

United States District Court



District of Maine

**POWER Act Program**  
**October 20, 2023**

**Panelists and Planning Committee Members**

**Judge Eric Mehnert**

Chief Judge of the Penobscot Nation Tribal Court

Judge Mehnert has served as the Chief Judge of the Penobscot Nation Tribal Court since 2008. He presides over the Nation's Criminal and Civil Courts as well as the Nation's Wellness Court.

He has also served as the Wellness Court Judge for the Hopi Tribe in Arizona. He was appointed in 2016 to help establish the Tribe's Wellness Court which is now fully active. In 2019 he worked with the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe in Wisconsin to help establish their Wellness Court and it too is fully active. He has presented on the benefits of Wellness Courts at seminars hosted by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, the North American Indian Court Judges Association, the Tribal Law and Policy Institute, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the American Bar Association and the Maine Bar Association

He serves as a Contract Judge for the Bureau of Indian Affairs where he is a member of a team reviewing Tribal Courts to assist in meeting the due process requirements of the Tribal Law and Order Act and Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction under the re-authorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

Prior to his appointment to the Penobscot Nation Tribal Court, Judge Mehnert was a senior partner in Hawkes & Mehnert, LLP. In his thirty-nine year career, he focused his litigation practice on civil rights, employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and defending the rights of those who have been institutionalized.

Judge Mehnert has also served as the Chief of Enforcement of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Commission against Discrimination overseeing a staff of 45 investigators and 15 attorneys in prosecuting discrimination actions throughout the Commonwealth. He has served on the Maine Advisory Group to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Board of Directors of the Maine Civil Liberties Union, and the Executive Board of the Portland Branch of the NAACP.

## **Judge Maria A. Woodman**

Maine District Court

Judge Woodman received her law degree from the American University, Washington College of Law, in the District of Columbia. She began her legal career as an Assistant District Attorney at the New York County (Manhattan) District Attorney's Office where she prosecuted cases ranging from attempted murder, domestic violence offenses, to felony drug charges. In 2003, Judge Woodman moved to Maine and obtained a position as an Assistant Attorney General in the Attorney General's Office Maine Care Crimes Unit, prosecuting provider drug diversion fraud cases. After serving in the Attorney General's Office for nearly seven years, Judge Woodman went on to private practice and served as a Family Law Magistrate before being appointed to the District Court in 2015. Among her numerous assignments in Portland, Judge Woodman sits on the domestic violence judicial monitoring court.

## **Judge Andrew Robinson**

Maine District Court

Judge Andrew Robinson was appointed to the Maine District Court in April of 2022. Prior to becoming a judge, he served as District Attorney for District 3 (Androscoggin, Franklin, and Oxford Counties) in Maine.

## **Lisa Marchese**

Deputy Attorney General and Chief of the Criminal Division

Lisa Marchese is from Bangor, Maine and received her BA degree in Political Science from the University of Maine at Orono. Lisa received her law degree from UNH Law, formerly Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord, New Hampshire. Following graduation, Lisa was hired to work in the Criminal Division of the Attorney General's office. As a member of the Criminal Division, Lisa taught for many years at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and handled extradition cases for several governors. She has prosecuted all types of criminal cases from OUI to welfare fraud to sexual assault to murder. For several years, Lisa served as the State's first Statewide Drug Coordinator for drug prosecution matters.

In 1997, Lisa became one of four statewide homicide prosecutors. In that capacity, she has handled well over 100 cases involving murder or manslaughter charges. A substantial

number of those cases have been complicated jury trials involving technical forensic evidence such as DNA, ballistics, fingerprints, pathology and state of mind.

Lisa has chaired the Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel for the past decade. This panel, which is legislatively mandated is a multidisciplinary group of individuals, including prosecutors, domestic abuse advocates, law enforcement, doctors and nurses, a psychologist, a judge and others who meet monthly to review all domestic violence related homicides in search of ways to reduce the number of people who die as a result of domestic abuse.

In 2010, Lisa was awarded the prestigious Caroline DUBY Glassman award by the Women's Law Section of the Maine State Bar Association. In August of 2014, Attorney General Janet Mills named Lisa Chief of the Criminal Division. She is the first woman to serve in that capacity. In 2017, Governor LePage named Lisa to the University of Maine System Board of Trustees.

## **Margaret Groban**

Margaret Groban is a former Assistant U.S. Attorney and the former National Domestic Violence Coordinator for the Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys at the Department of Justice. In this role she was a critical resource in the Department of Justice's efforts to implement the criminal provisions of the Violence Against Women Act and to fight the constitutional and statutory challenges to these federal domestic violence crimes. She currently consults for domestic violence organizations and teaches a course on the Second Amendment and the Regulation of Firearms at the University of Maine School of Law. She is a graduate of Barnard College and Fordham University School of Law.

## **Francine Garland Stark**

Executive Director

[Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence](#)

[Francine@mcedv.org](mailto:Francine@mcedv.org)

Francine Garland Stark has been a leader in the movement to end domestic violence for over 35 years. She was the Administrative Coordinator and later Community Response and Training Coordinator for the Spruce Run Association - now Partners for Peace - from 1986-2009 and Executive Director of Hope and Justice Project in Aroostook County 2009-2015. As Executive Director of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence, since 2015, she leads Maine's statewide efforts to foster justice and social change to end domestic abuse and violence. She has developed and provided education and training programs to increase recognition and response to domestic abuse in a wide variety of contexts. She has provided expertise and leadership extensively in the development of public policy and community initiatives to both prevent and mitigate the impact of abuse and violence. She serves on the Governor's Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse, the Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel, the Justice Assistance Council, the Elder Justice Coordinating Partnership,

the Justice for Children Task Force, the Deadly Force Review Panel, and the Maine Criminal Justice Academy Board of Trustees.

Originally from Chapman and now Surry, Maine, she is a graduate of Bates College, and served in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic. Francine's work is inspired and informed by her grandmothers' and sisters' experiences of domestic abuse and violence as well as her own history of sexual violence.

## **Aline Pardilla**

Outreach coordinator for Wabanaki Women's Coalition

Aline attended the University of Maine Orono and is a 2021 graduate of the National Tribal Trial Law School. Aline had been with the Wabanaki Women's Coalition for a year servicing all five Tribal Advocacy Centers. Aline has assisted in hosting the Annual Tribal Leadership Summit and has been a part of the planning team for the Maine Victims Assistance Academy 2023. She has also helped edit and advocate for revised tribal codes within one of the Tribal Court systems and successfully establishing New Tribal Codes(laws) specific to Protections from Abuse, Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Sex Trafficking.

Aline dedicated the past almost 8 years to the Penobscot Nation Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy Center while advocating for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, teen dating violence and sex trafficking.

She has extensive training in mental health, response to strangulation, and court advocacy. Aline has worked with various allied agencies on high-risk cases. She is also a part of several local community response teams including the SART (Sexual Assault Response Team), START (Sex Trafficking and Awareness Response Team and Bangor Area Task Force.

## **Elizabeth Stout, Esq.**

Executive Director

[Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project](#)  
[estout@vlp.org](mailto:estout@vlp.org)

Elizabeth Stout is the Executive Director of the Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project. She is a 1990 graduate of the University of Maine School of Law. Liz was a family law attorney in southern Maine for most of her career. She launched the Maine Community Law Center, a low-bono law incubator, in 2015, and joined VLP in September of 2020.

## **Missy Fairfield**

Advocate with Next Step Domestic Violence Project  
[NextStep DV Project](#)

Missy Fairfield is the Violence Intervention and Prevention Coordinator at the Next Step Domestic Violence Project, a domestic violence resource center offering comprehensive domestic violence services in Downeast Maine. Missy has been a DV Advocate at Next Step for 16 years and held several positions. She started as a Paralegal in 2007 after an internship through Husson University. She became Legal Services Coordinator and received a citation from the U.S. Department of Justice for her work with domestic violence survivors in 2010. Missy provided intermediary services for pro se litigants during protection order dockets. After Next Step received grant funding for a High-Risk Task Force, Missy collaborated closely with Hancock County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies. As part of this grant, Missy provided specialized training to law enforcement and probation on such topics as ODARA and non-fatal strangulation. Missy received the Maine Advocate for Justice Award in 2013 presented by Justice Saufley. Most recently, Missy has been responsible for constructing a certified domestic violence intervention program in Washington County. She administers and facilitates the programming for StepForward, the men's program in Washington County. She co-facilitates the women's domestic violence intervention program, Turning Points, serving both Hancock and Washington counties. Missy also sits on the Maine Commission on Domestic and Sexual Abuse.

## **Allison Kuhns, Esq.**

Kuhns Law Office and volunteer lawyer for survivors  
[akuhns@kuhnslawoffice.com](mailto:akuhns@kuhnslawoffice.com)

Allison Kuhns is a native Mainer and a 2020 summa cum laude graduate of the Maine School of Law, where she received a pro bono service award. She runs a solo practice based in Portland. Allison was a Justice Andrew Mead Pro Bono Fellow in 2023 and is a member of the Board of the Kids First Center. She has been volunteering with the Volunteer Lawyers Project's Domestic Violence Panel since the moment she was sworn in as an attorney. A survivor herself, Allison is passionate about providing legal guidance to other survivors.

## **Pawel Z. Binczyk, Esq.**

The Bennett Law Firm  
[pbinczyk@thebennettlawfirm.com](mailto:pbinczyk@thebennettlawfirm.com)

Pawel Binczyk came to the United States from Gdynia, Poland, and graduated from Amherst College and the Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, before beginning his legal career in the United States Army as a judge advocate. There, he served as both a

military prosecutor and defense attorney with a focus on special victims, crimes against children, and senior leader misconduct. He also served in the Army's Special Victim Counsel pilot program, providing direct representation to survivors of sexual and domestic violence in military courts. Pawel presently practices with the Bennett Law Firm, P.A., based in Portland, where he focuses his practice on Labor, Employment, Alcoholic Beverage, and Hospitality law. Pawel is an active volunteer with the Maine Volunteer Lawyers' Project. He serves on the small business and domestic violence panels, the Board of Directors for Boots2Roots, and continues to serve in the Maine Army National Guard, where he holds the rank of Major.

## **Darcie N. McElwee**

U.S. Attorney

District of Maine

[District of Maine | Department of Justice](#)

Darcie N. McElwee was sworn in as the United States Attorney for the District of Maine on October 8, 2021. U.S. Attorney McElwee was nominated by President Joseph R. Biden Jr. on August 10, 2021, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate on October 5, 2021.

Prior to becoming U.S. Attorney, she served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of Maine for over 19 years. She primarily prosecuted violent crimes such as sex trafficking, interstate domestic violence and child sexual exploitation, as well as firearms and arson offenses. She also served as Maine's Project Safe Neighborhoods Coordinator for approximately 16 years. She began her legal career as an Assistant District Attorney for Penobscot and Piscataquis counties from 1998 to 2002. Darcie grew up in Caribou.

## **Donna Brown**

Executive Director for the Wabanaki Women's Coalition

[www.WabanakiWomensCoalition.org](http://www.WabanakiWomensCoalition.org)

Donna Brown is the Executive Director for the Wabanaki Women's Coalition, a non-profit tribal domestic and sexual violence coalition that serves the Wabanaki tribes of Maine. Donna is a citizen of the Penobscot Nation of Indian Island, Maine and the Algonquin First Nation of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg located in Maniwaki, Quebec.

Donna earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Ottawa in 2007 and her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Maine in 2012. Her desire to support and advocate for the rights, health and safety of others led her to serve in a variety of positions over the past 25+ years including adult case manager; trainer; research assistant; grant writer; domestic violence shelter aid; and consultant to develop Healing to Wellness Court programs.

## **Andrea Mancuso**

Public Policy Director

[Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence](#)

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Andrea Mancuso is the Public Policy Director at the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence. Since graduating from Georgetown University Law Center, Andrea has been an advocate for survivors of domestic abuse and violence, including representing survivors in civil court and shepherding needed policy reforms.