

In the shadow of the eagle : a tribal representative in Maine / Donna M. Loring. — 1st pbk. ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-88448-302-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Penobscot Indians—Government relations. 2. Passamaquoddy Indians—Maine—Government relations. 3. Indian legislators—Maine—History. 4. Maine—Ethnic relations. 5. Loring, Donna M., 1948- I. Title.

E99.P5L67 2008

323.11970741—dc22

2007048157

Cover photograph of S. C. Francis's sculpture *Soaring Free* by Ken Woisard, East Blue Hill, Maine. Collection of the Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, Maine

Cover photograph of the Maine Statehouse by Alan LaVallee

Cover design by Geraldine Millham, Westport, Massachusetts

Copyediting: Genie Dailey, Fine Points Editorial Services, Jefferson, Maine

Printed and bound by

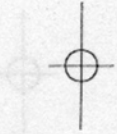


Let understanding and communication ^{through} ~~through~~ education
be the building blocks of a new tribal-state relationship,
one that recognizes and honors the struggles and
contributions of Native peoples. ?





Let understanding and communication be the building blocks of a new world - one that recognizes and honors the struggles and contributions of native peoples.



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- xxxii* Introduction: Now is the time to end our one-hundred-and-eighty-year silence.
- 1* Setting the stage
- 4* A nation is never conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. —Cheyenne proverb
- 10* We fight and fight and fight and fight for every inch of respect and dignity due us as human beings.
- 17* “The town of Houlton bulldozed the tribe’s tarpaper shacks without warning and in the middle of winter.” —Chief Brenda Commander, Houlton Band of Maliseets
- 22* ...a program that was doing a great service to Maine’s people of color and minority populations.
- 25* ...she was insulted by the word but never felt empowered enough to say anything.

- 29 "Representative Loring, would you like to second that motion?" —Senator Susan Longley
- 35 The "correction" bill will need active support if the legislature is going to salvage the integrity of its own process.
- 38 I must be honest and say I do not see a bright future for this bill. The gaming is going to kill it.
- 41 "They don't even celebrate Columbus Day!" —Barbara Walters, ABC "20/20"
- 47 We needed to win this one for them.
- 50 "The governor and the legislature got ambushed by a small group of Indians." —*Bangor Daily News*
- 54 Can we trust the legislative process to work the way we intended it to in the Land Claims Settlement Act?
- 57 Today we made history.
- 58 When the smoke had settled, it was yet another Indian massacre.
- 65 "Donna, you kicked ass!"
- 68 I'm not sure how this will play out, but I am sure that MITSC will never be the same
- 71 "Wouldn't you be better off if you became one with the majority?"

- 73 How ironic—Native presence is so prominent in the political system of this country and yet we are made invisible by it.
- 78 “If such a site were created we could have the Penobscots there one weekend, and the KKK demonstrating the next.”
—Paul Stern, Deputy Attorney General
- 84 The whole situation was one of many political insults we suffer in the white man’s world.
- 88 We tried to explain we had been cleared, but one of Al Gore’s advance people threatened to have the Secret Service remove us!
- 91 We are tribal citizens, but we are also Maine citizens without a vote or a voice for our tribes.
- 98 It is time for Maine state government to take a fresh look at Maine tribal governments.
- 101 Judge Crowley’s ruling stated that unless we chose to appeal in the state court system, our tribal chiefs would go to jail...
- 106 The tribes were in full agreement
- 109 “When you make a people invisible, you don’t want to talk about their history.”
- 112 Indian governments need to be treated as such, with respect and dignity, and looked upon as assets, not liabilities.
- 115 This committee would recognize the unique relationship that exists between the tribes and the state, as well as

facilitate knowing each other and each other's governmental responsibilities.

116 I'm not giving up, but I can see it's going to take another two years, minimum.

124 Tribal seats are contemplated in other states.

125 When the chair asked if anyone would be speaking against my education bill, one male voice said, "Not on your life, lady!"

131 I feel like I'm swimming against the current, but then again, I've been swimming against the current all my life.

136 The Baxter students got their public apology from the State of Maine after thirty years, but what a tremendous price they had to pay for it!

138 "Voices of change will never be silenced."—Elizabeth (Libby) Mitchell, former speaker of the house

144 My goodness, I sound like a politician!

149 It's tough to wait. This bill is probably the most important Indian bill that ever hit the legislature.

156 The Land Claims Settlement Act was supposed to affirm our sovereign rights, not deny them!

159 "I don't drink beer, I don't play golf, but I sure would like to vote."

162 The notes from my comrades made me feel very good, and for once, even if this is short-lived, I made a difference.

- 165 Education will help prevent hatred and prejudice. It will shine a light on that dark place where Indian people have been hidden for almost two hundred years.
- 176 Who are the real human rights abusers? All this time we thought it was China!
- 178 Anita's Poem
- 181 Judge Crowley's decision and the Maine Supreme Judicial Court's decision were dead wrong.
- 184 The World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked by terrorists
- 189 The state is taking Maliseet children from their homes in record numbers—five times the national average.
- 201 ...just think, for the very first time in Maine history the tribal chiefs would be addressing a joint session of the legislature!
- 206 Judge Crowley just basically signed the paper companies' order and changed the dates.
- 215 "Kittery site would employ 4,000 and fetch \$100 million a year for state." —*Bangor Daily News*
- 229 On March 11, 2002, the legislature observed the "State of the Tribes" for the first time in Maine history.
- 230 I am proud of all the Wabanaki warriors who have served and who remain role models for future generations.

235 This cartoon was dehumanizing. Ironically, it was in the paper
the day after the first-ever "State of the Tribes Address."

240 "I am pleased to appoint you as house chair of the Casino
Study Committee."

244 Epilogue

245 The Struggle Continues

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**INTRODUCTION: NOW IS THE TIME TO END OUR
ONE-HUNDRED-AND-EIGHTY-YEAR SILENCE**

Maine is the only state in the United States to have tribal representatives seated in its legislative body. The tribal governments represented are the Penobscot Nation and the Passamaquoddy Tribe. ^{those?} Their legislators represent their tribal governments, not individuals or districts. They have seats in the house chamber, they may serve on legislative committees, but they do not have a vote. They have served in the legislature since the 1820s.

This book is a record of my experiences as the Penobscot Nation's representative to the Maine State Legislature. I wrote it in journal form because I was experiencing something unique and important every day. I wanted to be able to give an accurate account of my experiences and pass them on to my own people and the representatives who would follow me. I now believe that others would benefit from my record as well.

For people interested in First Nations political process and policy all over the world, here is a view of policymaking in the United States from a firsthand Native perspective. You will get a flavor of the day-to-day aspects of what it's like to be a Native American trying to influence policy on a state level, trying to be heard, trying to be visible within the halls of the most powerful and influential body in the state.

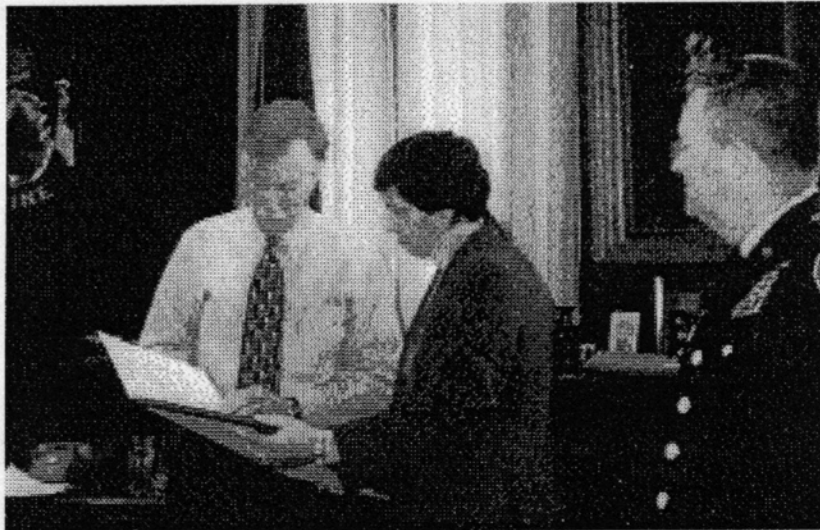
The two Indian representatives are treated cordially but when most bills are being discussed, they are discussed and decided upon in little groups and in small corners of the Statehouse. Indian representatives are not usually included in these discussions and are for the most part invisible bystanders. It has also been particularly difficult to influence any policy without a vote and without the same legislative standing that everyone else enjoys. One legislative leader

likened the task to having one's arms tied behind one's back and still trying to function effectively. In the legislative rush the Indian representative must be able to gain the attention of legislators long enough and be articulate enough to convince them to back a policy that will help them, or to vote against a policy that will be hurtful to Native communities. Every bill passed by the Maine State Legislature has the same effect on Indian people as it does on Maine people. It has been a daunting task for me as a Native woman to protect my people and promote Native issues.

Indian representatives of the past chose not to write about their daily experiences, perhaps fearing some sort of repercussions against them personally or against their tribe. But I believe that now is the time to write about these experiences. Perhaps some will not like what I have written (and I know that the legislature has a long institutional memory), but I have decided to take the risk and let the chips fall where they may. Many in the white majority culture do not understand Native issues. In order for them to understand they must first be willing to listen and be educated.

I have learned many valuable lessons myself during my tenure in the legislature. One of the most important lessons is that politics are fluid. What might be of crucial importance to me one day may not be so important the next day or the next week or the next year. A legislator may be my worst enemy on one issue, but my biggest supporter on another. Representatives or senators that I did not like for one reason or another I later came to not only like but respect. There are some that I will most likely be at odds with on every issue, and those with whom I'll never be a friend, but for the most part they are reasonable and honorable people. I have found the house to be one huge family that unites in crises regardless of party affiliations. The senate is an entity unto itself, one that remains closed to Indian representation, though tribal representatives are working to break down this barrier.

I truly believe that now is the time to end our one-hundred-and-eighty-year silence. It is my hope that whoever reads this journal



Taking the oath as Governor King's aide de camp, February 14, 1999. Governor King is on the left, and General Earl Adams is on the right. Courtesy of the Governor's Office

will be enlightened and have a deeper sense of both the plight and the contributions of Maine Indian people and their governments. It is also my hope that, through communication and education, the State of Maine will recognize and reconcile its past injustices and move forward to develop a beneficial partnership with Maine tribal governments.

I chose to use the title *In the Shadow of the Eagle* as a result of extraordinary events that happened in my personal life and the world at large during my legislative career. The eagle is a symbol to Native people of strength, dignity, respect, and power. It is sacred to us. It is our belief that our ancestors see us through the eyes of the eagle and guide us through the spirit of the eagle.

This is the story of my fight to be heard and to become visible within the halls of the most powerful and influential body in the State of Maine. At the end of the day I want my legacy to be that my work has made a significant difference.