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# Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management

## Tribal-State Collaboration Act Report

January 10, 2025



Researched and written by Sarah A. Sherman  
Director of Strategic Partnerships, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services  
Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management Tribal Liaison

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*Tim Shay accepts his Uncle Charles Norman Shay’s (WWII and Korean War Penobscot Nation Veteran) Ambassador of Peace Medal from Consul General Kim.*

# **Tribal-State Collaboration Act Report**

January 10, 2025

This report is submitted pursuant to 5 M.R.S. 11055(2), which requires the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management to file biennial reports with this Committee describing our implementation of the Tribal-State Implementation Act.

## **Background:**

In 2022, representatives of the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, and the Governor's Office negotiated the terms of legislation intended to expand economic opportunities for, and improve the welfare of, the Wabanaki Nations and their citizens, and to make structural changes in certain state agency decision-making to promote government-to-government dialogue with the Wabanaki Nations.

That legislation, enacted as Public Law 2021, c. 681, contains three parts. First, it amends Maine's tax laws both to provide financial benefits to Tribal citizens residing on Tribal lands, and to encourage economic development on Tribal lands. Second, it provides each of the four Wabanaki Nations located in Maine with the exclusive opportunity to conduct mobile sports wagering operations within the state. Third, it establishes in law a Tribal-State collaboration process designed to promote meaningful communication on issues of particular significance to the Tribes and their citizens.

## **The Tribal-State Collaboration Act**

The Tribal-State Collaboration Act, 5 M.R.S. 11051 *et seq.*, requires 15 agencies identified in the statute to engage in a Tribal collaboration process regarding contemplated programs, rules, or services that substantially and uniquely affect Maine's four federally recognized Tribes or their citizens. It is intended to be a user-friendly process free from unnecessary bureaucracy that will be implemented within existing resources.

Title 5 M.R.S. 11053(1) requires each agency covered by the statute to adopt a collaboration policy. The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management adopted its collaboration policy, which is appended to this report, on December 1, 2022. The Department's Tribal liaison, as required by 5 M.R.S. 11053(3), is Sarah A. Sherman, who can be reached at 207-430-5816 or [sarah.sherman@maine.gov](mailto:sarah.sherman@maine.gov).

On December 6, 2022, the Governor's Office provided training on how to implement the statute in a manner that promotes effective communication and positive government-to-government relations with the Tribes. The Governor's Office has also requested that the Maine Indian Tribal State Commission (MITSC) help to facilitate training of state agency Tribal liaisons on issues of cultural competency, and MITSC has agreed to do so. Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness provide a cultural training program on October 21, 2024 (see page 42).

The Tribal-State Collaboration Act became law on August 8, 2022. This report demonstrates The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management's ongoing Tribal collaboration and proposed opportunities for future collaboration in the coming biennium. We have no recommendations for changes to the statute at this time.

## **Collaboration Policy**

This policy governs the Department of Defense, Veterans, and Emergency Management's (DVEM) implementation of the *Tribal-State Collaboration Act*, 5 M.R.S. §§ 11051 *et seq.* The purpose of the Act is to promote respectful, government-to-government dialogue, and improve communication between state agencies and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Mi'kmaq Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, and the Penobscot Nation.

Staff should interpret and apply the provisions of the law consistent with this purpose. The Act is intended to be implemented within existing resources, and therefore should be administered in a way that is practical, user-friendly, and efficient. The goal is to ensure the Tribes are afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard – in addition to the public process – during the development of programs, rules and services that substantially and uniquely affect them or their citizens, while minimizing administrative burdens for both state and tribal staff. This policy incorporates the *Tribal-State Collaboration Agency Guidance* of November 29, 2022, which is attached and incorporated herein.

### **I. Collaboration Required**

Staff shall engage in tribal collaboration regarding a contemplated program, rule or service that substantially and uniquely affects an Indian Tribe or its members. In determining whether a contemplated action triggers the need for collaboration, staff should consider whether it will have a meaningful and significant impact on an Indian Tribe or its members that is distinct from the general population. This will always be a subjective determination and should be informed by the Act's purpose of improving communication between the State and the Tribes.

When in doubt, staff should consider whether some initial, informal communication with potentially affected Tribes would assist in making this determination. If the standard for collaboration is not met, but some communication with one or more Tribes would nonetheless be beneficial, staff should ensure that occurs. Decisions about whether and how to engage in collaboration should not be formalistic but should be driven by common sense and good judgement. The overarching goal is to increase and improve communication with the Tribes, rather than technical compliance with the Act for its own sake.

## A. The Process of Collaboration

The Act requires the agency to provide the Tribes with written notice of the contemplated action, allowing the Tribes a reasonable opportunity to provide information, advice, and opinions on the contemplated action, and consider the comments it receives.

1. **Notice (sub-§ 11053(1)(D)(1)).** Once the determination has been made that collaboration is appropriate, the tribal liaison or project manager should email the point of contact that each of the four Tribes has provided for the purpose of collaboration. This email should explain that the agency is initiating the collaboration process, providing a description of the proposed action, identifying the date within which comments are requested, and offer to answer any questions.
2. **Opportunity to Comment (sub-§ 11053(1)(D)(2)).** There is no statutorily required comment period for tribal collaboration. The schedule should take into account the nature of the proposed action, its relative complexity, the magnitude of its impact, the relative urgency to act, and other factors. The schedule may be extended or truncated as appropriate, depending on the level of interest the Tribes may express. Comments may be submitted in writing or provided orally in a meeting or via teleconference. The comment period and the manner in which information is exchanged should be flexible to accommodate the needs of tribal and state agency staff, and to promote efficiency and good communication. The agency must use reasonable efforts to complete the process before taking final action.
3. **Consideration of Comments (sub-§ 11053(1)(D)(3)).** The agency must consider in good faith the information, advice, and opinions it receives from the Tribes in the course of collaboration. The agency is not required to provide a written response to submissions it receives from the Tribes, but it may choose to provide feedback, including informally, in the interests of respectful dialogue. The agency should include any written materials received or generated in the collaboration process in the record of its decision-making. To the extent the Tribes provide comments orally, the agency should prepare a memorandum summarizing those comments for its record.
4. **Collaboration in Rulemaking (sub-§§ 11053(1)(D) & (D)(4)).** In the context of rulemaking, agencies must engage in collaboration consistent with applicable provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act, 5 M.R.S. §§ 8051 *et seq.* (APA), as well as the Tribal-State Collaboration Act, 5 M.R.S. §§ 11051 *et seq.* The Act directs the agency to use reasonable efforts to complete collaboration before formal publication of a proposed rule pursuant to 5 M.R.S. § 8053(5). Completing collaboration before publication of a proposed

rule will also avoid procedural confusion that could arise from collaboration occurring at the same time as the public notice and comment process under the APA. If it is necessary to engage in collaboration following publication of the proposed rule, the agency should work closely with the Attorney General's Office to ensure compliance with both statutes.

In the context of emergency rulemaking pursuant to 5 M.R.S. § 8054, the agency must provide notice and engage in collaboration to the extent practicable.

**Informing Agency Staff (sub-§ 11053(1)(E)).** The tribal liaison shall promote awareness of the Tribal-State Collaboration Act and this policy within the agency by conspicuously posting this policy on the agency's website and ensuring appropriate references are made to the policy in agency employment manuals and training materials.

## **Tribal Liaison Contact**

Sarah A. Sherman, Director of Strategic Partnerships  
Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services  
117 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0117

**Telephone** – 207-430-5816

**Email** – [sarah.sherman@maine.gov](mailto:sarah.sherman@maine.gov)

## **Training Received**

**Complete** – In the spring of 2024, per the request of the Maine Emergency Management Agency, the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services (MBVS) partnered with Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness to present a Wabanaki History and Culture sharing opportunity for state agencies staff.

MBVS hosted *Advancing Wabanaki Wellness, Wabanaki History and Culture Sharing* training at Camp Chamberland in Augusta on October 21, 2024. Over 80 state employees were in attendance representing multiple state agencies – The Executive Director of the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, Department of Human Services, Department of Environmental Protection, Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, Maine Department of Transportation, Maine Department of Corrections, the Veterans Benefits Administration, Maine Department of Labor, Department of Public Safety, Maine Department of Education, Maine Center for Disease Control, Maine Army National Guard, Maine Emergency Management Agency, and Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services.

## Contemplated Biennium Actions (2025 – 2027)

- Maine Army National Guard (MEARNG) maintains a small collection of Native American artifacts discovered at its Training Sites. Continued conversations with the Wabanaki communities regarding the curation of these cultural objects, as it has been determined by a Wabanaki archaeologist that it is not necessary return them pursuant to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.
- In-person consultative meeting between MEARNG and the Penobscot Nation’s Natural Resources Department regarding development plans at the MEARNG’s Woodville Training Site.
- MEARNG could potentially partner with Wabanaki communities to conduct Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) that would provide medical, dental or construction assistance while also furthering military training objectives. The lack of clean drinking water at the Passamaquoddy Reservation at Pleasant Point due to an old and infective water treatment plant was discussed at length during the October 21, 2024, training.
- MEARNG clarification of agreement with Wabanaki Communities by developing a Memorandum of Understanding regarding Maine National Guard Response efforts on Community lands in the event of a Natural Disaster.
- Maine Emergency Management Services (MEMA) Hazard Mitigation Assistance (Building Resilience Infrastructure and Communities - BRIC): the Agency plans to pursue a potential relationship between the State Hazard Mitigation Officer and Passamaquoddy Tribe to identify potential projects for consideration. BRIC funding might be a resource for the tribe to pursue to help address the drinking water issue at Pleasant Point. Tribes can apply directly to FEMA, but we would like to be a resource for technical assistance. Regina Marotto - [regina.marotto2@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:regina.marotto2@fema.dhs.gov) is the FEMA R1 Tribal Liaison.
- Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services (MBVS) continued support for Wabanaki Veterans and their families by collaborating with Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Veterans’ Liaison, Darren Ripley, and providing connection to the Bureau’s Veterans Services Officers, veterans’ forms and informational support materials, and by working with partner organizations to provide in-person claims clinics in Wabanaki communities.
- Continued MBVS collaboration towards the creation of a Maine Wabanaki Veterans Memorial in Augusta, ME.
- MEARNG, MEMA, and MBVS continued observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day (June 21) and National Native American Heritage Month (November).

- Ongoing MBVS and MEARNG meetings with Chief Pos Bassett, Donald Soctomah (Passamaquoddy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer), and PFC Charles Lola's and PFC Samuel Dana's families regarding the renaming of the MEARNG's Woodville Training Site to reflect and honor the actions of these two Passamaquoddy Veterans who served during the First World War.

## Summary of Agencies Collaborations in the Preceding Biennium

### Maine Army and Air National Guard

#### *Wabanaki Interactions and Collaborations*

**December 14, 2022** – Major General Farnham sent a letter to Chiefs Newell, Nicholas, Francis, Sabattis, and Peter-Paul regarding the Maine Army National Guard's (MEARNG) collection of items that were discovered during archaeological site investigations (1991 Hollis site and 1992 Gilead site). A request was made for consultation and guidance from the Wabanaki communities to determine if the items qualified as cultural items or objects of cultural patrimony pursuant to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), and to seek Tribal input on where and how the items are curated.

**October 2023** - Chris Sockalexis, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Penobscot Nation of the Penobscot Nation, stated that the artifacts were not likely NAGPRA materials. Mr. Sockalexis offered to potentially curate the artifacts at the Penobscot Nation's Museum, an outcome that MEARNG is very interested in pursuing, provided that the other Wabanaki Nations agree with this course of action.

MEARNG's Wabanaki community outreach/introduction effort concerning range construction at Woodville Training Site has been on-going since 2019. In 2023, MEARNG sought specific input from the Wabanaki communities on a new large range expansion project. The objective is early engagement and participation in environmental impact planning, studies/lines of inquiry, and project design. Per new Federal guidance, we are seeking and incorporating what is termed Indigenous Knowledge or Traditional Knowledge into our decision-making process. We've also made an open invitation for a pre-construction site visit.

**June 21, 2023** - MEARNG observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day.

**September 2023** - MEARNG member and 101ARW Mission Support Group Commander attended National Guard Bureau sponsored Tribal Engagement Training.



# ***Evolution of Federal Indian Policy***

Mark Gilfillan  
United States Army Corps of Engineers  
Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise  
September 2023



**November 2023** – MEARNG observation of National Native American Heritage Month.

**December 4, 2023** – Elizabeth Barton, MEARNG Cultural Resource Manager reached out to Ms. Sherman regarding the repatriation of Native American artifacts, the proposed Woodville Training Site range expansion in the Lincoln Area (Township T2 R9 NWP, near Chester), and Innovative Readiness Training (IRT), in hopes of generating a more productive and meaningful dialogue with the Wabanaki Community.

**February 2, 2024** – Brigadier General Diane Dunn was sworn in as the first woman to lead the Maine National Guard. She also serves as the Commissioner of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management. General Dunn is a descendant of a Penobscot Nation Tribal member.

**June 12, 2024** – MEARNG reported 11 Maine Army Guard Members and nine Maine Air Guard members identifying as Native American.

**June 21, 2024** - MEARNG observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day.

**August 2024** – MEARNG invited the Wabanaki Community to participate in an introduction and orientation tour of the Woodville Training Site and the proposed range expansion. Mr. Dan Kusnierz, Water Resources Program Manager for the Penobscot Nation, attended the visit. Discussions included the possibility of the MEARNG assisting the Penobscot Nation through the Innovative Readiness Training program, where MEARNG conducts aviation, natural resource, medical, or construction training activities that mutually benefit MEARNG and the community aid applicant.

Col. John Wilmot also spoke with Dan Kusnierz regarding the possibility of future assistance through the Guard's IRT process and explained some of the rotary wing aviation capabilities, which might fit his needs, as a tribal entity does fall within the eligibility requirements, the submission and approval process, and currently timelines (currently 18-24 months out from process initiation).

**August 15, 2024** – By invitation, Elizabeth Barton (MEARNG Cultural Resource Manager) and Ms. Sherman attended a concert of music celebrating nature and culture in Bangor. Maliseet Chief Clarissa Sabattis and Lauren Stevens (Passamaquoddy), Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Culture, Connection & Support Lead, joined Salt Bay Chamberfest Artistic Director and cellist Wilhelmina Smith, with cellist Yeesun Kim of the Borromeo String Quartet, in a collaborative performance featuring works by Grammy-nominated Dawn Avery of Mohawk descent, Pulitzer Prize winning Diné composer Raven Chacon, Passamaquoddy composer Allen Sockabasin, and Italian composer Giovanni Sollima.

**September 2024** – Ms. Barton reached out to the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq communities for comment and input on the planned cleanup and closure of a small arms range at the Former Loring Air Force base. MEARNG intends to remediate lead and other metals in the soil and then transfer ownership to the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge. Ms. Barton sent letters to both communities and was called by the Natural Resource Director at the Mi'kmaq community, Shannon Hill, who asked to see a copy of the draft site investigation plan. A hard copy of the document was sent to Ms. Hill.

**September 2024** – Ms. Barton reached out to Dr. Bonnie Newsom, UMaine professor and Wabanaki Community leader, in hopes of broadening the discussion and seeking broader Wabanaki Nation input on the proposal to have the Penobscot Nation Museum curate the artifacts the MEARNG has in its possession.

**November 2024** – MEARNG observation of National Native American Heritage Month.

## **Maine Emergency Management Agency**

### *Wabanaki Interactions and Collaborations*

**April 6, 2023** – Anne Fuchs, Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director of Mitigation and Recovery introduced MEMA's State Individual Assistance Officer to Ms. Sherman. Per MEMA's draft Strategic Plan, MEMA's Individual Assistance Officer and Deputy Director have been tasked with the following across the 2023-2027 timeframe.

- Increasing outreach to tribal governments and organizations.
- Increasing participation of tribal officials and representatives in Agency facilitated meetings, workshops, and training opportunities.

- Facilitating the sharing of information, best practices, and resource availability to tribal governments, organizations, and officials.
- Supporting county, municipal, and tribal plan integration into Agency plans and agreements with volunteer organizations and networks.
- Working with Maine's Tribes to assist in the preservation of tribal sacred land and resources by forming partnerships with them.
- Working with you as the Departmental Tribal Liaison to develop relationships with Maine's Tribes, built on trust and communication.

MEMA's Individual Assistance Officer is working with her teammates on the development of a statewide Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Summit and would like to inform tribal communities of their impending plans.

MEMA's Individual Assistance Officer and Ms. Sherman met and discussed an initial approach they could take together which included an introduction to the five Wabanaki communities Chiefs, a request for connection to their liaison for community emergency management, and an in-person visit by MEMA's Individual Assistance Officer and Ms. Sherman to learn more about the below four topics:

1. How does your community structure emergency management?
2. How do you look at land and resources culturally within your management plan?
3. Can MEMA assist your community in any way?
4. What can MEMA learn from your community's approach to emergency management?

**June 14, 2023** – Joe Legee, MEMA Deputy Director reached out to Ms. Sherman with a request for contact information for the U.S. Small Business Administration as they wanted to confirm who they should reach out to in Maine's Wabanaki communities following a declared disaster. Ms. Sherman provided the emails for the five community's Chiefs.

**June 21, 2023** –MEMA observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day.

**June 23, 2023** –MEMA requested MBVS's assistance with the distribution of grant information to the Wabanaki Chiefs regarding National Training and Education Division's (NTED) \$6 million FY 2023 Continuing Training Grants competitive program Notice of Funding Opportunity regarding the focus areas, *Build Tribal Capacities to Improve Readiness and Resilience* and *Rural Preparedness for Equitable Outcome*.

**September 18, 2023** -- FEMA hosted a virtual meeting between MEMA and participating members of the Wabanaki community. The “Notification of Disaster Impacts: A conversation with Tribes, Maine, and FEMA,” meeting was conducted to allow for Maine’s Tribal Nations to identify the preferred method for which they would like to be notified of disaster recovery efforts, to include disaster declarations. Participants included (former) Chief Rena Newell and Paige Sprague of the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point and Mike Hildreth of the Penobscot Indian Nation. Further discussions will be hosted based on the need for further participation.

**October 18, 2023** – Presentation by Regina Marotto-Benjamin, Tribal Liaison, National Preparedness, Federal Emergency Management Agency Region 1(FEMA) at the MEMA County Director’s meeting on Native American Tribe’s history and FEMA’s interaction with them.

**November 2023** – MEMA observation of National Native American Heritage Month.

**November 22, 2023** – Request made by Joe Legee, MEMA Deputy Director, to see if the Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services is aware of or could provide cultural competency training to MEMA staff. Ms. Sherman reached out to Lauren Stevens at Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness for guidance.

**November 28, 2023** - MEMA was contacted to provide technical assistance to the Penobscot Nation on frequency coordination with the FCC and Innovative Science and Economic Development (ISED) Office in Canada. The Penobscot Nation would like to use a radio frequency that is licensed to other parties, and we are working with partners to investigate whether it will cause interference in Maine or in Canada.

**December 28, 2023** – MEMA reached out to MBVS to ensure their message was shared with the Wabanaki Communities regarding a Major Disaster Declaration request (December 18-21) for the severe storm event. Preliminary Damage Assessments were scheduled for January 2 and 5, and Anne Fuchs, MEMA Director of Mitigation, Planning, and Recovery, wanted to ensure that the communities knew FEMA personnel would also be on site to validate damages.

**January 2024** – An invitation was extended to the Wabanaki community to participate in joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) across Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for the December 17-21<sup>st</sup> severe storm event, and the January 10<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> severe storm event. Participating in the damage assessment process did not commit Tribal Nations to applying under the State should a Presidential Disaster Declaration be received, but it did allow Tribal Nations to take advantage of the Federal personnel already being deployed to the State to assess damages.

Upon receipt of the December storm declaration (DR-4754) Penobscot Nation did decide to apply through the State for Public Assistance. Upon receipt of the January storm declaration (DR-4764) Passamaquoddy at Pleasant Point decided to apply through the State for Public Assistance, however disaster survivors within the community were also able to apply directly to FEMA for Individual Assistance.

**February 22, 2024** – Ms. Fuchs reached out to the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot communities to ensure that they were aware of the impending FEMA Request for Public Assistance deadline.

An invitation was extended to the Wabanaki community to participate in joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) across Individual Assistance and Public Assistance for the December 17-21<sup>st</sup> severe storm event, and the January 10<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> severe storm event. Participating in the damage assessment process did not commit Tribal Nations to applying under the State should a Presidential Disaster Declaration be received, but it did allow Tribal Nations to take advantage of the Federal personnel already being deployed to the State to assess damages.

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**May 29, 2024** - Wabanaki community representatives attended the Maine Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference, held on May 29 at the Augusta Civic Center. The theme of the conference was community preparedness and resiliency, and the focus (each year) is on the partnerships that make emergency preparedness possible in Maine. Included in the day's events was a breakout session led by Regina Marotto, FEMA Region 1 Tribal Liaison, on "Tribal Nations and Preparedness in Maine."



*Regina Marotto-Benjamin, FEMA Region 1 Tribal Liaison, presents Tribal Nations and Preparedness in Maine at the 2024 Maine Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference.*



**June 18, 2024** – MEMA’s Communications Manager and the Director of Operations and Response met with Paige Sprague, Homeland Security Specialist for the Pleasant Point Passamaquoddy Tribe, regarding an inquiry about the Passamaquoddy tribe being able to do public alerting. Discussions were had on how that could be achieved. The Communications Manager reached out to FEMA IPAWS to discuss how other tribes have done this across the Country. Next step will be for the Passamaquoddy to submit an alerting plan.

MEMA’s Exercise Officer and Technological Programs Manager have been in communications with Paige Sprague regarding participation in an upcoming (10/30/24) radiological exercise with the Point LePreau Nuclear Power Station in New Brunswick. Emergency scenarios at this facility could put Washington County and the tribal communities in danger through ingestion of radiological materials spread because of an emergency.

The Passamaquoddy community is currently not listed in the Radiological Emergency Plan and this exercise will target how to make that revision. MEMA will be testing the notification and information flow processes with the tribe. It was determined that both MEMA and Washington County should be making notifications to ensure the tribe is the appropriate information in a timely manner.

MEMA’s Preparedness and Homeland Security staff are currently scoping an effort to update the state’s Integrated Preparedness Plan and is interested in reaching out to Wabanaki community representatives to gauge interest in participating in a workshop pursuant to this effort. Exact dates are to be determined but will likely be in early fall.

**June 21, 2024** - MEMA observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day.

**November 2024** – MEMA observation of National Native American Heritage Month.

## **Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services**

### *Wabanaki Interactions and Collaborations*

**December 30, 2022** - Anne Fuchs, MEMA's Director of Mitigation, Planning, and Recovery reached out to Ms. Sherman to initiate direct contact with tribal communities to see if we could work to strategize ways to reach them, noting that was her understanding that they tend to work directly with FEMA, but if there's any interest in receiving recovery information from the state MEMA would to start a dialog with their communities.

**January 2, 2023** - Ms. Sherman sent an email to the five Wabanaki Chiefs and Lisa Sockabasin (Co-CEO Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness) to see if a meeting could be arranged between the Wabanaki communities and Ms. Fuchs at MEMA.

**January 4, 2023** - MBVS continued to work with U.S. Senator Angus King, Jr.'s office, Donald Soctomah (Passamaquoddy Historic Preservation Officer), and Capt. Jonathan Bratten (MEARNG Historian) to assist the families of two Passamaquoddy World War I veterans (Charles Lola and Samuel Dana), and the request to have their medals awarded posthumously.

Early in the new year, the Bureau received an update from Sarah Graettinger at Senator Angus King, Jr.'s office that read as follows, "We received a response from the Army on the inquiry for Mr. Lola, and Mr. Dana. Unfortunately, they were not able to grant our request. Per Army regulation that there needs to be an award recommendation from a person who had first-hand knowledge of the achievements and endorsed it from that time. They did suggest potentially hiring an independent researcher and having them go to the National Archives in College Park, MD to attempt to locate an original award recommendation. I will notify the families by mail."

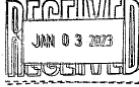
When asked if he could access the National Archives, Maine National Guard Historian, Capt. Jonathan Bratten responded, "Unfortunately, I have already been through the unit's award recommendations files at both the National Archives and the Massachusetts State Archives where many of the division records are. Barring missing or illegible files, I have not been able to come across any award recommendations for either Lola or Dana. If I do so at any future time, I will notify MBVS and hopefully we will have better luck."



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY HUMAN RESOURCES COMMAND  
1600 SPEARHEAD DIVISION AVENUE, DEPARTMENT 480  
FORT KNOX, KY 40122-5409

December 22, 2022

Awards and Decorations Branch



The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator  
ATTN: Sarah Graettinger  
40 Western Avenue, Suite 412  
Augusta, ME 04332-4018

Dear Senator King:

This is in response to your December 19, 2022, letter concerning your desire for Mr. Charles Lola to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during World War I.

While Mr. Lola's story is truly admirable and worthy of recognition, we are unable to facilitate your request. In accordance with Army regulation, a retroactive award recommendation must be initiated by an individual with firsthand knowledge of the Soldier's service and achievements and endorsed by at least one living member of the chain of command from the period. Due to the passage of time, there are no remaining Veterans who served during World War I who may recommend and endorse such a request. The only possible way forward is to locate substantial evidence that Mr. Lola's wartime chain of command intended to recognize his actions, along with eyewitness statements from individuals who were personally present during the incident in question.

We urge the supporters of this action to hire an independent researcher to visit the National Archives in College Park, MD, to attempt to locate an original award recommendation and unit reports with respect to Mr. Lola's actions on June 16, 1918. By providing you such guidance, we are not attempting to discourage or dissuade you. We understand the difficulties in attempting to reconstruct an award recommendation concerning events from a past conflict. However, we must be completely transparent about the regulatory requirements this recommendation would have to meet. If you require further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

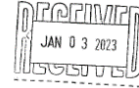
Grekil Y. Felder  
Major, U.S. Army  
Chief, Awards and Decorations Branch



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY HUMAN RESOURCES COMMAND  
1600 SPEARHEAD DIVISION AVENUE, DEPARTMENT 480  
FORT KNOX, KY 40122-5406

December 28, 2022

Awards and Decorations Branch



The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator  
ATTN: Sarah Graettinger  
40 Western Avenue, Suite 412  
Augusta, ME 04332-4018

Dear Senator King:

This is in response to your December 19, 2022, letter concerning your desire for Mr. Samuel Dana to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during World War I.

While Mr. Dana's story is truly admirable and worthy of recognition, we are unable to facilitate your request. In accordance with Army regulation, a retroactive award recommendation must be initiated by an individual with firsthand knowledge of the Soldier's service and achievements and endorsed by at least one living member of the chain of command from the period. Due to the passage of time, there are no remaining Veterans who served during World War I who may recommend and endorse such a request. The only possible way forward is to locate substantial evidence that Mr. Dana's wartime chain of command intended to recognize his actions, along with eyewitness statements from individuals who were personally present during the incident in question.

We urge the supporters of this action to hire an independent researcher to visit the National Archives in College Park, MD, to attempt to locate an original award recommendation and unit reports with respect to Mr. Dana's actions on June 16, 1918. By providing you such guidance, we are not attempting to discourage or dissuade you. We understand the difficulties in attempting to reconstruct an award recommendation concerning events from a past conflict. However, we must be completely transparent about the regulatory requirements this recommendation would have to meet. If you require further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

Grekil Y. Felder  
Major, U.S. Army  
Chief, Awards and Decorations Branch

**February 2, 2023** – Pleasant Point Veterans' Claims Clinic at the Passamaquoddy saltwater reservation in collaboration with MBVS Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Veterans', the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and MBVS.

**February 3, 2023** – Indian Township Veterans' Claims Clinic at the Passamaquoddy freshwater reservation in collaboration with MBVS Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Veterans', the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration, and MBVS.

**JOIN US FOR A  
VETERAN'S CLAIMS CLINIC  
IN SIPAYIK**




Were you Injured while in the military?  
Needing to file another Claim(s)?  
Have questions about other Veteran benefits?

Representatives from Wabanaki Public Health & wellness, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and Veterans affairs will be on site to help file claims or answer any questions about other benefits.

**When: February 2nd, 2023  
Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM  
Where: Beatrice Rafferty School**

**Register Here: <https://bit.ly/3GmlbWh>**

For more information, please reach out to Darren Ripley at [dripley@wabanakiphw.org](mailto:dripley@wabanakiphw.org) or (207)949-6142




 Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness

**JOIN US FOR A  
VETERAN'S CLAIMS CLINIC  
IN INDIAN TOWNSHIP**




Were you Injured while in the military?  
Needing to file another Claim(s)?  
Have questions about other Veteran benefits?

Representatives from Wabanaki Public Health & wellness, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and Veterans affairs will be on site to help file claims or answer any questions about other benefits.

**When: February 3rd, 2023  
Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Where: Indian Township Tribal Office**

**Register Here: <https://bit.ly/3BpojzN>**

For more information, please reach out to Darren Ripley at [dripley@wabanakiphw.org](mailto:dripley@wabanakiphw.org) or (207)949-6142




 Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness

**February 7, 2023** – After action report from the Sipayik and Indian Township events, “We helped 11 veterans total between the two communities, as well as had family members of veterans stop in to ask some questions and to get some information regarding services and benefits their veteran may qualify for. Tribal leadership at both locations were very pleased with our turnout and for coming into their communities to help their veterans.”

**February 10, 2023** – The Wabanaki Veterans’ Memorial Committee met, discussed the 14 letters of support they received, and the monument packet was delivered to the parks commission by Ms. Sherman on February 13<sup>th</sup>.

**February 12, 2023** – Anne Fuchs, MEMA Director of Mitigation, Planning, and Recovery alerted Ms. Sherman about extensive damages sustained at the Passamaquoddy Health Center at Indian Township due to a winter storm. Ms. Sherman introduced Ms. Fuchs to Chief Nicholas via email to see if MEMA could provide any assistance to their community.

**February 25, 2023** – As part of the Maine Governor’s Challenge Team’s engagement plans a second veterans’ benefits and resource event was held. The Indoor Veterans and Family Expo was co-hosted by the Veterans Benefits Administration and MBVS at the Anah Shriners Auditorium in Bangor and featured many community partners including Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness.



**We are all  
'PACT'  
up and headed  
to Bangor!**

For a family friendly event for Veterans to learn about the PACT Act and other benefits and resources available through the state and community.

**Saturday** ★ ★ ★ ★  
**February 25th**  
**10AM – 2PM**

- Agent Orange, Radiation, Toxic Exposures
- Expanded locations to presume conditions
- New presumptive conditions
- Respiratory conditions, MGUS, Cancers, Hypertension

**Veterans and Family Indoor Expo**  
**Anah Shriners, 1404 Broadway, Bangor, ME**  
**Sponsored by Masons, Bethlehem Lodge #35**

Stop in to see the: VBA, VHA, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, CDC - Suicide Prevention, Department of Labor - Career Center, Disabled American Veterans, Hope for Healing, House in the Woods, Maine Bureau of Veteran's Services, Maine Veterans Project, Maine Veterans' Services, Marine Corps League, Martin's Point, Travis Mills Foundation, Vet Center, Vet2Vet Maine, Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness, and many other Veteran-centric organizations

**VA**  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**February 27 - March 3, 2023** – Maine’s Team attended the four-day Governor’s Challenge Implementation Academy along with their counterparts from Vermont, Indiana, Nebraska, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa. Team Maine worked on honing the next three phases of its Service Member, Veterans, and Family suicide prevention plan to include: Creating a program with walk-in clinics to help identify veterans and provide a warm hand off to veterans’ services, conduct more veterans’ expos across the state, and to create a program in partnership with gun shops to provide non-judgmental, safe storage options for veterans and their firearms.



*Governor's Challenge Maine Team attends the (left to right) – Dr. Scott Hanson, Veterans Benefits Administration Director Jennifer Bover, Lewiston Vet Center Director Scott Hutcherson, Senior Director Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Brian Martinez, VA Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Tracy Charette, Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Veterans Services Coordinator Darren Ripley, Director Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services David Richmond, Maine Department of Labor Veterans Program Manager Leo Deon, MBVS Director of Strategic Partnerships Sarah Sherman, MBVS Communications Director Ryan Lorrain, and Crisis Systems Manager Kiley Wilkins.*

**March 2, 2023** – The VA Veterans Readiness and Employment Team held an interactive meeting through the Togus campus with Darcy Gentle, Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation Director, and Jason White, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, from the Wabanaki and Maliseet Indian Tribes. The purpose of the meeting to build awareness between both organizations, and an opportunity to discuss how to better provide Native American Veterans with shared resources between the groups.

**March 9, 2023** – Start of meetings with Nibezun, Veterans Benefits Administration, and MBVS to plan a Maine’s Native American Veterans Day celebration.

**April 5, 2023** – Lisa Montgomery, Penobscot Nation Veterans’ Tribal Liaison invited Ms. Sherman to attend the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Department of Veterans Affairs Tribal Veterans Representatives Conference in Mt. Pleasant, MI, July 24 – 28.

**April 26, 2024** – Ms. Sherman spoke with Suzanne Gressor, Executive Director of the Legislative Council, to check on the Wabanaki Veterans’ Memorial proposal status. Ms. Gressor will ensure that the State House Facilities Committee receives the proposal, and she will be in touch once they review it.

**June 21, 2023** - MBVS observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day.

**June 23, 2023** – MBVS assisted MEMA with the distribution of grant information to the Wabanaki Chiefs regarding National Training and Education Division’s (NTED) \$6 million FY 2023 Continuing Training Grants competitive program Notice of Funding Opportunity regarding the focus areas, *Build Tribal Capacities to Improve Readiness and Resilience* and *Rural Preparedness for Equitable Outcome*.

**June 28, 2023** – In partnership with Nibezun (A Wabanaki non-profit organization that celebrates culture as medicine, provides an inclusive space for healing, and promotes sustainability for all people, and future generations), the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and MBVS participated in a week-long celebration of Maine Native American Veterans Day at the Penobscot Nation’s Boat Landing on Indian Island. A Wabanaki cookbook was created to share with attendees, traditional food was shared, ceremonial drumming enjoyed, and representatives from the three veterans’ organizations were available to provide information, answer questions, and offer on-the-spot services.

★ ★ ★





## HONORING NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS DAY

**June 28th 2023, 11am-1pm  
Penobscot Nation Boatlanding**

Join us for a day of celebration and remembrance as we honor our Wabanaki Veterans. We are excited to **launch our Wabanaki Cookbook** in honor of our Veterans.


Wabanaki Veterans will have the opportunity to **receive the first copies** of this book, **taste recipes** we have compiled, **learn about support services**, and enter to win **door prizes**. Open to Wabanaki community members and families.

Reach out to Selena Neptune-Bear at [selena@nibezun.org](mailto:selena@nibezun.org) for more information.







## Wabanaki Cookbook

2023



Corn, Blueberry, and  
Wild Rice Salad  
p. 35




*Maine Native American Veterans Day was celebrated on Indian Island and a cookbook of traditional recipes was presented to the veterans who attended the celebration.*



*Penobscot Nation Veterans' Memorial on Indian Island.*

**July 14, 2023** – As part of the Maine Governor’s Challenge Team’s engagement plans a third veterans’ benefits and resource event was held. The Service Members, Veterans, and Family Expo was co-hosted by the Veterans Benefits Administration and MBVS in Caribou at the Cary Medical Center and featured many community partners including Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness, with a focus on the Pact Act and connection to federal and state benefits.



**We are all 'PACT' up & headed to Aroostook County**

For a family friendly event for Veterans, Service Members & their families to learn about the PACT Act & other benefits & resources available through the state & community.

Cary Medical Center Parking Available

**Friday** An event you do not want to miss ★★★★★  
**7<sup>AM</sup> – 11<sup>AM</sup>** **163 Van Buren Road, Caribou, ME**

**FREE EVENT** **JULY 14, 2023**

**FREE**  
 Maine-themed breakfast by *Operation at Ease*


**ONSITE Services Offered** such as State Park Passes, Recognition Coins, and more.

- Bring your DD Form 214 and
- Maine State Drivers License
- with Veteran indicator if you
- have it, to access some of
- the onsite services.

**FREE Door Prizes**

**On-Site Organizations:** .....  
 American Legion, Aroostook Veterans Alliance, Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Department of Labor - Career Center, Disabled American Veterans, DHHS-CDC Suicide Prevention Program, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, Maine Veterans' Home, Martin's Point, Maine Veterans' Services, Operation at Ease, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Quilts of Valor, Travis Mills Foundation, University of Maine - Presque Isle, Salvation Army - Operation Red Shield, Veterans Benefits Administration, Vet Center, Veterans Forward, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Health Administration, Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness, and more organizations committed to serving Veterans.

Veterans and Community Connection Expo

**VA**  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**July 24 – 28, 2023** – Ms. Sherman attended the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Department of Veterans Affairs Tribal Veterans Representatives Conference in Mt. Pleasant, MI, July 24 – 28, met Native American Veterans’ Advocates from across the United States, and attended the Saginaw Pow Wow. This training has not been offered in Maine since 2012, and MBVS will work with Maine’s Director Jennifer Bover at the Veterans Benefits Administration to co-host the training in 2024.



*Left to Right - David Curran (Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Veterans Outreach, and U.S. Navy retired); Sarah Sherman (MBVS); Gregorio Kishketon (Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma, VA Office of the Secretary, Center for Minority Veterans, and U.S. Marine Corps veteran); and Rodney Loonsfoot (Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Veterans Outreach, and U.S. Marine Corps veteran).*

**August 2023** - Maine State Legislator Samuel Zager, reached out to Director David Richmond regarding the upcoming commissioning of the *USS Augusta* in Eastport, Maine. He wanted to ensure that the Navy Public Affairs Office had a means to invite Maine’s Native American Chiefs and Wabanaki Veterans to the event. Ms. Sherman connected with Navy Installations Command Headquarters and provided contact information for the Wabanaki Chiefs and Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness so invitations could be sent.

**October 18, 2023** – Ms. Sherman attended a presentation by Regina Maratto-Benjamin, Tribal Liaison, National Preparedness, Federal Emergency Management Agency Region 1(FEMA) at the MEMA County Director’s meeting on Native American Tribe’s history and FEMA’s interaction with them.

**November 1, 2023** – The Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services (MBVS) and its partner agencies, participate in a nationwide Veterans Affairs (VA) virtual event in honor of National Native American Heritage Month. Gregorio Kishketon, Staff Advisor in the office of Secretary of the VA as the Native American/Alaskan Native Liaison at U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office, Center for Minority Veterans led the event, and he is also a member of Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma and a Marine Corps veteran.

Lauren Stevens, Division Director of Community Healing at Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness (WPH&W) sang a traditional Passamaquoddy welcome song and discussed the services her agency and Nibezun provide within their communities. Sarah Sherman, MBVS Director of Strategic Partnerships, discussed her five-year journey building relationships with the Wabanaki communities’ veterans and their families. Darren Ripley, Veterans Services Coordinator at WPH&W and an Iraq War Veteran, explained his work helping connect Wabanaki Veterans to their benefits and the special events he coordinates for them, and Director Jennifer Bover from the Veterans Benefits Administration, Togus Regional Office discussed her team’s role bringing connection to VA services to veterans in Wabanaki communities.

After the program, the Maine Team received these kind words from Mr. Kishketon, “I thank each and every one of your team, for giving of your time, expertise, and knowledge of our tribal nations. I was extremely happy with the outcome of the event. I have been inundated with compliments and kudos. In particular, from the senior leadership of VA Central Offices, and my senior leadership Mr. James Albino, SES NC, and Debra Walker, AD. Take a bow, we made a difference, and we touched many lives in Native Country.”



**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Center for Minority Veterans



NOVEMBER IS

# Native American Heritage Month

Join the VA Center for Minority Veterans in celebrating Native American Heritage Month with Key Note Speakers, Veterans and Music.

During these virtual events, Veterans and constituents will have the opportunity to learn about minority Veteran disparities and the PACT Act - including eligibility requirements, starting the claims process, access to VA benefits and more. Don't miss the opportunity to connect with CMV and learn how this program, under the Office of the Secretary, can add value and equity.

**November 1st and 30th 2023 |  
11am EST to 12:30PM EST**



**November 8, 2023** – As a result of meeting Gregorio Kishketon at the TVR training in Michigan, Ms. Sherman received an invitation and traveled with MBVS partner agencies to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Native American Memorial, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (where they interacted with several groups of school children), and the Pentagon Force Protection Agency for its Native American Heritage observance which was held in the Pentagon Central Courtyard. She was accompanied by Lauren Stevens, her father and former Passamaquoddy Chief, Richard Stevens, Darren Ripley (all representing the Passamaquoddy Tribe), and Christina Smith from the Veterans Benefits Administration, Togus Regional Office.

The two-hour event included attendance by Native American Tribes from across the United States wearing their traditional regalia, the Presentation of the Colors by the Kiowa Black Leggings Society, remarks from Harvey Pratt, designer of the National Native American Memorial and a Vietnam Veteran (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes); Larry Wright, Jr., Executive Director National Congress of American Indians (Ponca Tribe); Dr. Buu Nygren (Navajo Nation President), as well as performances by Zotigh Singers (Kiowa Tribe), Lance Fisher (Northern Cheyenne Nation) and Giovanna Gross (Oglala Lakota Nation and Northern Peruvian), traditional dance exhibitions by Louis Campbell (Lumbee) and Jonathan Taylor (Ponca and Southern Ute), and a Hoop Dance Song by Angela Gladue (Nehivaw (Cree)/Frog Lake First Nations).



*Lauren Stevens, former Passamaquoddy Chief Richard Stevens, and Darren Ripley at the National Native American Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.*



*Images from the National Museum of the American Indian.*





*Native American Heritage Month at the Pentagon Courtyard - November 8, 2023.*

**November 9, 2023** – The partnership between the Maine Bureau of Veteran’s Services, Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, Nibezun, and the Veterans Benefits Administration – Togus Regional Office and their work bringing advocacy to Wabanaki Veterans and their families was highlighted in the Portland Press Herald.

T10 Veterans Day Special Section | Thursday, November 9, 2023

VETERANS DAY 2023

## Coalition is bringing crucial services to veterans in Maine’s tribal communities

Though members of the Wabanaki have served in every branch of the U.S. military and in every war since the Revolutionary War, they often don’t get access to the veteran’s benefits they’ve earned.

By ALEXANDRA HALL

**D**arren “Moose” Ripley won’t soon forget the satisfaction he felt after working for nearly nine months last year with a veteran from the Penobscot Nation to get him connected to all of the benefits he was entitled to for injuries from his service.

“He was getting some of his benefits already, but it took such a long time because of scheduling, and talking to officials, and attending meetings, he was ready to give up,” said Ripley, a veterans services coordinator with Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness. “We walked through it with him, and it was a success. But that help isn’t something people in tribal communities have had a resource for.”

Ripley, a veteran who grew up in the Passamaquoddy community and is the third generation of his family to receive a Purple Heart, is one of several links in a network that’s developed organically over the last five years between Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, the Wabanaki nonprofit Nibezun, the Veterans Benefits Administration and Health Administration at Togus, and the Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services. Together, they’re bringing crucial services to the veterans of Maine’s tribal communities. And in the process, they will serve as a model for similar efforts across the country this November.

Maine is home to more than 500 Wabanaki veterans, and the Wabanaki have served in every branch of the U.S. military and in every war since the Revolutionary War. And yet, for multiple reasons, they often don’t get access to the veteran’s benefits they’ve earned.

“Maine is such a rural state, and tribal communities aren’t always close to many of the veterans resources they need to access,” said Sarah Sherman, the director of strategic partnerships at the Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services. Though she has been instrumental to the partnership’s genesis, she credits Ripley, Lauren Stevens with Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness and Selena Neptune-Bear of Nibezun with helping to bridge the longstanding issues of cultural division and mistrust.

“Darren and Selena’s introductions to the tribal communities have helped us build trust that allows us to have a more



Courtesy of Darren Ripley

Darren Ripley, left, of Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, with Eugene Loring Jr., a former Army Ranger.

direct relationship and deliver services,” said Robert McGann, government and community relations specialist at the VA Maine Healthcare System. A veteran himself, he works with all of the other partners to bring what he calls “a one-stop shop” of services directly to the tribal communities – all of them working together to organize on-site events where veterans are able to do things like file claims, get help finding employment, get access to veteran home loans, and file for education benefits and for monthly compensation benefits for illnesses.

“For all of their questions, there are people to help them,” Ripley said. “We’re getting the outreach done.”

Meanwhile, the coalition’s efforts are getting recognized, to the delight of partners like Sherman.

“We’ve been asked by Gregorio Kishketon (a program analyst for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and a Tribal Elder with the Water Clan-Kickapoo Tribe

of Oklahoma) to present virtually on Nov. 1 about our group’s work in Maine with the Wabanaki communities,” she said during an interview in October. The coalition also planned to be at the Pentagon in person on Nov. 8 for the VA’s Native American Heritage Month celebration.

Stevens, with Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, has been asked to sing at both events.

“The goal at the Pentagon is to model what we’re doing here in Maine for other areas of the country,” said Michael Brawn, an Air Force veteran and the assistant director of Veterans Benefits Administration at Togus. “There’s been a synergy between the groups that’s incredible.”

And the impact of that synergy, according to all involved, has gone beyond the practical and extended into the personal realm. In fact, the most robust sign-up events have taken on an air of cultural – if not spiritual – exchange. “They’ve taken the time to share their culture with us,”

McGann said, “including a smoke-smudging ceremony and a cleansing blessing that have been very extremely powerful.”

“One of the ways we heal is through our culture,” said Neptune-Bear, who was the force behind putting together a Wabanaki Cookbook for the tribal communities.

“Food and seed sharing are important to us.” To that end, the group was bringing copies of the cookbook to the Pentagon to share.

“As I understand Selena’s program at Nibezun, its focus is whole health,” McGann said. “And the VA in general has transitioned toward a whole-health model, so the two work very well together.”

Neptune-Bear may have been a step ahead of that pivot, but she welcome it nonetheless.

“Whole health is crucial to our relationship,” she said. “They’re seeing another way of healing for veterans. We view our culture as medicine and prevention for things veterans deal with.”

**November 22, 2023** – Request made by Joe Legee, MEMA Deputy Director, to see if the Maine Bureau of Veterans’ Services is aware of or could provide a cultural competency training to MEMA staff. Ms. Sherman reached out to Lauren Stevens at Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, and she agreed to assist with the creation of a presentation.

**November 30, 2023** – Darren Ripley (WPH&W) and Ms. Sherman were asked to present at the American Institute of Dental Public Health’s (AIDPH) Indigenous Veterans Oral Health Awareness Week virtual event. The intent of this program was to raise awareness, promote culturally responsive care, and advocate for improved oral health outcomes while celebrating the contribution of Indigenous veterans to our nation’s history.

**AIDPH Programing daily themes included:**

**Monday** - Honoring Indigenous Veterans

**Tuesday** - Cultural Responsiveness for Oral Health Providers

**Wednesday** - Understanding Indigenous Veteran Oral Health Needs

**Thursday** - Intersecting Healthcare Needs for Veterans and Indigenous People

**Friday** - Advocacy in Action



**Join us for the final ECHO webinar of 2023!**

Thursday, November 30, 2023 | 2:00 pm CT

Maine is represented by five Native American communities – The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, and Abenaki. This presentation will share how Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, Nibezun, the Veterans Benefits Administration, and the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services have been working in partnership to bring services to them.

**Presenters**



**Darren Ripley**, Veterans Services Coordinator, Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness



**Sarah Sherman**, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services

**December 15, 2023** – Frances Soctomah, Co-Director of Nibezun shared their Wabanaki Moons calendar with MBVS and the Veterans Benefits Administration to share with staff. Ms. Sherman forwarded the calendar to MEANG and MEMA for distribution within their organizations to provide further education and cultural awareness.

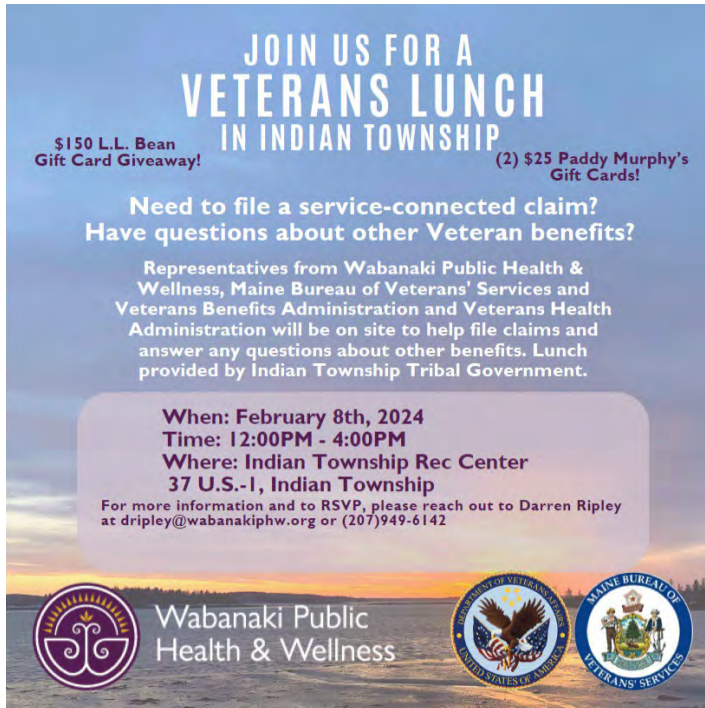


**December 18, 2023** – In advance of the storm, Anne Fuchs, MEMA Director of Mitigation, Planning, and Recovery reached out to Ms. Sherman to ensure that the Wabanaki Chiefs received the information regarding damage assessment and reporting. Ms. Sherman emailed the Chiefs directly providing situational awareness.

**January – December 2023** – Monthly meetings of the Wabanaki Veterans’ Memorial Committee were productive. Outreach made by Chris Sockalexix, Penobscot National Historic Preservation Officer) to both the Senate President, Troy Jackson, and Speaker of the House, Rachel Talbot Ross. Both Legislators support the project, and the Committee was advised to seek legislative support for the project.

**February 2, 2024** – Ms. Sherman met with Regina Marotto, who serves as the Tribal Liaison for the Federal Emergency Management Agency to discuss each other’s roles and how we could work together moving forward.

**February 8 & 9, 2024** – MBVS worked with Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, the Veterans Benefits Administration, and the Veterans Health Administration to bring claims clinics to Indian Township (Motahkomikuk) and Pleasant Point (Sipayik). Twenty-one Wabanaki Veterans attended and were connected to VA services and state benefits.



**JOIN US FOR A VETERANS LUNCH IN INDIAN TOWNSHIP**



**\$150 L.L. Bean Gift Card Giveaway!** (2) **\$25 Paddy Murphy's Gift Cards!**

**Need to file a service-connected claim? Have questions about other Veteran benefits?**

Representatives from Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and Veterans Benefits Administration and Veterans Health Administration will be on site to help file claims and answer any questions about other benefits. Lunch provided by Indian Township Tribal Government.

**When: February 8th, 2024**  
**Time: 12:00PM - 4:00PM**  
**Where: Indian Township Rec Center**  
**37 U.S.-1, Indian Township**

For more information and to RSVP, please reach out to Darren Ripley at [dripley@wabanakiphw.org](mailto:dripley@wabanakiphw.org) or (207)949-6142

 Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness  



**JOIN US FOR A VETERANS BREAKFAST IN SIPAYIK**

**\$150 L.L. Bean Gift Card Giveaway!** (2) **\$25 Paddy Murphy's Gift Cards!**

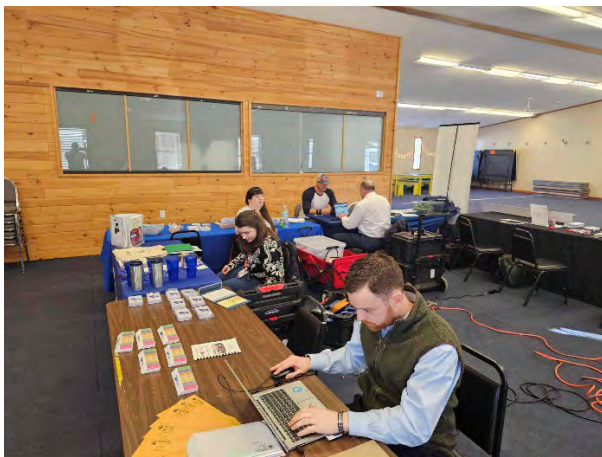
**Need to file a service-connected claim? Have questions about other Veteran benefits?**

Representatives from Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and Veterans Benefits Administration and Veterans Health Administration will be on site to help file claims and answer any questions about other benefits. Breakfast provided by Sipayik Tribal Government.

**When: February 9th, 2024**  
**Time: 9:00AM - 1:00PM**  
**Where: Old Beatrice Rafferty School**  
**22 Bayview Dr., Pleasant Point, ME**

For more information and to RSVP, please reach out to Darren Ripley at [dripley@wabanakiphw.org](mailto:dripley@wabanakiphw.org) or (207)949-6142

 Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness  



*Wabanaki Veterans' claims clinics at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township) and Sipayik (Pleasant Point).*

**March 4, 2024** – Ms. Sherman attended the Wabanaki REACH training, Interacting with Wabanaki-Maine History, at the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous & Tribal Populations.

**April 22-26, 2024** – A four-day VA Tribal Veterans Representative Training sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Tribal Veteran Representative Training was held in Bangor. It is the first time that this training has been offered in Maine since 2012. Representatives from seven tribal communities were in attendance (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, Mi'kmaq Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Crow Tribe (Montana), Blackfeet Nation (Montana), and Navajo Nation (Arizona).

This training was structured to help attendees understand Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration, Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, and Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services benefits, programs, and services available to veterans and their families.

An opening prayer was offered on Monday by Elliot Mountainsheep, Jr. (Crow Tribe); Opening drum and song, Lauren Stevens (Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township), Welcome and opening remarks, Brigadier General Diane Dunn, Adjutant General and Commissioner of the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (Penobscot descendent); Director David Richmond, Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services; Jennifer Bover, Executive Director Veterans Benefits Administration Togus Regional Office, and Trayce Davis, Medical Center Director, Togus VA Medical Center.

A smudging ceremony (burning sacred herbs for cleansing) and a traditional talking circle were offered to allow participants to discuss why they attended the training and what they wanted to gain from it. An in-depth training regarding all aspects of veterans' benefits was provided Tuesday through Thursday, and a Pact Act Claims Clinic for veterans on Friday.



***Elliot Mountainsheep, Jr., Representative Crow (Apsaalooke) Tribe (Montana) and J.W. 'Buck' Richardson, Jr., Minority Program Coordinator, VA Rocky Mountain Healthcare (VISN 19. The Crow Tribe flag was presented to MBVS with gratitude for hosting the training.***

**May 10, 2024** – MBVS Director David Richmond and Wabanaki Veterans’ Memorial Committee members were invited to Governor Mills’ Chambers for the signing of Chapter 606 Public Law, (H.P. 1430 – LD 2228) – An Act to Establish the Wabanaki Veterans Memorial.



*Left to Right: Darrin Ripley (Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness), Governor Janet Mills, Charles Patrick Shay, Tim Shay, Shiwa Noh, and MBVS Director David Richmond.*

APPROVED  
APRIL 9, 2024  
BY GOVERNOR

CHAPTER  
606  
PUBLIC LAW

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FOUR

H.P. 1430 - L.D. 2228

An Act to Establish the Wabanaki Veterans Memorial

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 3 MRSA §902, sub-§1-E is enacted to read:

1-E. Wabanaki veterans memorial. Notwithstanding section 902-A, subsection 2, paragraph B, the commission shall arrange for and oversee the development and implementation of a memorial in a portion of Capitol Park to honor the Wabanaki's defense and protection of their homelands and their service in the United States Armed Forces. The memorial is subject to available funding for the park.

**June 21, 2024** - MBVS observation of Maine Natives Americans Veterans Day.

**July 26, 2026** – Wabanaki Korean War Veterans and their families were well represented at the State House in Augusta on July 26. Out of 60 veterans recognized, 18 were from the Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Nation, and Mi'kmaq Nation. Posters of the veterans in uniform were created by the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and many families were pleased to see their loved ones strategically placed on easels near their reserved seats.

The event opened with an invocation by the Maine National Guard's Chaplain, Colonel Earl Weigelt, and Lauren Stevens (Passamaquoddy Tribe) singing a Wabanaki Welcome Song. This was followed by the Maine Department of Corrections Color Guard presenting the national colors (U.S. and Korean), and the Pledge of Allegiance and singing of National Anthems for both countries.

Congressional Delegation representatives offered remarks and Brigadier General Diane Dunn, Adjutant General, Maine National Guard and Commissioner for the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management (Penobscot Nation) provided remarks and read a proclamation.

The teachers and students from the Korean Language School in Portland wore traditional hanbok garments and sang several songs for the 13 Korean War Veterans present and the audience. State Representative Holly Stover, whose Uncle Arthur Barlow was Killed in Action in Korea, offered a remembrance of him and three other Service Members who lost their lives during the war to honor them and their four Gold Star Families who were present in the audience. This was followed by a moment of silence.

Jae-Hui Kim, Consul General of the Korean Consulate in Boston and David A. Richmond, Director of the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services presented Korean Ambassador for Peace Medals, State of Maine Veterans' Recognitions, and wooden plaques created by the Maine Department of Corrections Wood Shop to the veterans or their families. Darren Ripley (Veterans Services Coordinator – Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness) was present to accept the awards on behalf of families who were unable to attend the ceremony.

The veterans' recognitions were followed by Quilts of Valor presentations of handmade quilts to each of the Korean War Veterans present, a group photo was taken from the Grand Stairway, and authentic Korean food was served by Chef Hur owner of the N to Tail Restaurant in Portland.

Consul General Kim was so impressed by the number of Native American Veterans and their families represented during the ceremony he expressed his wishes to return to Maine to Brigadier General Dunn and host a second ceremony for the Wabanaki communities in 2025. Darren Ripley is already working with Sarah Sherman, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, and they are actively researching the names of Wabanaki Korean War Veterans and their family members in preparation of hosting a Wabanaki Korean War Veterans Ceremony on June 21<sup>st</sup> Maine Native American Veterans Day (time and location to be announced).

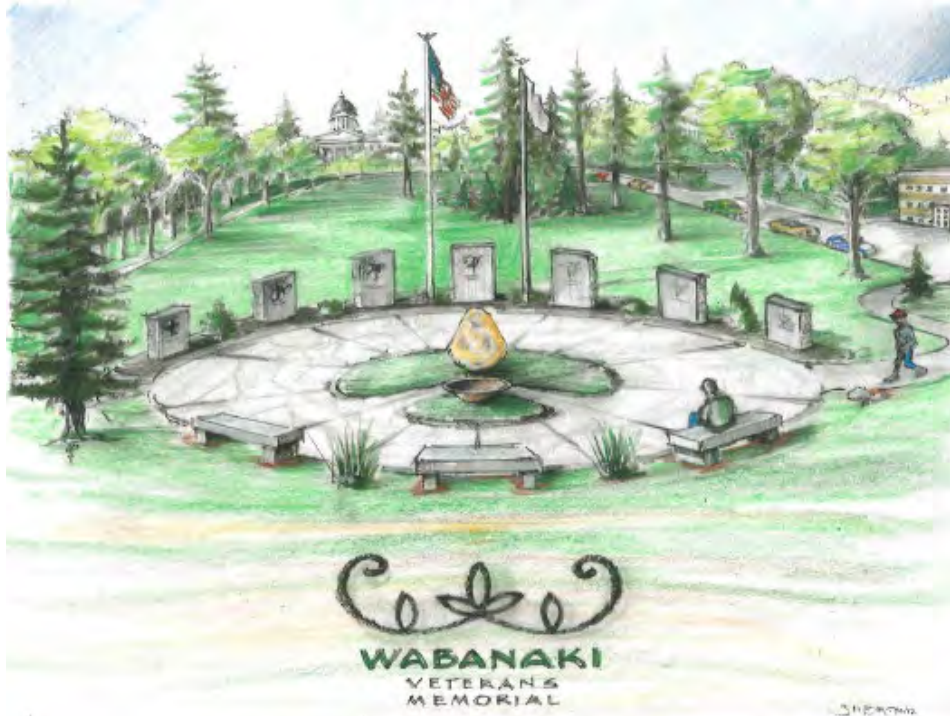


**The Stevens Family (Passamaquoddy Tribe) honors their Uncle John W. Stevens.**



***Wabanaki Families gathered to honor their veteran family members during the July 26, 2024, Korean War Veterans Recognition Day, which was held at the State House in Augusta, ME.***

**August 7, 2024** – Ms. Sherman presented to the State House Facilities Committee regarding the Wabanaki Veterans’ Monument 2021-2024 timeline and a concept drawing of the proposed monument.



**Concept Drawing by Maine Graphic Artist, Jeff Brown.**

**The State House Committee asked the following questions:**

- Could the Monument Committee provide a drawing of the proposed monument that was drawn to scale and showed the landscape. Ms. Sherman explained that the Monument Committee can but have held off hiring a landscape architect to do so, pending meeting with the committee and hopefully receiving their green light to move forward with the project.
- The State House Committee asked for the total number of Wabanaki Veterans who have served in the military since pre-Revolutionary war times. Ms. Sherman answered that currently there are over 500 Wabanaki veterans living in Maine and stated that she would have to go back to each of the communities to get total figures.
- Ms. Sherman was asked if the Monument Committee’s proposed plan falls in line with the Olmstead Plan (Original Park design). She stated that the Monument Committee believes that it does and cited the Guidelines for Designs, Approval and Installation of Memorial at Main Memorial Park (pages 4-6).

**The State House Facilities Committee made the following recommendations:**

- They are going to set a date and physically go for a walk in the park with our concept drawing to get a better idea of what the Monument Committee envisions.
- They requested access to the original Olmstead Plan and the other park guidelines which they will review. Suzanne Gresser, Executive Director of the Maine State Legislature, will oversee their documents request.
- They want to create an advisory board that is a neutral party to consult them.
- One of the Committee members shared that she studied Landscape Architecture in college.
- The State House Committee will meet again in one month.

**August 20, 2024** – General Dunn requested Ms. Sherman to reach out to Chief Bassett and Passamaquoddy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Donald Soctomah, regarding the Maine Army National Guard’s Woodville Training Site to be named in honor of two Wabanaki Veterans from Sipayik (Pleasant Point, ME), Private First Class (PFC) Charles Lola, who was killed in action on June 16, 1918, during the First World War and PFC Samuel Dana, who was severely wounded in action during the same battle. Both Chief Bassett and Mr. Soctomah were receptive to the idea and a meeting was set to connect her to both veterans’ family members and to plan a naming ceremony.

**August 15, 2024** – At the invitation of Lauren Stevens, Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, Elizabeth Barton (MENG Environmental Budget, Cultural Resource, and Stormwater, Drinking Water, Wastewater Manager) and Ms. Sherman attended a concert of music celebrating nature and culture in Bangor. This event provided an opportunity to make connections with representatives from the Wabanaki communities.

Maliseet Chief Clarissa Sabattis and Lauren Stevens (Passamaquoddy), Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness Culture, Connection & Support Lead, joined Salt Bay Chamberfest Artistic Director and cellist Wilhelmina Smith, with cellist Yeesun Kim of the Borromeo String Quartet, in a collaborative performance featuring works by Grammy-nominated Dawn Avery of Mohawk descent, Pulitzer Prize winning Diné composer Raven Chacon, Passamaquoddy composer Allen Sockabasin, and Italian composer Giovanni Sollima.

August 29, 2024 – The Bureau and Veterans Health and Benefits Administrations, co-hosted a claims clinic for the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Communities.

## **WABANAKI VETERANS BENEFITS SEMINAR AND CLAIMS CLINIC**

**Learn What New and Improved VA Benefits Can Do For You and Your Family, Including Families of Deceased Veterans! Recently, Eligibility For VA Benefits and Services Has Broadened To Include Many More Veterans! Need to File a Service-Connected Claim?**

Representatives from Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services, Maine Veterans' Home, and Veterans Benefits Administration and Veterans Health Administration will be on site to answer any questions about VA benefits and to assist with filing service-connected Claims!

**LUNCH PROVIDED!**

**When: August 29, 2024  
Time: 10:00AM - 2:00PM**

**GIVEAWAYS!**


**Where: Community Center,  
56 Micmac Drive, Presque Isle, ME**

For more information and to RSVP,  
please reach out to

Barrett Fisher, MBVS Ph 207-492-1173  
[Barrett.K.Fisher@maine.gov](mailto:Barrett.K.Fisher@maine.gov)

Or, John R. Ouellette, MN Council  
Ph 207-227-7782  
[johnnycouncil39@gmail.com](mailto:johnnycouncil39@gmail.com)



Scan this code for directions to the event 



**September 11, 2024** – The Bureau co-hosted the Supporting Veterans’ Resiliency Symposium with NAMI Maine at the University of Maine’s Portland campus. There were over 200 attendees for the day-long program, and Darren Ripley, Veterans Services Coordinator at Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness, was invited by MBVS to sit on a guest panel regarding alternative PTSD therapies and his work with Wabanaki Veterans.



*Veterans’ Symposium Keynote Speaker and Iraq Combat Veteran, Tom Voss, meets Purple Heart Decorated and Passamaquoddy Iraq Combat Veteran, Darren Ripley, at the Veterans’ Symposium at the University of Southern Maine.*

**October 3, 2024** –MEANG COL. Joshua Doscinski traveled with Ms. Sherman to Sipayik (Pleasant Point) to meet with Chief Bossett, Donald Soctomah (Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and Lola-Dana family members to discuss the details of a renaming ceremony for the Woodville Training Site. June 16, 2025, was agreed upon as the day for the ceremony, because it is the 107<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the battle in France during World War I where both men held their position and saved their company and PFC Lola lost his life and PFC Dana was severely wounded.

**October 21, 2024** – The Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services and Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness co-hosted a Wabanaki History and Culture Sharing opportunity on October 21st at the Maine National Guard's Camp Chamberlain in Augusta.

All state agencies and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs were invited to attend. Over 80 state employees from the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Department of Transportation, Inland Fisheries & Wildlife,

Maine Department of Corrections, Maine Department of Labor, Department of Public Safety, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Maine Department of Education, Veterans Benefits Administration, Maine Army and Air National Guard, Maine Emergency Management Agency, and the Bureau participated.

The presentation provided an interactive opportunity to learn more about Maine’s Wabanaki communities, their 12,000+ year history in Maine, cultural practices including (language, traditional medicines, song, and customs), and how to communicate better when working with their state counterparts.



***Brigadier General Diane Dunn welcomes the audience. (Top)  
Lauren Stevens, Director of Community Healing for Wabanaki Public Health & Wellness’  
Center of Healing and Recovery led the presentation. (Bottom)***



November 2024 – MBVS observation of National Native American Heritage Month.



VA's Center for Minority Veterans  
invites you to join us for the:

*2024 Native American Alaskan Native  
Heritage Month*

**"Reclaiming Native Truth"**

The Center for Minority Veterans invites you to celebrate Native American Heritage Month with us. We will host two events that are open to **EVERYONE**. Join us in honoring heritage, culture, and pride through these unique events.

  **November 6th | 11 am - 12:30 pm EST.**  
.....  
**Nivea Maria Santana Brock**  
United States Navy  
Keynote Speaker

  **November 20th | 11 am - 12:30 pm EST.**  
.....  
**Onentoko Day**  
United States Navy  
Special Guest Story Teller

  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Center for Minority Veterans

 Veterans  
Crisis Line

 NEW NUMBER,  
SAME SUPPORT.  
Call 1-800-368-1011  
Text to 988-6868

 [www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans](http://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans)

 [vacocmv@va.gov](mailto:vacocmv@va.gov)

**November 20, 2024** - MEANG COL. Joshua Doscinski and Ms. Sherman attended a second meeting at Pleasant Point with Chief Bassett, Donald Soctomah, and the Lola-Dana families. The program agenda and plaque language were finalized and turned over for transcription into Passamaquoddy, the stone for the plaque was chosen and logistics for getting it to the training site discussed, updated information provided regarding assistance with the return of historical artifact back from the Massachusetts Historical Society (a medal given to the Passamaquoddy community by George Washington), sharing of photos of found in the archives and information for obtaining Mr. Dana's military file provided.

## Recommendations for Changes to the Act

The Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management have no recommended changes to the Tribal-State Collaboration Act as of the completion of this report in 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Diane Dunn*

Brigadier General Diane Dunn  
Commissioner and Adjutant General

*Sarah A. Sherman*

Sarah A. Sherman  
Director of Strategic Partnerships, Maine Bureau of Veterans Services  
Tribal Liaison for the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management

**Wela'lin** (Mi'Kmaq), **Woliwon** (Passamaquoddy and Maliseet), **Woliwoni** (Penobscot Nation),  
**Wli Wni** (Abenaki) - Thank you in the five Wabanaki languages.

**Note:** Special thanks to Donald Soctomah (Passamaquoddy Historic Preservation Officer) for a Wabanaki language lesson.