

TESTIMONY OF

Sharon Libby Jones

Former State Representative – District 111 and Greenville Selectmen

Speaking Against L.D. 2418

“An Act Concerning Offensive Names”

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE
ON
JUDICIARY**

DATE OF HEARING: JANUARY 28, 2000

10:30 AM - Room 438, State House

SENATOR LONGLEY, REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON, AND THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, I AM SHARON LIBBY JONES, A SELECTMEN FOR THE TOWN GREENVILLE, SPEAKING AGAINST L.D. 2418.

My name is Sharon Libby Jones; I am a small business Owner, a Selectmen for the Town of Greenville and a former State Representative that represented District 111, which is located in Piscataquis County and includes 11 towns, two plantations and several organized territories in Northern Maine. Several of these unorganized territories are Little Squaw Township and Big Squaw Township.

L.D. 2418, An Act Concerning Offensive Names, is a step in the wrong direction for Maine. I think all of us here recognize the importance of the States history. We need to understand the state's tribal culture and history.

Piscataquis County for over 100 years has recognized and realized the importance of the Native American culture and history. Currently the Piscataquis County Economic Council has begun survey research on cultural heritage of the region. This research project will be gathering information from historians, storytellers, and traditional businesses. The information will be catalogued and used to develop a cultural heritage map, which will be used to

inform the citizens of the State and our travelers to the region of the richness of our history.

We are moving forward in Greenville with a Natural Resource Education Center. The concept of this facility is to house orientation and interpretation services, educational exhibits, on-and off-site programs, interpretive trails, and events that explain and celebrate the unique natural and cultural heritage of the region.

Piscataquis County is the poorest County in the State with the least population of any other County. We are rich with natural resources, history, culture and pride. The Native Americans are very much apart of our history.

Less than one week ago I received a Public Hearing Notice about this important Public Hearing. Since then there has been several articles and notifications that were sent to the citizens of the area. Tremendous feelings, reflections on history as well as strong emotions have been pouring in from the Native Americans and citizens of the Moosehead

Lake Region. In less than 24 hours nearly 300 people signed Petitions that were located in just a few of our businesses in the area. Yes Native Americans sign them as well. That is how strong our feelings are for the history of the word "Squaw".

The importance of the word "Squaw" is not only important to the heritage of the area but to our economy locally and State wide. Big Squaw Mountain an Internationally known ski area in Big Squaw Township is very important to our area. This Mountain at one time was owned by the State. Located on majestic Moosehead Lake are wonderful areas such as Squaw Bay, Squaw Point and Squaw Point Subdivision. The State owns a campground on Squaw Brook. The water supply for the Town of Greenville comes from a well located in Little Squaw Township. The Town has a sanitary landfill in Little Squaw Township. There is a growing industrial park located in this Township. We have a booming snowmobile industry located throughout Little and Big Squaw Townships, and Big Squaw Mountain. The trails systems (ITS 86 plus local

trails) in these areas are some the best in the State.

(Expenditures per Snowmobile for a resident is near \$600.00 and a non-resident \$1,100.00). Businesses, the State of Maine and the Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce, the Moosehead Historical Society, our schools and the Shaw Public Library, International Seaplane Fly In Organization, for years have promoted the word "Squaw" whether it be Squaw Brook, Little Squaw Brook Campground, hiking and biking trails throughout the Townships, on menus, signs, Squaw Mountain Resort and Golf Course and our magnificent Mountain called "Big Squaw Mountain".

Think for a moment the impact economically and historically on this unique area of the State. The following Departments would have to change many statues and regulations and maps of the area.

**All Business Brochures
The Town of Greenville
Emergency Management Agencies**

**The Department of Transportation
The Department of Conservation
The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
The Health and Information Center (EMS law)
Piscataquis County Law Enforcement Agencies**

We have recently had completed areas for the E-911 system that contain the word "Squaw". The evacuation designation for our immediate area is Big Squaw Mountain.

Think what this change would do for the State Forestry Division in our area. They maintain an immense and complex system for Forest Fires Protection.

Please do not remove forever the word "Squaw" from the Moosehead Regions heritage by passing this legislation.

Thank you

2/1/2000
Brooks, Maine

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Although I was initially shocked and angry to read of your 1/28/00 hearing on LD1248 in the 1/29/00 issue of the BDN, those reactive emotions are being replaced by what I hope are some helpful insights, which I'd like to pass along.

First off, nothing is served by blaming or shaming each other for being at a perceived different relative level of awareness and practice at being an educated and respectful person. Also, be wary of he or she who claims to be not at all racist or sexist.

While I knew "squaw" was not a particularly respectful word and I generally discouraged its use, I did unwittingly use it a few years ago in describing walking without support for the first time (after an accident) while upon the slopes of the majestic mountain currently of that name.

I now know that it references the female genitalia and is also used as a vulgar racist and sexist slur. After having a few days for the reaction to that to sink in, I hope you will join me in actively supporting an end to perpetuating this 14th century mistake in translation.

What better gift to give ourselves and especially our privileged white sons, than the modeling of the courage to say I will absolutely not stand for nor profit from perpetuating even unconscious abuse toward women and other races.

It is particularly powerful to say that with not just words, but with sometimes inconvenient and expensive actions. This depth of response says that we are strong and healthy enough and respect ourselves enough to appreciate, understand, and honor the experience and pain of all others as an extension of that of our own, our family and our community.

How about if the shoe were on the other foot? What if Christianity, English, and suits & ties, etc., were replaced and in some cases forbidden? What if people of another race, language, and culture had been dominating us for the past 500 years. What if we were trying to heal from that often cruel victimization and stand up and respect ourselves enough to ask to be respected as human beings in return? Would we want to look into the sad eyes and wounded spirits of our sons and daughters and try to explain that they really are legitimate and fully human children of God in spite of their real feelings and experience of being put down and treated "less than" in their everyday life?

Sure, the people of the Wabanaki Nations could continue to endeavor to overlook and forgive our ignorance, insensitivity and disrespect, but honestly, why should they have to? If the whole state can deal with 911 address changes, is this really a big deal? Yes, unfortunately, it is a big deal, a very big deal. Both racism and sexism die hard! This is an opportunity for healing. Let us take it.

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