

Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations

1. Respect tribal sovereignty and commit to resolve and uphold federal, state and tribal jurisdictions and protocols at both the state and local levels.

2. Honor Wabanaki choices to support healing as the tribes see fit and celebrate the cultural resurgence of the tribes within the Wabanaki confederacy so that both individuals and communities may be strengthened.

Among the suggestions we have heard: the creation of longhouses, language centers and classes, places in which rituals of birth, coming of age, and death may be celebrated, food and economic sovereignty, healing circles, and traditional health and wellness modalities. Other suggestions included welcome home ceremonies for people who are returning to their territory after a time away.

3. Develop Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), legal and judicial trainings that go beyond the basic checklists and toolkits to recognize bias and build cultural awareness at all levels of leadership and accountability in ways that frame ICWA within historical context.

4. With the counsel of the tribes, develop a policy to monitor regular compliance with ICWA, the selection of ICWA liaisons and the eventual provision of a supervisory-level staff member responsible for ICWA in each DHHA district office.

5. Create better and more consistent supports for non-Native foster and adoptive families so that Wabanaki children have the strongest possible ties to their culture.

6. Explore the creation of more Native foster homes in general and additional Native therapeutic homes in particular.

7. Resolve as quickly as possible issues with IV-E funds.

8. Fund the renewal of the ICWA Workgroup and involve them in designing and implementing training so that all levels of leadership are involved; their work may well include training

people on the new Bureau of Indian Affairs regulations being developed on ICWA.

9. Explore the expansion of tribal courts to include the Maliseet and Micmac communities, should these communities express a desire to do so, and explore as well what funding possibilities exist for this initiative. Also hear concerns from those who do not feel well represented by the courts.

10. Resolve problems surrounding blood quantum, census eligibility and the provision of services for children, as these issues are often contested and unclear.

11. Support the work of Maine-Wabanaki REACH in both Wabanaki and non-Native communities to foster truth, healing and change.

12. Reinstate the Maine governor's executive order of 2011 that recognizes "the special relationship between the State of Maine and the sovereign Native American Tribes located within the state of Maine." This executive order also recognizes that the "unique relationship between the State of Maine and the individual Tribes is a relationship between equals."

13. Create ways for people to continue to add to the archive at Bowdoin College and look beyond the mandate to keep these truth-telling conversations flowing at every level: in tribal communities, among the general public and within agencies that work with Wabanaki people.

14. Develop ways to expand on the work of Chapter 403 of the Public Laws of Maine of 2001, "An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools," also known as LD291, so there is an enlarged understanding of bias and genocidal practices in the greater community and Wabanaki-state relations are held in a broader framework.

