

How long have you taught social	Do you know about LD 291 the 2001 Act Requiring Wabanaki Studies?	If yes, how did you hear about the law?	Additional comments (if you heard about the law through a media outlet, please type the name below).	Do you feel you are meeting the requirements of the law?	What barriers are in the way of being able to meet the requirements of the law?	Additional comments, clarifications, or questions
25-30 years	No			1	I don't see the relevance or importance of teaching Wabanaki Studies.	
5-10 years	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department head, Graduate course in Maine history.		5		
15-20 years	No			1	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I don't know where to look for Wabanaki Studies related resources., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
20-25 years	Yes	I read about it in the newspaper or another media outlet (please specify the forum in the additional comments box)	Portland Press Herald	1	I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content.	Social studies is always under pressure to add more content to our courses. It is overwhelming. The district does not support our work with adequate staffing and resources. There are a number of state required areas that fall under social studies but have not been taught due to lack of resources.
20-25 years	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department head, I heard about it from a colleague in my building, I heard about it during a PPS course or Community of Learners event, I heard about it in a non-PPS course I took for recertification, I read about it in the newspaper or another media outlet (please specify the forum in the additional comments box), I heard about it as an ETEP Mentor	We also have had the Wabanaki Resource book since I have been here.	3	I do include Wabanaki Studies in Sociology, Religion and Modern World History Classes. These are lessons included in a wider unit (for example, Race and Ethnicity unit in Sociology and Imperialism and Civil Rights Units in History.	
20-25 years	No			3	The Wabanaki Nation is one of many minority groups that I will be covering this year.	
15-20 years	Yes	I heard about it during a PPS course or Community of Learners event, I heard about it in a non-PPS course I		2	I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	Newly arrived immigrants need an overview of Native American studies in general. They generally are not aware that there
20-25 years	Yes	I heard about it from a colleague in my building		3	I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content.	
10-15 years	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department	Race in the US Portland cass	1	Another teacher is teaching that content	
5-10 years	Yes	I don't remember		2	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I don't know where to look for Wabanaki Studies related resources., I am not sure how to evaluate the accuracy of the resources I find online, in the library, or elsewhere., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
0-5 years	Yes	I heard about it in my teacher education program, I heard about it from a colleague in my building, I heard about it during a PPS course or Community of Learners event		4	I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	I teach Wabanaki history and culture in my curriculum, but feel like I could use more time to teach it. I also connect it to my broader curriculum, but would like support in strengthening the connection between Wabanaki studies and the broader
20-25 years	Yes	Maine DOE		4	I am doing ok with this but, at least at Deering, we need two full semesters for US history!	
25-30 years	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department		3	Fitting into a cohesive unit and not just creating a stand alone unit.	
10-15 years	Yes	I don't remember how I heard of it.		1	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
25-30 years	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department head, I heard about it from a colleague in my building, I heard about it during a PPS course or Community of Learners event		1	I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	When I taught Early US history I did read Women of the Dawn with students. My current history course is 1900-now and I don't have a ready resource for contemporary Wabanaki studies
0-5 years	Yes	I heard about it in my teacher education program, I heard about it during a PPS course or Community of Learners event, I read about it in the newspaper or another media outlet (please specify the forum in the additional comments box), It was in the Press Herald recently		3	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I don't know where to look for Wabanaki Studies related resources., I am not sure how to evaluate the accuracy of the resources I find online, in the library, or elsewhere., I have recently found out how to evaluate, but that was a barrier prior.	
15-20 years	Yes	I heard about it from a colleague in my building		2	I don't know where to look for Wabanaki Studies related resources., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
0-5 years	Yes	I just learned of it today from Fiona.		1	I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
10-15 years	Yes	I heard about it in my teacher education program		1	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I don't know where to look for Wabanaki Studies related resources., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
10-15 years	Yes	I heard about it from a colleague in my building		1	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	
10-15 years	Yes	I don't remember.	I know there is a law that we have to teach Wabanaki stuff, but I don't know if it says anything else, and if it does, what it says.	2	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture.	
0-5 years	Yes	Heard about it from my first teaching position in Maine.		4	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture.	Coming from the Midwest my knowledge of the Wabanaki is rather limited.
5-10 years	Yes	Fiona's race class		3	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I worry about getting it wrong	
0-5 years	Yes	I heard about it from a colleague in my building		1	I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content.	
0-5 years	Yes	I heard about it during a PPS course or Community of Learners event		3	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	I absolutely want to know so much more!
10-15 years	Yes	I heard about it in a non-PPS course I took for recertification, I read about it in the newspaper or another media outlet (please specify the forum in the additional comments box)		3		
15-20 years	Yes	I heard about it from a colleague in my building		1	I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content.	
20-25 years	Yes	I heard about it in my teacher education program		3		
10-15 years	Yes	I heard about it in my teacher education program	I've nibbled on the edges of this and plan to do a lot more. I feel strongly about meeting this requirement.	2	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum., I think we need to be held accountable for teaching this.	

	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department head		3		
15-20 years	Yes	I heard about it from the social studies department head, I heard about it in a non-PPS course I took for recertification		1	I know little or nothing about Wabanaki history, people, or culture.. I do not have time to teach Wabanaki Studies related content., I am not sure how to design Wabanaki Studies related lessons or units so they fit with my broader curriculum.	I would welcome the chance to use materials, receive PD etc.

Social Studies Update

April 8, 2019

Agenda

- Introductions and Announcements
- Social Studies Survey Results
- Wabanaki Studies and Native Studies Update
- Plans for 2019-2020

Social Studies Learning Progression from 2000ish

K-2: Neighborhoods and Communities (defining them, mapping them, learning basic geography and civics terms that supported defining and mapping communities)

3: The City of Portland (history, landmarks, architecture. leaders, etc)

4: The State of Maine (history, geography, economics, government, Indigenous People)

5: Early US History: The 13 colonies, American Revolution, US Government, Geography, Slavery, Westward Expansion

6: World Geography and Cultures

7. Ancient Civilizations: Sumer, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Muslim World, Middle Ages

8: Early US History: 13 Colonies through Reconstruction

9: World Civilizations: Sumer through the French Revolution

10: Early US History: 13 Colonies through Gilded Age

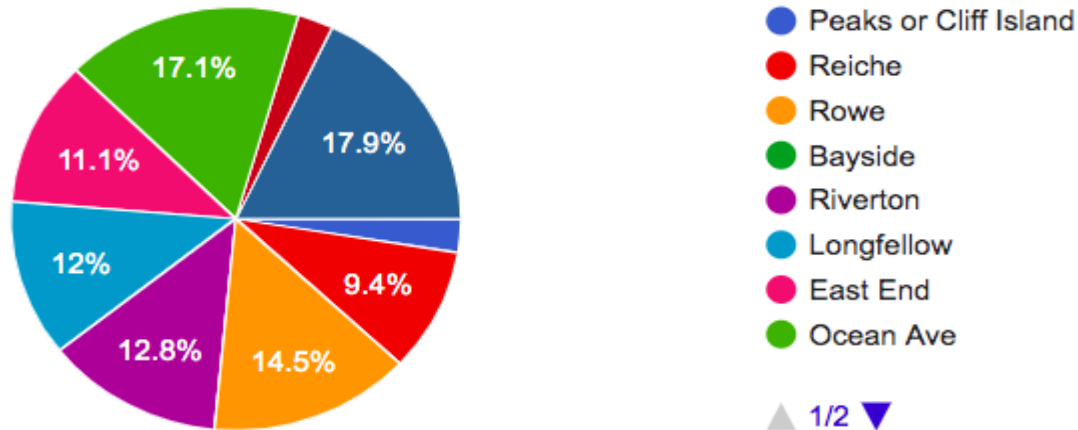
11: Modern US and World: Imperialism through Present Day

Portland000005

K-5 Survey Results Summary

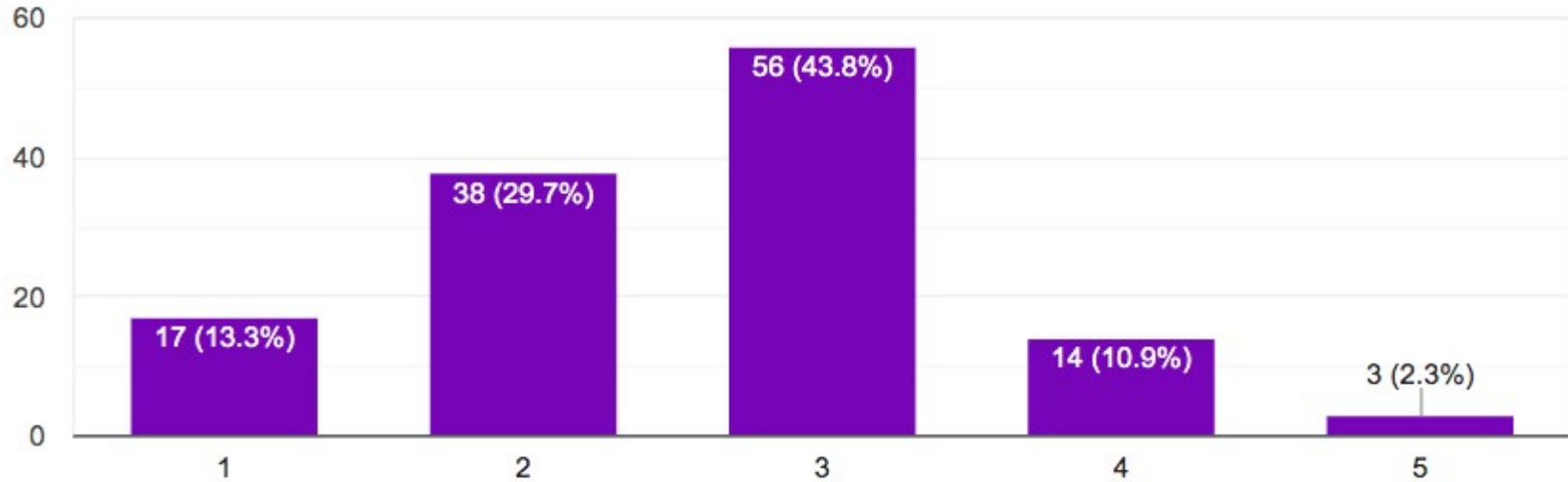
Response Breakdown

Responses from all grade levels, K-5, and across all schools (133 responses)



Social Studies Content Covered

1 = 1 am not able to cover SS content, 5 = I am able to cover 5-6 units

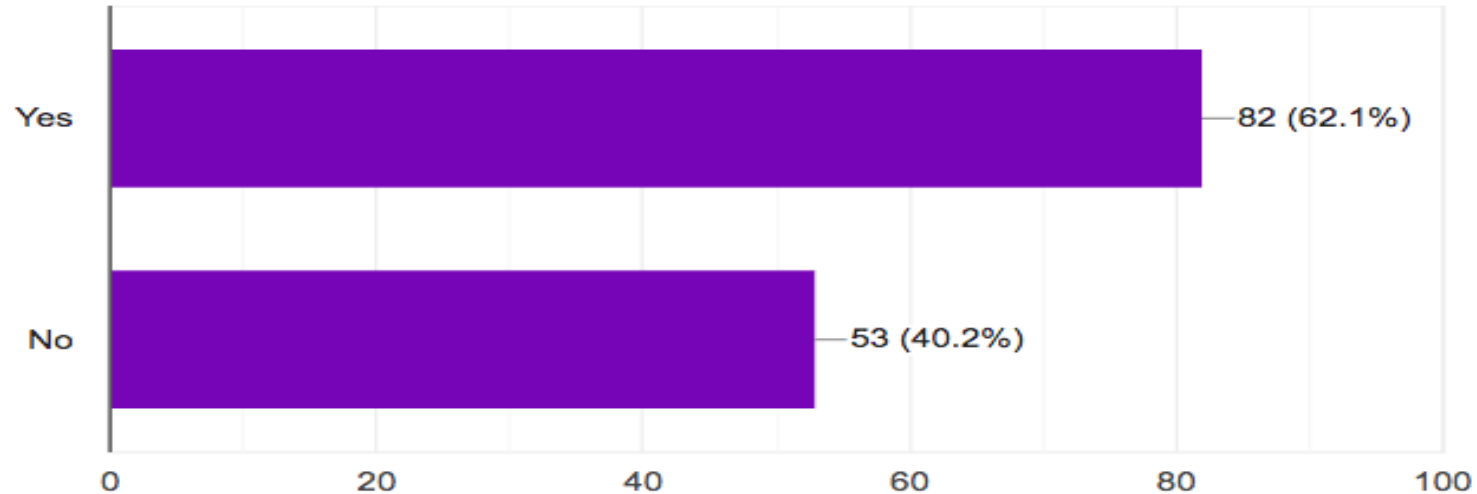


Additional Notes

- Though the bulk of elementary school teachers do not hold a BA in history, over $\frac{1}{3}$ report having taken undergraduate courses in history and more than half have taken a social studies methods course.
- Another $\frac{2}{3}$ report having a personal interest in social studies content.
- Teachers' additional comments reflect a desire to teach more social studies and a frustration at not having time or resources to do so.
- Many comments expressed a desire for district leadership in the area of elementary social studies.

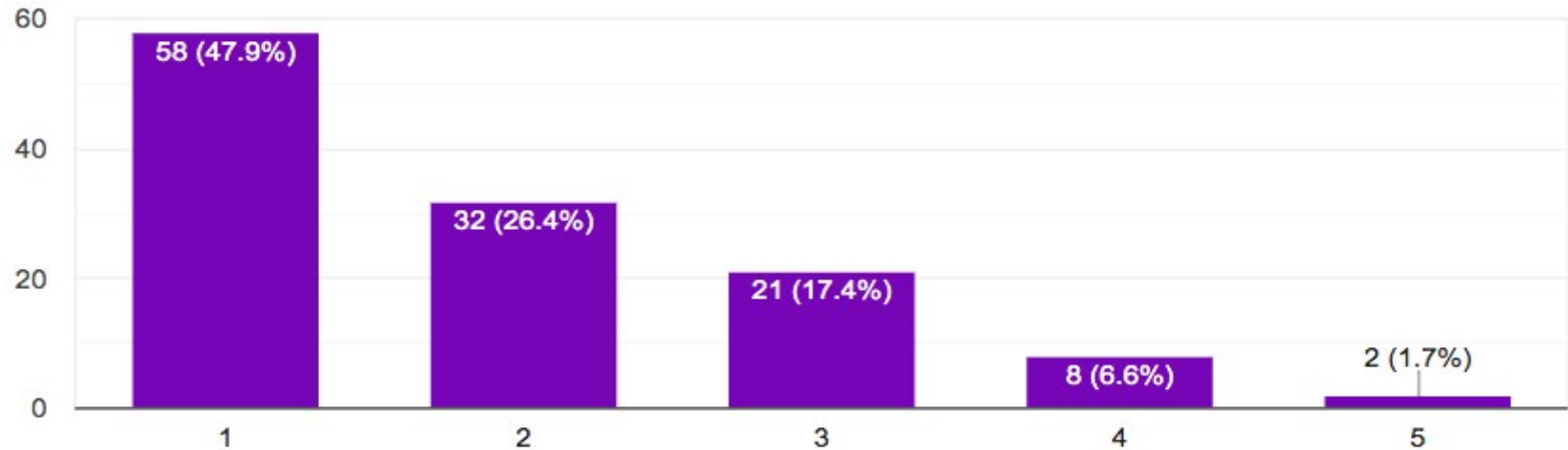
LD 291: An Act Requiring Wabanaki Studies

Do you know about LD 291?



LD 291

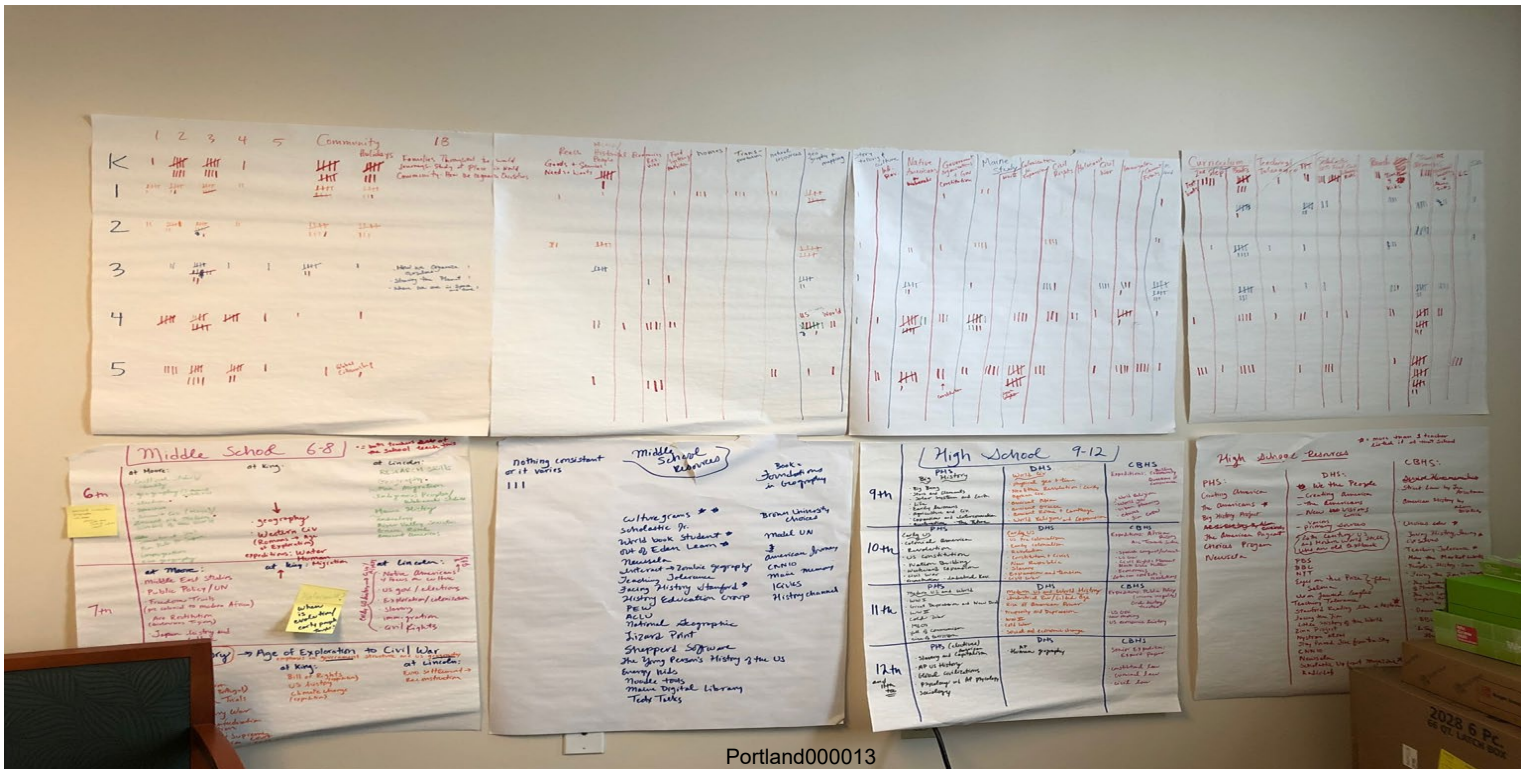
Do you feel you are meeting the requirements of the law? (1 = no, 5 = yes)



Additional Notes

- The majority of respondents named knowing little or nothing about Wabanaki Studies and not being sure how to design a Wabanaki Studies unit as the two major barriers they face.
- Not having time and not knowing where to look for or how to evaluate resources were also named as barriers.

K-5 Social Studies Topics



Major Themes Across K-5

K - 2

Holidays

Community (school or neighborhood)

Culture (homes, transportation, resources)

Geography and Mapping

Historical People

Storytelling

3 - 5

Portland

geography

Maine

immigration

Early US history
events

current

Revolutionary War

Civil War

Westward Expansion

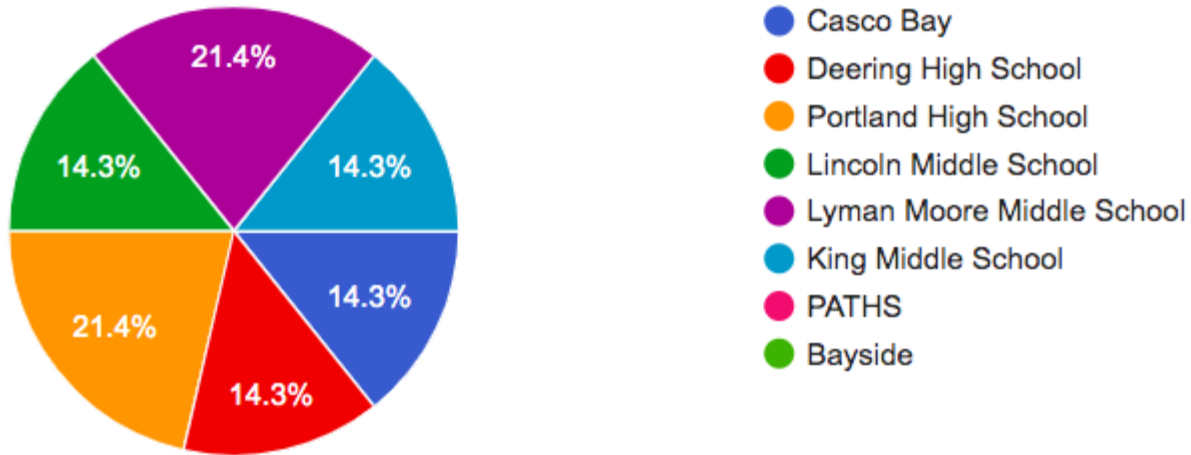
K-5 Resources

- The vast majority of respondents listed “my own resources,” books, and websites as their curriculum resources.
- Some listed specific websites, such as Time for Kids, Scholastic, etc)

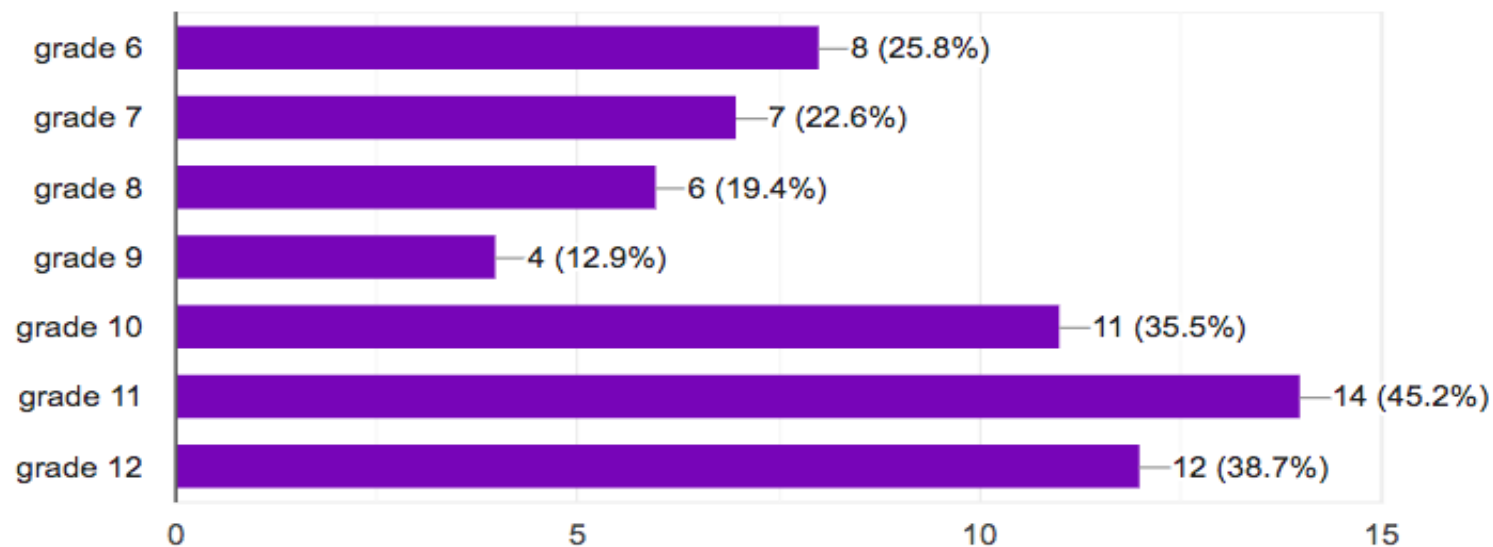
6 - 12 Survey Results

Response Breakdown

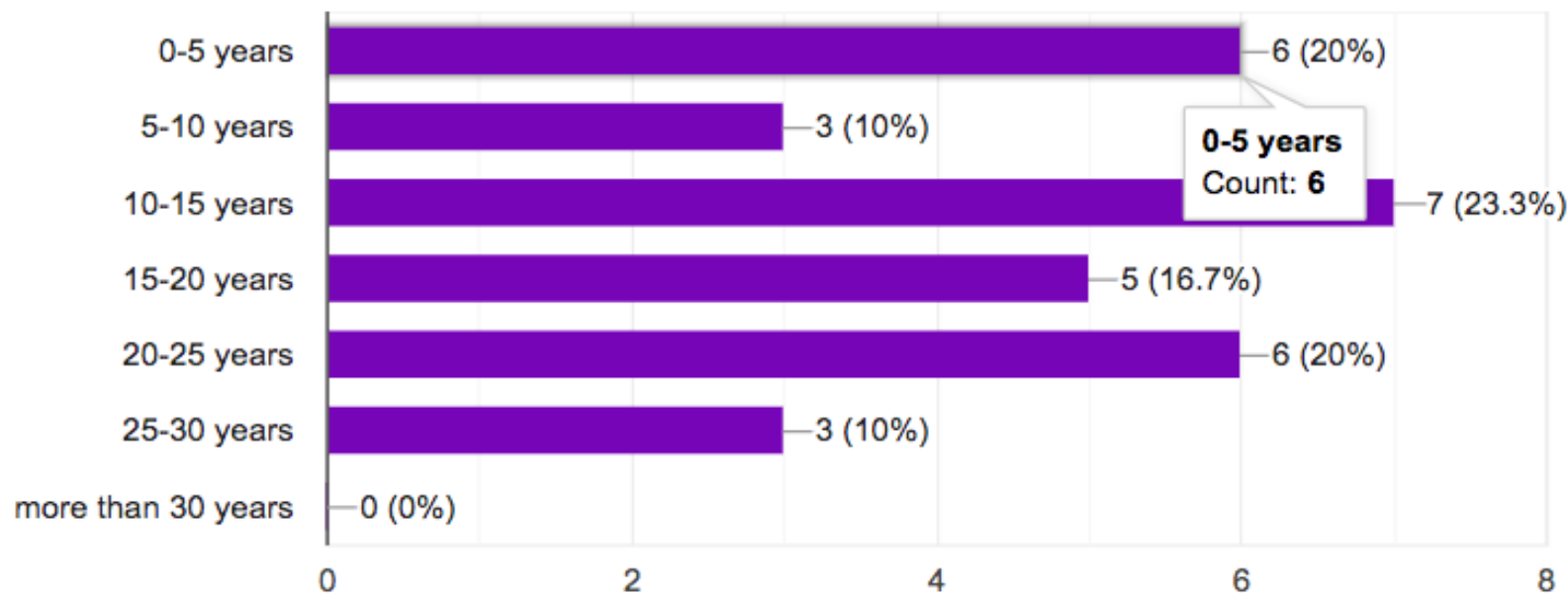
31 responses



Responses by Grade Level



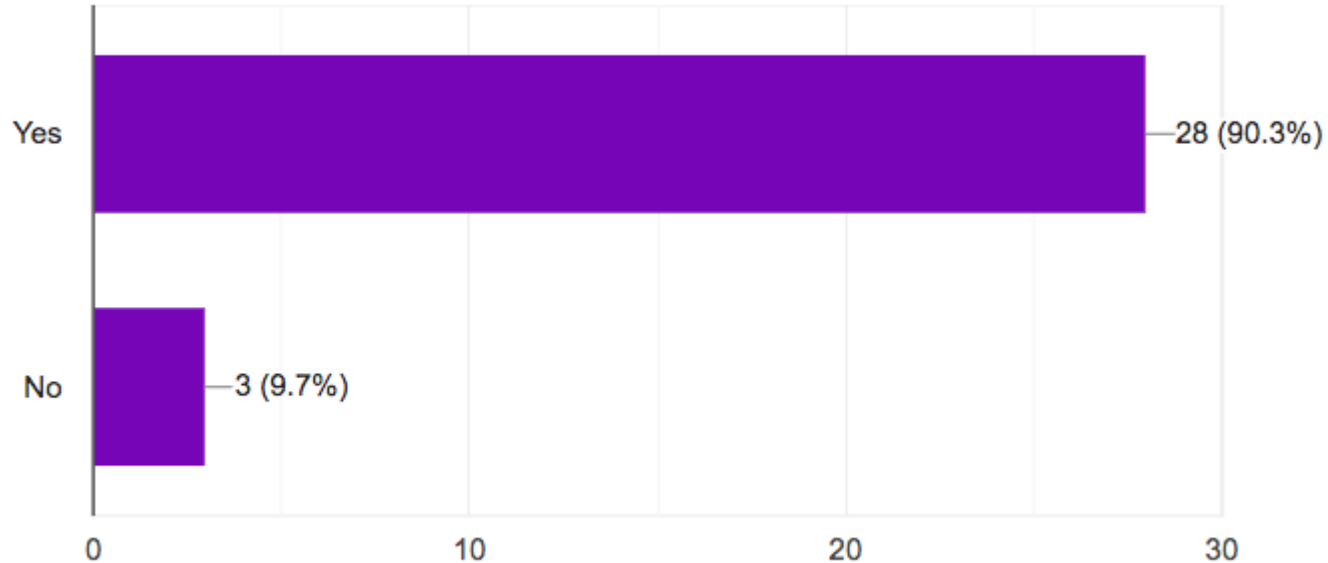
Number of Years Teaching Social Studies



Additional Notes

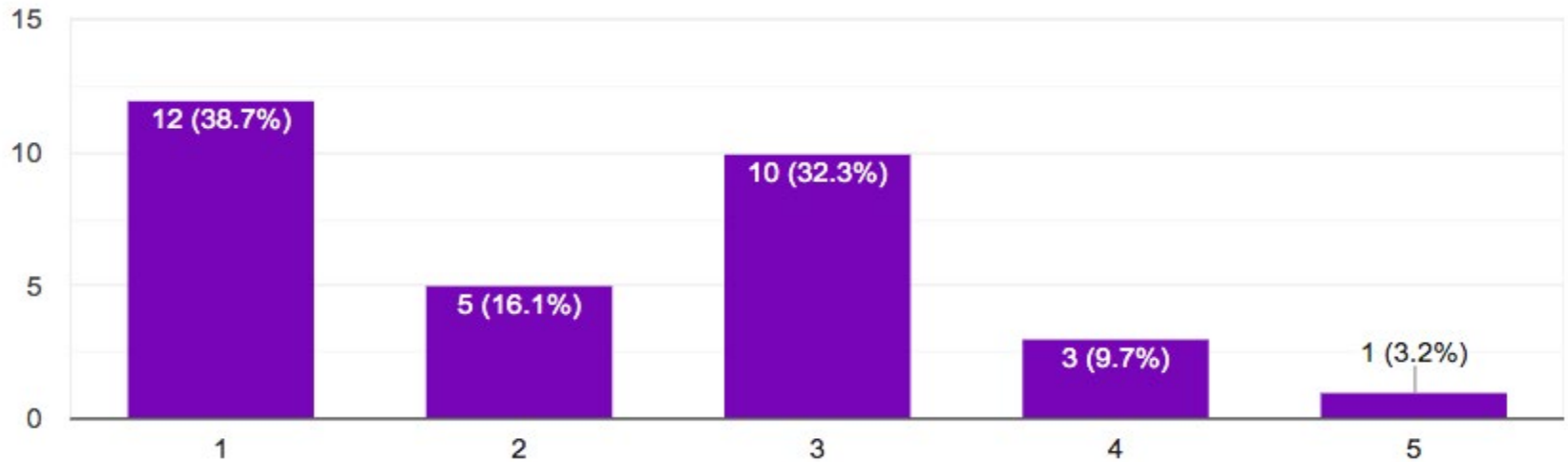
- 26 of 31 respondents have a BA in history, have an MA in history, or are working toward an MA history. Wow!

LD 291: An Act Requiring Wabanaki Studies



LD 291

Do you feel you are meeting the requirements of the law?



Additional Notes

- Respondents identified not knowing anything about Wabanaki Studies and being unsure of how to integrate Wabanaki Studies into their broader curriculum as the major barriers to meeting the requirements of LD 291.
- Fewer respondents identified not having time or not knowing where to look for resources as barriers.

6-8 Social Studies Units

6th grade

Cultural studies and identity

Geography

Election

Speeches

Ancient civilizations/ancient and modern
wonders of the world

Immigration/Human migration (expedition)

Research skills

7th grade

Middle east study

Public policy/UN

Africa (pre-colonial to modern)

Art restitution

Japan: history and culture

Early US History (colonization and slavery)

Immigration

Civil rights

6-8 Social Studies Units Covered

8th grade

US geography

Early US History through Civil War Era

Bill of Rights Expedition

Climate Change Expedition

6-8 Resources

- Many people listed teaching/curriculum websites (Teaching Tolerance, Facing History, Out of Eden, Choices, World Book Student, etc)
- Many people also listed news or history related sites (Newslea, National Geographic, History Channel, Young Person's History of the US, Lizard Print, PEW, American Journey, CNN10, etc.)
- Others listed geography sites or books (Zombie Geography, National Geographic, Foundations in Geography)

9-12

9th - *World Civilizations* (DHS), Big History (PHS) Building Community and Questions of Conscience (CBHS)

10th - *Early US History* (PHS and DHS) Africa Rising and Arc Toward Justice (CBHS)

11th - *Modern US and World History* (PHS and DHS) Public Policy and Oral History Theater (CBHS)

12th - electives (PHS and DHS) Expert Paper (CBHS)

9-12 Resources

- Many teachers listed specific curricula, books, or textbooks, such as Big History Project, Creating America, We the People, Facing the Lion, New Visions, and The Americans.
- Many teachers also listed curriculum and news websites such as Choices, Teaching Tolerance, Facing History and Ourselves, Scholastic Upfront Magazine, CNN10, Newsela, BBC, NYT, and PBS.
- Many high school teachers also listed films as curricular resources

Realigning and Reshaping Curriculum *Through* Wabanaki Studies and Native Studies

Curriculum Development Process

Decolonization

- Collaboration
- Privileging of Indigenous Voices
- Truth Telling

PPS Process

- Tribal Leaders Advisory Group
- Wabanaki Studies Commission Report from 2002
- Teacher PD
- Resources by Indigenous Peoples

Wabanaki Studies Curriculum Map

Guiding Principle

The landscape and natural environment are sources of knowledge. Gaining knowledge from the environment and landscape (land, forests, rivers, animals, weather, etc) is critical for understanding cultures, conflicts, and societies of the past and present.

From the 2002 Commission Report . . .

- A.) Who Are the Wabanaki People?
- B.) Wabanaki Tribal Territories
- C.) Maine Tribal Governments and Political Systems
- D.) Wabanaki Economic Systems
- E.) Experiences of Wabanaki People Throughout History
- F.) Wabanaki Cultural Systems

Wabanaki Curriculum Map

Color Coding

Wabanaki Studies and Native Studies--for the purpose of social studies--are broken into three major components:

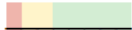

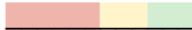

1. **Building Awareness and Respect** - includes natural history, geography, pre-contact culture, economics, and government
2. **Understanding Dispossession and Survival** - includes Indigenous perspective on and experiences in the period from The Age of Exploration through the Great Depression
3. **Identifying Contemporary Contributions and Challenges** - includes Indigenous perspective on and experiences from World War II through today

Wabanaki Studies Curriculum Map





A view of the curriculum map, K-12, by color coding only






PreK - 5

Grade Level	preK-2 	3rd 	4th 	5th 
Major Emphasis	Developing observation and awareness of environment	Developing awareness of the geography and ecosystems of the Presumpscot Watershed	Developing awareness of the topography, geology, geography, and ecosystems of Maine	Developing awareness of the topography, geology, geography, and ecosystems of the United States
Areas of Focus	<p>Past and continued existence of Wabanaki Peoples and other Indigenous Peoples</p> <p>A, B, and F</p>	<p>Experiences of Wabanaki peoples of Southern Maine, pre and post contact</p> <p>A, B, E, F (some C and D)</p>	<p>Experiences of Wabanaki peoples of Maine, pre and post contact</p> <p>A-F, emphasis on C and D</p>	<p>Experiences of Wabanaki Peoples and Indigenous Peoples of North America, pre and post contact</p> <p>A-F, emphasis on C and D</p>
Social Studies Topics Covered	<p>Holidays (Indigenous Peoples' Day and Thanksgiving)</p> <p>Community (School and Neighborhood)</p> <p>Historical People</p> <p>Storytelling (*see note!)</p>	<p>Portland History</p> <p>Immigration</p> <p>Portland000035</p>	<p>Maine Study</p> <p>Immigration</p>	<p>US Region Study</p> <p>Revolutionary War</p> <p>Westward Expansion</p> <p>Civil War</p> <p>Civil Rights Movement</p>

6 - 8

Grade level	6th 	7th  	8th 
Major Emphasis	Developing awareness of the topography, geology, geography, and ecosystems of ancient societies	Developing Awareness of the topography, geology, geography, and ecosystems of world civilizations	Continued Awareness and Understanding of the topography, geology, geography, and ecosystems of Maine, New England, and the early colonies of the USA
Areas of Focus	Early peoples and ancient societies with a focus on Indigenous peoples of the Americas	World civilizations with some focus on Indigenous peoples in Maine and across the globe	Inclusion of the perspectives and experiences of Wabanaki and other Native Peoples in the colonization and development of the US
Social Studies Topics Covered <i>that relate to Wabanaki Studies and Native Studies</i>	Cultural studies and identity Ancient civilizations Immigration <u>Re-Wilding</u> Deering Oaks Park Expedition at the EL middle school	UN and Public Policy Pre-colonial to Modern Africa Art Restitution Human Migration Expedition at the EL middle school	Colonial America Revolutionary War Westward Expansion Civil War Constitution Bill of Rights Climate Change Expedition at the EL middle school

9 -12

	9th 	10th 	11th 	12th
Major Emphasis	Developing and understanding of the relationship between environment and history	Deepening understanding of the relationship between environment and history	Deepening understanding of the relationship between environment and history	Refining understanding of relationship between environment, history, and contemporary issues
Areas of Focus and Guiding Questions	<p>Indigenous peoples of the globe</p> <p>Doctrine of Discovery</p> <p><i>What is the relationship between Indigenous peoples and their homelands? How does it differ from non-Indigenous people?</i></p>	<p>Doctrine of Discovery</p> <p>Treaties of colonial American and the Maritimes</p> <p>Scalp Proclamations</p> <p><i>What is the relationship between genocide and land?</i></p>	<p>Land Claims Settlement Act of 1980</p> <p>Indian Law</p> <p>Contemporary struggles</p> <p><i>Do Native Americans have the full rights of US Citizens?</i></p>	
Courses Offered	World Civilizations	Early US History <small>Portland000037</small>	Modern US and World History	Elective courses

Plans for 2019-2020

- Focus will be on design and planning for implementation
- Continued teacher PD (funding dependant)
- Tie into equity team work
- Continued collaboration with tribal leaders (2 large meetings per year)
- Continued outreach and work with Indigenous families in PPS
- Development of Teacher Advisory Committee for preK-5 and 6-12
(sign up today!!)

Date (some of the months may be inaccurate. This was the best I could pull together from email, calendar and memory)

Communication Type

August 2019	Wabanaki Studies Committee Meeting, UMO
September 2019	Presenting for the DOE Maine Native American Standards Workshops
November 2019	Wabanaki Studies Committee Meeting, Augusta
February 2020	Wabanaki Studies Committee Meeting
May 2020	Wabanaki Studies Committee Meeting
October 6, 2020	Meeting with Pendar Makin, Bridgid Neptune, Donna Loring, Mary Herman, and Fiona Hopper
December, 2020	Wabanaki Studies Committee Meeting
January 2021	Meeting with Mary Herman, Bridgid Neptune, and Fiona Hopper
February 2021	Meeting with Wabanaki Public Health and DOE
April 2021	Wabanaki Studies Committee Meeting

Notes

This was the first meeting of the Wabanaki Studies Committee (formerly Wabanaki Studies Commission) since 2004, I think. I was invited to join the committee.

Joe Schmidt asked me to present at a series of workshops he'd organized around the rollout of the newly revised social studies standards. These three workshops focused on the standards related to Maine Native Americans. The second presentation was supposed to be in October of 2019. I got sick and was unable to present.

This was the second meeting of the Wabanaki Studies Committee. The committee was originally supposed to meet monthly. Pender was injured in September and had to cancel that meeting. We've never met monthly.

I was unable to attend this meeting because it was scheduled during school vacation week.

This was our first virtual meeting, which I attended.

Donna Loring set up a meeting for Bridgid Neptune and me meet with Commissioner Makin to discuss how the DOE could support PPS's Wabanaki Studies work. We asked directly about possible financial support, specifically for the film part of the curriculum that could easily be used statewide. We were offered the use of a conference room at the DOE office in which we could record interviews, possibly with a microphone from the DOE. We asked if there were plans to elevate the curriculum Portland is creating on the DOE's statewide platform. No answer was given.

I was unable to attend this meeting due to a scheduling conflict. It was a one hour meeting, if memory serves, which was a reduction from the two hour meetings we had previously had

Mary Herman reached out to Bridgid and me to schedule a meeting. However, when we got into the meeting a week or so later, she could not recall why she had asked us to meet.

Bridgid and I were invited to meet with Wabanaki Public Health, Joe Schmidt, and Mary Herman to talk about Wabanaki Studies

I was unable to attend this meeting because of a scheduling conflict. It had been rescheduled from the original March date.

From: Emma Bond
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2021 2:21 PM
To: Margaret Edwards
Subject: Fw: Wabanaki Studies - Request

FYI

Emma Bond
pronouns: she/her/hers
Legal Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Maine
PO Box 7860, Portland, ME 04112
■ 207-619-8687
■ ebond@aclumaine.org
www.aclumaine.org

■
From: Xavier Botana <botanx@portlandschools.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2021 1:32 PM
To: Emma Bond <ebond@aclumaine.org>; Anne Rothacker <rothaa@portlandschools.org>
Subject: Re: Wabanaki Studies - Request

EXTERNAL MESSAGE:

Emma,
Sorry for the delay in getting back to you. We have retrieved about 400 emails and are close to being able to get you the first batch of ~200. That will be coming to you from Anne Rothacker, cc'd here.

We are completing a couple of more comprehensive documentation around professional development that we've organized and the costs associated with our work. I will probably be able to review those this weekend and have them for you shortly after that.

We also are proud to share with you [this article](#) that was recently published written by our Social Studies curriculum leader Fiona Hopper that documents the past few years of our work and also provides a good insight into the "why" we think it matters. She is willing to do a "drier" version for you guys if you would find that helpful. She would also be available to talk through any of this with you and/or others.

Thanks for your patience.
Xavier

On Tue, Apr 27, 2021 at 9:54 AM Emma Bond <ebond@aclumaine.org> wrote:
Xavier,

I hope you're doing well. I'm just checking in on the status of the FOAA request regarding Wabanaki studies. Do you have any estimate for the timing of the first production of documents? (With the understanding that we had discussed a rolling production, so the first production may not be complete). Thanks for any additional information you're able to provide. Happy to jump on the phone if that's easier.

All the best,

Emma

Emma Bond

pronouns: she/her/hers

Legal Director

American Civil Liberties Union of Maine

PO Box 7860, Portland, ME 04112

■ 207-619-8687

■ ebond@aclumaine.org

www.aclumaine.org

From: Emma Bond <ebond@aclumaine.org>

Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 12:23 PM

To: Xavier Botana <botanx@portlandschools.org>

Subject: Re: Wabanaki Studies - Request

Xavier,

Thanks for the quick response, and for all the work Portland has done in this area.

Best,

Emma

Emma Bond

pronouns: she/her/hers

Legal Director

American Civil Liberties Union of Maine

PO Box 7860, Portland, ME 04112

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From: Xavier Botana <botanx@portlandschools.org>
Sent: Monday, March 15, 2021 8:00 AM
To: Emma Bond <ebond@aclumaine.org>
Cc: James Morse <superintendent@portlandschools.org>; Maulian Dana <Maulian.Dana@penobscotnation.org>; Chris Newell <chris@abbemuseum.org>; Starr Kelly <starr@abbemuseum.org>; Margaret Edwards <medwards@aclumaine.org>; Bruce W. Smith <bwsmith@dwmlaw.com>; Melissa A. Hewey <MHewey@dwmlaw.com>; Melea Nalli <nallim@portlandschools.org>; Anne Rothacker <rothaa@portlandschools.org>
Subject: Re: Wabanaki Studies - Request

EXTERNAL MESSAGE:

Dear Emma,

This acknowledges receipt of your Freedom of Access request. We will review it and respond with a estimated timeline and associated cost.

Best,
Xavier

On Fri, Mar 12, 2021 at 11:49 AM Emma Bond <ebond@aclumaine.org> wrote:

Dear Superintendent Botana,

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Wabanaki Studies law, 20-A M.R.S. § 4706(2), requiring instruction in "Maine Native American history." In light of the importance of this topic, we are reaching out to schools across Maine to learn more about how this law has worked in practice. Specifically, we are reaching out to the five largest school districts in Maine, and to five school districts near tribal communities in Maine.

Attached is a letter providing background about the issue, culminating in a records request seeking information about Wabanaki studies in your school. You will see that we specifically address some of Portland's recent successes in the area! We know that the letter covers a lot of ground, so would be very excited to hear from you or your staff to talk through any questions you may have.

We appreciate your commitment to public service and education in Maine and look forward to working with you on this important project.

Best regards,
Emma

Emma Bond
pronouns: she/her/hers
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Xavier Botana
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Pronouns: he/him

*** Please Note: ***

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Finding a Riverview: Anti-Racist Education, Decolonization, and the Development of a District-Wide Wabanaki Studies Curriculum

Fiona Hopper

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Studies Coordinator

In my experience, my fellow white New Englanders know very little about the Indigenous peoples, histories, or cultures of this area. In what is now called Maine, there is profound ignorance about Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Mi'kmaq, and Maliseet/ Wolastaqiyik cultures and communities.

When we encounter our ignorance, we often express surprise or perhaps embarrassment, but we rarely consider our ignorance a matter of public health. So when Lisa Sockabasin, Director of Programs and External Affairs at Wabanaki Public Health, said during an early meeting between Portland Schools officials and tribal leaders, that Wabanaki Studies was a matter of public health, I thought about it for weeks afterwards. As I contemplated her words, it became clear that decolonizing is not a social justice add-on, or a trendy way to demonstrate wokeness, or an additional box on the cultural proficiency checklist.

It is a matter of life and death.

Like most white people, I've been trained to think that my ignorance is accidental, or at least benign, but it's neither. Also, it isn't as simple as not knowing. As Charles Mills points out, white ignorance cannot be explained as white not-knowing because it is ultimately about errors and biases in thinking, which cannot be overcome just by learning new information.¹ The kind of place-ignorance I share with most of my fellow white New Englanders is not just a byproduct of settler colonialism.

It is the *work* of settler colonialism.

This place-ignorance, so common among non-Native people and white people in particular, is part of the structure of settler colonialism. It's no accident that we're ignorant and it's no accident that we remain that way.

The failure of the state of Maine to implement Wabanaki Studies is a structural failure rooted in settler colonialism—a failure in no small part responsible for the ongoing public health crisis that Lisa Sockabasin identified.

Passamaquoddy nurse practitioner and consultant for the Portland Publics School, Bridgid Neptune, describes it this way:

Our tribal community, like others, is mourning preventable deaths of young people and deaths of our Elders who carry our language and culture. As I mourn recent losses and as each day passes, this work becomes more and more important for us. Without a doubt, I know that Wabanaki Studies, done right, will change the outcomes my family and Native community face.

The gravity of structural inequity was reinforced for me when I stood below the Dundee Dam on

¹ Charles Mills, "White Ignorance," *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 11-38.

the Presumpscot River last summer. The dam towered one hundred feet above—a great behemoth of concrete and steel. Water poured down in a long, controlled line from the pond the dam had created above.

Though it looks like part of the river on maps, to call this area a river is inaccurate. The river has been buried in a pool of near stagnant water. The dam has pushed the water far outside its banks, which causes a continual swirl of silt and debris. Even if they could make it up that far, fish would not be able to lay eggs in the aquatic dead zone created by the dam. The flowing water that fish have journeyed from the sea to find for thousands of years is now gone.

Chief Polin, an Indigenous leader from the Presumpscot River watershed, is the first recorded water protectors of the Presumpscot River. In 1739, he traveled over one hundred miles on foot to Boston to tell Governor Belcher of the destruction wrought by the dams that had been built to support the extraction of mast pines for British ships. These same ships transported barrels of dried cod harvested by the ton from the Gulf of Maine to feed enslaved Africans in the southern colonies.²

At this time, Colonel Thomas Westbrook, military leader and the King's Mast Agent, was building a massive dam across the river. In his request that fish passage be included in the dam, Chief Polin referred to the Presumpscot as the "river to which I belong."³ He explained that the loss of a critical food source would devastate his people.

Belcher requested that Westbrook add fish passage, but the request was ignored. In order to

protect the ecosystem to which they had belonged since time immemorial, the people of the Presumpscot river attacked dams, mills, and upriver logging settlements for the next seventeen years.⁴

I'd recently learned this history and thought of it as I stood under the shadow of the Dundee Dam. It was then that I saw how many traits white supremacy and settler colonialism have in

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ignorant and it's no accident
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common with dams. How their combined forces have fundamentally shaped the course of society just as dams artificially

alter the course of a river. They use their power to control people and resources just as dams control the flow of a river—and, as with dams, full life is only restored through their removal.

White supremacy and settler colonialism are structures that shape contemporary American society, just as dams shape habitat. All who live here travel through the deadened, toxic environment they create. All who live here have their lives altered by white supremacy and settler colonialism's power to determine the time, length, and course of our passage. When we fall one hundred feet into the roiling waters below, we think it was unavoidable. The experience of a life shaped by powerful, controlling, human-made systems convinces many of us that a series of dead ponds really is a river.

Thankfully not everyone is convinced. Many are still willing to share a river view.

Nearly twenty years ago, The Maine legislature passed LD 291, *An Act to Require Teaching of*

² Atlantic Black Box Project, 2019, <https://atlanticblackbox.com/>.

³ Lisa Brooks and Cassandra Brooks, "The Reciprocity Principle and Traditional Ecological Knowledge,"

International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies 3 (2010):11-28.

⁴ Maine Historical Society, "Holding Up the Sky," 2019, <https://www.mainememory.net/sitebuilder/site/2976/page/4665/display>.

*Maine Native American History and Culture.*⁵ The legislation received little attention nationally, but it laid the groundwork for other Indigenous nations to push states to pass similar requirements.

The legislation was written and put forward by Donna Loring, the Penobscot Nation representative to the Maine state government, and Donald Soctomah, tribal representative from the Passamaquoddy Nation. Though it did not use the term decolonization, the law was, as Indigenous Education scholar, Penobscot Nation citizen, and relative of Donna Loring, Dr. Rebecca Sockbeson, puts it: “intended to function as an educational policy working toward anti-racist education and decolonization.”

The intentions of the law’s Indigenous authors, Dr. Sockbeson further explains, were trivialized by state inaction.⁶ A lack of effort to fulfill the requirements of the law became yet another way for the state to disregard Native communities and leaders and to perpetuate white ignorance.

A recent state-wide survey revealed what Indigenous leaders, educators, activists, and presenters already knew: that the law was not being followed and when attention was paid to the Indigenous people of this area, it all too frequently reinforced the colonial narratives of extinction and the white supremacist narrative of inferiority. Even after twenty years, the law that set a new precedent in the nation has not been institutionalized by schools.⁷

I’ve spoken with many educators over the past few years, the majority of whom are cisgender white women, like me. Many want to

honor their obligation to uphold state law and teach Wabanaki Studies, but they frequently are overwhelmed by the scope of what they do not know and are afraid of making a mistake.

The combination of white ignorance, fear, and the absence of institutional motivation and support has left the groundbreaking legislation passed in 2001 largely ignored in schools located in what is now called Maine. Dr. Sockbeson notes that “many call themselves ‘allies’ to Indigenous peoples in Maine, yet Wabanaki Studies Legislation has been left behind.”⁸

I first encountered LD 291 after nearly ten years of teaching in the Portland Public Schools. A Black colleague and I co-founded a course for Portland educators focused on the relationship between systemic racism and education. In our design process, we decided to reframe American history in terms of stolen land and stolen labor. I cannot recall the exact origin of this idea. We were reading and digesting a lot of information at the time, but when we hit on that concept, the entire course fell into place. We named white supremacy and settler colonialism as the defining structures of the United States of America, then we went out and told our colleagues.

Since its inception, the course has served nearly one hundred and fifty educators in our district. It has proven to be a foundational element of the district-wide equity work launched just a few years after the course’s inception. The class allows educators to reconsider history they learned long ago and to examine how systemic racism is at work in themselves, their schools, and the United States.

⁵ *An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture*, http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_120th/billtexts/LD029101-1.asp.

⁶ , Rebecca Sockbeson “Maine Indigenous Education Left Behind: A Call for Anti-Racist Conviction as Political Will Toward Decolonization,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 58, no. 3 (2019): 105.

⁷ “Research Findings,” Reclaiming Native Truth: A Project to Dispel America’s Myths and Misconceptions, June 2018, <https://rnt.firstnations.org/>

⁸ Rebecca Sockbeson, “Maine Indigenous Education Left Behind: A Call for Anti-Racist Conviction as Political Will Toward Decolonization,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 58, no. 3 (2019): 125.

The creation of this class was, unknowingly, our district's first small move toward decolonization.

When we were still in the planning stages for the course, I drove two hours north to the Penobscot Nation. It was there I met Chris Sockalexis, Officer of Historic and Cultural Preservation, and later James Francis, Director of Historic and Cultural Preservation and tribal historian. James agreed to spend a class period with the first group of teachers, and has been a regular guest speaker ever since.

For many white teachers who grew up in what is now called Maine, he is the first citizen of a nation within the Wabanaki Confederacy they have ever met. And for some teachers who grew up in the towns of Orono, Old Town, or other settler communities built on unceded Penobscot territory, he is the first Penobscot citizen they have spoken with at length.

In the fall of 2017, the Assistant Superintendent of the Portland Public Schools, Melea Nalli, and the then newly hired Equity Specialist, Barrett Wilkinson, met, for the first time, with Indigenous leaders from across the state. About a month before, I'd read an article in the local paper about a resolution in front of the Portland city council to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. In it, Portland Superintendent Xavier Botana was quoted as saying that our schools taught about colonization and its destructive legacy.

I knew that teaching about the destructive impact of settler behavior and teaching about Indigenous peoples were far from being one in the same, and I knew, too, that we were rarely doing either one well within the Portland Public Schools. But when I read that article, it taught me to hope that we had district leadership who would support the implementation of a Wabanaki Studies curriculum.

I'd come to see LD 291 as anti-racist legislation that the white supremacist institutions of the state of Maine had left unfulfilled and to

see its implementation as a critical first step toward meaningful equity work.

As a personal second step, I reached out to the mother of two Passamaquoddy children who attended the elementary school where I worked as an ESOL teacher. We met for a cup of coffee and have since shared many more as we became partners, colleagues, and close friends.

Bridgid Neptune (Passamaquoddy) grew up in Mohtumikuk, part of the Passamaquoddy community near the international border between what is now called the United States and what is now called Canada. She works as a nurse practitioner in southern Maine, and also works tirelessly as a consultant to the development of Wabanaki Studies work in the Portland Public Schools. Our district's fledgling successes would not be possible without the support, feedback, and investment of Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet/Wolastoqiyik, and Mi'kmaq advisors like Bridgid.

In addition to regular consultation from Bridgid and support from the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribal historians, James Francis and Donald Soctomah, the district Academic Team has met bi-annually with tribal advisors to gather feedback on how our work is progressing and on our proposed next steps. Roger Paul, Chief Clarissa Sabattis, John Dennis, Lilah Atkins, Maulian Dana, Lisa Sockabasin, Esther Anne, Starr Kelly, Richard Sillyboy, Gabe Paul, Rebecca Sockbeson, Darren Ranco, Donna Loring, Maria Girouard, and Chris Sockalexis have all participated in advisory meetings. The guidance of Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet/Wolastoqiyik, and Mi'kmaq advisors is critical.

We cannot expect to do any decolonizing of curriculum without attempting to decolonize the process by which it is created. This kind of “dam removal” does not come easily to school departments. It requires supportive leadership, a commitment to equity, and the vision to understand the critical connection between decolonizing, anti-racist work and equity. It also requires patience, cross-cultural relationship building, and resources.

In my fifteen years of experience in education, this is not the norm of how schools do business.

Until I started working part time as the Wabanaki Studies Coordinator for the Portland Public Schools, I had no idea how little I knew about rivers, or even what there was to know about them. The Indigenous leaders, advisors, and friends I’ve been privileged to work with had not pointed this out directly, but instead have invited me to see, on many different occasions, that I do not have a river view.

I didn’t even know the term river view, let alone what it implied, until Penobscot and Passamaquoddy language teacher, Roger Paul, mentioned it during a tribal advisory meeting at the Abbe Museum.

I’d used the word *land* repeatedly in an early draft of a curriculum scope and sequence. On the first page I wrote some assertions about the importance of land-based education. I used *land* because that’s what was used in the articles I’d read about decolonizing land-based education. These articles were all full of the word *land*. They came from academics writing about the work happening within First Nations communities in the plains of what is now called Canada, an area, I later realized, with fewer rivers than the

Dawnland—one translation of the Indigenous name for the lands and waters of what is now called northern New England and the Maritime Provinces of Canada.

After reading through my description, Roger pointed out that the nations of the Wabanaki

Confederacy—

Penobscot,

Maliseet/Wolastoqiyik,

Mi’kmaq,

Passamaquoddy, and

Abenaki—are river

people. “We have a

river view,” he said. I asked if landscape might be a more appropriate term. “It’s your language,” he joked good naturedly, “you decide.”

That morning, Starr Kelly, Curator of Education, had offered a tour of the museum to all meeting participants who arrived early. The Abbe Museum is a small Smithsonian affiliate and a national leader in decolonizing museum spaces. She summarized the decolonizing framework outlined in Amy Lonetree’s groundbreaking book *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native Americans in National and Tribal Museums*.⁹

Lonetree names (1) Collaborating with Indigenous People, (2) Privileging Indigenous Voices, and (3) Truth Telling as three guiding principles—some might also say critical commitments—of decolonizing work.

The curator went on to frame the museum tour through these principles so we could see how they have been applied to the curation of exhibits, use of space, and even the organizational structures of the museum. They had used Lonetree’s principles to reconsider the colonial conception of a museum. The power of this new (or newly popular) view had reshaped their organization.

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⁹ Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native Americans in National and Tribal Museums* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

The assistant superintendent, curriculum director, and I wrote furiously in our notebooks as she spoke.

Later in that same meeting I said that meaningful inclusion of Wabanaki Studies in any school-based curriculum would require that the content and the concepts move through the curriculum rather than being compartmentalized in some tiny section of it. “You’re describing a river,” John Dennis, Mi’kmaq educator, noted. “Oh,” I said, “I had no idea.”

On the three-hour drive back to Portland, my colleagues and I talked through everything we’d heard. “I’ve never had a day like this,” one of my colleagues said, “where I said almost nothing and was engaged the entire time.” We all agreed and discussed how we, too, might use the three principles of decolonizing that the Abbe Museum used to shape the development of Wabanaki Studies curriculum and, maybe, everything else.

Viewing settler colonialism as a structure rather than a moment in long-ago history is a critical first step in decolonizing work, Starr Kelly explained to the social studies vertical team when she presented to us. Settler colonizers come to stay—that’s not an event, it’s an ongoing invasion.¹⁰

Her presentation was titled *Can We Decolonize Educational Spaces?: A Critical Look at Settler Colonialism and Empire Building*. In it, she asked teachers of history to consider the ways in which they uphold empire-building as the pinnacle of civilization and how destructive that ubiquitous narrative is.

Even now, the Penobscot Nation is fighting for water rights to the Penobscot River. This is

why decolonization and cultural humility are named as guiding principles of the new social studies instructional vision crafted by a team of teachers, Indigenous parents, and students from the Black Students Union, just this year. Moves made toward decolonization allow for anti-racist work, social justice education, environmental education, and inquiry to be front and center.

Much of decolonizing in social studies begins with an assertion of interrelationship. The questions that follow require students and teachers to see relationships between structures, events, systems, and resources. These questions include:

What is the relationship between power and economics?

Between empire building, genocide, and enslavement?

Between settler colonialism and the founding of the United States of America?

Between dams and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples?

What is the relationship between the state of Maine and the tribal communities within its superimposed boundaries?

What is Indigenous sovereignty and why is it important?

What are treaty obligations? How can we uphold them?

Decolonizing requires students and teachers to ask critical questions of power, nation building, capitalism, and all of the other topics schools typically avoid engaging with.

In education, we often call this kind of student-led inquiry “best practice.” But anyone who has had the opportunity to learn, even a little bit, from Native educators knows that supporting an understanding of

¹⁰ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

interrelationship—and not feeding students conclusions—is how Indigenous pedagogy works. No jargon, special terminology, or teacher training needed. Questions centered on understanding interrelationship¹¹ will underpin the pre-K-12 Wabanaki Studies scope and sequence currently under development. Bridgid Neptune will get first read of the compelling questions, then they will go to the tribal advisory group. Finally, COVID-19 protocols permitting, we will convene at the Abbe Museum once again.

Decolonizing requires students and teachers to ask critical questions of power, nation building, capitalism, and all of the other topics schools typically avoid engaging with.

The questions will be revised and then will go to the Social Studies Content Team, where they will be refined once more. Then, finally, the team will be ready to construct units that support each inquiry. Some of that work will be reading, reviewing, and adapting curriculum that already exists—curriculum made by the Indigenous nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy in what is now called the United States and what is now called Canada. Some of that work will involve building new material. The whole process, though, will be guided by the first principle Amy Lonetree names: collaboration with Indigenous communities.

All this said, the principle of collaboration is often in tension with the normal bureaucratic channels of curriculum development. It takes a willingness on the part of district leadership in order to function, and even then it is a tightrope we're walking all the time. We know that what we

create will not be perfect. We know that teachers in our district will need massive professional development support. We know, too, that what is created now will need to be refined again and again and again as understanding grows and knowledge is refined.

This will take a commitment to collaboration: one that educational institutions in the state of Maine have yet to sustain. But I am heartened by the perspective Bridgid shared in a recent update presented to the Portland School Board. She wrote,

There's been no shortage of well-intentioned efforts and program on the Rez. We've seen plenty of 2-3 year grant-funded programs designed by non-Natives that fail to meet their objectives. They fail to center the community's voice, perspectives or strengths. They privilege their intentions, while ignoring our culture and identities. They are trying to "help," they say. This is not helpful, it's harmful. This inevitably leads to low expectations and mistrust. PPS has avoided those missteps and is leading the state in this work. They have, and continue to, center Indigenous voices and perspectives, which has earned them confidence and buy-in from community leaders, Elders, and young people. This has not been easy or quick, it is complex and emotional. Trust and communication needed to be rebuilt before getting started on tangible curriculum work.

One afternoon, I had lunch with James Francis, at the Boom House, which overlooks a massive dam spanning the Penobscot River in Old Town,

¹¹ Sometimes called compelling questions in the world of inquiry-based education. See the Inquiry Design Model, <http://www.c3teachers.org/inquiry-design-model/>.

Maine. When we entered, James ushered me over to the plate glass window to admire the river. I had never seen someone look at a river with such attention and interest. It was as though we'd just entered a room with a revered guest, and I had no idea who it was.

When I crossed the bridge over the Penobscot after dropping James off, I looked out at the river, trying to see what he saw. I watched the water swirl and ripple and pour toward the giant dam downstream. This was the first time I'd ever deliberately contemplated a river. And I had a flicker of understanding. Rivers. That was where to begin if one wanted to find a river view.

Highly respected aboriginal leader of the Dene First Nation, Georges Erasmus, says "where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created."

I first heard this quote while watching a campaign announcement video from the 2020 presidential candidate, Mark Charles. In his campaign, Mark Charles, a citizen of the Navajo Nation and a scholar of the Doctrine of Discovery, calls for a truth and conciliation commission—on par with post-apartheid South Africa—to be created in the United States.¹²

He makes a compelling case for why this is the only way to find truth, healing, and equality in a country based on land-theft, slavery, and the disenfranchisement of huge swaths of the population. In naming the absence of common

memory, Mark Charles points to the deliberate ways in which settler colonialism and white supremacy have worked in tandem to break

Building a common memory in order to create a true community where all people have dignity, safety, and equal access to resources and justice is the long, long work of decolonizing.

communities and prevent shared understanding in order to ensure power and profit for a select few. Building a common memory in order to create a true community where all people have dignity, safety, and equal access

to resources and justice is the long, long work of decolonizing.

Last spring, the Portland Public Schools hosted its first ever community dinner for Indigenous families. Huntley Brook Singers from Motahkomikuk set up in the middle of the Portland High School cafeteria and families gathered to eat, dance, talk, and learn about the Wabanaki Studies work underway.

Bridgid had posted the event in social media forums used by her community and done outreach through a network of friends and relatives scattered throughout her homeland. She hand signed and mailed invitations to the homes of students who appeared on a list painstakingly created by our district student data expert. The process of creating that list revealed data collection problems that run deep into the local, state, and federal data collection systems. The invisibility of Indigenous students in our district data was profound, and acts as a present moment example of the destructive aspects of settler colonialism.¹³ The drive to eliminate and replace Indigenous people that perpetuated nearly one

¹² Mark Charles for President, <https://www.markcharles2020.com/>

¹³ Northwest Tribal Educators Alliance, "Obscured Identities: Improving the Accuracy of Identification of American Indian and Alaska Native Students," *Education*

Northwest (June 2017), <https://educationnorthwest.org/resources/obscured-identities-improving-accuracy-identification-american-indian-and-alaska-native>.

hundred years of war in this area is still at work in the data systems of today.

How can you build a common memory with a community when you refuse to see that it is even there?

As I watched him, I saw how the school system had failed him. It failed him because it could not see him. I wondered what it would've been like if he could've been seen.

During the community dinner, I ran into a student I'd known during my first year as a teacher. He hadn't been in my eighth grade English class, but was best friends with a boy who was, and they often hung around in my room in the morning and after school. The young man, who I will call Jason, had his daughter with him. She would be starting kindergarten in Portland in the fall.

I remembered Jason well. I had no idea he was a tribal citizen of a nation in the Wabanaki Confederacy. I doubted if any of his teachers had, or if they knew, what it would have even meant to them. Jason was constantly being disciplined in school. He struggled academically and seemed to drive his teachers crazy. I could tell he was bright and funny, and I enjoyed talking with him. But I was also a little relieved that he wasn't in my class.

Toward the end of the evening, Jason danced in a circle around the drum with his daughter and his nieces and nephews. He had his eyes closed. His feet knew exactly what to do, so he had no reason to look at them. As I watched him, I saw how the school system had failed him. It failed him because it could not see him. I wondered what it would've been like if he could've been seen. The entire trajectory of his life could've

been different if he had been seen and understood at school.

Our institution failed him, and had no idea.

Jason's sense of himself as a learner, his future opportunities, his connection to school, and his access to education were all collateral damage of white ignorance. An ignorance that can be, and is, deadly. His mother mentioned to me that he'd had many struggles. She didn't elaborate, but I heard Lisa Sockabasin in my head. Wabanaki Studies in every school is not just about curricular compliance, it's about visibility, dignity, and, above all, every person and community's right to wellbeing.

Wabanaki Studies is about public health.

Where common memory is lacking, there can be no community. Jason's daughter's first experience in a public school will have been dancing with her father and her cousins around the drum and hearing songs in Passamaquoddy. It isn't enough. I don't know if we'll ever be able to do enough, yet that moment marked a tiny starting point to a long journey toward building school communities where Indigenous students are seen and respected.

Recently, I received a digital copy of a map that shows the Presumpscot River watershed—in which the city of Portland is located—striped of roads, towns, and other development. It will be the anchor for a unit about what it means to be a water protector for third graders.

The goal for that unit, which will focus primarily on Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet/Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Abenaki¹⁴ is water rights activism. This will replace the long standing third grade Portland history unit, a unit whose primary focus has been the study of colonial landmarks scattered throughout the city.

¹⁴ A people which has no current land base in Maine.

The shift toward Indigenous-led environmental justice movements marks a turning point because the emphasis will no longer be on preserving the story of settler colonial greatness but on, what award-winning Wolastoqiyik musician Jeremy Dutcher calls, “building sustainable relationships with this place we call home.”

Sometimes I’m asked why a white person is doing this work. It’s not without its complexities, certainly, but settler colonialism and white supremacy are structures built by white people. It is our work to unbuild them, too.

The teaching corps of Maine, like that of the nation as a whole, is disproportionately white and female. Every student in Maine will have many white cisgender women as teachers and so it falls to us, not Indigenous people, to figure out how to provide a meaningful, respectful, and accurate Wabanaki Studies education to Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike. This requires white teachers to grapple with our ignorance, our resistance, our socialization, our fragility, and our endless anxiety about making mistakes.

My message to the many white teachers I’ve worked with is as follows. For those among us already seeking to do meaningful anti-racist work, look no further. For those hesitating to engage, that hesitation is ultimately about our fear of discomfort—because I’ve yet to meet a tribal citizen who didn’t already assume that we would make lots of mistakes. Take a deep breath, then join the Indigenous leaders, activists, artists, representatives, scholars, and citizens who’ve been fighting the public health crisis created by settler colonialism and white supremacy for centuries. Start by seeking the education you probably never received and push for that education to be included in all teacher education programs and all schools.

Because our inaction is not neutral. It is destructive.¹⁵

Last summer, twenty-five educators from the Portland schools and two Penobscot guides paddled down river from Sugar Island, where we’d just spent two days learning from Penobscot leaders on tribal lands. The majority of us were divided between two twenty-five-foot warrior canoes. Ryan Ranco, one of the guides, mentioned that he’d never seen the water so still. It was a perfect mirror.

We glided by the remnants of two booms—man-made barriers built in rivers to contain logs—leftover from logging days. I could see the image of each reflected in the water. The water was so still that the boom and its reflection were virtually indistinguishable. I would’ve believed Ryan if he’d told me the boom was a sphere suspended in water.

Everything is changed once seen from a river.

Fiona Hopper has taught in the Portland Public Schools for fifteen years. She started her career as a middle school English Language Arts teacher and later became an ESOL teacher for elementary school students. In 2015, she co-founded a course for Portland teachers that explores systemic racism and its impact on education both historically and today. Fiona is starting her third year as the Social Studies Teacher Leader and Wabanaki Studies coordinator for the Portland Public Schools.

¹⁵ , Rebecca Sockbeson, “Maine Indigenous Education Left Behind: A Call for Anti-Racist Conviction as

Political Will Toward Decolonization,” *Journal of American Indian Education* 58, no. 3 (2019): 125.



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Below are links to various sources to help paint a clear picture of Wabanaki Studies curriculum development in Portland Public Schools. The article listed first provided the most detailed account of our district work to date.

[“Finding a Riverview: AntiRacist Education, Decolonization, and the Development of a District Wide Wabanaki Studies Curriculum,”](#)Journal of School and Society, April 2021

[PMA Educator Night](#), December 2021

[New England News Collaborative](#) series on racism in New England, October 2021

[Webinar for the DOE](#), May 2020

[Donna Loring Lecture, University of New England](#), October 2019

I’ve also created a suite of resources for PPS educators to use to develop and improve their Wabanaki Studies curriculum while the district curriculum is under construction. All the resources are housed in one document, titled the [Wabanaki Studies Planning Guide for Portland Educators](#)

Date	Event Name	Event Type
2016-present	Race in the USA	12 session graduate style course for PPS educators
February 2017	Invisible and a Q and A with James Francis	COL, also part of Race in the USA
October 2018	Wabanaki Studies 101	Lunch and Learn
October 2018	Dawnland Film Screening	Parent University
Nov-18	Decolonizing Thanksgiving	COL
Decemeber 2018	Bringing History to Life Through Primary Sources	COL
January 2019	An Introduction to Passamaquoddy Culture and Language with Roger Paul	COL
February 2019	Invisible and a Q and A with James Francis	
March 2019	N'tolonapemk: Our Relatives' Place	COL
April 2019	Decolonization Workshop	All Day Workshop
May 2019	Chief Polin Memorial Tour	COL
June 2019	Penobscot Nation Summer Intensive	overnight trip
August 2019	Mapping Wabanaki-Maine History	workshop
October 2019	Using the Decolonization Resouce Evaluation Tool	part of an all day training for Equity Leaders

October 2019	Decolonizing Thanksgiving	School based PD for Ocean Ave
October 2019	Discomfort and Renewal	Public event
2019-2020 School Year	Makking Wabanaki Maine History	All Staff PD
November 2019	The Land Claims Settlement Act	Public event
November 2019	Mapping Wabanaki-Maine History	Parent University
January 2020	Questioning the Legacy of Empire Building	PD for Social Studies Content Team Members and related partner organizations
January 2020	This is Passamaquoddy Territory	Public event
February 2020	Decolonizing Curriculum	School based PD for Presumpscot
February 2020	Penobscot Sense of Place	Public event
August 2020 October 2020	Upstander Academy Maine Indigenous Education Left Behind	week long workshop virtual event
January 2021	PD for PPS Arts Educators	PD for music and visual art educators and related partner organizations
March 2021	This is How We Name Our Lands	virtual event
March 2021	POW Camps in the Maine Woods	virtual event

June 2021	Penobscot Nation Summer Intensive	multi-night trip
August 2021	Upstander Academy	week long workshop
August 2021	Take Me to the River PD	full day PD for 3rd grade teachers

Organizer	Description	Cost
Fiona and Alberto	This course was first offered in winter/spring of 2016. The course includes a session about Indigneous history with a focus on Wabanaki Studies as well as a session with tribal historian James Francis (Penobscot). In 2018, we began opening James' presentation to all PPS educators, and later to the general public, so that more people would have an opportunity to hear him.	approx \$400 per speaking event (including transportation costs)
Fiona	James Francis (Penobscot tribal historian) came to talk to PPS teachers. They all watched the film he made, Invisible, first. Participants in the semester long Race in the USA course were required to attend. The event was open to any other faculty who wanted to come.	approx \$400
Fiona	PD session for all staff at PPS Central Office	no cost
PPS (Barrett and Fiona)	Film screening open to all PPS faculty, students, and families, SCHs granted for teachers	1000????
Fiona	Fiona led a workshop on how to disrupt the Thanksgiving myth through Wabanaki Studies	no additional cost
Fiona	Kathleen Neuman from MHS led a workshop instructing teachers in how to use Maine Memory Network to find and highlight primary sources related to Wabanaki Studies	
Fiona	Roger Paul, teacher of Wabanaki languages, presented to PPS teachers	approx \$300
Fiona	James Francis (Penobscot tribal historian) came to talk to PPS teachers. They all watched the film he made, Invisible, first. Participants in the semester long Race in the USA course were required to attend. The event was open to any other faculty who wanted to come.	approx \$400
Fiona	Film screening of N'tolonapemk and Q and A with Bridgid Neptune	\$150
Fiona	Mishy Lesser from the Upstander Academy and Maine Wabanaki REACH led an all day workshop for 20+ PPS educators	\$500 for REACH, \$1000 for Mishy + hotel, which was about \$200, plus lunch for teachers was about \$250
Fiona	PPS teachers met up at the Chief Polin Memorial in Westbrook and the president of Friends of the Presumpscot River led a tour	\$75
Fiona, Barrett, and Chris Sockalexis	25 PPS educators spent a day learning from Penobscot leaders, spent the night on Sugar Island, then paddled to Indian Island the following day. Teachers received SCHs for participating in the trip.	\$5000 (NEA grant)
Barrett	The PPS admins (all department heads and school leaders) participated in the mapping workshop offered by Maine Wabanaki REACH as part of their annual administrative retreat	\$500
Barrett and Fiona	Building equity leaders were introduced to a resource evaluation tool to use for assessing the quality of Wabanaki Studies related texts.	no cost

Fiona	Fiona presented during all staff PD about how to disrupt the Thanksgiving myth using Wabanaki Studies resources	no cost	
Portland Public Library	Starr Kelly from the Abbe Museum presented at the Portland Public Library. Fiona advertised this event to teachers and was able to grant SCHs to anyone who attended.	no cost	
Barrett	Full staff from 5 PPS middle and high schools participated in the mapping workshop organized by Maine Wabanaki REACH as part of required early release PD. All middle and high schools were supposed to complete the workshop by the end of the 2020 school year, but the pandemic made that impossible.		\$2,500
USM Osher Map Library	Maria Giourard presented at USM Hannaford Hall. Fiona advertised this event to PPS educators and was able to grant SCHs to those who attended.	no cost	
Grace and Barrett Abbe Museum	This was a Parent U event, so it was open to all faculty, students, and parents within PPS. Our 2019-2020 contract with the Abbe Museum included a PD sessions with Starr	not sure of the cost. It included Starr's presenting fee plus trael expenses. Maybe \$350	
Fiona and Libby Bischoff from the USM Osher Map Library	Roger Paul and Newell Lewey presented to an audience of 350+ at Hannaford Hall. Fiona advertised this event to PPS educators and was able to grant SCHs to any who attended.	no cost, USM paid the honoraria to Roger and Newell	
Fiona	Fiona presented during all staff PD about how to use Wabanaki Studies to start decolonizing curriculum		
Fiona and Libby Bischoff from the USM Osher Map Library	James Francis presented to an audience of 250-300 at Hannaford Hall. Fiona advertised this event to PPS educators. Teahers taking Race in the USA were required to attend. Fiona was able to grant SCHs to PPS educators who attended.	\$500 honorarium for James Francis	
Upstander Project Abbe Museum	4 PPS social studies teachers participated in the Upstander Summary Academy Rebecca Sockbasin presented virtually. The event cost \$10. PPS did not cover that cost, but did grant SCHs to anyone who attended. Fiona advertised this event to PPS educators.	no cost	\$1,000
Abbe Museum	As part of our contract with the Abbe this year, we included a PD session that we chose to use for arts educators.	\$250 (included in Abbe contract for 2020-2021	
USM Osher Map Library	Creators of the Penobscot Place Names map presented virtually. Fiona advertisted this event to PPS educators and was able to grant SCHs to anyone who attended.		
Abbe Museum	Bonnie Newsom presented about the POW camps built on Passamaquoddy lands during WWII. Fiona advertised this event to PPS educators and was able to grant SCHs to any who attended.		

Fiona	20 PPS educators will paddle the Penobscot and spend time learning from Penobscot leaders. The trip is scheduled for June 21-23 with a follow up debrief session on the morning of June 24th. PPS educators will receive SCHs for participating in the trip	\$8000 (Learning for Justice/Southern Poverty Law Center grant from 2020)
Upstander Project	5 PPS educators will participate in the Upstander Summer Academy	\$1,250
Fiona and Brooke Teller	All 3rd grade teachers will spend a full day learning about the new Wabanaki Studies unit for that grade level. There will be 3-4 follow up sessions throughout the 2021-2022 school year.	unknown at this time. \$1000-\$1500 is our working estimate

Expenditure	Description
Fiona's salary and benefits for 2018-2019 (.5 FTE)	Research and begin design of Wabanaki Studies curriculum and to conduct social studies synthesis in PPS
Fiona's salary and benefits for 2019-2020 (.6 FTE)	Launch social studies content team tasked with drafting an instructional vision for social studies and continue work on Wabanaki Studies curriculum development
Fiona's salary and benefits from 2020-2021 (.7 FTE) + level B stipend	Lead social studies curriculum work in Wabanaki Studies, Africana Studies, and general social studies curriculum for PreK-12
Wabanaki Studies Consultant	Bridgid Neptune has acted as a consultant for Wabanaki Studies development in PPS since 2018
Abbe Museum Contracts	We had to modify the Abbe contract from 2019-2020 because of the pandemic. This year's contract covers the costs of tribal advisory meetings for 2020-2021, a PD session, and technical support from Starr
Mileage Reimbursement	This would include mileage to and from Penobscot Nation 3 times, mileage from Portland to Houlton, Houlton to Eastport, and back to Portland, and mileage to and from the Abbe once
Travel Reimbursement	This would include food reimbursement for a lunch for tribal advisors in October of 2018, food reimbursement for Fiona in November of 2018, Air B and B accomodation for Fiona, Melea, and Jesse in March 2019, as well as food reimbursement for them and lunch costs for tribal advisors at the Abbe Museum
Social Studies Content Team	The Wabanaki Studies Subcommittee has been meeting throughout 2020-2021 to develop units for K, 3rd, 7th, and 10th grade
PD for PPS Educators Race in the USA	This course includes one to two sessions related to Wabanaki Studies. By the end of June 2021, approximately 200 PPS educators will have completed the course.
Projected Costs to Finish Development and Fully Implement (3 year projections)	
Film	A film to support the Wabanaki Studies curriculum. This will likely have to be paid for through outside grants and funding
Books and Resources	This assumes investement of approx. \$14,000.00 per grade level, or \$28.50 per student
Curriculum Development	This includes payment for PPS teachers working on the curriculum
Tribal Advisors, Consultants, PD	This includes projected costs for a consultant, ongoing tribal advisory meetings, and some PD for PPS educators led by tribal leaders
Salary and Benefits for Social Studies	This includes an estimate of Fiona's slary at .8 FTE with a level B stipend

Cost**Paid From**

approx. \$4000 for teachers
+ \$300 for guest speakers

approx. \$23,425 to date
\$1,800 per course. As of
2020, the course is now
offered twice a year.

estimate is \$120,000.00

estimate of \$200,000

estimate of \$25,000.00

estimate of \$50,000