

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION NOW COALITION

September 30th, 2020

To: California Department of Education
Instructional Quality Commission
State Board of Education
State Superintendent Tony Thurmond

Dear California Department of Education (CDE), Instructional Quality Commission, State Board of Education, and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond,

We are writing as the Indigenous Education Now Coalition to express our concern regarding the September 2020 version of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum in relation to the original draft, overall and specifically with regard to the sections on Native American Studies. Having reviewed the new document, we are concerned that there is a substantial reduction of significant content on Native American Studies, leaving only a decontextualized and haphazard set of lessons that are not part of an overarching approach to teaching the main concepts and historical events that are necessary for an understanding of the Native American experience in this country. While the original proposal was not perfect, it demonstrated a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to the topic. In its current form, this Native American Studies curriculum is anemic at best and cannot provide high school students with enough knowledge to understand either historical or contemporary Native American peoples or issues.

Specifically, we disagree with the removal of the original draft's lesson two in the curriculum's Appendix B, the purpose of which is to: "expose students to the complexities behind the absence of Native oral and cultural history in traditional history textbooks" by exposing them to "policies, resolutions and broken treaties in U.S. history that have oppressed and marginalized Native American Tribes in the past, and the current oppressive conditions for all indigenous communities," as well as "how these historical practices play out in the realm of public policy, politics, and sovereignty and resistance in Tribal communities." This lesson thus provides the key context needed to understand materials in the remaining lessons, which, in the absence of this lesson, are seriously undermined. The key concepts broached here: Tribal sovereignty, self-determination, doctrine of discovery, genocide, broken treaties, key supreme court rulings, the Unratified Treaties of 1851, California Indian Slavery, federally and non-federally recognized Tribes, historical trauma, cultural survival and revitalization, and Pan-Indian movements are all crucial components for understanding Native American history and current experience. This lesson was developed by experts in Ethnic Studies and pedagogy, and is integral to the design of the curriculum.

Given the crucial nature of this lesson, it is hard to understand its summary removal from the model curriculum. We can speculate that critics did not want children to learn that a significant part of the founding of this country and the state of California was not in reality a happy tale of

manifest destiny, but rather one of the unremitting deployment of power by European settlers against the original peoples of this continent. However, we wish to suggest that, as recent calls for racial justice in the U.S. have highlighted, a country (and a state) that has not grappled with and come to terms with its history is likely to perpetuate its inequalities and injustices. Only through education can we generate public discourse that will allow us to overcome this past.

Further, the vast majority of Native American significant figures present in the original draft have now been removed. The justification for their removal is unclear. For reasons similar to those expressed above, we advocate for their inclusion and the addition of more Native American significant figures through consultation with Native American scholars and educators -- that is part of the core purpose of this curriculum as a model.

In addition, it is good to see the guiding principles in the lesson templates, this is necessary and an improvement from the July 2020 draft. We wish to express our support for the continued prominence of the Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies, specifically this [version, format, layout which increases accessibility](#). It should not be broken into footnotes as the September 20th draft does, this minimizes important concepts within it -- it is important to keep the guiding values and principles together and presented in an accessible way as this one page layout/format does, and imperatively, *not dilute them in any way*. The current federal administration's censorship of critical race theory, the 1619 project and other people of color-led educational efforts, makes it evident that we cannot allow the same pressures (no matter how numerous) pushing against these guiding values and principles in California, to take precedence over the guidance of Ethnic Studies educational leaders and our communities -- that would be a continuation of institutional and curricular racism which we *must* be better than as California today.

We lament the fact that the process thus far has not included formal Tribal consultation with California Native American Tribal leaders, Tribal education offices and Tribal organizations. We strongly encourage the CDE to initiate a formal process of Tribal consultation, to be carried forward as well by individual school districts when it comes time for implementation. This process, along with further engagement of Native American scholars and educators in the field of Ethnic Studies, will help ensure a robust and appropriate curriculum.

Chapter 2, lines 514-628 are dedicated to District Implementation Guidance, and Key Considerations for District and Site Administrators. We recommend adding the following specific bullet point: "*Tribal Consultation*: Districts are required to conduct Tribal consultation with Tribes and Tribal organizations in the development of and prior to the implementation of their local Ethnic Studies programs, and should include consultation with Native American and Indigenous organizations in their district as well as Native American scholars and educators." This is distinct from the land acknowledgement present on lines 542-543.

Lastly, in your official summary of public comments, it is imperative to recognize [the 25,000+](#) individuals signed on in support of the original ESMC draft as a foundation, along with over 150 community-based organizations and associations in support, with combined memberships of

over 600,000 people. University Ethnic Studies departments, Education departments, and K-12 school districts across the state are also in support. Significant parts of the original draft need to be reinstated in the November 2020 iteration, including those we have noted here, and expanded.

In summary, the Indigenous Education Now Coalition urges the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission to:

1. Reinststate the original curriculum draft's Native American lesson 2 in Appendix B.
2. Reinststate the original curriculum draft's Native American significant figures, and include additional figures.
3. Include the Guiding Values and Principles of Ethnic Studies as one well formatted page to help with accessibility, rather than broken into footnotes, and [do not dilute them from their current form](#) -- prioritize these over the "outcomes" present in the September 2020 draft, which are not as strong, nor as representative of authentic Ethnic Studies.
4. Initiate a process of Tribal consultation regarding the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and explicitly include *Tribal consultation* in Chapter 2, District Implementation Guidance, and Key Considerations for District and Site Administrators.
5. Update your official summary of public comments, to include the 25,000+ signed on in support of the original draft as a foundation for this curriculum project -- these voices should not be silenced/unaccounted for in your official count.

Thank you for your work on this momentous project, and we look forward to the subsequent draft, including our recommendations, being more representative of both authentic Ethnic Studies, and authentic Native American Studies.

Sincerely,

Indigenous Education Now Coalition

Contact: Shannon Speed (Chickasaw), Director, UCLA American Indian Studies Center,
sspeed@aisc.ucla.edu