



Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate

Tribal Education Department

LAKE TRAVERSE RESERVATION

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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 #2-Re-establishing the Office of Indian Education within the Department of Education

Greetings Chairman, Vice-Chairwoman and Committee Members,

In anticipation of this meeting, I had a discussion with Deb Bordeaux and asked her for some help in preparing for this second presentation before the State-Tribal Relations Committee. She provided the below document, which is an excellent History from the perspective of a Principal and then working with the Great Plains Tribal Education Directors. This shows the passion for the Education of Indian Children that we as Directors have been a party to. Pidamayaye. Sherry

Just for my own experience-

- When I was the Principal at Loneman, and Keith Moore was the Indian Ed Director he brought the Secretary of Education Melmar around to meet with the administrators on the Pine Ridge. When that Acting Secretary Kirkgaard was in there after Dr. Melody Schopp left, he did the same he made an effort to learn and know what Indian Education was about.
- Secretary Melmar tried to support, ie signed the first MOA with the BIE without talking to Tribes, but he was trying to do the right thing. He had statistics about the number of native students in the public school system and how they were performing academically. He stated there was a need to improve because they would be in the work force soon and SD needed them.
- As a parent/ Auntie- I had a niece who was a Special Needs student in a public school system and she was mistreated by her teacher aide and I was able to call Keith Moore and ask him what could be done. He gave me guidance and looked into it. It did not make the situation go away but he was empathetic which was helpful. I had some one in the State DOE to talk to



- Dr. Melody Schopp with Mato (Indian Ed Director) worked with us on the accreditation and believed what we told her about needs for Indian Schools. She invited TEDs to state meetings and worked at building a relationship with TEDs, she held the first consultation meeting. To get to the first consultation meeting Dr. Schopp worked with Mato (Indian Ed Director) to host planning meeting and had members of the SD DOE attend the meetings to help build an understanding in the DOE staff.
- Dr. Melody Schopp admitted they did not know what to do to help improve services for native students and worked with Governor Duagard in establishing the Native American Achievement Grant.
- She was willing to address the racist issue but did not move forward with it.
- Today in the SDEEC mtg, the worry is being able to move forward with the Community Choice School Bill without the SD DOE support. To me this impacts Indian Education in SD and it is important that SD DOE is supportive. I saw it make a difference for COSA and the Native American Achievement Grant.
- Dr. Melody Schopp attended the LNI Education Conference and presented.
- The Acting Secretary Kirkegraad attended DOC Education Conference and visited with people there.
- I think Indian Education issues should be more inclusive to SD DOE and not be exclusive. Dr. Melody Schopp said it very clearly in admitting more needed to be done for Native American Students. I understand the problem and take ownership of it.

The biggest issue is there was a relationship beyond the SDIEAC and an effort made to know about Indian Education. That is not happening now.

Between Keith and Mato was Roger Campbell and LuAnn Werdell who struggled with the Gear Up issue, both felt it was the State that made it hard. Lowell Amiotte was there for a short period of time and he reached out to native communities to look for a director and address issues.

Pidamayaye.

