



Maine-Wabanaki REACH

Newsletter
Spring 2015

The Mandate and Beyond: Recommendations of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission

The Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) invites the public to a series of five forums to discuss its recommendations.

The commissioners and staff will make visits across the state to talk about the process, review lessons learned from their research findings and offer their recommendations.

They will be joined by members of Maine-Wabanaki REACH who originated the TRC and will be tasked with implementing its recommendations.

REACH will give its reaction to the findings and provide ways people can get involved in continuing the work of truth, healing and change.

Attendees will have the opportunity to make comments and ask questions during these forums, being held:

April 30, 5:30 Husson University, Bangor

May 6, 4:00 University of Maine at Presque Isle

May 13, 11:30 University of Maine at Machias

May 27, 5:30 Portland Public Library, Portland

June 1, 12:00 State House Complex, Augusta

The events lead up to the official release of the TRC's report on June 14 at the Morgan Hill Event Center.

The "Closing Ceremony" of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare TRC: Moving Forward with Truth, Healing and Change marks a return to the site where the work officially began on Feb. 12, 2013, with the Seating of the Commissioners.

The TRC is entering the last phase of its mandate which was signed on June 29, 2012, at the Maine State Capitol.

With support and guidance from REACH, the Commission has conducted focus groups and gathered statements from Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki people across the State of Maine.

Inside this issue:

Development Committee	2
Facilitation Skills Coaching	2
Evaluation Focus Groups	2
Health & Wellness Coordination	3
Wabanaki Corrections Organizing	3
Maine Ally Building	4
Community Engagement	4



"The TRC is excited to have reached a landmark moment: we have gathered more than 150 individual statements from Wabanaki and non-Native participants who have bravely shared their experiences; what we have learned is galvanizing and powerful, and we are looking forward to describing these findings and our recommendations for improving child welfare service delivery for Native children in Maine at a series of events this spring."

~Charlotte Bacon, TRC Executive Director

"After all that has happened since this journey began in 1999, this is a significant milestone. Everyone involved with REACH is filled with anticipation about hearing the findings and what needs to happen after the TRC process ends in June. In many ways for REACH, the work has just begun, and we can't wait to start this next phase of bringing truth, healing and change to greater realization"

~Esther Attean, REACH Co-Director

REACH Website:
www.mainewabanakireach.org

Facebook: MEWabanakiREACH

Twitter: @MEWabanakiREACH

REACH Development Committee

"It was a truly amazing day, and I've already heard very positive and motivated responses from attendees. I'm very grateful to you all for how you put the day together. And now to the task of keeping people engaged!"

*~Dana Baldwin
Maine Philanthropy
Center*

As the TRC completes its mandate, REACH members and staff have gathered several times to discuss our vision and goals for the work moving forward and our relationship with Wabanaki Health & Wellness.

We remain committed to providing education of history, trauma, resiliency, healing and ally building to Maine and Wabanaki communities and to overseeing the implementation of the TRC recommendations

REACH's Development Committee is hard at work identifying grant resources, cultivating private donors and exploring merchandise sales and service fees as ways to generate resources to continue our work.

The Maine Philanthropy Center, the TRC and REACH collaborated to bring together many representatives from Maine funding organizations to hear the preliminary themes the TRC has uncovered and learn about REACH's work.

We met at Penobscot Nation on March 4 and have already scheduled follow up meetings with several funding representatives in the coming months.

We have been invited to attend Kellogg Foundation's Racial Healing Conference in North Carolina in May. We are excited about sharing and deepening our relationship with this funding partner. Thanks to all of the members of the Development Committee.

Facilitation Skills Coaching



An important part of our work is facilitating healing, support, education and action groups in Native and non-Native communities.

REACH staff, volunteers and allies who facilitate these groups have a range of experience in group facilitation.

As our work expands, increases and deepens, we realized as a group we could benefit from coaching calls with experienced facilitators discussing various topics related to group facilitation.

We have begun to hold 90 minute calls twice monthly with volunteer coaches.

We have calls scheduled through the end of the summer addressing topics such as role of facilitator, how to keep a group moving and on topic, how to hold a safe space for deep and meaningful dialogue, how to structure an agenda and tips for leading a meeting.

"I liked the survey because I had never been asked questions like that before... even though I have thought about these things for a long time." ~ Survey Respondent

Evaluation Focus Groups

As part of the overall evaluation of the impact of work done by REACH and the TRC process, we developed a survey for Native and Non-native people.

A review of the survey data shows a few trends that we would like to explore more deeply through the use of focus groups.

Ralph Cammack will conduct focus groups (relaxed, guided discussions) in Sipayik and Motahkmihkuk on April 23.

We hope to gain deeper insight into the reactions stirred when people reflect on the taking of Wabanaki land, lives and culture and to understand how feelings relate to Wabanaki

people's sovereignty, health, healing and well-being.

If you have taken a survey and would like to be part of the focus groups, please contact Stephanie Bailey.

Focus group participants will receive a small token of appreciation.

Health and Wellness Coordination

Health and Wellness Coordinator Maria Girouard provides education on Wabanaki history, intergenerational trauma, and trauma resilience to a diverse audience including health and social service professionals, Wabanaki community organizers, traditional wellness practitioners, and anyone interested in wellness for Wabanaki communities.

Training opportunities are provided to offer an empowering framework for understanding deep historic wounds while working toward collective healing.

REACH's workshops provide a unique forum for Wabanaki engagement while bolstering trauma resilience/resolution skills and increasing the capacity of wellness practitioners in our tribal communities.

Upcoming workshops include: "Returning to Respect" kindness/anti-bullying campaign, Welcoming our Relatives Home, Writing & Healing: A train-the-trainers retreat, and Art & Healing.

Maria will also conduct focus circles for discussion of topics presented at the 2014 Wabanaki Wellness Gathering including reclaiming our birth & death

rituals, decolonizing our diets/food as medicine, circle communications and Re-evaluation Counseling.

Maria is excited to be engaged in the Wabanaki Corrections Organizing work and is looking forward to developing ways to promote wellness within the prisons and tribal communities.

Wabanaki Corrections Organizing

Gratitude and Best wishes to Tom Doyle as he transitions out of the role of Wabanaki Corrections Organizer. Our plan to carry the work forward entails recruiting several Wabanaki people to help facilitate circles in the prisons.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick, remains very supportive of our work and has asked us to provide monthly email updates to him.

We have held 2 healing circle sessions with 7 native male prisoners at Maine Correctional Center. The TRC has gathered one private statement there and is conducting focus groups with the inmates. We will continue to offer circles for men at MCC and will begin a circle for women at MCC and Southern Maine Reentry Center.

We are very excited to focus on prisoner re-entry and to be collaborating with Wabanaki Health & Wellness. Our hope is to complement WHW's supportive services with restorative justice healing processes

We are hosting a focus group on April 16 at WHW with former Wabanaki inmates to gain a better understanding of what is most helpful and challenging when transitioning out of prison and back into the community.

Our plan involves providing education in our communities about disproportionate rates of incarceration, the impact of trauma and addiction, the power of healing and resiliency building; working with inmates and their

families to help facilitate restorative justice healing circles for truth-telling, grieving and healing; and initiating Welcome Home ceremonies at a community level.

We are developing ways to foster more connection between prisoners and community. Stay tuned for details on how you can become involved in our upcoming book drive.

Several tribal elders have expressed appreciation for our corrections work, they are glad that we are focused on ways to promote healing, welcome our people home and keep them there.

For more information about Corrections Organizing, please contact Esther Attean.



"I look forward to circle...it's the only time I feel free, with no one there to judge me. In circle, I can relax, say what I want, feel what I want. I can be myself and forget that I am in prison"
~Inmate at MCC

Maine Ally Building

"I didn't know a lot of what I learned in the training, and now I need to ask myself: 'Why didn't I know?' and 'What am I going to do about it?'"

~Ally Training Participant



"I'm very grateful to have been part of this work of truth, healing and change. It's time Americans get more in line with the values our country was founded on. The injustices to indigenous people reside in every square mile of earth, every rock and tree and its healing is foundational to this country changing direction."

~Arla Patch

Amidst the storms of winter, dozens of people, from Aroostook to York, attended 6 hour REACH ally trainings. The training is designed for non-Native people and includes a very brief history, awareness of white privilege, ally responsibilities, and support to share this information in Maine communities.

This spring, we are moving to new locations with training planned in Houlton, Trescott, and Waterville. In each location, organizations have welcomed us in and supported our outreach. Local activists have talked to community members about this opportunity to explore our roles together.

Following the training, people stay connected with us to participate in ally work. Ally groups (in Portland, Bangor, and

Auburn so far) provide ongoing education and support for action. New group facilitators are on board and these folks will meet regularly as we learn together how to make the most of the ally group time. We are working towards linking people in other ways as well, including the webpage, google groups, emails and Facebook.

Ally work has shown up in many ways as allies educate their representatives, organize educational events, write letters to the editor, and talk to friends and family about what they have learned. At REACH and TRC events, look for the folks with the REACH Ally name tags. They are there to help out and talk about REACH's work in Maine communities.

Maine Community Engagement

For the past two years, REACH has been fortunate to have Arla Patch on staff serving as the Community Engagement Coordinator.

In this role, she has focused on education; researching, developing and fine tuning a program that shares the history, necessity and process of the TRC.

She has helped bring this information to faith groups,

schools, colleges, a diversity forum, historical societies and Rotary Clubs.

She shares that a large part of her job has been learning how to best support non-native Mainers in becoming volunteers and effective allies; building a caring community of people who are committed to engaging in truth, healing and change.

Maine Community Organizers Barbara Kates and Tom Reynolds facilitate Ally training with Arla Patch and volunteers Susan Howe and Paul Strickland. Thank you volunteers!

Thank you to the people helping us reach new communities: Brian Chapla, Marilyn Roper, Alan Furth, and Cecil Brooks.

Thank you to the organizations which have provided us with space or supported registration: Wilson Center in Orono; PICA; Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine, Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Colby College, Cobscook Community Learning Center, St. Mary's Catholic Church in Houlton, Unitarian Universalist Church in Auburn, Friends Meeting in Portland, and Unitarian Universalist Church in Portland.

Arla will be transitioning out of her role at the end of June, she is moving out of state to be with her son.

Working with Wabanaki people and spending time in Wabanaki communities has helped her become more deeply aware of the meaning and importance of family and for this she is grateful.

Best wishes to Arla!