

Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2304
Related to the Addition of Indian Education
Senate Committee on Education
February 1, 2021 • ND State Capitol
Submitted by Cheryl Kary, Ph.D.
Cheryl@sacredpipe.net • 701.426.1315

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 SB 2304, relating to the addition of Indigenous Studies to the requirements for North Dakota students. I am particularly interested in the passage of this bill because I see the need for this type of education 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 being an educator and having to explain a good part of history and background in order for people to understand the issues of today. If I had a dollar for every time an individual has said to me, "I wish I had known this" or "I wish I had learned this in school" or "Why don't I know this?", I could retire tomorrow. There is so much that people in our community just DO NOT KNOW about Indigenous people and history. And this is a detriment to our communities who must work together in the dark. It contributes to misunderstandings, resentment, and common mistakes that could easily be solved with the passage of this bill.

I am here to encourage your support of SB2304. The bill, as written, provides a lot of latitude for schools to incorporate this content where they are and to their capabilities. As a member of the Bismarck Public Schools Indigenous Parent Committee, I am confident that schools have the professional capacity and support to easily integrate Indigenous content into their current curriculum. More importantly, the students who will benefit from the passage of this bill will be the fully-informed, creative problem-solvers of the future that ND needs.