



Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

Tribal Education Department
LAKE TRAVERSE RESERVATION

BOX 509
AGENCY VILLAGE, SOUTH DAKOTA 57262-0509
PHONE: (605) 698-8298

To: Representative Shawn Bordeaux, State-Tribal Relations Chair
Senator Red Dawn Foster, Vice Chair

From: Dr. Sherry Johnson, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate TED Director

Date: October 21, 2020

Re: Document #1-Re-establishing the Office of Indian Education within the Department of Education

These are some points for you to consider in the discussion on the Re-establishing the Office of Indian Education under the Department of Education.

- The SDIEAC was formed to address the achievement gap between Native and non-Native students in SD. How can that be adequately achieved if they are not under the SD Department of Education, whose focus is EDUCATION and not Tribal Relations?
- The mission of the SDIEAC is to promote the highest quality of education for all American Indian children in SD that is based in cultural relevancy and produces positive educational outcomes. How does the Secretary of Tribal Relations, without a degree in Education, know what better than the Education staff at the SD Department of Education what high quality education requirements are?
- According the FAQ section of the SD Department of Tribal Relations Frequently Asked Questions are:
 - Where do I check to see if I am eligible for enrollment?
 - Where do I start to search for someone on one of the Reservations?
 - Who do I contact regarding information on one of the Tribes?
 - What is the population for Native Americans in South Dakota?
 - What is the labor force for the Tribes?
 - Who are the current Tribal Presidents/Chairmen?
 - Who do I contact if I would like to perform volunteer work on a reservation?
 - How do I find out which Native American Charities are legitimate?
 - Where can I find information about traveling through the reservations?



There is something glaringly missing from this list and that is the FAQ regarding EDUCATION, which are many! How do the above topics have anything to do with addressing the achievement gap?

- Acting as an advisory body to the Secretary of the Department of Tribal Relations AND the Secretary of the Department of Education requires an added layer that never existed prior to 2018.
- Recommendation Two: The advisory council recommends that the Director of the Office of Indian Education and the Department of Education devise a way to include an OSEU implementation plan into the accreditation review tool for schools in South Dakota. This should be how all the SDIEAC tasks and recommendations should be worded because the Dept. of TR does NOT understand education needs and requirement.
- The SD Dept. of Education has contacts and a working relationship with various staff and departments within the Bureau of Indian Education to address the needs of the BIE funded schools. Needing to share information as a result of those relationships and conversations with the Dept. of TR seems unreasonable and unnecessary.
- Is the Dept. of TR providing guidance and follow-up with the BIE funded schools on all the COVID-19 requirements and needs? No, all of that is coming from the Dept. of Ed because they know and understand the rules and requirements

Pidamayaye.

