



# **Cross-Cultural Knowledge Exchange to Advance Collaborative Forest Stewardship:**

## Perspectives across Tribal Nations and State Agencies in Maine, USA

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### **By:**

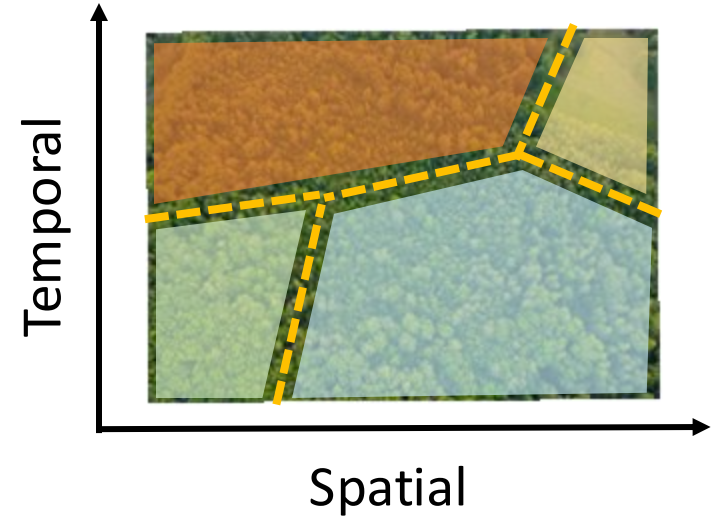
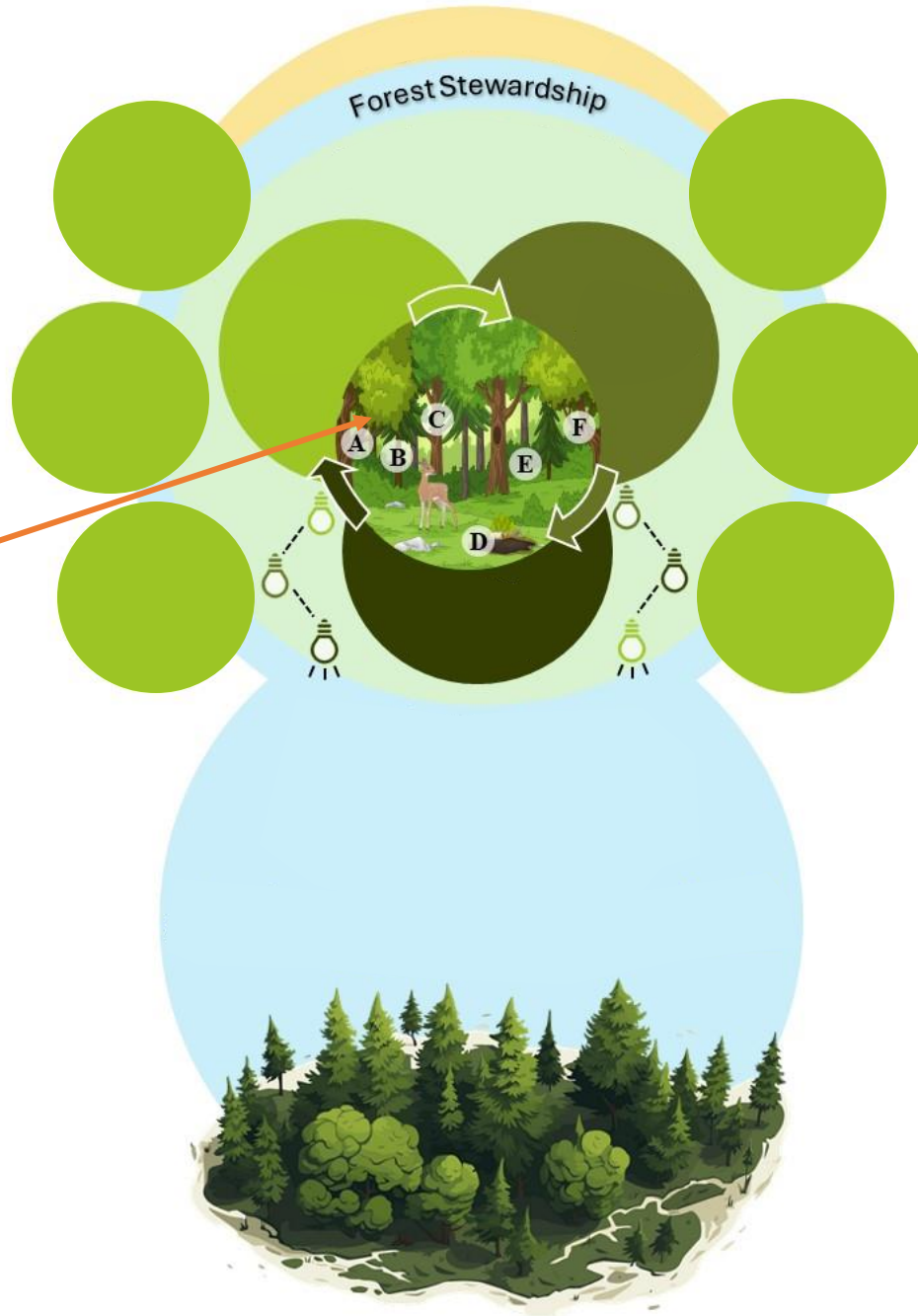
Rachel Swanwick, MS  
University of Vermont  
Forest Stewards Guild

### **Advisors:**

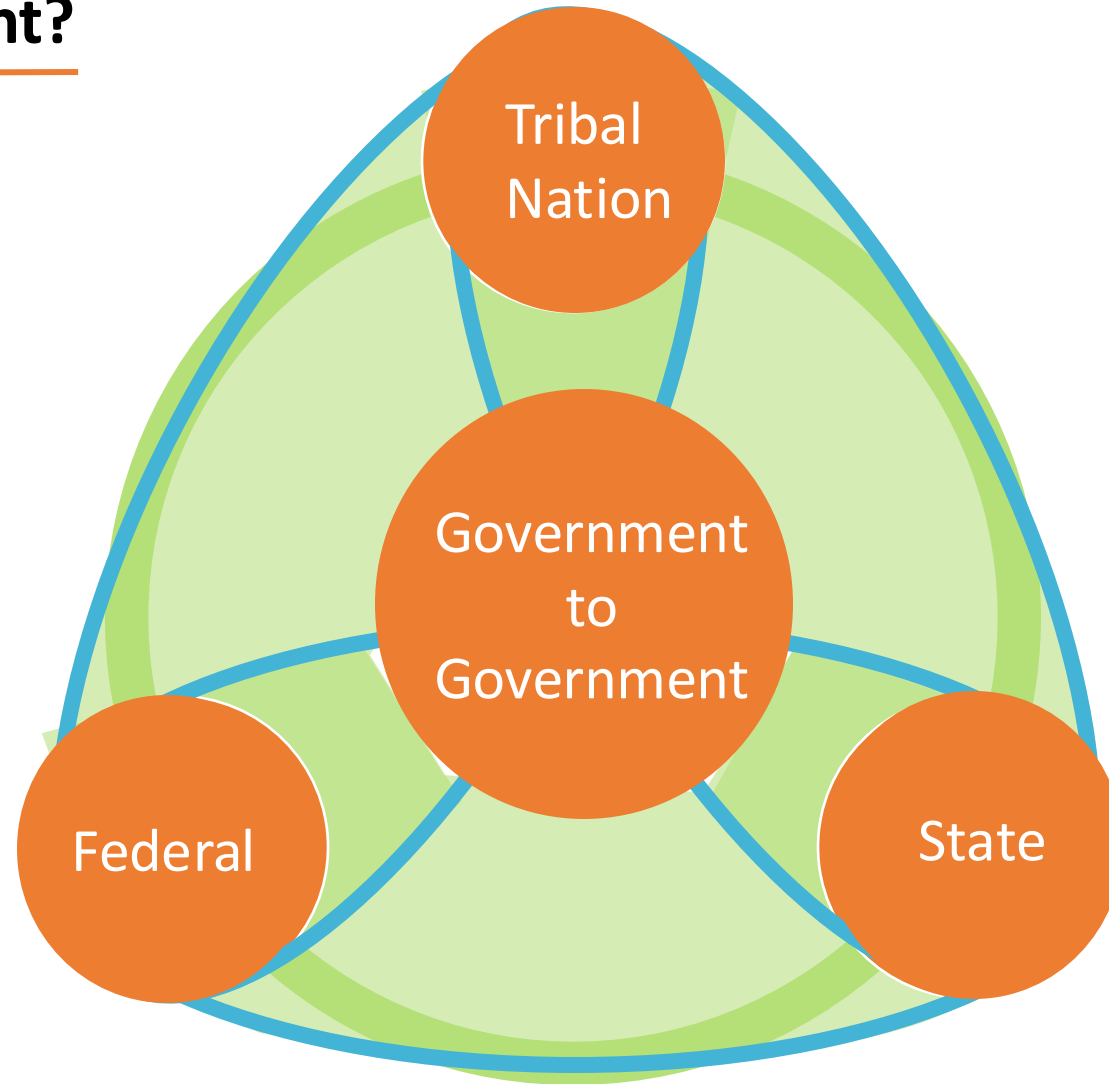
Dr. Anthony W. D'Amato, Professor, University of Vermont  
Dr. Rachel E. Schattman, Assistant Professor, University of Maine

# Background In a Nutshell

Forest systems



## Why is this important?

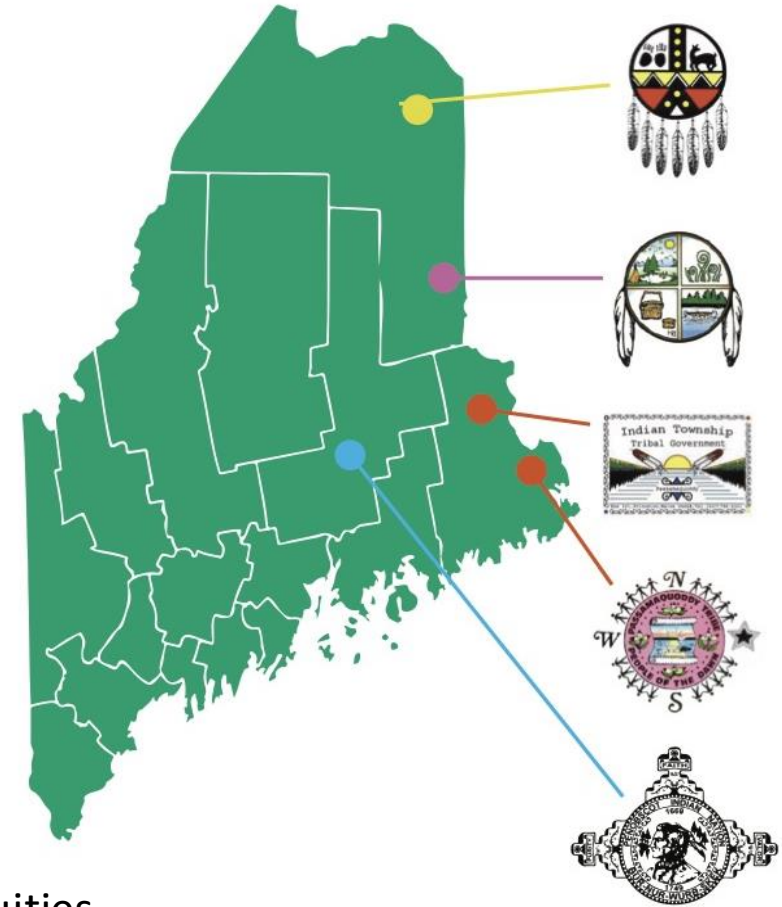


# Study Scope

89% of Maine's landscape is forested

The Wabanaki Nations are a confederacy of Tribal Nations

Present-Day Maine



Pathways to sustain community well-being



↓ Inequities

↑ Adaptive Potential

## Study Scope

In Maine, ongoing challenges between state and Tribal Nations

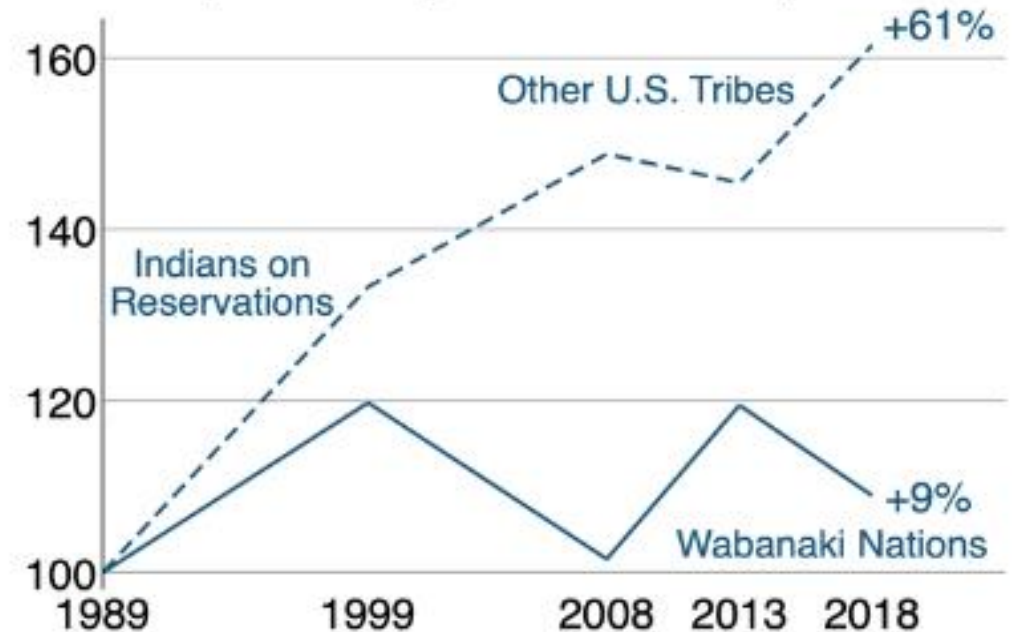
Maine's Tribal-state relations is a national outlier:



The Maine Indian Land Claims Settlement Act of 1980 (MICSA):

Limiting application of federal laws for Tribes "affecting" Maine state law

Growth of Per Capita Income, 1989–2020  
Wabanaki Nations v. Non-Maine Tribes  
(Inflation Adjusted, 1989 = 100)



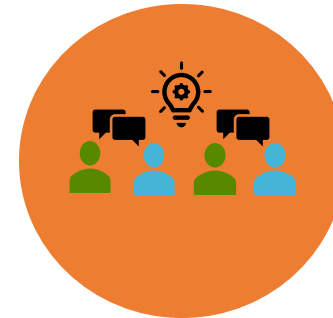
Medford et al., 2022



## Research Goal

Evaluate how forest stewards from state agencies and Tribal Nations in Maine:

- i. understand and value diverse knowledge systems and bridging of knowledge
- ii. describe ongoing Tribal-state relations in the context of knowledge exchange, collaboration and forest stewardship



# Methods

## Qualitative Data Collection

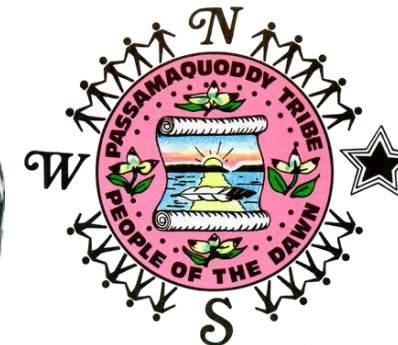
- Interviews (22 participants total)

12 participants state agencies



Interviews:  
45-150 minutes

10 participants Wabanaki Confederacy



# Diverse Knowledge Systems

State Agencies

Western scientific knowledge  
(SK) dominant

Diversity of perspectives →  
resiliency

Limited engagement with  
Indigenous knowledge (IK)



“ No any one source is ever going to give you  
the complete answer...I know that what  
happens in the ivory towers of universities,  
is not always reflective of what people  
observe on the ground.”

(S5)

Example:

Avoid biased decision-making

Prioritize objectives

Improve transparency



# Diverse Knowledge Systems

Tribal Nations

Collective and individual  
responsibility towards IK

Western science  
valued

Constant “straddling”  
of IK and western SK



Taking every perspective into account is part of this job, I feel like I owe that [to] the Tribe and our people. I think using the best science available and also remembering where we came from.”

(T1)

Example:

Community set regulations  
on Tribal lands



# Collaborative Governance

State Agencies

Expanding project-based partnerships

Constraints:

Fear exacerbating ongoing issues

Lack institutional guidance

Enhance co-development



I wouldn't know who to go to or what the appropriate way to reach out would be....I don't want to contribute to any sort of negative interaction or experience. I really want to foster positive experiences.”

(S12)

Example:

Conservation culturally important species

Monitoring/response emerald ash borer

Expanding access for tribal harvesting



# Collaborative Governance

Tribal Nations

Maintain sustained relationships

Constraints:

Eroded trust in state government

Enhance “back and forth”

Lack of knowledge on Tribal affairs



"It's always like [there's] an elephant in the room when you have conversations...there has clearly been issues over the course of history...but a lot of times the department staff at the state level have no idea that's been the case or is still the case...I think it should be a big point to educate state workers about that."

(T5)

Example:

Forest pest monitoring



# Key takeaways

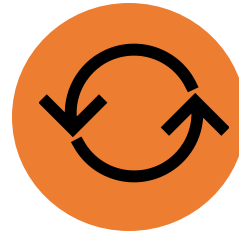
Paradigmatic differences between SK and IK



Two-Eyed Seeing

Multiple Evidence-Base

Knowledge exchange two-way process



Cultural Competency

Unconscious Bias

Collaboration at outset



Reimagine institutions

Inclusivity of diverse knowledge holders



Tribal Elders

Youth

IK Keepers

# Sustaining Ash Partners Network (SAP-Ne)

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Offer workshops and webinars

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Establish a network of ash treatment demonstration areas

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Develop a web hub of resources on ash

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Richard Silliboy





# Sustaining Ash Partners Network (SAP-Ne)



Want to learn more and get involved?  
  
Visit  
SAP-Ne's website!



# Research Acknowledgements

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Advisors: All study participants

Dr. Anthony D'Amato

Dr. Rachel Schattman

Collaborators:

Dr. Darren Ranco

Dr. Adam Daigneault

Tyler Everett, PhD Candidate

Committee:

Dr. Cherie Morse (Chair)

Dr. Amy Seidl

Other Support:

Silviculture and Applied  
Forest Ecology Lab

UMaine Agroecology Lab

Funding:

USDA McIntire Stennis  
Program

Northeast Climate Adaptation  
Science Center

UVM Rubenstein School of  
Environment and Natural  
Resources



University  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MAINE





**Thank You!**

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