

March 10, 2022

Honorary Members of the Minnesota ...

On January 31, 2022, H. F. No. 2856, A bill for an act relating to education; requiring school observance of Indigenous Peoples' Day; establishing Indigenous Peoples' Day as a state holiday and eliminating Christopher Columbus Day as a state holiday; amending Minnesota Statutes 2020, sections 120A.42; 645.44, subdivision 5 was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Education Policy. This bill recommends that our Minnesota State education systems adopt a practice of observance which will recognize the cultural and linguistic values and heritage that are present in this great state in which we all live today. It asks for one hour, but in passionate review, should we ask all to observe to their conscience and in quest of the budding history of the State of Minnesota.

Early on, American Indians who lived in the State of Minnesota gathered food and lived lifeways which today can build knowledge and help create discussions in several of the areas and disciplines that we are teaching today. I often think about architecture. Many of the homes that were lived in by the Anishinaabe and the Dakota were warm enough to get them through the tough Minnesota winters. Examining that in several classes such as math, science, and physics would create numerous opportunities for integrated learning. When you think about food, many of the foods that were shared here in Minnesota can also be applied to some of the classes throughout the day and throughout the curriculum. Wild rice is a major complimentary crop throughout the nation and internationally. It can be used in economics as

a teaching activity, home economics as an activity, geography, and science. This is not a moment to erase history, but to embrace moments to educate and to inform students on how beautiful this State really is and has been.

A little about myself, I grew up on a reservation in rural North Dakota. I started at Head Start in 1965. Graduated. I then went onto Catholic School and graduated in 8th grade. Because I lived on a reservation most of my life, I knew who I was and that we were Anishinaabe. At the age of 14 years old, my older sister and younger brother, and I were sent far away to New Mexico to boarding school and removed from our family and tribal area. I once mentioned this to one of my non-Indian friends and she told me, "Man, weren't you lucky!" Thinking it was a boarding school where rich families might send their kids. In this bill, under topics to be taught, it asks that one hour might present information on (2) the history of federal boarding schools for Indigenous children. You see, my boarding school experience was one of trauma. I was removed from my grandmother, my mother, my father, my sisters, my brothers, my friends, and my tribal community. I was placed in a large urban city. While there, I was raped and left for dead. I often tell this story, not to shock people, but to let people know how broken-hearted I was and how everything I knew about being an Indian was left behind. I was one of many generations of American Indians who went to boarding school. In fact, boarding schools still exist and some of our Minnesota American Indian students are sent to them if they have no place to go today.

The other topics that are suggested lead into all areas of future careers to support the State of Minnesota including the legislative branches. Thinking about the practice of law, linguistics, literature, social studies, social services, medicine, and spiritual services. As a

lifelong teacher with a Ph. D. in Education, it does not take long to create ideas to be innovative and come up with activities to incorporate how American Indians/Alaskan Natives were a part of this great State and great Nation. Like me, a student whose education was filled with lack of support, instability, and being insecure, creating opportunities for engagement can support help to build that identity and inspire as well as acknowledge the spirit within to be something.

Drawing together all the common factors that this can be integrated into all areas, that the State of Minnesota has numerous resources to draw from in this area, and that key factors can inspire more than conflict with issues if presented as a positive influence on who we are in this State, I believe that this bill is the right thing for us to do. I am hoping that you consider my testimony as how important it is to support students no matter who they are and why they need to know small and large history facts about their neighbors. I share my story with everyone so they can understand more about our history and our lived experience.

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