



March 2026

To the First Light community:

This letter represents a commitment by the Maine Community Foundation (MaineCF) to strive to support Wabanaki communities and Tribal governments and to continue learning alongside others as part of the First Light community.

MaineCF recognizes the inherent sovereignty and dignity of the Wabanaki nations—the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Penobscot, and Passamaquoddy—who live on and care for the lands and waters we now call Maine. Wabanaki people have been on this land for thousands of years, since time immemorial. We also acknowledge that the 1980 Settlement Act created restrictions that have prevented Wabanaki communities from access to more than 150 federal programs, dramatically stunting economic growth. This situation has resulted in direct negative impacts on the lands and lives of the Wabanaki people and people throughout Maine.

The Foundation is committed to building deeper relationships with the Wabanaki nations and using our resources to support Wabanaki communities. MaineCF is a public charity whose mission and vision are to bring people and resources together to build a more vibrant and equitable Maine where people and communities thrive, and this includes the Wabanaki.

“Where we’ve been” - MaineCF began a more intentional focus on the history, culture, and current issues of the Wabanaki in 2017. In 2019, we applied our learning to our conservation grantmaking, resulting in a focus on increasing access to land for people and communities who had less access or had been historically excluded. We hosted learning opportunities for our staff featuring Wabanaki speakers over the course of 2023. We have continued to deepen our learning through the participation of a three-person team comprised of a Board member, Vice President of Donor Engagement, and Community Partner in the Confluence Cohort of the First Light Learning Journey from November 2024 to November 2025.

As our learning grew, funding also grew, including:

- Over \$11 million in grants to Tribal governments and Wabanaki nonprofits between 1983 and 2025

- Largest one-year funding in 2025 totaling over \$2.5 million
- Annual grants for food to Tribal governments and Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness resulting in \$500,000 of support since 2020
- Annual \$10,000 grants to Tribal governments for the preservation and promotion of traditional handcrafts starting in 2024
- Annual grants supporting Wabanaki land return starting with \$150,000 in 2024 and almost \$200,000 in 2025 through the new Land for Communities grant program.

In 2024, MaineCF created an internal team with the responsibility of stewarding this work. Our staff had conversations with 11 Wabanaki citizens and community leaders and learnings from these conversations are helping to guide our understanding and approach to building relationships with the Wabanaki nations and nonprofits. This internal team also helps identify support for Wabanaki proposals and requests received.

“Where we’re headed” - Going forward, the Foundation will strive to:

- Deepen education around Wabanaki history, culture, and current priorities among the MaineCF Board of Directors, staff, and donor community
- Strengthen relationships with Wabanaki Tribal governments and nonprofits
- Ensure Wabanaki representation on MaineCF’s Board of Directors and on grantmaking committees
- Expand financial resources available in support of Wabanaki land return through MaineCF’s Land for Communities grant program
- Facilitate greater understanding of and financial support for Wabanaki priorities by MaineCF’s donor community
- Increase annual grantmaking to Wabanaki communities over time, including an annual contribution to Wolankeyutomone kisi apaciyewik ("Let us take good care of what is returned" Fund), created by and for Wabanaki people to strengthen relationships with the land
- Continue annual analysis of MaineCF funding to Wabanaki communities to track our progress on these commitments
- Encourage greater understanding of Wabanaki-led efforts towards Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, and the connection to increased regional economic prosperity.

Approved by the Maine Community Foundation Board of Directors on March 13, 2026.