

Representative Heather Keeler,

I am writing on behalf of the amendments introduced to the bill HF 2856. These amendments propose to officially change the observance of Christopher Columbus day to Indigenous Peoples day, and provide for at least an hour of the day to be devoted to observance of the holiday in schools. I support this change in the state holiday observance and ask for your vote to pass the bill. Such a small change in holiday observance, one hour of school time, can signal the importance of this topic to our next generation.

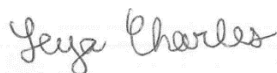
Teaching the history of the United States of America, and especially that in Minnesota with Dakota and Ojibwe nations residing within, is an important part of schooling. Recognizing the history of how Minnesota came to be a state is an important part of building back better and making Minnesota a strong state who can challenge, confront, and overcome the dark histories of how Minnesota was established as a state. Without teaching these lessons in our schools of the indigenous history within Minnesota we are ignoring our foundations as a state and are risking standing on a shaky foundation.

I grew up having been homeschooled and did not receive any teachings regarding the presence of native nations within Minnesota borders. This did not include any history of the dark past of Minnesota native relations, treaty right fundamentals, or reservation era and certainly did not include teachings about the native nations still here and actively present in the state today. As now a staff member of an Mdewakanton Tribe in the state of Minnesota, I now recognize the importance of teaching and distinguishing the native nations in the state. Recognizing all peoples within the state makes for a stronger state in the present day as our students grow up to be policy makers, construction workers, and citizens living within and in close proximity to native nations' land.

There are many resources that can be provided to schools to aid in observance of this new state holiday. These include but are not limited to excerpts from the book Mni Sota Macoke, compliments of Dakota Wicohan. Bdote memory map that includes short videos on pronunciations of Dakota place names and the meaning behind them, as well as numerous books published by the Minnesota Historical Society for all grade levels such as Bow Wow Pow Wow, Josie Dances, and Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask by Ojibwe scholar Anton Treuer. This would be a great place to start in providing suggestions for teachers, staff, and students to aid in observance of this important holiday.

Please vote to pass the bill HF 2856 with the proposed amendments to enact observance of Indigenous Peoples Day. This respectfully acknowledges an indigenous focused holiday to bring to the forefront the often ignored people groups that live within our state, supporting local economy, politics, and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leya Charles".

Leya Charles

Resource Links:

Westerman, G. & White, B (2012). Mni Sota Macoke: The Land of the Dakota. *Minnesota Historical Society Press*.

<https://dakotawicohan.org/courses/mni-sota-koce/>

<https://bdotememorymap.org/mnisota/>

<https://www.mnhs.org/education/native-american>