



April 23, 2020

We write to you concerning the U.S. Department of Interior's tragic decision on March 27, 2020 to disestablish and revoke the Mashpee Wampanoag tribal reservation status.

The Mashpee Wampanoag have lived on their land for more than 12,000 years. After a decades-long struggle to finally win official recognition as a sovereign Native American nation, the U.S. Department of Interior has ordered the removal of 321 acres of land out of federal trust, making it impossible for the tribe to govern on its land.

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic which already inordinately impacts our tribal people due to lack of access to adequate, life-saving health measures it is unconscionable to stand by while any tribe is denied the self-determination, authority and access to needed resources to care for its own people.

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Chairman Cedric Cromwell Qaqemasq (Running Bear) is clear that, "The steps being taken now—in the middle of the nationwide pandemic—to disestablish our reservation and take our land out of trust has created a crisis on top of a crisis. Our land is sacred. It is where our people receive health services. It's where our children attend our language immersion school. It is where we are building houses for our citizens. Taking our land is a direct attack on our culture and our way of living."

The 2016 United Methodist Resolution 3321 states that,

"The General Conference of The United Methodist Church affirms the sacredness of American Indian people, their languages, cultures, and gifts to the church and the world...Treaties are regarded as binding, sacred, and enduring texts by American Indians and Alaska Natives, comparable to the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. Therefore, it is disturbing that the US government ignored its trust responsibilities by violating treaties and other promises. Tribal sovereignty is an inherent international right of Native nations."

We stand with The National Congress of American Indians, which represents over five- hundred tribes who condemn this action as a failure of trust. Individual tribes and Native interest organizations are showing support through letters and on social media, posting the hashtag #StandWithMashpee.

We call on our legislators to take a stand to reverse this unjust done to the Mashpee Wampanoag people and to advance the passage of H.R. 375/S. 2808 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/375/all-info> with all due haste.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Kent, Chair

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