

MN House of Representatives
Labor, Industry, Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy Committee

March 17, 2021

Dear Chair Ecklund,

I am writing as a long-time supporter of Makoce Ikikcupi and their efforts to establish a land base outside of Granite Falls, Minnesota. I am a resident of South Minneapolis and a carpenter in the building trades for over twenty years.

I grew up in Minnesota but it wasn't until 2008, when the state was marking its sesquicentennial year, that I learned about the effects of settler colonialism on the Dakota people whose origins are here, at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. I learned about how our U.S. government broke treaties with the Dakota, forced removal of people from their homelands, and force-marched and imprisoned Dakota women and children at Fort Snelling. Once I knew this history, I was compelled to support Dakota efforts to reclaim indigenous lands and lifeways as a gesture towards repairing these wrongs.

This bill before you, HF 1042, would bypass Minnesota building codes in the specific case of traditional Native American building practices. The issue came up when Makoce Ikikcupi began construction of traditional Dakota earthlodges on their land outside Granite Falls. The city of Granite Falls stated support for their right to practice traditional Dakota building methods, but said they were bound by state law to enforce adherence to MN building codes. As a carpenter I understand and embrace the need of building codes to ensure safe structures for all people across this state. But I also know these codes are only relevant to modern western style building practices, which are irrelevant to how traditional Dakota earthlodges are constructed. Enforcing western rules and regulations where they are irrelevant is a continuation of colonial practices that should be re-examined. **Bill HF1042 resolves this concern and has support on both sides of the aisle, as well as the city of Granite Falls.**

As a Minnesota resident, carpenter, and advocate for racial healing and reparations with Dakota people, I urge you to pass HF 1042.

Thank you,

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