



COQUILLE INDIAN TRIBE

Culture, Education, and Library Services

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SB13 Written Testimony:

As we move into consideration of Senate Bill 13, we come to a point where we ask are ourselves: Who are the recipients of this funding? What is the product? Who directly benefits from the use of these funds? Well, the bottom line is, we all benefit.

Oregon Indian kids benefit. The benefits for Oregon Indian kids will be astounding. The state and Tribe's will be working on something together, as a team, to validate the blood that moves through their body. They will be given an opportunity, academically, to reconcile who they are in this world, in this place, in their home, in their community, and in their Tribe. We will give them the facts that will allow them to sit up a little taller in their seats, feel proud of their heritage and their story, and not be ashamed to acknowledge who they are. They are not ashamed of who they are, they are embarrassed of sharing who they are in an environment where peers and educators exhibit a complete lack of understanding. Let's give our Tribal kids the ability to participate in our Oregon story.

Indian kids who are not from the Oregon Tribes benefit. When the State or Oregon validates and values the history of their Tribes, they are showing the children not living close to their Tribes, that this is possible. This is real, there is pride in our shared history. That this work is possible, and achievable.

All kids benefit. Providing a more robust, truthful, heartfelt history of our first nations is a story all should here. This information makes them better citizens, better partners, better community members, and better leaders. This type of curriculum is not just educational, it will assist in supporting environments of acceptance and tolerance. It is one avenue to showcase to children the value we find in each other's story.

Community members benefit. Providing our youth with the academic tools they need to be successful community members is paramount. Leaving out a major part to history leads to confusion and ignorance at community initiative and development platforms. Not understanding the legislative standing and sovereignty of Tribal nations is a learning curve that does not allow for efficiency in our community project, most often times ending in hard feelings and misunderstanding. Communities need all of their resources: they need informed citizens, they need knowledgeable citizens, and they need compassionate citizens.

Tribes benefit. Our story is too powerful not to tell. It deserves to be heard. We deserve to be heard. People want to hear it.

Oregon benefits. Oregon is a beautiful state with a rich history. Some good, some not so good. But we have never been a state to shy away from the truth, regardless of the repercussions. Here is an opportunity to embrace all it means to be Oregon, and to partner with the first inhabitants to make sure all of the colors of our history are displayed.

Please support Senate Bill 13.

Submitted by Bridgett Wheeler,
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