



**Wabanaki REACH**

Truth • Healing • Change

Winter 2024

# Woli pili k'ton! Happy New Year!

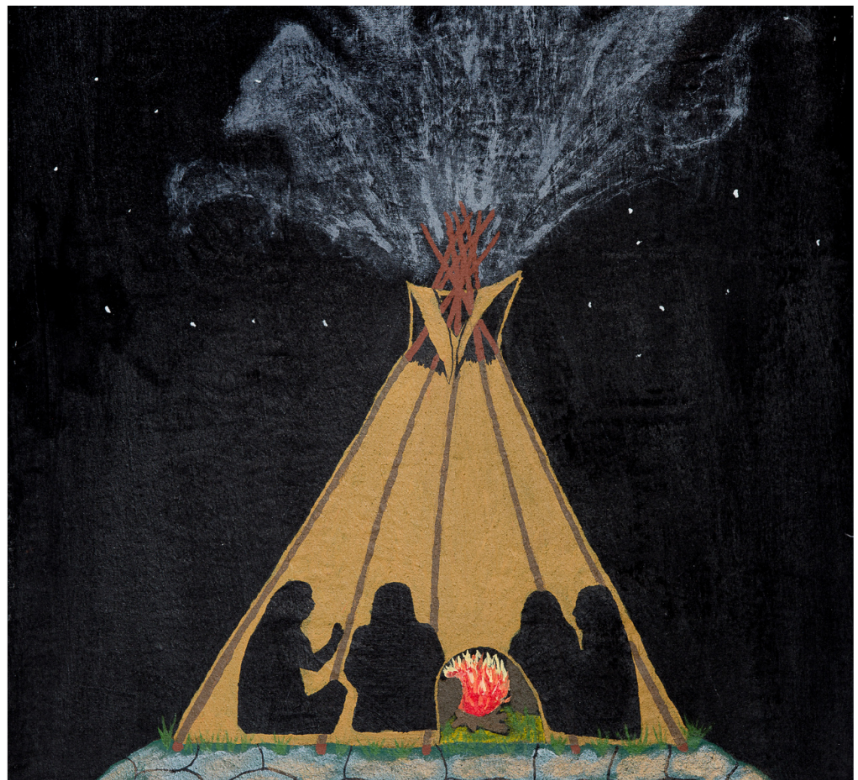
The entire Wabanaki REACH team is ready for a new year of truth, healing and change work here in Wabanakik also known as Maine. As we reflect on the past year, we remain grateful for all the ways you have contributed to decolonization here in this beautiful territory. One highlight was the amazing example of partnership and coming together for the children when the Maine legislature passed the Maine Indian Child Welfare Act. Sponsored by Senator Donna Bailey, this legislation supports the tenets of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, which is considered the "Gold Standard" in child welfare policy.



## May you give and receive forgiveness in the new year

Forgiveness is a core cultural value of the Wabanaki and a message of forgiveness is traditionally shared at the start of the New Year. The forgiveness message is displayed in Passamaquoddy/Maliseet, Penobscot, Abenaki, and Micmac and the artwork is generously donated by James Manley, who is incarcerated at Maine State Prison. James wanted to show his appreciation for Wabanaki REACH's work within Maine prisons.

anhaldamawi kasi palilawewlan \* apiksiktui wjit ta'n kisi o'pal'tu



nhelto muwin kisi wapoli lweyulansopon

ni anhelətamawi kekweś awəpaləyaholsipon kči-niweśkw kəpon

# Reflecting on a Year of Growth and Partnership at Wabanaki REACH

## by Andrea Francis



September 12, 2023 marked my first year anniversary with Wabanaki REACH. The date came and went in a month filled with activity for our organization. As I look back at my first year, it has been filled with learning, growth and a deepening sense of community. Joining this incredible group of people has been a privilege and has opened up opportunities to engage with the community in new and enriching ways.

REACH has been growing and I am happy to be part of that growth. I came into this position

when the board and the Executive Director decided that infrastructure was an integral part of REACH's development. Stepping into this role has allowed me to be part of and give shape to our newest committee, Collective Growth and Support. This committee is our own take on Human Resources and how we can shape our policies to the mission, vision and values of our organization. Together we have initiated taking on systemic oppression and replacing it with values reflecting Wabanaki self-determination. In addition, I have been writing about our experiences in a limited series blog on the Wabanaki REACH monthly email blast. I've been delighted to find that it has garnered some interest from other values-led organizations.

My colleagues and I worked with the Sewall Foundation to co-host the second annual Sewall Wabanaki Partner Gathering. We worked closely with Sewall Executive Director Gabriela Alcalde and held the gathering in Penobscot territory where we were joined by 20 other Wabanaki led organizations. We convened for a full day to speak about our collective work, share a meal with funders from around Maine and discuss important issues in our communities. Having the opportunity to share with other Wabanaki leaders and foster new relationships supports the mission of Wabanaki REACH to "design our structures and processes to be responsive to Wabanaki communities and beneficial to Wabanaki people."

I am so grateful that I stepped out of my comfort zone and participated in the creation and performance of where the river widens, a play for REACH's oral history project Beyond the Claims, Stories from the Land and the Heart. I hoped that by participating in community devised theater I would be able to contribute to REACH in a more creative way. Not only did I achieve this goal, but I also formed some deeper connections with colleagues while the REACH family grew to include community members who participated. It was an important story to tell and in this performance we all got the chance to be storytellers. I am truly honored to have had this experience. (continued on next page)

Looking ahead to next year I am inspired by my colleagues, the work that they do and their unwavering dedication to the self-determination of Wabanaki communities. It is encouraging to work with visionary people that care about one another and uphold the values of our organization. This year I have found strength in shared goals and the transformative impact of collective action. As I reflect on this journey, I am grateful for the trust placed in me, the lessons learned and the opportunity to contribute to a cause that resonates with me.

## **Tuesday Evening Community**

### **by Barbara Kates**

So, what's new this week? This is how the Tuesday Evening Community meetings begin. We officially call it "check in". With easy transition from one to another, we share anecdotes, report on events, share a recent challenge, or just wonder about something that baffled us. Tuesday Evening Community are REACH facilitators and readers for education programs. We meet the first Tuesday evening of each month at 6 on zoom. Some bring dinner to the screen. Some are tired after a long day's work. Others are excited about a recent REACH program. People only come if they want to and can make it work in their busy schedules. Each meeting anywhere from 4-12 volunteers and staff gather.

Tuesday Evening Community began early in the COVID pandemic, meeting weekly to shepherd the transition of REACH interactive programming to online. Within three months, we began facilitating programs online. By that time, we were already appreciating the sense of community through zoom and continued to work on projects together and just visit.

After checking in at each meeting, we talk about programs that need attention, applaud recent successes, and then discuss various topics that help support our REACH work.

What brought you to REACH and what keeps you volunteering at REACH? This was the topic for the December meeting. We each had a different story and common themes showed up as well. We deeply appreciate the way REACH supports the change we want in the world to be part of our volunteer interactions with each other. We pay attention to relationship, enjoy laughing together, and support talk about what is troubling.

Facilitating REACH educational programs is hard work. It is continual learning and practicing. Knowing we are part of Tuesday Evening Community makes the work more fluid and stronger. And it is fun to be together.

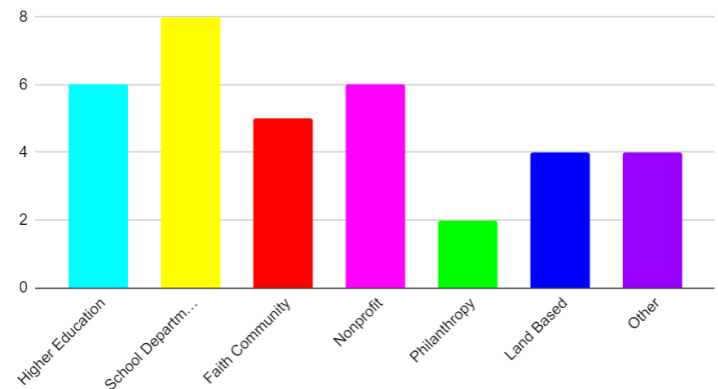
# Trends in REACH Educational Programs

We have been quite busy the past few months scheduling, facilitating, and revising current programs. We piloted a three-session program designed for communities of faith this fall and hope to have it ready to add to our Program Menu this spring.

We continue to explore the potential impact of our programming on the community. We looked at the types of organizations or institutions that we have presented to over the past few years.

We broke the organizations down into the following categories: higher Education, school department, land-based, philanthropic, non-profit, faith communities, public health, and others. For some organizations, they may fit into multiple categories, we chose one for basis of this analysis.

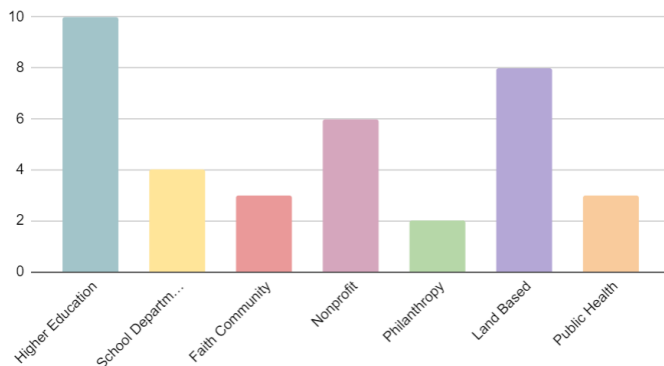
Program Breakdown 2021 by community



## What we learned

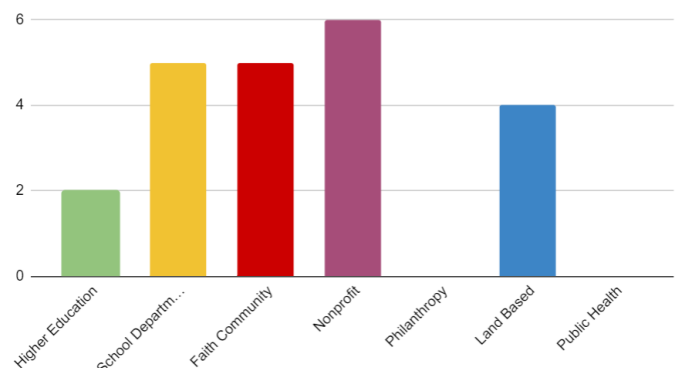
- Over the last few years, at least 50% of the programs we facilitate have been for school departments and higher education institutions
- There is an upward trend of land-based organizations and non-profits scheduling programs
- Faith communities and philanthropic organizations continue to request our programs

Program Breakdown 2022



It is exciting to see the mix of organizations and institutions that continually reach out in hopes of learning more and becoming better neighbors. We are all learning together!

Program Breakdown 2023





## Beyond the Claims - Stories from the Land + the Heart

Thank you for joining us along the Penobscot River in September to hear a new play. It was a joy to share *where the river widens* with you at the close of summer.



For those of you who couldn't make it, or were rained out because of Hurricane Lee, stay tuned! We are in the process of adding a trailer of the performance to our Beyond the Claims webpage. There will also be a short video about our recent collaboration with Threadbare Theatre Workshop.



## Wabanaki Health and Wellness

One goal of REACH's Health and Wellness work is to maintain connection with and promote well-being of Wabanaki people incarcerated in the Maine prisons. During 2023, Passamaquoddy elder and REACH Coordinator Brian Altvater, Sr. conducted 10 sweat lodge ceremonies for both male and female Native inmates at the Maine State Prison in Warren, the Maine Correctional Center in Windham and the Mountain View Correctional Center in Charleston. He plans to also hold ceremonies at the Bolduc Correctional Facility in Warren and the Downeast Correctional Facility in Machias.

Conducting sweat lodge ceremonies in the prison requires thorough preparation which Brian begins months before by coordinating with prison staff, visiting with inmates to share teachings about the traditional and spiritual beliefs of the Wabanaki people, to lead talking circles and pipe ceremonies. While traveling hundreds of miles and being away from home for days can be exhausting, Brian still finds the work rewarding and gratifying to see the excitement of the inmates, eager to learn while being respectful at the same time. He often gifts the inmates with sage, sweetgrass, cedar, or a medicine pouch in the hopes that what they have learned from him and from Spirit will stay with them forever.

We are grateful to Brian for his continued commitment to Wabanaki people who are incarcerated in Maine prisons.

# Woliwon Woliwoni Walalin Thank You

Wabanaki REACH remains grateful to many people: everyone who donates to REACH - large and small, monthly or one-time, foundations; everyone who makes time to participate in REACH programming; our wonderful family of volunteers who bring their time, skill, and energy to REACH; and everyone in our larger REACH community who is engaged, learning, and on this truth, healing, and change journey with us.

Because of your generosity, we have been able to continue to deliver educational programming, continue to create educational work around Beyond the Claims, engage in Wabanaki wellness work, and provide assistance to Wabanaki families through Grandmother's Love. Thank you all.

Dear REACH,  
Thank you for your  
ongoing work to help  
us understand the  
impacts of  
colonization.

Dear REACH Staff &  
Board,  
Thank you for the  
education and inspiration  
you make possible year  
after year.  
It's an honor and a privilege  
to support your work.

Visit our website to learn more, read the blog, engage with resources, find out about events, join our listserv or make a donation:

<https://wabanakireach.org>

Visit our Facebook page for the latest in truth, healing, and change  
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