

The ACLU of South Dakota supports all Tribal Sovereign Nations and all Indigenous persons. The South Dakota third revised social studies content standards are an example of ongoing colonialism and discrimination against Tribes in South Dakota and Indigenous students. Native Americans represent the second largest ethnic group in South Dakota and have the least representation within these content standards. Indigenous leaders, culture, history and topics are mentioned the least amount within all topics and subjects, especially historical figures. No mention is made of the lasting effects on Indigenous societies caused by colonization within the state of South Dakota or U.S. The content standards fall short of including the substantive Native American topics and Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings that would foster acceptance of diversity, understanding and meet the needs of Indigenous students.



P.O. Box 1170
Sioux Falls, SD 57101
aclusd.org

The failure to consult with any Tribal Government is also blatant discrimination against Native American students and Indigenous families in South Dakota. It violates the state's obligation to first consult with the Tribal governments under S.D.C.L. §1-54 and to obtain from Tribes' free, prior and informed consent when actions are taken that affect Tribes and their children. Instead of engaging in meaningful consultation with Tribes to obtain suggestions, input and consent to these revisions, the department of education hired a former Christian-college professor. The revisions do not include Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings in civics, history, geography, economics, government and all other subjects within the social studies content standards for each grade level. The revisions now include mandatory teachings about Christianity in a number and manner that could violate the State of South Dakota's Constitution and the Establishment Clause. Religious figures of significance to Tribes or other ethnic groups are not mentioned or referenced in any manner.

Harmful biases and attitudes toward Native Americans are perpetuated generation after generation by these revised content standards which erase the presence of Indigenous history, culture, innovations, contributions to modern society, and languages from the classroom. Native American students have unique cultural needs that are not being met through these content standards which fail to include, to any meaningful degree, Indigenous perspective. The state of South Dakota receives federal funding specifically for Indian Students every year who attend public schools and the content standards should reflect that.

The state also has an ongoing affirmative duty and obligation to honor the Treaties the U.S. entered into with the Tribes of South Dakota, and should not blatantly disregard the federal laws and U.S. Constitution recognizing Tribal sovereignty. This includes the right of Tribes to provide direction and input for the education of their children who attend schools in the State of South Dakota. This obligation and duty were entirely ignored by South Dakota Department of Education which results in discrimination against Indigenous students and the Tribal Nations of our state.

Stephanie Amiotte
Legal Director
ACLU of South Dakota