

Statement of Congresswoman Chellie Pingree  
M. Speaker

I want to express my gratitude and best wishes to a coalition doing very important work in my state to heal injuries of the past and find a better path into the future.

Today, Wabnaki Chiefs, officials, and citizens—along with members of the Maine Legislature, Truth and Reconciliation Convening Group, Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, and Maine’s governor—are gathering to sign the Maine Wabnaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Mandate.

This historic signing will begin work to seek truth and healing in how the state child welfare system has treated the families of these indigenous Maine tribes—including the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkmikuk, Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik, Penobscot Indian Nation, and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs. In recent decades, these groups have seen their children taken from them to be placed with non-native families through adoption and foster care.

Through this process, the commission will listen to stories of families affected by these practices and learn how the loss has impacted cultures that rely on their children for continued existence. The goal is not to injure, blame or shame anyone, but to bring these truths to the open air so they can heal, teach, and prevent future harm.

I’m so proud to live in a state that is willing to have these difficult, but crucially important, conversations with a spirit of honesty and reconciliation. I wish my best to this group and fervently hope it reaches a successful conclusion.