

In 2008, Maine-Wabanaki REACH, then a collaborative of Wabanaki and Maine child welfare workers, initiated the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission. After collecting statements from nearly 160 individuals and focus groups and researching documents and records, the Commission released its final report in June 2015. They transferred all of their research materials including the video, audio, and written statements, founding documents, the final report of TRC, and their administrative and research records to Special Collections and Archives at Bowdoin College. These Archives will be accessible to the public at: <http://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/maine-wabanaki-trc/>

Archived statements are a gift to people yearning to understand the truth of what happened here. These personal memories provide a window to the realities of the relationship between Wabanaki people and the state of Maine. This relationship has similarities to other Native communities and states, and to other Indigenous peoples and the governments of the dominant culture. It is so important that we understand this history to guide us to a better future for our children's children.

Wabanaki and Maine people are grateful for these statements. Statement providers gave their time, energy and knowledge to help build best child welfare practice with Wabanaki children and families. For many people, participating in the Commission's work required courage, faith and trust in a process that was new. Providing a statement often brought out a mix of emotions including pain, anxiety and relief. It is important for statement providers, especially, to know that each step of the process may refresh any or all of these feelings.

Most statement providers agreed to allow their statements to become public in the hope that sharing their experience will help ensure the best outcomes for children in the future. Some statement providers requested anonymity and in these cases, there is no name attached and the recording does not sound like the statement provider's voice.

Listening to or reading statements online may stimulate challenging emotions and it may be helpful to make sure you feel comfortable, emotionally prepared, and have access to support before reviewing the archives. As you listen to or read statements, make sure you take care of yourself, acknowledging and releasing any distress or emotions that arise. Here are some suggested ways to help reduce stress:

- Talk to your supporters in your life about your experience
- Write down your thoughts and feelings in a private journal
- Feel your breath and take a few moments for some deep breathing
- Exercise. Maybe a walk, aerobics, dance, or singing to wake up your lungs
- Connect with your spiritual side at home or at your place of worship
- Immerse yourself in an enjoyable activity
- Laugh – watch a funny movie or get together with friends who like to laugh with you

- Listen to music that soothes your soul

If you have questions or concerns about your statement, or if you need research assistance, please contact the George J. Mitchell Department of Special Collections & Archives at [scaref@bowdoin.edu](mailto:scaref@bowdoin.edu) or calling 207.725.3288

Visit the website of Maine-Wabanaki REACH at [mainewabanakireach.org](http://mainewabanakireach.org) if you want to stay up to date on the work to implement the Commission's recommendations or if you wish to contribute to the Archive by providing a statement.