



News from the Wilson Center



Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

April 23, 2015



Easter, Passover, Earth Day and the Equinox have all come and gone and Hope has finally arisen in Maine! The very first green shoots can just be seen around the building. As always at the Wilson Center, we have been blessed by even more joy than the norm. We have celebrated both Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Easters; made both Pysanky and Greek eggs (special thanks to Ann Homola); hosted an Interfaith Holy Week Celebration, a Jewish Passover Seder, and an evening of MicMac drumming and storytelling. Traditions of rebirth, resurrection, gratitude, liberation, and freedom from oppression have filled our building and our lives. Where else, I keep asking myself, could I find such an amazing place to spend my time?

Some of you may have seen the series of articles in the BDN about a renewal of faith in the Catholic churches of Maine. Some of you may also have seen the article about the Jewish synagogue in Rockland that hosts an Easter dinner each year for the Christian folks in their area who have nowhere to go for Easter dinner. One of the people interviewed for this article explained it very simply, saying (and I paraphrase): 'We aren't celebrating a holiday on this day, so we are the ones who have the time to do this.'

Imagine a world where we all lived like this - where we celebrated each other's traditions, learned from each other's practices and stepped in to help one another when it was obvious we were the ones with the time (or money or resources) to best help in that moment.

It sounds too good to be true, right? And yet I see it happening around me every day at the Wilson Center: students dialoguing with each other about their different spiritual traditions (or about the new traditions they are trying to build); Wabanaki and non-Wabanaki folk getting together to discuss fishing and water rights on the Penobscot River and the deep spiritual meaning of those rights to the Wabanaki people; students from Iraq and Iran coming to explore American food and Christian holiday traditions at a Wednesday dinner; members of the Islamic Center inviting Judaic Studies and the Wilson Center to help in the planning of Islamic Awareness Week; students from the Wilson Center raising money to purchase the instruments needed for the Shaw House's music program for homeless youth in Bangor. The list goes on and on. I see hope and faith being reborn through communication, caring and listening every day. As Dorothy, Elwin, and all the founders of the MCA so clearly knew, we humans are blessed by our amazing diversity and by our limitless hearts.



In the newsletter which follows, you will hear many more details about the events which have been happening at the Wilson Center these last five months. As you read it, I invite you to open your own hearts, to sit back and to simply enjoy!

In Peace,
Sarah

The last 5 Months at the Wilson Center:

- In December, the Wilson Center celebrated the birth of Jesus and the Winter Solstice with Advent candles, Christmas cookies, fellowship and lots and lots of singing.
- In January, along with the UMaine Office of Multicultural Student Life and the NAACP, the Wilson Center helped to plan the Martin Luther King Day celebrations for UMaine. Nearly 300 people were in attendance at the Breakfast. The Wilson Center had the honor of nominating the keynote speakers, Ester Attean and Denis Altavater of Maine Wabanaki REACH (<http://mainewabanakireach.org/>). We also reinstated the Dorothy Clarke Wilson Peace Writing Prize for this event
- In February, the Wilson Center hosted a fascinating talk by Professor Douglas Allen on “Religion & Violence: Why is there so much Religious Violence in the World and Can Religion Become a Force for Peace?” Folks from Jewish, Christian, Buddhist and Muslim traditions were all present. The talk was recorded by WERU and you can hear it at the following link: <http://archives.weru.org/bangor-area-commons-formerly-99-9/2015/03/bangor-area-commons-3515/>
- In February and March, we hosted two live-music Coffee Houses (pictured to the right), showcasing UMaine musical talent and raising money for the Shaw House for homeless youth in Bangor.
- In March, we hosted the first meetings for a Restorative Justice Collaborative which is starting in the Bangor area and an informational community-wide meeting on the Penobscot River Jurisdiction case (see Cheryl Robertson’s pieces later in the newsletter for more details).
- In April, we hosted a Passover Seder, an Interfaith Holy Week Celebration, and an evening of drumming and storytelling with John J. Dennis, member of the Aroostook Band of Micmac. We also hosted dinners for visiting speakers, Kristin Beck and Dr. M. Benjamin Thorne. Kristin is the first openly transgender former U.S. Navy Seal. She visited UMaine for Pride Week. Dr. Thorne is a historian who studies the Roma and their resistance to the Nazi regime. He visited campus as part of Holocaust Remembrance Week.



Weekly events continued as well:

- Wed night “Dinner & Discussion” for UMaine students, faculty, and staff happened each week. Topics and activities included: labyrinth walking as a spiritual practice, Equinox traditions across religions, the practice of “Giving Something Up”, and Holy Week as the “Occupy Wallstreet” moment of Jesus’ ministry. Along the way we also hula-hooped (see photo to left), attempted to increase our own balance with yoga and some silly table games, and generally laughed lots and long.
- LGBT-Inclusive Bible Study began in October and met weekly all year. New Testament and Gnostic Gospels were explored. The group has now renamed itself “SpiritualiTea” and describes itself as “a motley crew of students, teachers and community members who are

interested in the big questions. We embrace diversity, appreciate mystery and celebrate meaningful conversation over a cup of tea each week”

- The Orono Friends meeting continued to use our space for their Sunday worship at 10am.
- Interfaith Power and Light continued to share our office space.
- Monday night meditation group met every Monday at 4:30pm. Celtic Christian, Zen Buddhist and the Sufi-based Heart Rhythm Meditation styles were all taught. This group is open to the larger community and will resume meeting again in September. They invite you to come and join them at any time!

Introducing two New Student Assistants:



Ariadne Dimoulas

Hello!

My name is Ariadne Dimoulas; I am a senior dual degree student at the University of Maine, studying Marine Biology and International Affairs. I am very excited to join the Wilson Center because I believe strongly in its commitment to equality, universal acceptance and interfaith relations. I was raised in Maine, however my family heritage is Greek and my own spiritual background is Greek Orthodox. I love to travel and have had the fortune to visit many parts of Europe and Asia. I prefer to spend all my free time outside or being active whether I'm skiing, snow shoeing, kayaking, swimming, rafting, biking, running, hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing or any other activity! If being outside isn't possible I also love to read or listen to music.

“There is no way to happiness - happiness is the way.” Thich Nhat Hanh



Jennifer Karod

Hi All! My name is Jenny Karod, and I am a Junior Communication major at the University of Maine. I play viola in the University Orchestra and love to sing and write. I have a music minor and creative writing minor as well. I am so excited to be starting this new journey at the Wilson Center because it stands for everything I believe in and more. I believe in spreading positivity and acceptance in the world, and every time I work here, the infectiousness of the atmosphere, people laughing and everyone coming together for a common goal never fails to put a smile on my face. I am so excited to continue reaching out to students through new Public Relations strategies, because I think the Wilson Center is a place everyone should know about and celebrate!

The 2014 winner of the Dorothy Clarke Wilson Peace Writing Prize is ...

John J. Dennis for his piece “Reconciliation”

John is a member of the Aroostook Band of Micmacs and was the Cultural Director of the Band for 5 years. He is also a storyteller, musician and teacher of the Micmac language. Currently

he is a student at UMaine in the College of Education and Human Development. He is majoring in Elementary Education and plans to become an elementary teacher.

Honorable Mention (in alphabetical order by author):

- Michael Bailey “The Celebrated Genocide: Manifest Destiny and Native Peoples”
- Berkay Payal “Road to ‘Paradiso’: Forgiveness”
- John Peters “In the Eye of a Storm”
- Anna Weigang “Metamorphosis” .
- Olga Remesha “My Tribe Surrounded by My Heart”

You can read John’s winning essay on our website:

<http://umaine.edu/wilsoncenter/peace-prizes-and-community-service-grants/>



Wilson Center Spotlight on: Restorative Justice and the Penobscot River Case



Introduction to Restorative Practice by Cheryl Robertson

On January 28, 2015 the Wilson Center hosted dinner and a movie with Dr. Cheryl Robertson and Laurie Cartier, alumnae of the University of Maine Diversity Leadership Institute. We viewed the documentary, *Burning Bridges*, and had a round-table discussion of what it means to be restorative rather than punitive in schools and within the juvenile justice system. Members from the Juvenile Community Corrections Office and Department of Corrections were at the table, along

with several UM students, including one who is interested in bringing Restorative Practice to the UM dorms.

Currently, the US incarcerates 716 people per 100,000 residents, more than any other country in the world (www.prisonpolicy.org/global). Many school systems depend on detention, suspension, in-school suspension, loss of privileges, and denying access to entertainment or community events to change any misbehavior. As students and parents and teachers, we know that this model doesn’t work. Offenders are not called on to repair the harm they have caused, nor are they asked to hear the harmed perspective. Restorative Practices call for more support of youth, and ask for a response to misbehavior that teaches care and responsibility, rather than

Wilson Center Wish List:

- A hand-held drill (cordless or with a cord both fine!)
- A lawn mower
- A plastic “lawn mower shed” for out back

creating more harm by punishment. Restorative Practice is sweeping the state of Maine. The hope is to decrease incidents of youth incarceration and to increase incidents of youth responsibility.

Along with JCCO's and interested and concerned citizens, the Restorative Justice Institute of Maine (www.rjmaine.org) has now begun to build a Community Justice Collaborative in the Bangor Region and is working toward a goal of facilitator training and referrals to help shift this punitive system into a restorative healing for youth and others.

For more information or a presentation on Restorative Practice, or to participate or be put on a mailing list for the Bangor Region Restorative Practice Collaborative, please feel free to call or email Cheryl Robertson, 249-3053, email: Cheryl.robertson@maine.edu.

The River Case Town Meeting by Cheryl Robertson

One of the first meetings in the state regarding the Penobscot Nation vs. Janet Mills (hereafter referred to as the River Case) was held at the Wilson Center in February. The townspeople of Orono, including residents who are Penobscot Nation members, met to discuss the litigation regarding the Penobscot Nation.



The Penobscot Nation, in an effort to defend and protect ancestral and reserved Penobscot territory, entered into a legal dispute with the State of Maine when the AG claimed that reserved river territory was not under the jurisdiction of the Penobscot Nation. At stake was sustenance fishing, a cultural inheritance and ancestral practice that has been the identity and right of the Penobscots for thousands of years. In addition, a Portland law firm recruited 18 Intervenor (mills, corporations and towns along the Penobscot and Piscataquis Rivers) to act as defendants, siding with the

state of Maine. One of the defendants was the Town of Orono.

On February 26, the Wilson Center hosted an informational session with Maria Girourd, Penobscot Historian and Environmentalist. Over 35 people, including Orono Town Council Chair, UM students and others were present to discuss the case, its implications and the possibility of the Town of Orono withdrawing as an Intervenor. Following this session, on March 15, the Town of Orono held a Town Development Council meeting and voted unanimously to recommend that Orono withdraw as a defendant from the Penobscot River Case. On April 13th the full council voted the same. Efforts are now under way to reach out to the remaining defendants: Bucksport, Howland, Lincoln, Mattawamkeag, Millinocket and E. Millinocket and the City of Brewer.

If you would like more information about this case or would like to get involved in any way, please contact Cheryl Robertson at: 249-3053 or Cheryl.robertson@maine.edu

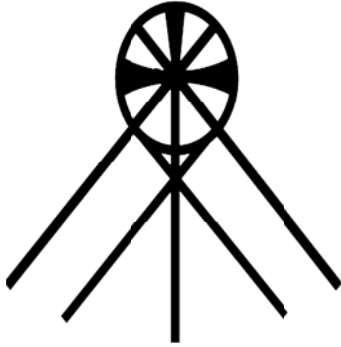
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MAY YOUR SHOOTS
OF HOPE THIS
SPRING BE MANY!
The Wilson Center

Wilson Center Mission:

The mission of the Wilson Center/MCA is to provide an ongoing progressive and ecumenical campus ministry for the University of Maine community, and, through, worship, study and service, to work for social justice, honor diversity and offer opportunities for spiritual growth.

