



## **Trust for Public Land - First Light Community Letter**

Trust for Public Land (TPL) is grateful to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cohort of the First Light Learning Journey and to have a seat on the First Light Conservation Community Delegation. In TPL's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, Trust for Public Land named four primary Commitments to guide all of our work: Climate, Equity, Health, and Community at the center. These commitments inform the work that we do, centered around lands, trails, parks, and schoolyards.

TPL's Tribal and Indigenous (TIL) Initiative advances each of TPL's primary commitments. Ken Lucero, TPL's Tribal and Indigenous Lands Program Director leads this initiative to forge strong partnerships and amplify the impact of the organization's work across all 50 states. TPL's Tribal and Indigenous Lands Initiative encompasses projects with Indigenous communities spanning 500,000 acres and encompassing 13 schoolyard and park-development initiatives. Additionally, the program champions policy and public funding efforts that create opportunities for Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities.

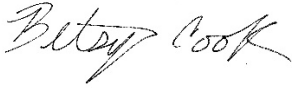
TPL's current Tribal and Indigenous Lands Initiative is in part grown out of TPL's former Tribal and Native Lands Program that was created in 1999. From 1999 to 2010, under the guidance of three successive directors of that program and assisted by an advisory board of Indigenous leaders, TPL worked with more than 70 tribes and Indigenous organizations to restore 200,000 acres of land to Indigenous stewardship.

In January 2023, TPL's National Board adopted the following statement of intention, "Over 70 Native American tribes and Indigenous communities have honored Trust for Public Land by allowing us to work with them to return access, stewardship and ownership of important lands and be open to how our work can best advance tribal language and culture. TPL will continue to build relationships with tribal and Indigenous communities, and work to advance their priorities for land. We see this work as central to our core commitments to community and equity and will seek to weave the resulting insights and progress throughout everything we do. We are committed to showing respect, transparency, and humility with our tribal and Indigenous partner communities. We will make a sustained investment to advance our work with them. TPL staff and volunteers will seek to grow our understanding through training, listening and ongoing engagement."

Currently, in Wabanaki Territory, Trust for Public Land and Penobscot Nation are partnering to bring the 30,000-acre Wáhsehtək<sup>w</sup> land back to Penobscot Nation.

The Trust for Public Land looks forward to continuing to work with the Wabanaki Commission on Land and Stewardship and First Light to restore Wabanaki connection to land and looks forward to working with partners across the continent and beyond to restore Indigenous communities connections to land.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Cook". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Betsy Cook  
Maine State Director  
September 24, 2024