

Senate leadership -

Many thanks for the dedicated discussions and time you spent in your consideration of H.716 and for passing it to the Governor for his signature. It is an important step in honoring aboriginal rights and showing the State's commitment in the reconciliation process with Abenaki, the original Vermont inhabitants, the People of the Dawnland. It is an important act which increases access to ancestral hunting and fishing grounds, both for those living now and for generations to come.

In the interest of bringing forth more visibility to Abenaki, The Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs (VCNAA) asked that H.880 be introduced this year. This bill would add traditional Abenaki names to State park signage. Land and places are living entities in Abenaki culture and are honored by the names given to describe them. After years of State policies and actions which effectively made the Abenaki language almost extinct by making it inaccessible to most, H.880 will make it possible for these places to be honored again in the old way. It will also raise visibility of the Abenaki presence, public awareness of our language and perhaps instill a curiosity in others to learn about who Abenaki are. It is a simple act of reconciliation which will honor the history of Vermont while enriching the lives of Vermonters and all of those who visit.

Please pass H.880. It would not cost additional money to the State and would only set a policy for how park signage is made moving forward. This bill's passage would demonstrate Vermont is proud of the presence and contributions of Abenaki, it's indigenous people.

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The Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs:

Carol McGranaghan, Chair

Carol Irons, Vice-Chair

Andrea Brett, Secretary

Jennifer Morton-Dow

Hillary Hoffman

Beverly Little-Thunder

Chiefs of the recognized Vermont Abenaki tribes:

Sagamo Roger Longtoe Sheehan, El-Nu Abenaki tribe

Chief Shirley Hook, Koasek of the Koas Abenaki tribe

Chief Raven Wood, Koasek of the Koas Abenaki tribe

Chief Richard Menard, Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi St Francis/Sokoki Band

Chief Don Stevens, Nulhegan Abenaki Band of the Coosuk