

**Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 2316
Related to Changing the Date of First Nations Day
Senate Government and Veterans Affairs**

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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 SB 2316, to change the date of First Nations Day. In my opinion, a serious mistake was made in establishing the current date of recognition (which is the Friday before).

We live in a State that is deeply and negatively impacted by our history of conflict. And, in my opinion, we have done very little to address any sort of reconciliation or attempt to resolve this shared trauma. American Indian people continue to live with the legacy of racism and discrimination and socio-economic distress. The settler-immigrants of this State also have their unresolved trauma and continue to live with hyper-fixation with military and force, distrust of government, and negative coping mechanisms such as unwillingness to discuss truth and reconciliation.

But this is what is needed right now. We need a First Nations Day and a Columbus Day to occupy the same date in order to have honest discussions about the occupancy of this continent. What we have had with these holidays is all the pomp and circumstance, the pretty speeches, and the colorful flags. But those do not allow us to have the hard discussions about sharing space. In moving First Nations Day to the second Monday in October, we create opportunities to speak to each other and heal.

I encourage your DO PASS recommendation and your support in the full vote for SB2316.