

Statement from Elnu Abenaki

July 2, 2020 Concerning the dialogue about the proposed highway project at the intersection of Hatfield St. and Rts. 5 & 10 at Northampton, MA: Elnu Abenaki, a Vermont State-recognized Tribe, offers the following comments with regard to the ongoing situation and the parties involved.

Kwai mziwi – greetings everyone,

This statement is on behalf of Elnu Abenaki, representing our understandings and council, grounded in the perspective of a Native community that has ancestral ties through both kinship and relationship with Ndakinna, our homelands.

- Abenaki have a direct, ancient association with the mid-Kwenitekw/Connecticut River valley, by proximity and through diplomacy and kinship. As a result of the process of colonization, it is well-known that the dispossession of Indigenous people that traditionally call today's Northampton and Hatfield home resulted in many joining the Abenaki at Schaghticoke, Missisquoi, Odanak, and elsewhere. Their descendants are among us today.
- Similarly, Abenaki have longstanding relationships with Nipmuc - for the identical reasons, as neighbors, allies, and kin – and who are subjected in like manner to the destruction of colonization. We stand with Nipmuc and their own previous sovereign statements.
- We have been following the progress of this project for over a year. To the best of our knowledge, the NHPA Section 106 process has followed protocol, and cultural resources have been surveyed, documented, and impacts addressed according to requirements.
- The laws being what they are, we acknowledge and appreciate that at least one Federally-recognized Tribe has actively participated as cultural monitor, in the person of Mark Andrews of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah). Meaningful inclusion of Native voices with regard to Indigenous cultural concerns is paramount and should be foregrounded and expanded
- We concur that any ancestral materials should return, or remain, in the Earth, our Mother, who is the holder and provider of everything.
- We are grateful for the consideration and care of others that have stepped forward from the several Native communities to intervene and clarify this confusing situation, and for the support and interest of allies.
- We maintain that, going forward, the best means of finding balance and peace, and minimizing these situations – recognizing that the inevitability of change is embraced through responsibility and relationship – is to prioritize inclusion and awareness. We aspire toward a better way of being here together and that includes recognizing where change is needed.

Wliwni – thank you,

Sôgmô Roger Longtoe Sheehan, Chief Elnu Abenaki
Jim Taylor, Councilman Elnu Abenaki
Rich Holschuh, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Elnu Abenaki

