

**Testimony of John Dieffenbacher-Krall, Executive Director,
Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission (MITSC),
LD 1399 An Act To Provide for the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Certain Rights Regarding
Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Management
May 9, 2013**

Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife; my name is John Dieffenbacher-Krall. I live in Old Town, Maine and I submit this testimony in my capacity as the Executive Director of the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission (MITSC). The Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission appreciates the opportunity to address LD 1399 An Act To Provide for the Aroostook Band of Micmacs Certain Rights Regarding Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Management. MITSC does not have an official position on this bill but we do feel compelled to address the importance of enhancing Indigenous Peoples' access to traditional food sources and cultural practices for obtaining that food.

One of the defining characteristics of Indigenous Peoples includes their intimate relationship with the natural world and their historical dependence on the wild foods that their aboriginal homeland provides for them. The Aroostook Band of Micmacs, like most other Indigenous Peoples, relied on wild game, fish, and plants to sustain them. Research points to the many severe problems Indigenous Peoples suffer when they are cut off from their traditional foods. LD 1399 represents an initiative to support the Aroostook Band of Micmacs' effort to preserve an essential aspect of their culture and to improve community health by the restoration of healthy protein sources to their diet.

Five years ago the Maine Legislature became the first legislative body in the United States to express its support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples describes the minimum human rights all Indigenous Peoples possess formally recognized by all of the nation-states belonging to the United Nations. Article 26 specifically addresses Indigenous Peoples' rights to resources they have "traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired."

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

We encourage the Legislature to work with the Aroostook Band of Micmacs so they can maintain the cultural practices and realistically access the wild food sources they have enjoyed for millennia.

