

## **Panelist Bios for Penobscot Listening and Learning session:**

**Maulian Dana** is the Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador. “I come from a long line of tribal leaders, and I was raised by strong women,” Dana says. “Both of my grandmothers had leadership positions in the tribe, and my father was Penobscot chief when I was a teenager. Seeing my dad’s experiences as chief—there were some dramatic and scary moments—helped shape who I am today.” After serving a year on the Penobscot Tribal Council (the tribe’s decision-making board), the newly created ambassador position presented itself. Sworn in as ambassador in September, Dana has embraced all aspects of the position. From talking with civic and school groups to meeting with politicians and government officials, she uses a multi-faceted approach to strengthen the political profile of the Penobscot Nation. In the very public role as ambassador, Dana carries on work that began in her teens and now unfolds on a larger canvas. She has been instrumental in the push to change Columbus Day to Indigenous People’s Day, educating town councils and the public on the history of genocide and mistreatment of Maine’s native people. Many cities—including Portland, Brunswick and Orono—have passed Indigenous People’s Day, and the momentum continues.

Dana may be best known as the local founder of the “Not Your Mascot/Maine” movement in Skowhegan and other towns. She clearly remembers how it began one winter day in her early teens, watching the televised state basketball tournament with her father.

“It was the Warriors vs. the Indians. People were covered in fake war paint, whooping and dancing in a really offensive way,” she says. “I turned to my dad and said, ‘Is that how they think of us?’ That was my wake-up call.”

**Maria Girouard** of Penobscot Nation is a longstanding community organizer, educator, environmental activist and peace advocate. With a particular interest in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, Maria holds a master’s degree in history from the University of Maine. She is a master gardener and a founder of The Peoples' Garden; a community garden located on Indian Island and has served her tribe in many capacities over the years including as director of Cultural and Historic Preservation and as an elected member of tribal council. In 2015 Maria received the prestigious Maryann Hartman Award from the University of Maine for her advocacy work in preserving the rights and cultural heritage of the Penobscot Nation.

**Darren Ranco** is a faculty member with the University of Maine’s Department of Anthropology, as well as the Chair of Native American Programs and Coordinator of

Native American Research. His research focuses on the ways in which indigenous communities in the United States resist environmental destruction by using indigenous diplomacies and critiques of liberalism to protect cultural resources, and how state knowledge systems continue to expose indigenous peoples to an inordinate amount of environmental risk. Ranco is a member of the Penobscot Nation, and is particularly interested in how better research relationships can be made between universities, Native and non-Native researchers, and indigenous communities.

Ranco's SSI project (Mobilizing to Fight an Invasive Insect) is the first such project in the nation to bring together diverse groups to try to prevent, curb, and respond to a potential ash borer invasion. Collaborators include members of the Maine Indian Basket makers Alliance, tribes, university researchers, state and federal foresters, and others. His team seeks to develop a proactive, coordinated response on a statewide level in order to save culturally and artistically essential brown ash tree resources from the invasive emerald ash borer. Part of this response involves mapping Maine's ash tree populations, learning how to identify a borer attack, educating the public, and establishing a seed bank should the beetle strike. The team's findings will lead to new strategies for protecting Maine's three species of ash trees, inform public policy, and establish effective methods to bring together diverse groups to address threats from invasive species.