

Fond du Lac Ojibwe School Social Studies Standards/Benchmarks Project

"Indian people want their children to value their culture and traditions, but they also want their children to have basic academic competencies and subject-matter knowledge. Among the critical issues for American Indians is to reconcile Indian spiritual values and formal education." (The College Board of American Indian Science and Engineering Society, 1989).

The Ojibwe School is now working on completing a comprehensive grade K-12 American Indian Social Studies Standards and Benchmarks guide specific to what we teach in our school. We have for many years taught important historical facts specific to our Indian history and culture and the timing is now right for producing our school based social studies standards and identify what all students should learn specific to Indian history. Once we complete our project (complete with assessment tests) we will submit this work to the Bureau of Indian Education as an important measure of student success. Much of our renewed interest in getting this project completed is influenced by what is now happening with the state.

On December 20, 2012 a hearing was held at the Minnesota Department of Education to provide opportunities for concerned citizens to testify on the Minnesota Department of Education's Social Studies Standards Revisions. In particular the hearing was called by Education Liberty Watch, a group that is objecting to the inclusion of American Indian standards and benchmarks in the 2011 revised standards version.

The Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC) official position objects to any reference to weaken or remove American Indian history or citizenship or government standards and benchmarks from the proposed 2011 Social Studies Standards. The current form of the social studies standards begin to address shortcomings of meeting statutes as presented in the American Indian Education Act of 1988. The act provides provisions that speak to curriculum relevancy, positive reinforcement of self image, and developing intercultural awareness among pupils, parents, and education personnel.

We (TNEC) also believe that a holistic education that fosters resiliency and a focused sense of identity are critically important components of American Indian Education. The Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies (2011) present opportunities for instructors, school leaders, policymakers, and concerned and active community members to shape the direction of all children in our great state. As presented the Standards promise to influence and provide a rigorous and relevant curriculum. Through our collaborative working relationships we intend to work with all parties to continue to improve the health, mental and spiritual wellness, education, and economy for all citizens.