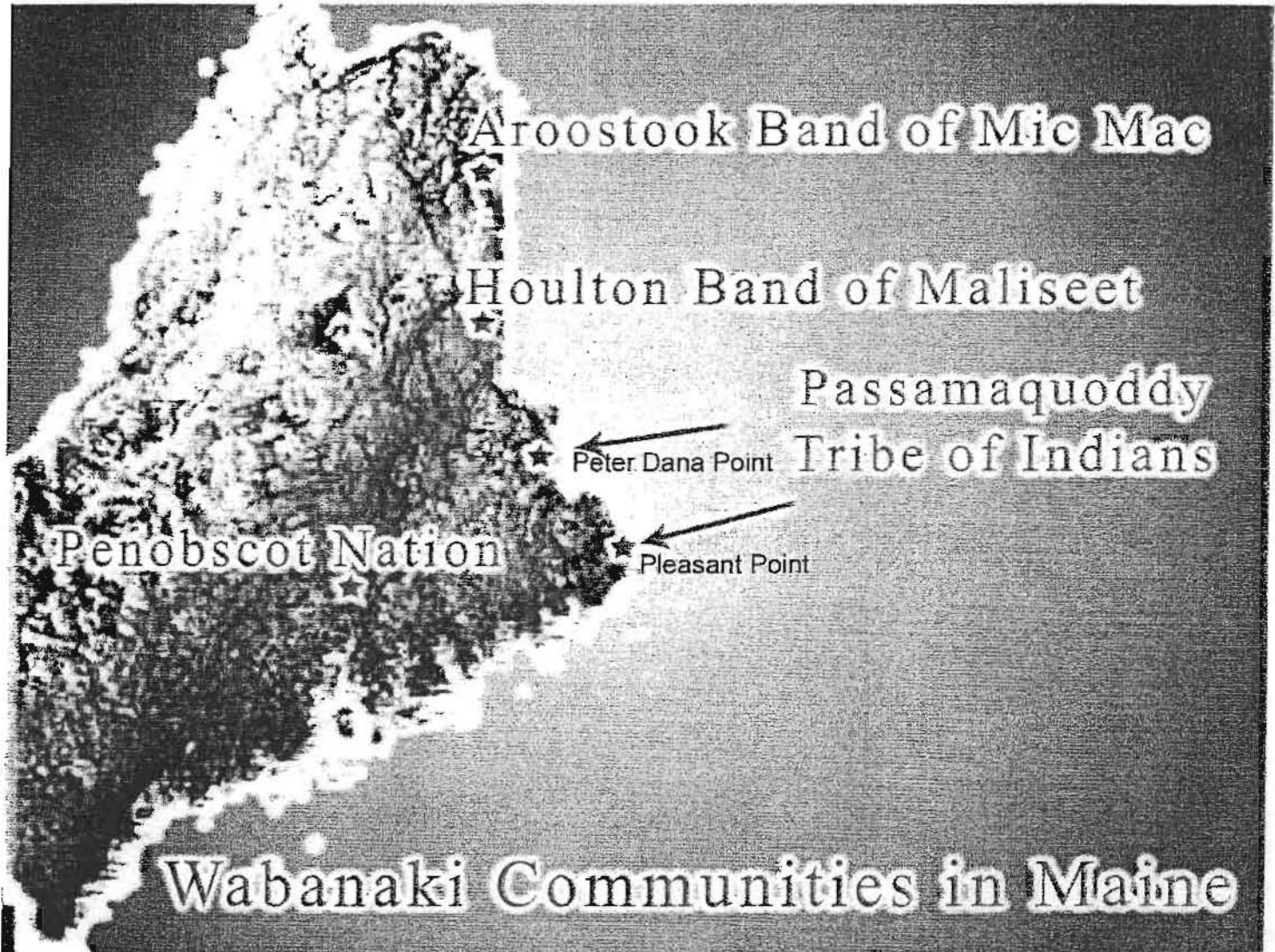


PUBLIC LAW 2001, CHAPTER 403 H.P. 255 - L.D. 291

A LAW TO TEACH ABOUT MAINE'S NATIVE AMERICANS
IN MAINE SCHOOLS



SEPTEMBER 2004

WABANAKI STUDIES COMMISSION

Wabanaki Studies Commission

LD 291 (An Act to Require the Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools) was sponsored by Penobscot Tribal Representative Donna Loring, passed by the 120th Maine Legislature and signed into law in June 2001 as Maine Public Law 2001, Chapter 403. The law that was enacted -referred to as LD 291- requires all Maine schools to teach about Maine's Native peoples (the Wabanaki) in grades K-12. To help prepare for implementation, LD 291 created a 15 member Wabanaki Studies Commission. Meeting approximately monthly since October, 2001, the Wabanaki Studies Commission has identified areas of study that should be covered in grades K-12; reviewed existing materials and resources about the Wabanaki that could be used in the classroom; made connections with museums and other community resources that can support teachers. During the spring of 2004, the Commission worked with the Department of Education's Connie Manter to develop Essential Questions and Essential Understandings to guide educators in the development of culturally-appropriate curriculum.

The Wabanaki Studies Commission and the Native Studies Program at the University of Maine held two Wabanaki Studies Summer Institutes for pre-service and in-service teachers during the summers of 2003 and 2004. Over 70 educators from all grade levels and from throughout the State attended. Wabanaki scholars and Wabanaki community members taught the teachers. In the latest institute, participants utilized the Essential Questions and Essential Understandings to develop units of learning, which are included in this packet, as examples of utilizing the materials, as well as aligning them with the Maine Learning Results. In this time of No Child Left Behind legislation, it is critical that all curriculum materials tie in with assessments and we believe that Wabanaki Studies is no exception.

As a Commission we plan to continue to meet, especially in this critical time when the law goes into effect. We will continue to provide professional development to in-service and pre-service teachers, as well as other educators, to ensure curriculum models which tie in with the Essential Understandings that the Commission developed at its Think Tank in early 2004, and to provide support to the Department of Education, the Colleges of Education, and the schools to ensure the continuance in the spirit of the law. The Commission is unique in its make-up and its purpose. Its primary function will be to ensure continuity in the intent of the law. With the make-up consisting of the fine educators and the excellent Native community representatives, we feel the Commission is uniquely equipped to continue the phenomenal work it has begun with both educational as well as Native credibility.

We are very pleased with the work to date, but realize we have a great deal of work ahead of us. Please look through the attached materials. It is hoped this will begin to assist educators of all levels to begin to think about how they might educate the students in their classes. Please also visit our web site (still under construction) <http://www.umaine.edu/ld291>.

Included in this packet, in addition to the units of learning, are: The Essential Understandings and the Concentrated Areas of Study which assist educators in defining areas of curriculum; an overview of the law and its impacts; a pedagogical tool of the Culture Circle, which helps to demonstrate the interconnectedness of all aspects of culture; and suggested resources.

LD 291 OVERVIEW

Public Law 2001, Chapter 403 H.P. 255 – LD 291, “An Act Requiring Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine’s Schools”, was a result of the efforts and recommendations brought to the Maine Legislature by Penobscot Representative Donna Loring.

LD 291 was signed into law by Governor Angus King in 2000 to be implemented in the 2004 –

2005 school year and included in the Maine Learning Results. A required component of Maine studies is Maine Native American studies addressing the following:

- A. Maine tribal governments
- B. Maine Native American cultural systems and experiences of Maine tribal people throughout history
- C. Maine Native American territories
- D. Maine Native American economic systems

Resources for culturally appropriate instruction regarding Maine Native American history in our State have been virtually non-existent. The Wabanaki Studies Commission was established for development and acquisition of educational materials and resources to facilitate quality instruction relating to Maine Native American history and culture, and provide opportunities for professional development.

By providing quality resources, teachers will be better equipped to appropriately instruct the students in Maine schools about this important aspect of our culture. Long held stereotypes, omissions, and inaccuracies concerning American Indians will be appropriately addressed in Maine public schools. Maine students will become more informed about the rich cultural heritage of the federally recognized Wabanaki Tribe residing in our State.

Historical Background to the Study of Wabanaki Culture and Tribal Sovereignty

What led to Donna Loring putting this before the Legislature?

"A very informal survey in a Portland doughnut shop revealed 7 out of 10 patrons who were quizzed about the tribes in Maine responded, 'there are no tribes in the State.' Upon hearing the results of this survey, Loring decided that education had to be the key to understanding between Maine's Native people and the rest of the population." Betsy A. Tannian of the Daily News Editorial.

Why teach Maine Native American history, culture and tribal sovereignty in the public school curriculum?

The intent for the initiative to require the study of Maine Native American history, culture and tribal sovereignty is the acquisition of knowledge about the original inhabitants of the State of Maine. The need for greater understanding of the Wabanaki people, their history, culture, and their unique relationship with state and federal government is reflected in the problems of the past decade.

It needs to be acknowledged that American Indian histories, cultures, and sovereignty hold as legitimate a place in the classrooms in Maine as does the history, culture and sovereignty of the non-Indian. The instruction on Maine Native Americans needs to be authentic and accurate, and should include the historical and contemporary status, contributions, and uniqueness of the Maine tribes.

Prejudice reduction is an important goal for the study of the Wabanaki communities. Students will learn of the many cultural and value differences amongst the tribes. They will be able to compare and contrast these differences with the various American immigrant heritages.

Part of the goal of prejudice reduction is to benefit Indian students, families, and communities. Researchers have shown that when students are exposed to accurate instruction about their culture, they exhibit improved self-esteem, which in turn promotes opportunities for academic success and participation in extracurricular learning experiences.

Non-Indian students will also benefit by being exposed to instruction about other groups of people and their cultures. The resource information must be historically and culturally accurate. Students demonstrate more understanding and appreciation of others and also of their own unique heritage(s) when they have the opportunity to learn about their own and other ethnic groups.

Integrating Maine Native American Studies into the Curriculum

One of the most commonly expressed concerns about the requirement to teach Maine Native American Studies relates to the relationship of these concepts to the existing curriculum. The issue implies that Maine Native American Studies is a separate discipline, unrelated to the current curriculum, that will require the creation of new courses. The answer is not necessarily to create new classes, but to take advantage of the many opportunities to integrate these concepts into current courses.

Classroom teachers, it is important to note, should not feel overwhelmed with the notion that they must become the "Wabanaki expert". While there is the need for instructors to build their knowledge base, their role will be primarily to that of facilitator. In this role, teachers will link the concepts required by LD 291 with the core subjects. Several resources are available providing opportunities for the integration of topics in Wabanaki studies into existing curriculum, including instructors of the Native American Studies program at the University of Maine in Orono, consultants of the Wabanaki Summer Institute, representatives of the Wabanaki Studies Commission, and members of the Wabanaki community.

Inservices are critical to districts' efforts to provide school staff with concrete examples of how to integrate the Maine Native American Studies requirements into their courses. Each year, the Native American Studies Department at the University of Maine sponsors the Wabanaki Summer Institute designed for classroom teachers. The purpose of this course is to aid educators in their understanding and appreciation of Native American history and culture, and to enhance

the effectiveness of teaching about Native peoples and cultures. The theme of the course is the relevance of the past to the contemporary lives of native people. Additionally, the course focuses on the importance of the impact of Europeans on the life, customs and function of traditional societies, Native people's roles, and education. The course assists teachers in the presentation and inclusion of American Indians in all segments of the curriculum. It deals with issues pertaining to textbook representation of Native Americans, as well as, American Indian stereotypes. Further, the course deals with contemporary, historical and traditional issues affecting American Indians.

Social studies is perhaps the most obvious place to integrate these concepts, but American Indian cultural topics can also be brought into government, math, science, reading, and other classes. Educators can use broad central themes to incorporate Wabanaki history, culture, and tribal sovereignty into any subject. Students can draw comparisons between the cultures, laws, histories, languages, beliefs, economics, communications, and technologies of Wabanaki Indians, and other people around the world. The diversity among tribes is as great as those between other peoples of the world. Comparisons can reinforce the study of cultural similarities and differences closer to home.

RESOURCES

TEXT BOOKS:

The Wabanakis of Maine & the Maritimes, by The Wabanaki Program of the American Friends Service Committee

Maliseet & Mi'kmaq, First Nations of the Maritimes, by Robert M. Leavitt

WEB SITES:

<http://www.umaine.edu/ld291/>

A site for educators and students pertaining to LD 291, including resources and lesson plans

<http://www.fdl.uwc.edu/windian/harvey1.htm>

An excellent resource for evaluating books and materials

<http://www.oyate.org/>

Includes evaluation of texts, resource materials and fiction by and about Native peoples

<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ecubbins/webcrit.html>

An excellent resource that discusses how to evaluate web sites pertaining to Native peoples

<http://www.library.umaine.edu/speccoll/Guides/nativeamerican.html>

A useful guide to materials available in the Fogler Library, as well as web sites pertaining to the Wabanaki peoples

<http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/>

A well maintained megasite of all Native areas, including the Northeast

<http://www.nativeweb.org/>

Another good megasite for indigenous cultures

<http://www.indiancountry.com/>

The most comprehensive Native newspaper. Great for current issues

<http://www.airos.org/>

Listen to live Indian radio throughout the U.S. Features music, news, and special guests

<http://www.mainememory.net/home.shtml>

Search for historical items, view stories, exhibits, collections, and more