

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1488**  
**Relating to the creation of the truth, healing, and reconciliation commission**  
**House Human Services Committee**

February 8, 2021 • ND State Capitol

Submitted by Cheryl Kary, Ph.D.

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Chairperson and members of the Committee:

My name is Cheryl Kary and I am the Executive Director of the Sacred Pipe Resource Center, a local non-profit serving the American Indian population in Bismarck-Mandan and Lincoln. I would like to offer this testimony in support of HB1488, relating to the creation of a truth, healing, and reconciliation commission. I am particularly interested in the passage of this bill because I see the need for this nearly every day in my interactions with service providers, the business community, and the general public.

In my work at the Sacred Pipe Resource Center, I do a lot of outreach, training and service as a liaison between Native and non-Native communities. And no matter what type of project I'm involved in, I find myself having to (1) educate members of the general public about North Dakota's history with regard to Native people, and (2) conciliate the legacy of historical conflicts, distrust and trauma.

William Faulkner once wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." This is especially true for the State of North Dakota. Our State has been forged in conflict, displacement, violence, and injustice – heavy words but not as heavy as the burden of living with unresolved trauma, silence, and avoidance. We have lived with the legacy of these things but have gone blithely along as if they have had no impact on the people of this State. It is not unlike a household that refuses to discuss the "family secret" of abuse or alcoholism. And, as the familiar adage goes, unless we learn from our contentious history we will be forever doomed to repeat it. In fact, the entire Dakota Access Pipeline protest led at Standing Rock was a direct replay of the railroad expansion of the mid-1800's and, unfortunately, the North Dakota response was no different in 2016 than it was in 1889. The conflict, displacement, violence, and injustice of the pipeline issue only served to further traumatize and divide all people of the State. We must do better.

HB1488 is a map for attempting to accomplish what no political party, government, municipality, or organization has ever been able to accomplish – healing the wounds of the past and uniting people of this State around shared understandings. Until we begin this process, we will continually live under the heavy shadow of an unresolved past.