

## **First Light Learning Journey – Passamaquoddy Indian Township/Motahkomikuk – Bear Lodge**

May 22, 2018

### *Ciona's Notes*

#### **Wishes from Land Trusts:**

Would like to share more about each of us and our organizations, coming with a common cause of caring about land and place

Provide more information ahead of time about land trusts;

Find a way to encourage the Tribal representatives to ask more questions in these sessions

Better underscore relationship to place on both sides

Are they open to us sharing their stories on preserves? When and where? How can we learn more about this?

What is sovereignty? What does it mean? Consultation on how it works? Important terms that we need better understanding of

What resource types do Tribes want to assure access to? Heard so far: Flint, other rock types (which?) plants, (sweet grass,) red clay, ceremonial grounds, access, dye materials? Elver access points? It would be helpful to create a list together of resource types.

IDEA: joint educational initiative that meets requirements in Maine, so that schools are required to incorporate environmental teaching, and on teaching about Wabanaki culture (already required to do this)

Summer camp for kids on site at Bear Lodge facility to teach/combine the two?

#### **Some Changes to Make:**

Re: land trusts, lets not use word control in terms of millions of acres of lands for LTs. We have limited rights to these lands – we need to manage expectations;

Let's not talk again about the idea of getting to a point of "rolling out maps". No need to make that something to wait for or into something that is clearly daunting for the Tribes. We can bring ours – our maps exist. They can tell us resource types to look out for and special destination places, or tell us stories that are OK to tell. Maybe eventually they will talk to us about locations... once trust has been built;

#### **Homework:**

Provide some understanding of tribal government structure setup and issues – provide some info on that and distribute to land trusters

Ciona should reshape the 'LAND TRUST' one pager and hand out ahead of time to Tribal representatives. Map of MLTN land trust regions and one pager are important to give ahead of time. (shall Ciona work with Whit to generate this for our next ones?)

Get templates of MOUs with federal government already in place at Woods and Waters and Acadia (Ciona to do)

Provide some education on elver fishery and tribal access issues

Provide a better understanding of the water rights concerns around the Penobscot – is clearly a fundamental issue we need a better understanding of.

SEND OUT Maps and contact info for all land trusters to tribal members in follow up with thanks

Build and fund increase in capacity in for assessment process and collaboration at tribal level (build grant money into MLTN requests to help fund hours for the time needed within tribes?) for name and story info for process to create jobs in tribe and support capacity increase. Eventually

work towards a process and/or committee to consider requests for information to share on preserves (names, stories)

*Notes by Susan Caldwell*

We gathered in a circle in the new Bear Lodge facility shortly after 9:00 am and welcomed Matt Dana, Martin Dana, Donald Soctomah, and Chief William Nicholas. Peter welcomed all with gifts of gratitude. The purpose of the First Light Learning Journey is listening and learning. Our goal is to share land and resources at the speed of trust.

Peter asked the Passamaquoddy Tribe members to talk with us and consider these questions:

How has access to land and water changed over time and what has been the impact?  
What is the need of the Passamaquoddy Tribe relevant to the conservation lands owned by conservation organizations within this collaboration?

What works well in collaborations?

What can we do better?

What are the possibilities?

Chief William Nicholas shared a few thoughts first:

There has been a lot of negativity unfortunately.

Wish the state of Maine would keep a promise.

Teaching Wabanaki culture in Maine schools is an unfunded mandate. There is legislation requiring all students to learn about Maine's indigenous people but no funding to do so.

There are a lot of good people and good things happening in our community. We need to raise the profile of positivity.

Growth is needed as well as new economic opportunities.

The carbon credit project was given an award. He wants to grow more trees than are cut to have a sustainable resource. Not all in the community supported the project.

There are many miles of maintained ATV trails. ATV access offers good hunting opportunities as well.

Working with the elders is a great benefit. The Tribal community is a great resource.

Glad to have opportunity to participate in elver fishery. We can't change the past, but can learn from it as we move forward. There is already a lot of trust. We need to balance resource use and cultural ways of getting sustenance from the land.

Limits on the fishery and cleaning up pollution on the land and water is important.

Donald Soctomah shared these thoughts:

He cares deeply about the special sacred places of the Passamaquoddy people. Our history is powerful and we have connections to so many places

He works with historic preservation and partners with Army Corps of Engineers regularly to determine whether any projects using federal funding sources have tribal cultural significance.

Things are coming around and changing in a positive way. People didn't use to care about Native people and Native rights. It's great to see groups like this get together and take the time to come visit.

It would be great to have better access to sacred sites rather than having tribal members feel anxious about sneaking into places that provide resources such as sweetgrass, birch bark and water access or spiritual sites. "We are pulled to places that are spiritual or provide us with natural resources. There's a yearning to go to the mountains to say a prayer. Our ancestors are all around us. Yesterday I was at the cemetery and I could feel the spirits all around us."

“People can treat us very badly. We don’t want to see the head of an Indian on sports jerseys. They don’t honor our people. “

We used to engage more in the legislature, but they don’t understand what we have to offer. He served 8 years in the legislature.

I understand history. We can’t live in the past, but we can learn from our mistakes. We need to get our stories out there. It’s hard to gather Passamaquoddy history. You have to dig deeper to find it.

A head of the Indian Chief was put on the top of a stick and stuck in the ground in Boston to show victory and celebration.

Good things have happened in the last few years. It’s good to have partnerships with conservation. We have reached out also to the paper companies. In 1918 they dammed the river and flooded about 3000 acres of Indian Township. Paper companies are bought and sold. He talked to Domtar and struck up a friendship. Their headquarters are in Quebec. Donald asked if the Passamaquoddy could buy the 26-acre island in Big Lake that had the Passamaquoddy burial grounds. Tribal members with small pox would go there to prevent the spread of the disease and often would die on the island. They said they would not sell it to the Tribe, but they would give it to them! They presented the deed to the Chief.

“We will survive. We have good leadership now. There are good businesses within this community.” There are new laws about fish passage. There used to be millions of salmon. They have the largest site of petroglyphs in North America right here in our territory. Donald has studied the petroglyphs for 20 years. We can see the thoughts of our ancestors on the rocks. Matt Dana shared these thoughts.

Thank you very much for coming.

There has been a lot of negativity and difficult relationships in the state legislature.

He told a story about talking to his children to let them know they are ambassadors for the Passamaquoddy people. “You will be judged and your actions will reflect on the entire Tribe. If you are treated badly, let it go.”

The legislature allowed tribal representatives to put in a vote for Speaker of the House, but Ken Fredette threw a tantrum on the floor and slowed the process. Dana’s boys were there to see it. It was an awful experience. Indigenous people have been treated very poorly. He introduced a bill to change Columbus Day to Native American People’s Day and a reported included that in an article about the “10 craziest bills.” He has had some good relationships also in the legislature too and has made many connections.

The elders used to fish for eels and it’s good to see the people go to the rivers again and join the elver fishery this year. It’s now an economic resource and it’s good to have Passamaquoddy people fish again.

There’s a great sweetgrass resource in the salt marshes near Rogue Bluffs, but traditional access has been blocked with no trespassing signs. Tribal members have to sneak to get to the harvest area and are in fear of being kicked off the property. They are no longer free to harvest medicinal plants where they once did. Can conservation groups help with that access?

Tribal people have used some of these resources for thousands of years and then a new property owner comes along and blocks access in recent year. It feels so good to be able to use the resources we always used.

Chief added: Lepage will ask us “What can I do for you?” and we say “Please leave us alone and let us make our own decisions.” He says, “No, way.” We want the state of Maine to recognize our sovereignty and agree upon our sustenance rights. There have been disagreements about the definitions. We aren’t here to deplete resources. We have a lot of deer in our area that are traveling a long way to come here. “We want the Passamaquoddy people to choose to stay and keep their cultural connections between the people and the land. We know the smell of an elder’s home by the herbs they use and cooking traditions they have. We need

to protect our resources and know what it's like to be Native.”

Peter asked: Tell us more about the importance of sovereignty and access. What can we do? Where is access most needed? Where would it be most useful to have guaranteed deeded access? Conversation proceeded and the discussion points captured below came from a mixture of many voices.

We need access to resources. The Passamaquoddy are proud and accomplished basket makers and we need black ash, brown ash and sweet grass to make the baskets. There are “blue book” rules stemming from Christian ideology that prevent tribes from going on the land. Basket production provides important jobs and economic income for our people. Watch the Gabriel Sisters film about basket making and tribal culture. The tribes don't exploit resources. We also want access to medicinal plants and spiritual sites. The agreement made at Acadia NP between the park and tribes for access to places took a very long time to accomplish. It took a long time to develop the trust, but now we have that template. We also want access to places for our traditional activities. It was so powerful this year to have the Passamaquoddy people go back to the rivers to fish for eels. It was a traditional food and we have many places named for the eels. Passamaquoddy people want access to be moderated to provide protection to special places such as sacred sites and/or archaeological sites.

To be good partners there are lots of things we need to do better. It's not all about modern day rights but respect for all Wabanaki people in Maine. For some forests are a place of fear and some think of a source of this fear related to the Indian people who live deep in the forests. Our culture is based on the rivers as the source of travel and sustenance. We value the rivers throughout our history.

We want to be left along to make decisions on our own. We exercise sovereignty in a lot of ways and the word means different things to different people. We want to go down to the rivers and exercise our rights.

We don't want to be like everyone else and be “just another township” because we are different. If we lose our sovereignty, we will have lost a lot.

We have seen land opportunities change when the owner knows the tribe wants to buy the land. Suddenly the price goes way up. We can't pay more than what the land is worth.

We would appreciate the knowledge that comes from seeing maps of conservation lands. Understanding and education is a great first step in a partnership. If nothing but friendship comes from this collaboration, that will be something. We have a lot to offer to. We employ over 200 people and provide a lot of services such as medical care and emergency services. We want to be good stewards and good partners.

Martin shared stories of driving elders to places where they could gather medicinal plants, but they had to sneak in to get to their traditional harvest places and it was scary when they were caught for trespassing and removed from the property. Access to traditional harvest places would alleviate the fear and allow them to use the resources they have used for hundreds of years. We don't want to cross private property boundaries.

The Chief provided an overview of the Tribal Government. There is a Chief, Vice Chief, Governor and Lieutenant Governor and the Tribal Council. There is also an Elders Council to provide historical input. There are council meetings about once a month, but those can often be postponed. If an elder passes away then all tribal business stops and meetings must be rescheduled.

Businesses: Columbia Falls blueberry company, carbon credit project, new Bear Lodge facility that we are staying in for our visit, new Maple Inn restaurant just about to open up in Jackman (Unity College recently acquired the Skye Lodge), water bottling facility, maple syrup company and bottling operation in Jackman area is new also. They also have a high stakes BINGO facility. They try to spur employment, but still have high unemployment in the town.

There is miscommunication and negativity regarding how the tribe pays for taxes. There are no community taxes for the tribal government – all their funds come from their businesses so the funds from federal government is a small piece. The Chief's ultimate goal is to get zero in funding from federal government. The state gives the tribe about \$50k in funding for dealing with substance abuse. He wants to be 100% independent.

How does the Tribe feel about the fish passage issue on the St Croix River. There has been controversy between the State of Maine, non-profits, NOAA and the St Croix Commission regarding the value of allowing alewives to pass the dam. It seems that the Tribe is now encouraging fish passage as more information has been gained.

What is the current status of tribal representation in the legislature? In 2015 all Tribal representatives stopped going to the state legislature due to an erosion in trust and negative relationships. Matt is still able to introduce legislation. The tribal representative does not have a vote, but he can speak on behalf of the Tribe. His term is up in the fall. We will "wait and see" how the relationship changes with the introduction of a new administration in the State of Maine. It's good to have a seat at the table and be allowed to share testimony but Matt thinks it's best not to have a vote with the way things are right now.

Maine is often a leader around the nation in conservation and we have the ability to guide certain aspects of conservation policy in Maine. For example, we share templates for management plans and conservation easements throughout the State. What should we include in management plan templates for conservation lands that would be helpful to the Wabanaki people? We have leverage for positive change and the ability to set standards that are followed throughout the state and beyond. Please reach out to the tribes to consult them and find out about potential traditional uses of the land. Consultation is a first and very important step to open up conversation.

Please describe putting land into "Trust" in comparison to tribal fee land ownership. The Passamaquoddy is the largest landowner in the Grand Lake Stream area. In Columbia Falls there are lands recently put into Trust.

Using education of youth is a great way to collaborate. They are planning to use the Bear Lodge facility as a place for youth to gather in the summer for youth employment and skills based education as well as learning about conservation and land stewardship. The Chief suggested that we collaborate more on education and school policy and youth engagement going forward. Could a starting point be to welcome non-native teenagers from around Maine to go to Bear Lodge for a learning opportunity over the summer?

In closing Peter summarized three ways/categories in which we should explore more collaboration between the Passamaquoddy and Maine's conservation community:

Education and advocacy

Share knowledge about particular conservation lands in Maine (look at maps)

Anticipate potential cultural resources and access on our own conservation lands and consult with the Tribes.

We should also consider paying for the cultural consultation as the capacity of the Tribes to

respond to request for consultation is limited. There are not enough Donald Soctomah's in the State to do all the potential work to be done!