

Committee members,

I would like to recognize and honor Representative Ruth Anna Buffalo for introducing this bill and I offer my full support to this commission's deeply sacred task in working towards truth telling, healing and reconciliation.

We cannot move forward unless we acknowledge and address all aspect of North Dakota Settler Colonization including attempted genocide, centuries of oppression, laws such as the Dawes Act that resulted in land loss; broken treaties; cultural genocide of Boarding School era, and institutional and systemic racism.

This Commission would represent a long-awaited admission of injustices and an acknowledgment that Native people continue to be negatively impacted by settler colonization and provide a forum for victims to speak about personal experiences.

While we can't erase the historical events, the TRC provides an important step toward reconciliation and healing, But, first the truth telling must begin, and that is going to be painful, both for those telling their stories and for those listening. Historical and Intergenerational Trauma that will come out during testimonies.

Relationship between North Dakota tribes certainly suffered during NO DAPL. There is a prevailing lack of understanding of Native world view toward the sacredness of water and land.

A prevalent issue right now is Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. While I am grateful for former Sen. Heitkamp for introducing Savanna's Act, we still face some of the highest rates of domestic violence and murder of Native women, more than ten times the national average due to normalized and increased societal tolerance of violence against Native women.

Most distressing there is continuing and pervasive stereotypes of tribal people – that we receive 'handouts' free college tuition etc., indicating a lack of understanding of treaty rights.

Natives ages 20-24; 25-34, and 35-44 are three of the five groups most likely to be killed by police making them more likely than any other racial group to be killed by police despite the fact that they only make up 1.2% of the population of the United States.

We have a disproportional high incarceration of Native men in penitentiaries. There is appalling disparities in health. These are broad quality of life issues rooted in economic adversity and poor social conditions. Diseases of the heart malignant

neoplasm, unintentional injuries, and diabetes are leading causes of Native deaths (2009-2011). We have the highest suicide and infant mortality.

The state of North Dakota could help better its relationship with tribal people by supporting and fully cooperating with this commission. Education on the collective history of events shaping Indian Country is needed – curriculum specific to the history of the Boarding School era is a must. We need more tribal representation in local and state government. I would refer this committee to the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007). The document emphasizes the right of Native peoples to live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, culture and traditions and to pursue their self-determined development, in keeping with their own need and aspirations. It outlaws discrimination against Native people.

Reconciliation for North Dakota Native people is a long journey between Truth and Reconciliation. Before reconciliation has to come healing. Healing requires that we acknowledge the harm, the injustices and what those who have benefited from the injustice have gained. Healing requires that we transform the systems of inequity and oppression into systems of equity and abide by the promise to do no further harm. As Native people we have to heal from Historical and Intergenerational Trauma.

Our culture is our treatment, our language I our medicine.

Reconciliation to me represents Restoring Respectful Relations.

Passing of this bill will represent a huge step towards Truth, Healing and Reconciliation.

Respectfully,

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