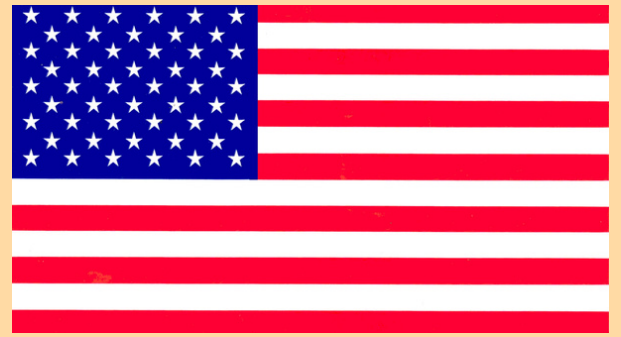


UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: MAINE-WABANAKI STATE CHILD WELFARE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION



WHAT IS THE TRC?

The Maine-Wabanaki State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a *Truth and Reconciliation* commission established by commissioners Chief Clayton Cleaves, Chief Brenda Commander, Chief Kirk Francis, Chief Rich Getchell, Chief Joe Socobasin and Governor Paul LePage in order to address the ongoing concerns of the forced removal of Indigenous children through the Maine child welfare system, and to determine if such removals called for reforms and reconciliation.

The TRC was first endorsed in February of 2013, with the summary of the final report being published in 2015.

WHY WAS IT CREATED?

The TRC largely aims to address the time period stemming from the creation and establishment of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (ICWA). The ICWA was originally established in order to ‘protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families’, as well as set federal requirements for the foster care of Indigenous children. However, due to underlying oppressive measures and racist ideologies present within federal institutions, the requirements of the ICWA were rarely upheld, and Indigenous children were instead both historically and presently subjected to various forms of cultural loss, systemic trauma, and other human rights abuses.

Through such, the TRC determined that the Wabanaki children in the Maine welfare system had indeed been subjected to a cultural genocide, and reconciliation was therefore required.

MANDATES OF THE TRC

The main goals of the TRC were:

- Create and establish a more complete account of the history of the Wabanaki people in the state childwelfare system.
- Work in collaboration with Maine-Wabanaki REACH to provide opportunities for healing and deeper understanding for Wabanaki people and state child-welfare staff
- Promote individual, relational, systemic and cultural reconciliation
- Improve child-welfare practices and create sustainable changes in child welfare that strive for the best possible system

OUTCOMES & LEGACIES

- Calls to honour Wabanaki choices to support healing as the tribes see fit and celebrate the cultural resurgence of the tribes within the Wabanaki confederacy
- Recommendations to establish traditional Indigenous cultural methods, such as longhouses, language centres and classes, places in which rituals of birth, coming of age, and death may be celebrated, food and economic sovereignty, healing circles, and traditional health and wellness practices
- Foster the establishment of more Indigenous foster homes and Indigenous therapeutic homes
- Better access to support systems for non-Indigenous foster families, so that Indigenous children can maintain strong ties to their culture

STATISTICS

Number of Commissioners: **5**

Number of Women Commissioners: **3**

Total Number of Participants: **159**

Number of Cases Heard: **159**

Total Years of Conflict: **Ongoing since 1978**



THE MAINE-WABANAKI STATE CHILD WELFARE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

An Important Dates Timeline

1940-60S

Several reports labelling Indigenous parents as unfit and promoting harmful stereotypes are published.

1978

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (ICWA) is established, leading to decades of cultural genocide in Indigenous children.

2013

The TRC is first commissioned by the Governor of Maine, in collaboration with 5 Indigenous Chiefs.

2015

The final report of the TRC is completed, after hearing from 159 survivors.

2023

Indigenous children still experience hardships and oppression within the foster care system.

