



Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

REMARKS OF REPRESENTATIVE JEFF MURSAU, CHAIR, JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STATE-TRIBAL RELATIONS, TO THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

October 26, 2023

Good morning, members of the Assembly Committee on Education. During this past interim session, I again served as the chairperson of the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations. I am here today to present four bills from the committee's work for your consideration.

The committee is required to be created every biennium to study issues relating to American Indian tribes and to develop legislative proposals. Membership of the study committee consisted of two Senators, five Representatives, and 10 public members representing the interests of the state's tribes. The study committee met four times from August to December 2022.

The committee discussed numerous policy options spanning an array of substantive areas of law. In concluding its work, the committee recommended a number of bill drafts for introduction by the Joint Legislative Council, four of which are before this committee today.

Assembly Bill 209 does the following three things:

- Requires that the state superintendent incorporate American Indian studies into the model academic standards.
- Requires that the Department of Public Instruction develop and provide informational materials related to a school board's legal obligation to provide instruction on American Indians.
- Modifies the American Indian studies requirement for teacher licensure.

Assembly Bill 210 provides that school boards and charter schools may not prohibit a pupil with certain tribal affiliation from wearing traditional tribal regalia at a graduation ceremony or school-sponsored event.

Assembly Bill 212 requires each school district to report the numbers, ages, and tribal affiliation of American Indian children attending the schools of the school district.

Assembly Bill 214 provides an option for a tribe to decide whether each individual applicant for a lifetime license to teach the American Indian language associated with the tribe in an American Indian language program is qualified to receive the lifetime license.

The special committee recommended introduction of all four bills by unanimous votes.

I am happy to answer any questions. Steve McCarthy and Ben Kranner from Legislative Council are here with me today to help answer any questions. Thank you for considering these bills.

In Support of Assembly Committee on Education Assembly Bill 214: Relating to a lifetime license that authorizes an individual to teach an American Indian language in an American Indian language program and modifying rules promulgated by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Good morning, Chairman Kitchens, Vice Chair-Dittrich, Committee members, and guests, my name is Adrienne Thunder, and I currently serve as the Division Manager for the Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division. Prior to this role, I served as the Executive Director of the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Education. I received my Master's Degree and undertook doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. I am here to express support for AB214.

This bill supports the efforts of the Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division to ensure instructors of Hoocak language are well-prepared and well-qualified to teach Hoocak at all age and learning levels and supports the Ho-Chunk Nation's sovereignty by determining its own process for certifying teachers of the Hoocak language under the auspices of its Language and Culture Code.

The Hoocak Language is at level 8b. Extinct on the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, meaning the language is only spoken by the grandparent generation with little

opportunity to use the language.”¹ The Ho-Chunk Nation puts a high priority in revitalizing and preserving its language and culture. Currently there are nearly 8,000 members in the Ho-Chunk Nation. In 2015 the Nation completed a Census for all Ho-Chunk members over the age of 18 and more than half of the membership completed the Census. The Census revealed that 83% of families reported the frequency of their daily Hoocąk language usage as “rarely” or “not at all.” When asked about the frequency that the Ho-Chunk language is spoken in the home, the majority, 61% (1310) said that Ho-Chunk is not spoken at all in their homes; 23% (491) said that Ho-Chunk was spoken rarely in their homes; 7% (150) said it was spoken at least once a week; and 6% (134) said Ho-Chunk was spoken every day.

As a result of that Census data, it was clear collaborative efforts had to be taken in order to keep the language and culture alive and to reduce barriers to language learners. Some of the barriers include, but may not be limited to: inter-generational non-transfer of language, under educated teachers or inexperienced teachers, and limited language use or knowledge by the students.

The inter-generational non-transfer of language barrier creates proficiency gaps within generations. The elite elders, aged 70 and older, are of the great-grandparent generation and many of whose first language is Hoocąk. These elders may use the Hoocąk language with other

¹ Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale. [Ethnologue Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale \(EGIDS\) – The Ethnos Project](#)

elite elders but may not be communicating to their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren due to historic trauma. According the HCN 2015 Census only 3% of the population "Can speak Hooçak most of the time and understand completely". Additionally, 48% of the census participants said "they understand a lot" with 89% of the participants indicating "I do not speak Hooçak." The intergenerational gap is present when the grandparent generation is not transferring the Hooçak language to the younger generations. The population of the great-grandparent generation continues to diminish at an alarming rate. Consistent with most other indigenous languages, the number and extent of written, audio or video language documentation is not extensive. These elders, whom we call Eminent Speakers, are currently the best resource and are at a premium. Eminent Speakers, who are first language speakers of Hooçak, comprise less than one percent (1%) of the Ho-Chunk population. The Hooçak Eminent Speaker-to-language learner ratio is approximately 1:536 making them the most valuable resource to learning the Hooçak language.

Under-educated, untrained, or inexperienced teachers in second language acquisition methodologies are a barrier. Limited knowledge of 21st century technology and teaching methodologies limits the teacher effectiveness in the classroom, hindering the ability to provide effective learning environments and instruction. Current language teachers have had training in one or two second language acquisition methodologies. According to Dr. Simon Borg, specialist in teacher education and professional development, teacher research, and research methods, there are factors that world language teachers have that are different than that of teachers of

other subject areas. Effective instruction requires the teacher to use the medium (language) the students do not yet understand in their instruction and the interaction patterns necessary to provide instruction, require group work and practice which is not effective instruction in other content areas. World language teachers require specialized training to be effective teachers in addition to specially organized learning spaces.

A barrier faced by the students of Hoocąk language is their own limited language use or knowledge of the Hoocąk language. According to the Revitalization Survey of participating students in the Tomah Area School District 2016-2017 academic year, only 50% of the students reported using the language outside the classroom and only 63% of the students communicate in Hoocąk with other students. To support revitalization efforts, our Hoocąk instructional programs must implement a quality curriculum that encourages young people to speak the Hoocąk language at a Novice High level of proficiency in classes and in their communities facilitated by trained teachers with authentic resources at their disposal.

On March 15, 2015, the Ho-Chunk Nation enacted the Ho-Chunk Language and Culture Code making it the "policy of the Ho-Chunk Nation to ... involve Families and the communities to the greatest extent possible, in the instruction of the Ho-Chunk Language..." This collaboration has resulted in our High School Program, which guides enrolled high school students at five Wisconsin public high schools at Black River Falls, Tomah, Nekoosa, Wisconsin Dells and Baraboo through levels of proficiency as outlined in the Hoocąk Language Standards and

Benchmarks, and encourages community participation and presentations. In order to achieve its goal, the High School Program has implemented the following objectives: 1) Enrolled students demonstrate an understanding of Hoocak language and culture; 2) Each location increases its authentic Hoocak language resources; 3) Program goals are consistent with those found in Wisconsin DPI's Educator Effectiveness; and 4) Each location increases community language exposure.

The Hoocak language courses in our High School Program promote various forms of communication, keeping the Hoocak language and culture alive and, more importantly, helping students acquire Hoocak language skills at a proficient level for conversation. This will be a continued effort used to revive the use of the Hoocak language and therefore, increase knowledge of Hoocak language and culture to all interested High School students, both Ho-Chunk and non-Ho-Chunk, in these participating five school districts.

Courses are conducted in 85% Hoocak and all course levels reflect the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication as defined by the Hoocak Language Standards and Benchmarks and assessed based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) guidelines as adopted by the Ho-Chunk Nation's Language Division. In addition, these courses will integrate all competencies in the instruction for the Culture, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities as outlined in the World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages – aligned to the Hoocak language.

The courses are taught by second language learners of the Hoocąk language, and each instructor has been paired with an Eminent Speaker. Each instructor is required to obtain their teaching certification from the Ho-Chunk Language and Culture Committee and a license to teach the Hoocąk language from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. This process is outlined in the Hoocąk Language Educator's Certification and Licensure Process. Additionally, instructors have training in at least one of the following methodologies for teaching an indigenous language: Backward Curriculum Design, Comprehensible Input, Project Based Learning, Direct Method and other indigenous language methodologies. Teachers attend conferences or conventions offered by the National Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages and Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages each year. Instructors have attended workshops aimed at implementing a flipped classroom, integrating technology in the classroom, and instructional gamification.

The Hoocąk language instructors utilize various methodologies for second language acquisition. Emphasis is put on listening to the sounds of the Hoocąk language and practicing to emulate those sounds, as many of them are distinct from those found in English. Thematic units relevant to the students' everyday lived experiences engage students and increase understanding and retention of vocabulary, structures, and concepts as well as a greater appreciation of the Hoocąk language and culture.

Consistent with most indigenous languages, the Hoocak language lacks extensive cultural documentation written, verbal or otherwise, compared to world languages such as Spanish, German, or French. To accommodate for this deficiency, the instructor is paired with Eminent Speakers who serve as primary resources and learning aids for both the students and instructor. The Eminent Speaker, whose presence cannot truly be replicated, is the most valuable tool in providing authentic language for learners. Up until the pandemic, the Language Division has assisted each school by providing an Eminent Speaker for each of the classrooms each year the partnership has been in place. This is no longer the case. Additional tools, resources, and teaching materials include, but are not limited to, Hoocak High School reference book, Hoocak Lexicon, a new online dictionary, and other publications developed by the Language Division. The Hoocak instructors create many of their own learning resources to keep the content relevant and fresh. Recent additions to their learning tools and resources have included the Quizlet app, Facebook, TikTok videos, and the Hoocak Academy YouTube channel.

The culmination of all of these efforts is our learners' increased level of proficiency in Hoocak. By the end of Hoocak I, students will have completed enough content to be assessed at the Novice Low and Novice Mid levels. In Hoocak II learners will be assessed in the Novice Mid and Novice High learning levels. By the end of Hoocak III learners will be assessed in the Novice High level and show emergence into the Intermediate Low level. Achieving these objectives were once only dreamed about twenty years ago. The effort to make these gains in revitalizing

Hoocak language has taken decades to achieve as well as the hard work of dozens of Eminent Speakers, instructors, support staff, and of course, our learners, families, and communities.

We understand Indigenous language teacher training is varied from nation to nation, and each of us has our unique set of resources, barriers, practices, and processes. The strength of this bill before us is that it honors the process each indigenous Nation sets forth for the training and certification of its instructors. The Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division has learned through years of trial and error, careful observation of other tribal language programs, and rigorous training and study how to best prepare our language instructors. It is our wish to see our instructors receive the training and education to help them achieve the Nation's expectations to perpetuate our language and culture, to meet or exceed the standards of their fellow World Language educators, and to help our students become the best Hoocak language speakers they endeavor to be.

We are grateful to have the Hoocak Language Consortium, made up of all five school districts, which is supported in part by the DPI American Indian Language Revitalization Grant, through which our instructors share learning strategies, promising practices, new learning resources, and professional development opportunities and can present events and activities incorporating community speakers and authentic Hoocak materials. The training and support for our instructors has occurred largely due to the hard work of our Education Coordinator, Jessi Falcon, who served as a former Hoocak language instructor herself and saw the need to

develop a system of training and support for our Hoocak instructors in order for them all to be at similar levels of language and teaching competency. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Antonia Schleicher, a well-known scholar and trainer of teachers from less-commonly taught languages now at Indiana University but formerly at UW-Madison, for her advice, support and development of the training of our instructors. Finally, our greatest debt of gratitude is for our Eminent Speakers, without whom none of this would have been possible. It is their time and efforts over the last 50 years which have kept our Hoocak language alive. Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.



October 26, 2023

Assembly Committee on Education

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2023 Assembly Bill 214**

I want to thank Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 214 (AB 214). My name is Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and with me today is David O'Connor American Indian Studies Consultant. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the 2022 Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations for their collaboration with DPI on the development of AB 214.

The tribal nations and communities requested AB 214 to ensure their sovereign authority over the teaching of American Indian languages in schools and the associated proficiency requirements to advance to a lifetime license. Wisconsin law provides that an educator may move from the first full license at the Tier II provisional level to the Tier III lifetime license after six semesters of successful teaching experience at the Tier II level within the prior five years. Licensees keep that lifetime license if they are regularly employed in education and pass a background check once every five years.

Educator licensure administrative rules (PI 34) were changed in 2018 to recognize the sovereignty of federally recognized tribes in relation to licensing. These changes came about in consultation with the tribal nations and communities who approved the language for the administrative rule changes prior to promulgation.

Under the 2018 rule change the DPI will only license those endorsed by a tribe through an identified entity (tribal council, tribal language division, or local American Indian parent advisory committee) for the following licenses:

- PI 34.0385 Tier I tribal, community and school liaison license.
- PI 34.0386 Tier I, American Indian language, and culture aide license.
- PI 34.0387 Tier I, American Indian language license – alternative eligibility.
- PI 34.0388 Tier I, American Indian history.
- PI 34.055 Tier II, American Indian language license.
- PI 34.056 Tier II, American Indian history, culture, and tribal sovereignty license.

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After the department drafted the language in PI 34, state law changed creating a new lifetime license. This statutory change failed to account for the sovereignty of tribal nations and communities to establish their own rules over the unique qualifications needed to teach American Indian languages. Tribal nations lost the ability require a regular qualification review for those American Indian language teachers who choose to apply for lifetime licensure.

AB 214 restores control to the tribal nations and communities in Wisconsin for oversight of educators who teach their languages on a lifetime license. This bill prohibits DPI from issuing a lifetime educator license to teach an American Indian language in an American Indian language program if the tribal nation or community notifies the department that they wish to evaluate each individual who applies for a lifetime American Indian language license. DPI may only issue a lifetime license if the tribal nation or community notifies DPI that it has determined the educator is qualified for a lifetime license to teach the American Indian language.

DPI recognizes the sovereignty of the tribal nations and communities to preserve and protect their languages. That can only be accomplished if they have authority over their educators as provided for in AB 214.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 264-6716.



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To: Representative Joel Kitchens, Chair
Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Lisa Liggins

Date: Thursday, October 26, 2023

Re: Support for Education Related Bills Recommended by the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations: AB-209, AB-210, AB-212, and AB-214.

Good morning, Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education.

My name is Lisa Liggins, I am serving my second term on the Oneida Business Committee as the Oneida Nation's Secretary. I am currently serving on the Oneida Nation School Board and Oneida Youth Leadership Institute Board. I also serve on the State of Wisconsin Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

The Oneida Nation has over 17,000 tribal citizens worldwide and approximately 1,450 students attending public school in the State of Wisconsin. We are a Nation, like most tribes located in the State of Wisconsin, who have several other governmental jurisdictions located within our boundaries. For us that includes two counties, 5 cities and villages, and 6 school districts.

I would first like to thank Chairman Kitchens for scheduling a public hearing on the education related bills recommended by the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations. I would also like to thank Representative Jeff Mursau, who chaired the Special Committee and the other legislators that served: former Sen. Janet Bewley, former Rep. Bowen, Rep. Edming, Sen. Jacques, Rep. Rozar, Rep. Tittl and Rep. Vining. I would also like to thank the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Superintendent Jill Underly and Legislative Liaison Kevyn Radcliffe for attending and working with the Special Committee to come to mutual agreement on all the bills being heard today.

Please understand, the legislative bills before us are priorities identified by the eleven federally-recognized Tribes located in Wisconsin and worked on via the State Legislature's Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

With recognition of the long agenda and respect of your time today, the following testimony on behalf of the Oneida Nation is in support of all four of the Special Committee bills.

- **Assembly Bill 209:** Model academic standards related to American Indian studies, informational materials related to a school board's obligation to provide instruction on American Indians, and the American Indian studies requirement for teacher licensure.
- **Assembly Bill 210:** Pupils wearing traditional tribal regalia at a graduation ceremony or school-sponsored event.

A good mind. A good heart. A strong fire.

- **Assembly Bill 212:** Requiring school districts to report information related to American Indian children attending school in the school district.
- **Assembly Bill 214:** Lifetime license that authorizes an individual to teach an American Indian language in an American Indian language program and modifying rules promulgated by DPI.

Today, we are here to share the importance of recognizing our cultural heritage at graduation ceremonies; implementing contemporary and historic tribal sovereignty, culture and significant events regarding American Indians into the public school's curriculum; allowing tribes that choose to, to review and provide an endorsement for tier III Native American language applicants; and, ensuring information is reported related to American Indian children attending school in the school district.

We were the first people of this land and our contributions, both then and now, deserve to be known as part of the story that has gotten us all to the place we are today.

The Oneida Nation is proud of the progress we have made with local colleges and universities and some of the local school districts.

The Seymour School District sends some of their staff to the DPI American Indian Studies Institute each summer. Seymour offers Oneida Language as part of the high school curriculum. Wisconsin Indian Studies are taught as part of the curriculum at 4th grade. Oneida's Youth Education Services middle school staff have assisted in providing information about Oneida

History in some of the classrooms. The middle school has a display case of Indigenous cultural material as well as a "13 Moons" mural in the commons area/lunch room of the school.

The Green Bay School District has Indian education Act 31 student learning outcomes that are written into CEDs (content essential documents aka curriculum). Starting in Kindergarten evidence outcomes are written into each grade level's social studies documents. The resources that are available to teachers (in addition to the DPI websites that compile resources) is "First Nations in Wisconsin" by author Patty Loew. All teachers have a copy in grades K-5. All classrooms have at least 10 books placed in the classroom libraries that feature Native American main characters, are written by Native American authors, and are recommended texts from DPI, as well as First Nations websites. Some classrooms have maps purchased from GLIFWC showing the First Nations in Wisconsin. Each building has an updated Hands on History Bin. This bin, originally donated by Oneida Nation, was updated last year to include additional texts for teachers to check out and use with students. Included in the bin are some lessons that teachers can use, as well as a large Wisconsin map.

The West De Pere High School has a Native American History class. The 1/2 credit class fulfills one of the social studies requirements. Students are required to take 1 credit of US History, 1 credit of Global History, and can choose two 1/2 credit classes to fulfill the rest. The instructor for the Native American History class collaborated with Dr. Lisa Poupart and Danielle Karl Tubby to develop the curriculum. West De Pere has offered several professional development

opportunities to their social studies team(s). They utilize Dr. Poupart in their professional development sessions.

However, not all schools in the State have the same resources or adhere to the same standards as our local schools. Therefore, the Oneida Nation feels it is necessary for our schools in the State of Wisconsin to have minimum standards and the correct resources when teaching about the first people of this land.

We have shared our resources with all our surrounding school districts. We have shared our knowledge, given tours, and invited your children to our museum and our Corn Husking Bee. We shared who we are through song and dance. We have participated in professional development days, so our teachers will have a better understanding of our culture, traditions, and way of life.

The Oneida Nation is a Nation of strong families built on Tsiyukwaliho t^h and a strong economy. We look forward to continuing to build partnerships with all the school districts, the Department of Public Instruction and the State Legislature with a good mind, a good heart and a strong fire.

Bill Summaries with Comments:

Assembly Bill 209

- *Model academic standards.*
 - The bill requires the state superintendent, in consultation with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association to incorporate American Indian studies into the model academic standards. These standards must address certain historical and contemporary information that pupils are expected to know. At a minimum, this information must include significant events, tribal sovereignty, and culture relating to the federally recognized tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
 - **Oneida Nation Comment:** This provision is meant to focus what is already supposed to be occurring in Wisconsin schools. Further, while learning about the past is important – we also want to make sure students learn about our culture and how tribes exist and function today. This is important as eleven federally recognized tribal governments exist within the geographical borders of Wisconsin.
- *Informational materials related to a school board's obligation to provide instruction on American Indians.*
 - Current law already requires an instructional program that is designed to give pupils at all grade levels an understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics.
 - Current law also requires as part of the social studies curriculum, instruction in the history, culture and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin at least twice in the elementary grades and at least once in the high school grades.
 - AB-209 among other things, requires that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) develop informational materials related to the requirements described above for distribution to school boards annually.

- **Oneida Nation Comment:** Educating our youth is important, but oftentimes it is just as important to ensure that the governing bodies and administrators overseeing our children’s education are reminded of the materials our youth are learning. This legislation should be fairly easy for educational entities to meet – as the materials can be provided in a format of the local school district’s choosing.
- *The American Indian studies requirement for teacher licensure.*
 - Subject to several exceptions, current law generally prohibits the state superintendent of public instruction from issuing a teaching license to a person unless that person has received instruction in minority group relations, including instruction in the history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
 - AB-209 modifies the instructional requirement, providing that a teacher license applicant must receive instruction in the culture, tribal sovereignty, and contemporary and historical significant events of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
 - **Oneida Nation Comment:** AB-209 replaces in this statutory section the word “history” and adds the language “Contemporary and historical significant events.” The point again, is that while learning about the past is important – Tribes want to make sure students learn about our culture and how tribes exist and function today.

Assembly Bill 210

- *Pupils wearing traditional tribal regalia at graduation ceremony or a school-sponsored event.*
 - *As summarized by the Legislative Council summary of the bill,* Wisconsin law contains some general protections for a pupil's religious beliefs, ancestry, creed, race, and national origin. Specifically, schools must provide for the reasonable accommodation of a pupil's sincerely held religious beliefs with regard to all examinations and other academic requirements. Additionally, no student may be denied participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be discriminated against in any curricular, extracurricular, pupil services, recreational, or other program or activity because of race, religion, national origin, ancestry or creed.
 - However, current law does not explicitly address an American Indian student's right to wear traditional tribal regalia at a graduation ceremony or school-sponsored event.
 - **Oneida Nation Comment:** Many Native Americans celebrate major life accomplishments by wearing tribal regalia, which are considered sacred traditions, symbols of achievement and connection to the Tribal community. This is meant to ensure that the protections afforded under current law clearly provide for Tribal regalia.

Assembly Bill 212

- Requiring school districts to report information related to American Indian children attending school in the school district.
 - As summarized by the Legislative Council summary of the bill, under current law, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction must conduct a statewide, biennial assessment of the need for American Indian language and culture education programs. Various information must be included in this assessment, including information on the numbers, ages, location, and tribal affiliation of American Indian pupils. While certain school

districts began voluntarily reporting tribal affiliation data to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) during the 2021-2022 academic school year, current law does not explicitly require school districts to collect this information and report it to DPI.

- Current law also requires each school district to submit an annual school district report to DPI. This report must include various information related to the school district, including the number of children taught in the schools of the school district, the number of hours of direct pupil instruction provided in each school of the school district, and the names of all teachers employed by the school district during the school year.
- AB-212 expands the requirements of this report, requiring each school district to report the numbers, ages, and tribal affiliation of American Indian children attending the schools of the school district.
- **Oneida Nation Comment:** The intent of AB-212 is to ensure the district and the state is obtaining the data needed for accurately assessing American Indian language and culture education programing needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Yaw^ko



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Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Melinda Danforth

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Assembly Bill 209

- *Model academic standards.*
 - The bill requires the state superintendent, in consultation with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association to incorporate American Indian studies into the model academic standards. These standards must address certain historical and contemporary information that pupils are expected to know. At a minimum, this information must include significant events, tribal sovereignty, and culture relating to the federally recognized tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
 - **Oneida Nation Comment:** This provision is meant to focus what is already supposed to be occurring in Wisconsin schools. Further, while learning about the past is important – we also want to make sure students learn about our culture and how tribes exist and function today. This is important as eleven federally recognized tribal governments exist within the geographical borders of Wisconsin.
- *Informational materials related to a school board's obligation to provide instruction on American Indians.*
 - Current law already requires an instructional program that is designed to give pupils at all grade levels an understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics.
 - Current law also requires as part of the social studies curriculum, instruction in the history, culture and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin at least twice in the elementary grades and at least once in the high school grades.
 - AB-209 among other things, requires that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) develop informational materials related to the requirements described above for distribution to school boards annually.

- **Oneida Nation Comment:** Educating our youth is important, but oftentimes it is just as important to ensure that the governing bodies and administrators overseeing our children's education are reminded of the materials our youth are learning. This legislation should be fairly easy for educational entities to meet – as the materials can be provided in a format of the local school district's choosing.
- *The American Indian studies requirement for teacher licensure.*
 - Subject to several exceptions, current law generally prohibits the state superintendent of public instruction from issuing a teaching license to a person unless that person has received instruction in minority group relations, including instruction in the history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
 - AB-209 modifies the instructional requirement, providing that a teacher license applicant must receive instruction in the culture, tribal sovereignty, and contemporary and historical significant events of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in Wisconsin.
 - **Oneida Nation Comment:** AB-209 replaces in this statutory section the word “history” and adds the language “Contemporary and historical significant events.” The point again, is that while learning about the past is important – Tribes want to make sure students learn about our culture and how tribes exist and function today.

Assembly Bill 210

- *Pupils wearing traditional tribal regalia at graduation ceremony or a school-sponsored event.*
 - *As summarized by the Legislative Council summary of the bill,* Wisconsin law contains some general protections for a pupil's religious beliefs, ancestry, creed, race, and national origin. Specifically, schools must provide for the reasonable accommodation of a pupil's sincerely held religious beliefs with regard to all examinations and other academic requirements. Additionally, no student may be denied participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be discriminated against in any curricular, extracurricular, pupil services, recreational, or other program or activity because of race, religion, national origin, ancestry or creed.
 - However, current law does not explicitly address an American Indian student's right to wear traditional tribal regalia at a graduation ceremony or school-sponsored event.
 - **Oneida Nation Comment:** Many Native Americans celebrate major life accomplishments by wearing tribal regalia, which are considered sacred traditions, symbols of achievement and connection to the Tribal community. This is meant to ensure that the protections afforded under current law clearly provide for Tribal regalia.

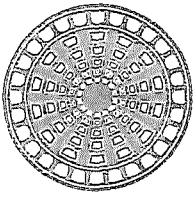
Assembly Bill 212

- Requiring school districts to report information related to American Indian children attending school in the school district.
 - As summarized by the Legislative Council summary of the bill, under current law, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction must conduct a statewide, biennial assessment of the need for American Indian language and culture education programs. Various information must be included in this assessment, including information on the numbers, ages, location, and tribal affiliation of American Indian pupils. While certain school

districts began voluntarily reporting tribal affiliation data to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) during the 2021-2022 academic school year, current law does not explicitly require school districts to collect this information and report it to DPI.

- Current law also requires each school district to submit an annual school district report to DPI. This report must include various information related to the school district, including the number of children taught in the schools of the school district, the number of hours of direct pupil instruction provided in each school of the school district, and the names of all teachers employed by the school district during the school year.
- AB-212 expands the requirements of this report, requiring each school district to report the numbers, ages, and tribal affiliation of American Indian children attending the schools of the school district.
- **Oneida Nation Comment:** The intent of AB-212 is to ensure the district and the state is obtaining the data needed for accurately assessing American Indian language and culture education programming needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Yaw^ko



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
ROBYN VINING
14TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
WAUWATOSA • WEST ALLIS

October 26, 2023

Support for State-Tribal Relations Bills (Assembly Bills 209, 210, 212, and 214)

Chairman Kitchens and members of the Assembly Committee on Education, I am State Representative Robyn Vining, and I represent the 14th Assembly District, which includes the people of Wauwatosa and West Allis. I am honored to submit testimony today in support of four bills that were the product of the bipartisan Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations.

I was proud to serve on the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations last year, and was incredibly honored to be part of this important, bipartisan legislative process that collaborated with community members, experts, legislators, and members of our tribal nations to identify and address issues facing Wisconsin's tribal communities.

After conducting four hearings, including a hearing and tour of the Menominee Nation reservation, the committee unanimously approved seven bills, which were also unanimously approved by the Joint Legislative Council earlier this year. These bills allow students to wear traditional tribal regalia at graduation ceremonies and school-sponsored events, to incorporate American Indian studies into the model academic standards, to collect more data on American Indian children attending schools, and to give Wisconsin's federally recognized tribes input on issuing lifetime licenses to teach their language, among others.

The members of our tribal nations deserve to see these bipartisan bills move through the legislature and onto Governor Evers' desk to be signed into law, and I thank you for your part in that work. **This is how we move Wisconsin forward, together.**

Forward together,

Robyn Vining
Wisconsin State Representative
14th Assembly District