

Just a few trip notes from Susan Caldwell @ The Nature Conservancy (not by any means complete!)

Cobscook Community Learning Center in Lubec – Sipayik Passamaquoddy Listening Session

Present: Rena Newall, elected tribal representative for the Passamaquoddy people, , Dale Mitchell and Ed Bassett from Passamaquoddy Tribe's environmental department at Pleasant Point

First Light Learning Journey Participants: Peter Forbes, Diedre Whitehead, Brian Wentzell, Steve Tatko, Eric Topper, Stefan Jackson, Lissa Widoff, Kristin Peet, Ciona Ulbrich, Lucy McCarthy, Patrick Watson, Catherine Schmidt, Aaron Englander, Aaron Mequier, Susan Caldwell, and Deb Bicknell (not all stayed for afternoon/evening trip/meeting)

Peter welcomed all to the circle shortly after 9:00 am and introduced the First Light Learning Journey's goal to share land and resources at the speed of trust. We did a round of introductions. These notes were gathered over the course of the morning's discussion. They are not complete and don't necessarily capture the full conversation.

- How can the conservation community in Maine share land and resources with the Passamaquoddy Tribe? What is the Tribe's interest in access to land and water? How has lack of access been impactful?
- Basket makers need more access to ash and sweetgrass for harvesting.
- It would be very helpful to have a map of conservation lands in Washington County so that tribal members know who to contact regarding potential access.
- Sustenance has different meanings. It's not just about food for survival, but food for the soul, spirit and culture too. For example, Rena's grandmother would walk many miles to harvest sweetgrass for braiding and this was important to her way of life.
- It's hard to find large enough birch trees to harvest for canoe making. Some people harvest by cutting down the tree first. Others harvest by peeling the bark off the standing tree. As a conservation community, we don't generally manage our forests to grow large birch. It's really helpful for land trusts to have the knowledge of their own timber inventory.
- Invasive plants such as Phragmites and loosestrife are problematic also in terms of harvesting sweetgrass. More action is needed from landowners to remove invasives.
- The Tribe has traditionally used the waterways to transport timber and other natural resources as well as for human travel. Access and passage on waterways is important.

- Often conservation groups manage their lands for later successional forests that may limit potential ecological diversity. Would it be beneficial to do more active management with fire, for example? Fire management was used by the Passamaquoddy along the St Croix riparian areas for game management. Sharing knowledge about the highest priority species and their management needs would be advantageous.
- Kerry Hardy's book "Notes on a Lost Flute: A Field Guide to the Wabanaki" was commended!
- It's important to manage lands not just for the health of a particular plant or animal, but for the health of the native culture as well.
- Access to the St Croix river for recreation and other cultural uses is needed also. It would be helpful to know if there are specific traditional access points that are now not accessible.
- Meddybemps land parcel is of great importance to the Passamaquoddy Tribe and any support from the conservation community in returning that land to the Tribe would be appreciated. Sharing of expertise and guidance in leading to this outcome would be very appreciated.
- Transferring land from non-native people to native people requires breaking down barriers. There is a long-standing challenge of pervasive racism against the Passamaquoddy people. The Passamaquoddy can be very good neighbors, but sometimes a change in mindset is needed.
- Is broader habitat restoration work by the conservation community helpful? Loss of habitat due to pollution or disruption of natural ecological systems is impacting all of us in Maine.
- First Light Learning Journey participants want to be good neighbors to Indigenous people. One tool we are exploring is the use of cultural respect agreements. This technique is being promoted by Ramona Peters of the Mashpee Wampanoag in Cape Cod, Massachusetts through the Native Land Conservancy. There was acknowledgement that conservation group's science and planning efforts with stakeholders have not always included engagement with Maine's Tribes.
- What's the right legal tool to share resources? These can range from verbal agreements with landowners to written restrictions and legal tools such as conservation easements and/or cultural use agreements. The establishment of native land trusts is another option that has been successful in places outside of Maine.
- There is a small land base at Pleasant Point and limited resources. The example of over harvest of clams was noted. There are too many licenses which is not sustainable for the clam resource.

- What works well in collaboration and what has not worked well? Building alliances and working together toward common goals such as restoring alewife habitat can work very well.
- Rena's new role in the legislature was noted. Increasing the visibility of the Maine Tribes is likely to be positive and a new administration provides potential opportunity. The conservation community has been successful with policy initiatives in Maine and there may be more opportunity to collaborate with Tribes and conservation groups through legislative policy initiatives.
- Breaking down barriers of racism is challenging. Ignorance of the history of Maine's Tribes is frustrating.
- It's important to do a better job of educating Maine's students about Maine's history.
- Regarding tribal sovereignty and increasing land holdings, what's the best-case scenario for increasing tribal lands? The Tribe now owns about 100,000 acres in Trust lands and the settlement act allows for up to 150,000 acres. The US Government owns title to the Trust lands. There are no restrictions on increasing fee lands, but paying the taxes can be challenging. Acquiring new land close to existing lands would be most desirable. The Passamaquoddy want to see the Meddybemps land transferred back to them.
- First Light Learning Journey will be welcoming all tribal representatives that we have met with to date to a gathering in early June. Building relationships is important and having honest discussion even if we agree to disagree is valuable.
- Rena welcomed conservation group's participation in their 8th annual tribal career expo likely taking place on the first Friday in May at Washington County Community College. Grade 6 through college-age native youth are encouraged to attend. It would be great to have more participation from the conservation community in Maine.

We adjourned the meeting around noon and enjoyed a meal together and then a field trip to the museum at Sipayik.

Cobscook Community Learning Center in Lubec – First Light Learning Journey Discussion on Next Steps

December 11, 2018 – 4:15-6pm and then again after dinner...

Alan Furth, the outgoing Director and Co-Founder of CCLC, joined us to give a bit of background regarding the development and work of the Cobscook Community Learning Center <https://www.thecccl.org/>. The **mission** of the Cobscook Community Learning Center is to create responsive educational opportunities that strengthen personal,

community, and global well-being. CCLC is open to groups for workshops and meetings and we are encouraged to host our gatherings there in the future! Overnight lodging and meals are available.

After Alan left Peter asked that we consider together these three questions/updates together:

- What do we do with our privilege and knowledge we are gaining through the First Light Learning Journey?
- Let's update each other on the work we have been doing and progress to date since our last gathering.
- How should the First Light Learning Journey move forward – with a second cohort starting in January 2020?!
 - Would it be appropriate to do a presentation about the First Light Learning Journey at the annual Maine Land Trust Network conference? The selection process for workshops is already well underway. Certain aspects such as EDI work and emerald ash borer work and/or a demonstration of ash pounding are being considered. There was additional discussion about the value of sharing information at this time through this venue.
- Within our own organizations, First Light participants can continue to raise awareness among our staff and membership about the importance of our history and potential partnership with Maine's Tribes going forward. The conservation community can learn and share Maine's history, support the education of Maine's people regarding Wabanaki history, and engage tribal youth in conservation career opportunities, for example.

Relevant Progress and Updates:

- Aaron and Diedre talked to MCHT stewardship staff about their First Light experience.
- Lissa included native needs on the Environmental Funders Network call agenda.
- Dawnland showings throughout Maine have been offered and supported by First Light participants and others.
- Maine Audubon brought Robin Wall Kimmerer to speak and it was an overwhelming turnout.
- Steve has been promoting doing statewide inventory work on ash in our Maine forests. Engaging UMO and Cooperative Forest Research Unit (CFRU) and using available LiDAR data offers opportunity.
- Kerry offered relevant programming at Vinalhaven Land Trust annual meeting.

- The importance of supporting the transfer of land at Meddybemps to the Passamaquoddy was emphasized. This site also has significance for fish passage as well.
- Success by Nibezun in fundraising to acquire the land was celebrated again! They will continue to work on organizational development and fundraising for infrastructure and programming. They are exploring starting a native land trust.
- There was a gathering at UMO focusing on the emerald ash borer (EAB) that included basketmakers, academics, scientists, conservationists, foresters and researchers working together.
- Ciona has been working with conservation organizations in Waldo, Hancock and Washington counties on gathering GIS data to share conservation ownership. She is coordinating with Suzanne Greenlaw who is doing her PhD at UMO on this work. One initial practical outcome would be to find locations for brown ash and sweetgrass for potential sharing with Tribes.
- TNC can offer additional GIS support when we determine what would be most helpful to Tribes. As we talk about gathering in June and “rolling out the maps.”
- MCHT has collected examples of cultural use/respect agreements and has connected with an attorney in Boston on this topic with the hope of crafting a template for Maine. Acadia NPS has oral agreements relevant to harvest of sweetgrass.
- Sarah Alexander, new ED at MOFGA, is an ally for connecting Indigenous people with land in Maine.

Future of First Light Learning Journey:

Through the First Light Learning Journey, there have been 5 listening sessions between conservation and tribal representatives over the past year: Penobscot, Micmac, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy at Indian Twp and Sipayik. Peter will work with Maria Girouard, Darren Ranco and Donald Soctomah to plan for a gathering in early June welcoming all who were included in those five listening sessions. There will also be a canoe trip on the Penobscot River for up to 18 people in May. This work represents the original commitment of the First Light Learning Journey, so what’s next?!

There was discussion about the value of both deepening and continuing the connections initiated with original participants as well as potential for starting a second cohort of First Light Learning Journey starting in January 2020. We want the work to expand to others in the conservation community and there is also a sense from existing participants that we want an opportunity to continue working together and deepen the connections we have made. Peter’s sense from Tribal Chiefs is that they are willing to continue the partnership and commit to future listening sessions. There is value in

maintaining the existing connections and deepening the relationships that have been initiated. Continuity brings validity and deepening of engagement. There was discussion around the need for others of us to take responsibility for governing a growing network. Clarity around outcomes and deliverables of our work to date and ongoing work going forward is needed. Peter asked participants for support in considering the structure and outcomes of such a network. Developing a “one-pager” was proposed as a starting point.

Wrapping up at around 8:30 pm Peter said that he heard that we suggest both an ongoing network to grow from the initial First Light Learning Journey participants as well as new opportunities for others in the future. This will require new commitments from existing participants to support the work!