

Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission Minutes
April 18, 2025
Randall Student Center, 134 (First Floor Conference Room)
University of Maine at Augusta
Public Live Stream Provided

Meeting was called to order at 10:20 a.m.

Members Present (In person and by Zoom):

Chair: Newell Lewey

Commissioners: Robert (Bob) Checkoway, Oshikiyol (Zeke) Crofton-Macdonald, Gordon (Nels) Kramer, Rena Newell, Robert (Bert) Polchies, Darren Ranco, and Samuel (Sam) St. John

Commissioners Absent: Joseph (Joey) Barnes

Staff Present: Jill Tompkins (Executive Director), Rachel Bell (Projects Coordinator)

Guests Present: Chief Clarissa Sabattis, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Christian J. Cotz, Deputy Secretary of State, Kimberly (Kim) Patwardhan, Assistant Attorney General, Gregory Curtis, Head, Special Collections and Projects, Fogler Library, University of Maine, Ralph Dana, Sipayik Environmental Department, Brian Altvater, Passamaquoddy Citizen and Schoodic Riverkeeper, Eric Altvater, Passamaquoddy Citizen, Laura Rose Day, Skutik River Restoration Trust, and Teresa Singh, J.D.,

Public: By audio stream

Opening: Newell Lewy offered an honoring to the Creator.

Introductions: Those in attendance in person and on video introduced themselves.

Review of Agenda and Declaration of Quorum: Quorum was not established. Commissioners reviewed the agenda and made no changes.

Approval of Minutes: Carried Over.

Maine State Archives-MITSC-University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections Memorandum of Understanding

Christian passed around a copy of the MOU outlining the components of a draft agreement between the Maine State Archives, MITSC, and the University of Maine Fogler Library Special Collections. The proposed agreement would formalize the storage of the MITSC archives at the Fogler Library and would facilitate their digitization to make them searchable and publicly accessible. Christian and Greg were able to answer questions from the Commissioners, but no formal motion approving the agreement could be made due to a lack of quorum.

Sipayik-Eastport Causeway Project Presentation

Ralph presented a PowerPoint presentation discussing the complex history of the causeway and its environmental and tribal community impacts. He explained the current efforts and collaboration towards the goal of removing the causeway. Ralph shared a copy of the Passamaquoddy Chief and Council at Pleasant Point Resolution #3.4.2025-1, "Opening of the Causeway to Restore Aquatic Connectivity Between the Passamaquoddy Bay and the Cobscook Bay."

12:00 p.m. -- LUNCH -- 12:30 p.m.

Columbia Law School LL.M. Pathways Fellowship 2025

Teresa introduced herself to the Commissioners. She shared some of her background working with indigenous organizations in Australia, which inspired her to pursue an internship at MITSC. Teresa has been awarded a one-year fellowship, beginning in July 2025, to work on various MITSC projects that implement the recommendations of SEA RUN.

Development of MITSC Testimony Submission Guidelines

There was a group discussion about how and when MITSC should be submitting testimony to the Maine Legislature on bills concerning the Wabanaki nations--especially given the challenges of the Legislature's schedule, which often moves quickly and without advance notice. The group decided on criteria for participating in legislative activities on bills that are not proposed on MITSC's behalf, do not mention MITSC, or do not directly affect MITSC's responsibilities. MITSC will only act on bills that tribal leadership has communicated are a priority. When these bills have been identified, MITSC will decide in a meeting with a full quorum which bills the Commission should submit testimony for. The full commission will then delegate authority to a sub-committee or legislative committee that can meet as needed to make any decisions that require a quick turnaround. The legislative committee will meet and report back to the whole group. If the committee has questions, they can reach out to the entire commission via email. When it comes time to submit the testimony, either the MITSC Chair or the Executive Director will do so unless there is someone else, such as a Commissioner, with greater expertise in the subject. Jill is willing to draft amendments to MITSC's Bylaws to formalize the guidelines.

Review of 132nd Legislature Bills Affecting Wabanaki Nations and Citizens:

Zeke and Jill provided an update on the status of tribal bills pending in the Legislature, including LD 1474, the Wabanaki Studies bill, and LD 999, the bill submitted on behalf of MITSC to make its employees eligible to participate in the State of Maine group health plan.

Approval of Bylaws Amendments

Carried Over.

MITSC Financial Report & Audit Request for Proposals

Jill provided a financial update, including the transition from desktop QuickBooks to QuickBooks online and the ongoing search for a new auditing firm. Chief Sabattis recommended the firm, Chester M. Kerney of Presque Isle, based on the Band's positive experience working with them in the past.

Grant & Staff Activity Reports

Jill provided a brief update on the various grant-related projects. Due to time constraints, Commissioners were referred to the detailed written staff reports in the materials packet for additional information.

Next MITSC Meeting: It was decided that the May 9, 2025, meeting at the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians Community Center should be postponed until June 6, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.