

State of Vermont

Senate Chamber



Montpelier, Vermont

Senate Resolution

By Senators Watson, Baruth, Bray, Brock, Campion, Chittenden, Clarkson, Collamore, Cummings, Gulick, Hardy, Harrison, Hashim, Ingalls, Kitchel, Lyons, MacDonald, Mazza, McCormack, Norris, Perchlik, Ram Hinsdale, Sears, Starr, Vyhovsky, Weeks, Westman, White, Williams, and Wrenner,

S.R. 11. Senate resolution relating to supporting the continuing resiliency and strengthening of the Abenaki communities in Vermont and encouraging a greater appreciation and respect for Abenaki culture during Abenaki Recognition and Heritage Week and throughout the year.

Whereas, Indigenous People in Vermont were long denied legal recognition and experienced direct discrimination, especially as a result of the Vermont Eugenics Survey and the eugenics-inspired and State-sanctioned sterilizations authorized in 1931 Acts and Resolves No. 174, and

Whereas, over the past 15 years, the injustices that the Abenakis experienced have begun to be addressed, and

Whereas, 2006 Acts and Resolves No. 125 established the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, and 2010 Acts and Resolves No. 107 granted the Commission the authority to review applications from Native American tribes and bands for State recognition, and

Whereas, during the 2011–2012 biennium, the General Assembly confirmed the Commission's determination that the Elnu Abenaki tribe; the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation; the Koasek Abenaki of the Koas; and the Missisquoi, St. Francis-Sokoki Band had satisfied the criteria for State recognition, and

Whereas, in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. R-114, the General Assembly adopted a joint resolution extending an official State apology to all impacted Vermonters, including members of Indigenous communities, for the harms they suffered due to State-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices, and this apology was modeled on the apology that the University of Vermont issued for its role in the conducting of the Vermont Eugenics Survey, and

Whereas, having extended an apology for the effects of the 1931 sterilization legislation, the General Assembly, in 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 128, established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address past harms, including those referenced in the 2021 joint resolution, and

Whereas, the Abenakis and other Indigenous people hold great reverence for and have an enduring bond with the land and waters of Vermont, and they have long counted on these natural resources as a source of sustenance and as a place of gathering for civic and sacred purposes, and

Whereas, the General Assembly recently enacted legislation in recognition of this ancient bond by passing 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 143, which provides for free hunting and fishing licenses for certified citizens of State-recognized Native American Indian tribes, and 2020 Acts and Resolves No. 174, which establishes a process to add Abenaki names as appropriate on new or replaced signs in State parks, and

Whereas, for the fifth consecutive year, Governor Philip B. Scott has designated the first week of May as Abenaki Recognition and Heritage Week, and this designation affords an ideal opportunity for Vermonters to gain a more informed understanding of Abenaki life in Vermont, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate:

That the Senate of the State of Vermont supports the continuing resiliency and strengthening of the Abenaki communities in Vermont and encourages a greater appreciation and respect for Abenaki culture during Abenaki Recognition and Heritage Week and throughout the year, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of the Senate be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs and to each Vermont-recognized Abenaki tribe and band.