



Date: February 9, 2017
To: Senate Education Committee
From: Reyn Leno, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Subject: Senate Bill 13

My name is Reyn Leno and I am the Tribal Council Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today.

As a sovereign nation, the Tribe has worked hard to build positive government-to-government relationships across all levels of government. We are proud to have a strong relationship with the State of Oregon.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde supports Senate Bill 13, which directs the Department of Education to develop curriculum relating to the Native American experience in Oregon and to provide professional development related to that curriculum.

There are nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. The history of our peoples, who have lived in Oregon since time immemorial, is significant for all Oregonians but today is either ignored or poorly described in our schools. Most Oregon students learn more about the Sioux and Apaches than they do about the Umpqua, Molalla, Rogue River, Kalapuya or Chasta.

Senate Bill 13 is an investment in Native American communities. The nine tribes in Oregon have invested in local schools and we are still living with dire outcomes.

For example, the current Native American graduation rate in Oregon is only 56.4 percent, and our children are not performing at grade level for many subjects including basics like Math and Science. Many teachers are not prepared or equipped to discuss issues surrounding Indian Country, such as tribal sovereignty, tribal government land removal, termination and restoration. Some of the history is complicated and can be difficult to discuss.

Grand Ronde has always recognized the importance of teaching Native history in Oregon. The Tribe has developed a history curriculum because of the need for historically accurate and culturally relevant curriculum in Oregon schools about Oregon's first peoples. In 2014, this curriculum was provided to Willamina School District and is now in 10 school districts in Oregon. The Tribe, through the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, has also made funds available for the other Oregon Tribes to develop tribal-specific history curriculums. It is the Tribe's goal to build respect and understanding of Tribal history and culture, to give all youth the opportunity to learn about Oregon's Native history, and to foster a culturally respectful representation of Native Americans.

In closing, CTGR encourages support for Senate Bill 13 because it will have a significant impact on the lives and education of Native people and all Oregonians. It will also correct the years of omission from Oregon's history curriculum of the 9 sovereign tribes. With this Bill we can focus our efforts towards what is important -- the education of our children.