

February 1, 2021

Dear committee,

I am writing in support of SB 2304. You may wonder why someone in Seattle is writing to you asking you to support Native curriculum in North Dakota classrooms. It's because I have watched how integrated curriculum helps young people more robustly learn about our country's history and contemporary issues.

My name is Denise Juneau. I am currently the superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, and although Washington State has a state mandated Native curriculum called "Since Time Immemorial" that so many of our students benefit from, I am not writing this letter in my capacity as the SPS superintendent. I am writing in support of SB 2304 as a member of the Mandan and Hidatsa Tribes, a member of the Old Dog Cross family, and as the former State Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Montana.

Montana passed its own legislation in 1999 referred to as "Indian Education for All (IEFA)" that states that Montana will recognize the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and preserve that heritage through its educational institutions. Montana recognized that all people should increase their knowledge of American Indian culture and history; that educational organizations and personnel should work directly with tribes when making educational decisions about what to teach, and that educators should be provided professional development that assists them to both teach accurate information and to better relate to Native students.

In 2005, the Montana legislature appropriated funding both to the state education agency and to schools to assist with implementation of IEFA. The SEA developed over 300 lesson plans for educators to use in cross-curricula areas and provided professional development that helped educators gain a better understanding of Native issues, tribal sovereignty, and a more truthful and accurate historical context. All of this work was steeped in tribal relationships and developed with tribal wisdom and input.

There are so many stories to be told about the success of IEFA ranging from educators expressing their gratitude about increasing their own knowledge and making them better at their profession to classroom stories about Native students "seeing" themselves in their learning environment for the first time, and non-Indian students learning different perspectives and increasing their understanding about tribes and Native people in a positive manner.

I am happy to see North Dakota take this step of tribal inclusion in the best way possible. To assist the next generation, through the public education system, access an accurate and authentic history, learn about tribal sovereignty, and be able to see multiple perspectives about different issues. Indian Education for All is a success story in Montana. Since Time Immemorial is a success story in Washington State. Passing Senate Bill 2304 will be a success story in North Dakota.

This is a link to an article about the journey of IEFA in Montana:

http://www.pdkmembers.org/members_online/publications/archive/pdf/k0611jun.pdfDenise
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