



We help schools think and talk about issues related to race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation.



Students from the Manchester School civil rights team in Windham made their own shirts for Civil Rights Team Project Night with the Portland Sea Dogs on May 12. They were part of a group of more than 560 students representing 31 teams from across the state!

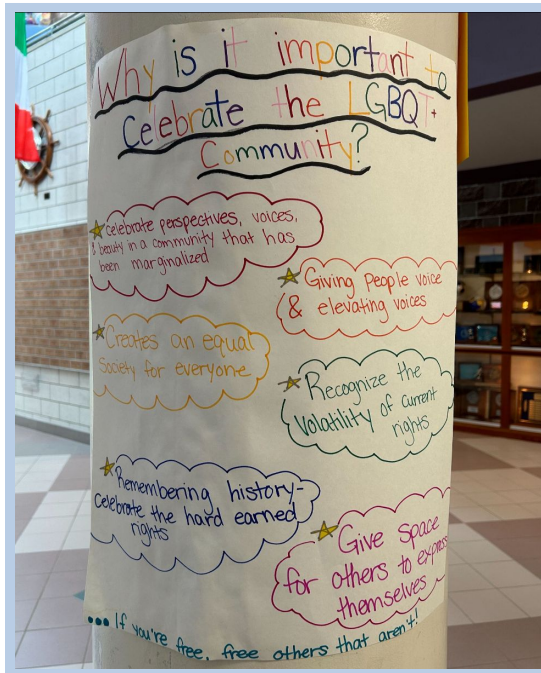
Civil Rights Team Spotlight

Robert W. Traip Academy in Kittery

The Traip Academy civil rights team involved both their school community and their local community in their work this year, embracing both the spirit of collaboration and the goal of the Civil Rights Team Project.



Near the end of February, many houses, businesses, and places of worship in the neighboring city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire were targeted by a hate crime. Students were concerned, especially since the locations were openly affirming of people of different races, nationalities, religions, genders, and sexual orientations. To show their support, the civil rights team created cards with a message of love and encouragement and organized a signing table for the cards during lunch. The gesture inspired several students to join the civil rights team!



In an effort to get their school community talking, the team created a series of posters for Pride Month. The first week, they posed the question “why is it important to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community?” The second week, they published a survey so that students could submit their own answers to the question. Then, based on the responses and on discussions as a group, the team published a final round of posters with several important answers: “giving people voice,” “recognizing the volatility of current rights,” “remembering history,” and “using privilege to help raise others up,” to name a few. Advisor Kim Lightcastle reported that the project created a lot of excitement and positive energy during Pride Month.

Their month of celebration concluded with the installation of pride prisms in the windows of the school's main hallway. When the sun hits them, the prisms refract the light and create rainbows that celebrate, as one team member said, "the spectrum of human experience."

Regular readers of *The Torch* may remember that the Traip team's land acknowledgment mural [made the news](#) this winter. Recently, they partnered with a Passamaquoddy language master to translate their accompanying statement and will be painting the translation across from the mural.

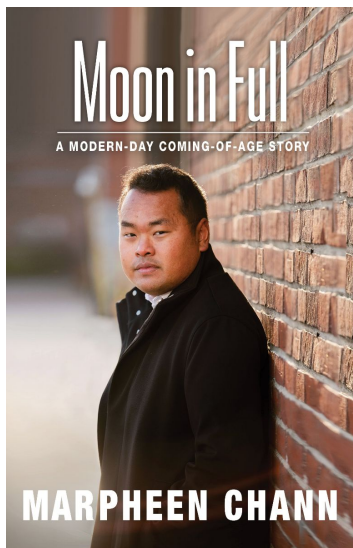


At the mouth of Peskategwa, R.W. Traip Academy is located on N'dakinna, which is the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook and Wabanaki peoples past and present. We acknowledge and honor with gratitude the land and waterways and the aln8bak [all-nawm-bock] (human beings) who have stewarded N'dakinna throughout the generations, affirming that there are Native people in Maine and the wider Wabanaki homeland today and that their story has continued for more than 12,000 years.

Local Collaborations

In doing civil rights work, there are great opportunities to cooperate, reach out, ask for help, and involve others! Here are some examples of collaboration from our civil rights teams from the spring.

Bangor High School



In collaboration with their school's Q+ Club and their school librarian, and with support from the Maine Humanities Council, the Bangor High School civil rights team read and discussed sections of the memoir *Moon in Full* by Marpheen Chann. Chann is a Portland-based author and civil rights activist, and in his book he details his experiences as a second-generation Asian American adopted into a white family and coming out while surrounded by strict religion.

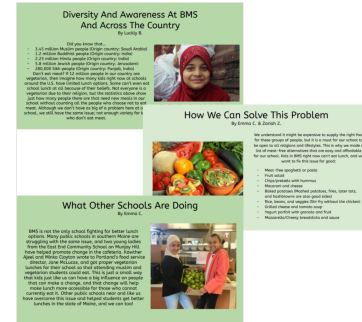
Students took part in two related events—a talk facilitated by a professor from the Women's and Gender Studies department at the University of Maine, and a second led by Chann himself. From collaborating with other student groups to focusing on a Maine author, this civil rights team proved that there are so many resources and relationships to be found in your community!

The Bangor High School civil rights team's work was made possible by the Maine Humanities Council. If you'd like to learn more about resources available to your civil rights team through MHC, contact Nicole Rancourt (Nicole@mainehumanities.org).



Biddeford Middle School

The Biddeford Middle School team completed a Welcoming Inventory to figure out what their school community could be doing to make students of all identities feel welcome. They crystallized their ideas into three potential changes to present to the principal: celebrating more diverse holidays schoolwide, creating a civil rights section in their library, and the winning idea, making the school lunch menu more inclusive by including more vegetarian options.



In [their presentation](#), team members pointed out that many students follow dietary restrictions as part of their religious beliefs, often adopting a vegetarian diet. They also reviewed the limited meat-free options on the existing menu, and then gave great examples of more inclusive foods and vegetarian versions of already-existing meals that could be great additions. With the help of the principal and their school's food service director, they were able to make significant changes to the lunch menu a reality!

Falmouth Elementary School



For Pride Month this year, the Falmouth Elementary civil rights team joined forces with their school's Parent-Teacher Organization to support Maine LGBTQ+ causes. The PTO sold yard signs during the month of June with various affirming and inclusive statements, like "Falmouth has pride" and "Hate has no home here," and asked the team to decide which organizations to donate the funds to.

After researching Maine-based agencies and groups, the team settled on giving to Portland's PFLAG chapter and EqualityMaine. The fundraiser was a great success, and the PTO was able to donate \$1,000 to each of these wonderful local support organizations! They hope to collaborate with the civil rights team again in the future.

Morse High School

The Morse civil rights team had a great opportunity to learn about local history through an antiracist scholar and powerful primary source documents. Team member Jai Marlowe wrote a grant to have writer and historian Dr. Meadow Dibble, founder of the [Atlantic Black Box Project](#), present about her work researching New England's complicity in the enslavement of African and Indigenous peoples in the Caribbean.



After Dr. Dibble's talk, the team visited Maine Maritime Museum to view documents that tie prominent local names to the slave trade. They are working with museum staff to integrate the documents into the museum's permanent collection, to provide important context that shows the historical connection between shipbuilding and shipping wealth in our area and enslaved people.

Robert V. Connors Elementary School in Lewiston

Since about 40 percent of their school community observes Ramadan, the Connors civil rights team decided to take an extra step to ensure their peers felt valued and affirmed. Students assembled 75 bags for participants at the [Rosati Leadership Academy](#) afterschool soccer program to enjoy for Iftar (the fast-breaking evening meal during Ramadan) and shared a message of solidarity. Advisors Nes Griffin and Kelsey Boucher report that Rosati staff were appreciative of the collaboration, and that administrators were so proud that the team demonstrated "community, inclusion, and compassion"!



Civil Rights Team Shoutouts



Conners Emerson School in Bar Harbor: In a new and interactive take on learning about civil rights history, the 7th and 8th grade team organized a building wide scavenger hunt!

They researched and chose important figures from each of the six focus areas of identity, and then made informative [trading cards](#) for each. The cards were printed, laminated, and hidden around the school for students to find and match to a template in their homeroom. The first group to find all their cards won a snack from the team, and every classroom had great conversations about the civil rights heroes that were featured!

Eastport Elementary School: The team surveyed students to get an idea of how often they hear bias-based language in school. They also asked respondents whether they felt those words were okay to use, or use disparagingly, and then presented their data in a [colorful display](#). Most students replied that using this language is not okay in their school, and they got to see that their peers agree!

Gardiner Area High School: The team held monthly vigils for community empowerment, focusing each on a specific civil rights theme like LGBTQ+ Pride, women's history, or inclusion, and presenting related readings, poetry, or music. Students took turns leading and organizing the events, which were 20 minutes to an hour long and encouraged participants to share their experiences and concerns. Despite some initial setbacks, the team has firmly committed to continuing the series in the coming school year!

Gardiner Regional Middle School: The team has been achieving excellent visibility and participation at their school! Teachers are aware of and interested in their work, and advisor Ari Bouse got great feedback from a coworker: "I was impressed by how many students joined the Civil Rights Meeting and how forthcoming they were with how they identify and their religious beliefs. You have certainly created a safe and welcoming atmosphere that students are drawn to."

Leroy H. Smith School in Winterport: The team held their annual Welcome Week to reinforce that all are welcome in their school. This is their seventh year! Activities included theme days, announcements, hand-made posters, and a schoolwide assembly to cap it off. Team members are particularly proud of their work practicing and then reading aloud civil rights-themed books in classrooms around the school. They report that the event was a great success and got people talking about welcoming everyone!

Marshwood High School: The team presented to each of their school's departments about bias-based language using their own [PowerPoint presentation](#) and printable pocket guides to interrupting harmful speech. Their work was well-received and prompted meaningful conversations, and the English department was inspired to take a more critical look at the books they select!

Waterville Senior High School: One of our new teams this year has been focusing on inclusivity in their homeroom



assemblies. Every week, they present their work to the school community as a great way to increase visibility. In an effort to include multilingual learners, a student fluent in English and Arabic translates the content into Arabic for their peers. They have gotten a lot of positive feedback from the district about the accessibility of their presentations!

Thanking our Retiring Advisors

We want to recognize three incredible educators who have retired this year for their generosity of time and spirit serving as civil rights team advisors:

- **Denise Simoneau**, advisor at James F. Doughty School in Bangor, has been a teacher for 25 years and joined the CRTP during a very difficult time in education. We thank Denise for 2 years of hard work in the Project!
- **Murray Bourne**, advisor at Winslow Junior High School, has been an educator for 46 years. We are so thankful for the expertise he's brought to our work for the past 6 years!
- **Tracey O'Connell**, advisor at J.A. Leonard Middle School in Old Town, has been a teacher for 30 years. We thank her for her incredible 20 years of dedication to the CRTP and to the students of the Leonard civil rights team!

The Civil Rights Team Project would not be possible without the generous commitment of time and knowledge of our many advisors. We wish you well-deserved happiness and relaxation in your retirement.

Thanks for reading!

That's all the recent news from the CRTP! Expect another edition of *The Torch* at the start of the winter season. Until then...

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Administered by the Office of the Maine Attorney General

The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of elementary, middle level, and high school students by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in our schools.

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