

MARCH 9, 2021 – COTEAU ROOM / NORTH DAKOTA 67 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ND HOUSE COMMITTEE – EDUCATION

Senate Bill #2304

A Bill relating to requiring all elementary and secondary public and non public schools in the State to include curriculum on Native American History.

CHAIRMAN OWENS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

Good morning and thank you - for allowing us all to come here today to provide information and insight for your deliberations. My name is **CARA CURRIE HALL**. I am Cree Indigenous. I am married, a mother, grandmother.

Chairman Owens, members of the Committee, I am here today to speak in favor of SB#2304 and to ask for your support - to vote for and DO PASS this on this important Bill.

I had the opportunity to speak before your [House Education] Committee in February and at that time I offered information about an International instrument that was developed over decades of work by experts; who were representing the worlds 425 million indigenous peoples; they, along with the member states of the United Nations; USA included wrote this document. The **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP**.

The UNDRIP provides a framework for us. It establishes that the Rights of Indigenous Peoples exist. It establishes minimum standards and methods for us to draw from today.

As a daughter, grand daughter and great grand daughter of Chiefs, I would be remiss to ignore the EXCELLENT work of all of those indigenous experts and member states that worked together over 25 years. I will reference their work, their words and their wisdom to guide these discussions today.

THE UNDRIP, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was a long a difficult process, but, it was not an impossible process.

The length of the work is a representation of the human will to find the common place in which to co-exist. Together, with Indigenous Leaders, Experts, Elders, and Nation States, we brought forth an instrument for “us”, and for “those coming after us”, that Recognizes and Reaffirms that Indigenous Peoples are unique with unique identities and rights.

As we study the five Sovereign Tribal Nations, that are located within the State of North Dakota, we gain a wealth of knowledge, understanding, and information, that strengthens our relationships and unites us in our joined history.

You may already know of a very important custom of our peoples around the world, is to give honor and acknowledgement to the Peoples upon whose Territory’s we are upon.

At this time, I would like to acknowledge the Peoples of the Great MHA TRIBAL NATION upon whose original territory we are on.

Our custom and teaching is that we understand who we. We are the First Peoples of the land [who signed] Treaty. Within these Rights are the Responsibilities of speaking for those who cannot speak for themselves.

We take this work of creating laws that govern and legislate the instruction of our children, and grandchildren, very serious. The teachings we have as Indigenous Peoples are - that ***our decisions we make today are impacting Seven Generations after us.***

[In fact, Mr. Lynn Helms, Executive Director of the North Dakota Industrial Commission – in another platform - stated that, “our decisions we make today will have an impact on our grand children’s grand children”. He is right.]

We agree on the magnitude of creating a system of educating the leaders of tomorrow, and, the necessity to ***“put our minds together to see what we can do for our children”.*** [Chief Sitting Bull].

What we are doing today is about the Generations following us. This principle is not different than the non indigenous peoples understandings.

STATEMENT OF THE United Nations Office of the High Commissioner ON UNDRIP

The High Commissioner for Human Rights welcomes the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007, as a triumph for justice and human dignity following more than two decades of negotiations between governments and indigenous peoples' representatives.

The UN Declaration was adopted by a majority of 143 states [in favour, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Georgia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Samoa and Ukraine)]. **(*In 2007 USA and all those opposing reversed their decisions to support the UNDRIP).**

The Declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being and rights of the world's indigenous peoples. The Declaration addresses both individual and collective rights; cultural rights and identity; rights to education, health, employment, language, and others. It outlaws discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them. It also ensures their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own priorities in economic, social and cultural development. *The Declaration explicitly encourages harmonious and cooperative relations between States and indigenous peoples.*

UNDRIP / United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Many Articles can be referenced for today's discussion but I will highlight two parts of Article, #14 & #19. I also brought a copy of the UNDRIP for you & it is available online in multiple languages.

ARTICLE 14

1. **Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish and control their own educational systems and institutions** providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. **Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.**
3. **States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.**

Article 19 **States shall consult and cooperate in good faith** with the indigenous peoples concerned through **their own representative institutions** in order to obtain their **free prior and informed consent** *before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.*

Article 2 Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals

Article 3 Indigenous Peoples have the right of self determination.

Article 11 Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs.

Article 13.1. ... the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

The UNDRIP “**language**” can be **captured and referenced to support and enhance the work** being done here today.

Our experts, and yours too, [the USA was directly involved in the writing of the UNDRIP for 25 years], gathered the best information from around the world to confirm the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their Right to Education.

The standard has been set and we welcome the opportunity to meet it.

In fact, it is possible - that we can offer that the instruction on US History to include the United States role in writing, endorsing, and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Nationally across the USA, “Indian Education” views are shared by many others who have forged a path from which we can observe, learn and draw from.

Leading the way on **EXPANDING AND ENHANCING CURRICULUM**, are the States of Montana, California, New Mexico, Wisconsin, South Dakota.

The National Indian Education Association

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was formed by Native educators in 1969 to encourage a national discourse on Native education.

Founding Principles:

- + to bring **Native Educators** together to explore ways to improve schools and the education of Native children;
- + to promote the maintenance and continued development of Native languages and cultures;
- + and to develop and implement strategies for influencing local, state, and federal policy and policymakers.

The NIEA Provides a Resolution of Support for State Legislation that recognizes the culture and history of American Indians, similar to that of Montana Code 20-1-501.

*The NIEA Resolution is attached.

TODAY, we can lead the way – we can be the leader of the Nation by integrating the true and important history of the First Peoples, the Native American Peoples, the Five Tribes in the State of North Dakota, into the study and instruction of our coming generations.

The timing for North Dakota to have this discussion could not be more appropriate to bring together the entities and chart a new path forward together. A Bill of this nature, **Senate Bill #2304**, will build bridges and strengthen the State, and the State and Tribes.

This is the time.

Members of the Committee, I came here today to join with you in the important discussion, to offer information, to join with you in creating solutions, and, I came here today to **ask your Committee to support Senate Bill #2304 and give it a DO PASS.**

Mr. Chairman, I will take any questions at this time.

Thank you.