

**Penobscot Nation
Indian Island, Maine
August, 1998**

COMMUNIQUE NO. 18

The traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth convened on Indian Island, Maine, within the homelands of the Penobscot Nation of the Wabanaki Confederacy. The Circle was well cared for by the Keepers of the Eastern Door. We learned of the history of those whose ancestors were first touched by European contact. A 1755 proclamation by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Province declared the Penobscot people to be "enemies, rebels and traitors" to the King of England, and therefore required the citizens of Massachusetts Bay Province to take every opportunity of "pursuing, captivating, killing and destroying" all Penobscot people. A bounty was offered for the live capture or scalp of Penobscot men, women and children. There is no record of the number of bounties claimed, but the persecution of Penobscot people began very early after the landfall of British invaders.

The view from the Eastern Door gave us a perspective on the status of our Nations and threats to our future. A most significant threat is the loss of our languages. We are losing our languages at an alarming rate in many communities and this imperils knowledge systems, ways of thinking, and traditional teachings. This tide must be stemmed.

Environmental loss is another urgent concern. All over Turtle Island, Native communities continue to be courted, threatened and coerced into accepting what would be unthinkable in well-to-do non-Native communities. Toxic waste, dangerous industry, and destructive development are real threats today that will impact all life in the future. While meeting on Indian Island, we saw firsthand what manmade pollution has done to the Penobscot River.

The delegation from the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation shared information about the desecration of burial, ceremonial, and village sites in the State of Florida. This Nation, living in their traditional ways, is being formally excluded from consultation with non-Native governance because they are not federally recognized. The Circle is mindful that the vast majority of traditional and sacred sites pre-date the invention of federal recognition. The best representatives for these sites are those who have stayed with the Nations' natural laws. These are people who continue to practice their ceremonies and ways of life with respect, discipline, and responsibility. The Circle considers the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation to be such a people. In the case of burials, special care must be taken. The disturbance of the ancestors affects the health of those who mishandle them, as well as the natural environments around their resting places.

The Circle calls on all decision-makers to consider long-term views and values, with compassion for future generations. The youth have reminded us that in a short time they will inherit the responsibility of protection and coexisting with nature. We must provide them with guidance, hope, encouragement, discipline and love in a world where all of these gifts have fallen into disuse.

The women of the Circle continue to emphasize the need for balance and inclusion. As leaders, caretakers and teachers, their words and actions are crucial to the Circle, as they should be in our home communities. The concern, the pain, and the love of these women need to be valued and appreciated fully.

"Dadil Na Bam Uk"

(All past ancestors and all living, we thank you)

The Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth
Indian Island, Maine
August 9, 1998