

# SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE – EDUCATION

February 1, 2021 – Room 216 / North Dakota 67 Legislative Session

## 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 SCHAIBLE AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

My name is CARA CURRIE HALL, I am Maskwacis Cree, Indigenous, married, a mother, grandmother.

I want acknowledge that we are on the original territory of the Mandan Peoples of the GREAT MHA TRIBAL NATION today.

I am here today to speak in favor of SB#2304 and to ask for your support to vote for and do pass this Bill.

I had the opportunity to speak before the House Education Committee a week ago and I offered information about an international instrument that was developed over decades of work by experts representing indigenous peoples and member states of the United Nations. [UNDRIP] Will speak on later.

A global experience through Sport.

In 1996 I was employed by the Atlanta Committee of the Centennial Olympic Games. I was the Director of the Cultural Program for the Olympic Youth Camp, an Official Program of the Olympic Games.

We had over 500 Youth from 157 Countries come to America to join in this global celebration of good will.

The Olympic Youth Camp theme was **“WE ARE MORE ALIKE THAN WE ARE DIFFERENT”**. Over a period of 14 days we overcame language and cultural

barriers, through, song, food, dance, and cultural exchanges [and with a lot of translators for all the languages]. We created ways to break down nationalistic barriers by encouraging acceptance of international cultures and languages. Our goal, create unity with the global community.

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. It is not different than the non indigenous peoples understandings.

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”.

So, 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].

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.

Instead, I will make reference to their words and 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. In 2007 the UN

It 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 those coming after us, that Recognizes and Reaffirms that Indigenous Peoples are unique with unique identities and rights.

Many other instruments and UNDRIP Articles can be referenced for today's discussion but I will highlight two parts of one UNDRIP Article, #14.

I brought a copy of the UNDRIP for you and provided them earlier.

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.

## **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.

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

In fact, we can offer that the instruction on US History can include the US role in writing and endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Others have forged a path from which we can observe, learn and draw from. Leading the way in similar efforts on **EXPANDING AND ENHANCING CURRICULUM**, are the States of Montana and California. The National Indian Education Association 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.

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.

I am asking your Committee to support Senate Bill #2304 and give it a do pass.

I will take any questions at this time.

**Ekosi. Thank you.**

## **UN Office of the High Commissioner**

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).

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.