



A Position Paper

Indigenous Education

*A Statement of Policy
and Proposed Action
by the*
**New York State
Education Department**

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People. Now our minds are one.

Excerpt from the Ohen:ton Karihwaterhkwen – The Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address¹

Historical oppression, prejudice, the fast pace of modern society along with theft and destruction of our land and sacred places have been factors that tried to strip us of who we are. It is vitally important that we learn from one another, that we learn our connection to our lands and water, to our ancestors, our families and to the Creator.

Shinnecock Nation Statement

¹ A full version of the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address can be found at https://americanindian.si.edu/environment/pdf/01_02_thanksgiving_address.pdf

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Land Acknowledgement

The Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department acknowledge that the State of New York is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations—as well as the Shinnecock Nation and the Unkechaug Nation (Poospatuck).

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, often referred to as the “People of the Longhouse,” is one of the world’s oldest continuous democracies, with governance, teachings, and cultural traditions that have guided its people for centuries. The Shinnecock and Unkechaug Nations, whose homelands are on the eastern end of Long Island, have maintained deep and enduring connections to their lands, waters, and ways of life since time immemorial.

We recognize that these lands were, and remain, places of gathering, community, and cultural sustenance for Indigenous peoples. We honor their sovereignty, resilience, and continuing presence, and we acknowledge the ongoing contributions they make to the life of this state and those who inhabit it.

This acknowledgment affirms our shared responsibility to understand and recognize these histories, to uphold and respect the sovereignty of New York State’s First Peoples, and to foster a future rooted in equity, justice, and mutual respect.

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Forward

In 1975, the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York issued a landmark *Statement of Policy and Proposed Action on Native American Education*.² At that time, the Regents recognized both the unique cultural heritage of Indigenous communities and the State's longstanding commitment—dating back to at least 1846—to providing educational services for Indigenous students residing on reservations and tribal lands. Although it did not address the shameful and unfortunate history and role New York State played in the establishment and operation of residential schools, we recognize the traumatic impact on Indigenous children, families, and communities, which can be felt to this very day. The original statement did acknowledge the need to support the self-determination of Indigenous Nations and peoples while preserving their cultural identity, calling for action across teacher preparation, curriculum design, bilingual education, and postsecondary access.

Fifty years later, this reissued and updated policy reaffirms the original vision and addresses the evolving educational, cultural, and governmental landscape. While progress has been made in some areas—some only recently realized—some of the original recommendations remain unfulfilled. Today, the New York State Education Department (NYSED), under the leadership of Commissioner Betty A. Rosa, approaches its work with Indigenous Nations through a lens of mutual respect, cultural responsiveness, and collaborative partnership. No longer rooted in an expectation that Indigenous students assimilate into the mainstream, our work reflects a commitment to educational sovereignty, equity, and support for culturally sustaining practices.

To frame this renewed commitment, we look to a symbol from the earliest days of diplomacy between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and colonial governments: the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship. This chain, originally forged in the 17th century, symbolized the ongoing relationship of peace, respect, and mutual support between sovereign nations. It was agreed that the chain must be regularly polished so that it would not tarnish, ensuring the strength of the relationship would be maintained across generations. Although originally a covenant between

² <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/Indigenous-education/statement-of-policy-and-proposed-action-1975.pdf>

the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the colonial government, today, the Silver Chain of Friendship extends between the State of New York and all nine Indigenous Nations with government-to-government relationships with the State, including the two Algonquian Nations of Long Island, the Shinnecock and Unkechaug Nations. Over the past 50 years, that chain has weathered periods of neglect—tarnishing from disinvestment, miscommunication, and unfulfilled promises. But today, under Commissioner Rosa’s leadership, there is a concerted effort to polish the chain once more and honor its intent through meaningful action.

One such action is the establishment in 2023 of the Commissioner’s Indigenous Education Advisory Council—a recommendation first articulated in the 1975 policy paper but not realized until nearly five decades later. This Council, composed of leaders from Indigenous Nations across New York State, plays a critical role in shaping the direction of education policy that is reflective of Indigenous voices and perspectives. In collaboration with Indigenous partners, the Department has also created a first-of-its-kind certification in Indigenous Language and Culture, a significant step in supporting language revitalization and cultural transmission through education—one of the Council’s first major undertakings.

Further strengthening these bonds, New York has become one of the first states in the nation to explicitly prohibit the use of school mascots, logos, and imagery that appropriate or stereotype Indigenous peoples—an action rooted in the values of the Dignity for All Students Act and supported by widespread advocacy from Indigenous communities. These actions reflect not only progress but the beginning of a new era of partnership based on respect, self-determination, and shared responsibility.

True to our government-to-government relationship, the role of NYSED today is not to unilaterally impose policy but to support the visions of Indigenous communities—visions grounded in sovereignty, tradition, and the future well-being of children. Our partnerships with school districts have also evolved from some compliance-driven mandates to collaborative engagements, grounded in awareness and culturally responsive and sustaining education.

This revised policy statement affirms our belief that Indigenous students deserve educational systems that honor their identities and reflect the rich cultural, historical, and linguistic traditions of their nations. It proposes strategies that are both respectful and actionable, focused on supporting Indigenous education through sustained engagement, shared decision-making, and acknowledgment of tribal sovereignty.

In the spirit of the Silver Covenant Chain, let this document serve as a renewed **Call to Action**—a reflection of our collective responsibility to keep the chain polished, the commitments honored, and the future bright for Indigenous students across New York State.

David M. Frank
Assistant Commissioner
New York State Education Department

Acknowledgements

The creation of this document was made possible through collaboration and consultation with the New York State Education Department Indigenous Education Advisory Council. We are deeply grateful for their knowledge, dedication, and time. Each member of the Advisory Council presented this document to their sovereign governments or councils for consultation and endorsement. The letters of endorsement received from these Nations can be found in the appendix of this document. We also extend our appreciation to the offices within the New York State Education Department that contributed to this work, as well as to the New York State Board of Regents, and Commissioner of Education, Dr. Betty A. Rosa. Their leadership and steadfast commitment to ensuring all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities in safe and supportive learning environments—grounded in culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy—were essential to the development of this document.

New York State Education Department Indigenous Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Betty A. Rosa convened the state's first Indigenous Education Commissioner's Advisory Council in 2023. The council, comprised of representatives of the federally and state-recognized Indigenous Nations with government-to-government relationships with the state of New York, advises the commissioner and department on educational matters regarding Indigenous students and communities. The council also serves as a gathering place to share ideas, develop new initiatives, and ensure that all Indigenous students have access to educational and social emotional programs to support college and career readiness.

The current members of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council are:

Derek Montroy	Oneida Nation of Indians
Megan Murphy-Beakman	Oneida Nation of Indians
Randi Phillips	Oneida Nation of Indians
Brad Powless	Onondaga Nation
Simone Thornton	Onondaga Nation
Wendy Gonyea	Onondaga Nation
Sub-Chief Agnes Jacobs	Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe
Barbara Weston	Seneca Nation of Indians
Nanci Williams	Seneca Nation of Indians
Denise Williams	Shinnecock Indian Nation
Germain Smith	Shinnecock Indian Nation
Christine Abrams	Tonawanda Band of Seneca
LuAnn Jamieson	Tonawanda Band of Seneca
Betsy Bissell	Tuscarora Nation
Bryan Printup	Tuscarora Nation
Tina Pineda	Tuscarora Nation
Chief Harry Wallace	Unkechaug Nation
Thomasina Mack	Unkechaug Nation

Introduction

For nearly two centuries, the State of New York has worked in partnership, sometimes positively and far too often detrimentally, with the Indigenous Nations that maintain a government-to-government relationship with the State to support the education of Indigenous students. Today, these sovereign nations include the seven Haudenosaunee Nations as well as the two Algonquian-speaking Nations of Long Island:

- The Seneca Nation of Indians
- The Tonawanda Band of Seneca
- The Tuscarora Nation
- The Cayuga Nation
- The Onondaga Nation
- The Oneida Indian Nation
- The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- The Shinnecock Indian Nation
- The Unkechaug Nation

We begin by acknowledging that the land on which we live, learn, and teach as New Yorkers is the ancestral, current, and unceded territory of these Indigenous Nations. NYSED honors the original stewards of this land by fostering a shared sense of belonging for all and by advancing educational policies that respect and sustain the cultural identities of Indigenous students.

Educational services provided to Indigenous students in the past were often rooted in assimilationist practices rather than culturally responsive and sustaining approaches. This legacy contributes to significant disparities in both educational inputs and student outcomes to this day. The Board of Regents and NYSED recognize the importance of fostering educational environments that enable Indigenous students to retain their unique cultural identities, languages, and ways of life, while also accessing the full range of college, career, and civic opportunities. It is within this context—and with a full acknowledgment of the harms perpetuated through policies of tribal termination, land dispossession, and the residential school system—that we reaffirm our commitment to rebuilding and strengthening trust with Indigenous Nations through educational opportunities.

Recent work together reflects this renewed commitment such as the establishment of the Commissioner’s Indigenous Education Advisory Council, the first Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate in the state’s history, and the prohibition on the use of school mascots, logos, and imagery connected to Indigenous Nations or peoples.

At the center of these efforts is the New York State Education Department’s Office of Indigenous Education (OIE). OIE coordinates the work of NYSED in relation to our partnership with Indigenous Nations and NYSED’s enduring commitment to supporting Indigenous education and the creation of resources uplifting Indigenous voices across our state. OIE oversees state funding and provides technical assistance to 13 public school districts and three Indigenous Nation schools, in addition to other schools and districts, that educate students living on sovereign Indigenous lands. Technical assistance, in the context of this Statement of Policy refers to targeted supports to individuals, organizations, or communities to address a specific need or problem with the goal of enhancing capacity or improving student performance. The Office also administers the Indian Aid Program, which supports Indigenous students who pursue postsecondary education. In addition, OIE collaborates closely with Indigenous leaders, school district administrators, education liaisons, and transportation providers to ensure that contracts for tuition, supplemental services, operations, and transportation are developed and implemented effectively and with respect for Tribal sovereignty.

OIE is a hub for statewide collaboration—partnering across NYSED offices and with sister state agencies to meet the full spectrum of Indigenous students’ needs. OIE works hand-in-hand with NYSED offices such as the Office of Access, Equity, and Community Engagement (which includes the My Brother’s and Sister’s Keeper programs); Bilingual Education and World Languages; Special Education; Standards and Instruction; Educational Management Services; Cultural Education; Higher Education; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; and Student Support Services, among others. An example of cross-agency collaboration is OIE’s partnership with the New York State Office of Mental Health and Indigenous Nations to launch culturally grounded pilot programs focused on student wellbeing. Designed in consultation with Indigenous Nations, these pilot

programs reflect Indigenous values, needs, and cultural frameworks. Cross-agency collaborations also include partnerships with the Department of Labor, Department of Health, and others, to provide opportunities and supports for Indigenous students academically, socially, emotionally, and economically.

This policy statement reflects not just a renewed partnership between NYSED and Indigenous Nations, but an ever-growing network of commitment—spanning state agencies, school districts, cultural institutions, and communities—to ensure that Indigenous students in New York are seen, valued, and supported. It is our hope that this work not only uplifts the cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples, but also contributes to a more pluralistic, just, and inclusive New York for all.

The fundamental purpose of this work is to honor longstanding obligations and treaties with Indigenous Nations. In the past those treaty mandates and obligations were ignored by the United States. Today, we are trying to rectify those past transgressions.

We are honored to be part of this journey and are committed to ensuring that Indigenous students across New York State graduate ready to lead — with dignity, purpose, and the full support of the educational system that serves them.

Use of the Term "Indigenous"

Throughout this policy document, the term "Indigenous" is used rather than "Native American." This term is used to emphasize the original and continuing connection to the land, sovereignty, and nationhood of the communities referred to. Our intention is to recognize the diverse identities, histories, and self-determination of Indigenous Nations and peoples, both within and beyond what is now called New York State. We acknowledge and respect that preferences vary among individuals and communities and affirm the right of Indigenous Nations and peoples to self-identify as they so choose.

Embedding Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE) and Indigenous Education:

This policy statement is not only an opportunity to reaffirm commitments made in 1975, but also to align our shared efforts with a more recent and significant educational commitment: the adoption of the CR-SE Framework by the New York State Board of Regents and NYSED, which began in earnest in 2018. The CR-SE Framework, found at <https://www.nysed.gov/crs>, was developed to help all education stakeholders create student-centered learning environments that affirm racial, linguistic, and cultural identities; prepare students for rigor and independent learning; develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; and empower students as agents of social change. This commitment certainly extends to Indigenous students.

At the core of the Framework are four guiding principles:

1. Creating welcoming and affirming environments
2. Fostering high expectations and rigorous instruction
3. Identifying inclusive curriculum and assessment
4. Engaging in ongoing professional learning

These principles are deeply complementary to Indigenous philosophies of education, which emphasize relational learning, collective responsibility, experiential knowledge, and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity. Indigenous education is grounded in the holistic development of each learner — intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically — through learning that is community-driven, place-based, and intergenerational. The CR-SE Framework provides a structure that can support and elevate these values across the education system.

CR-SE practices are especially important in the context of Indigenous education. For too long, schooling in New York State and across the United States has been shaped by assimilationist models that have devalued Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and worldviews. Today, our goal is not to reinvent the wheel, but to indigenize existing structures—embedding Indigenous ways of knowing

and being into the foundation of educational practice. Indigenization is the intentional process of informing our educational work and processes with Indigenous perspectives, histories, and values alongside western knowledge systems — not as an add-on, but as an essential part of a shared and just education system. This work aligns with ongoing movements toward decolonization and reconciliation, which call on education systems to transform power structures, challenge dominant narratives, and honor the sovereignty and lived experience of Indigenous peoples.

The CR-SE Framework, when implemented with fidelity, offers a meaningful path forward in the spirit of the Two-Row Wampum – parallel paths with an ongoing relationship of friendship, peace, and respect. Inclusive curriculum and assessment practices also support the transmission and revitalization of Indigenous languages and histories. Welcoming school environments and high expectations foster belonging and affirm Indigenous students' strengths. Ongoing professional learning provides the space for educators to engage in critical self-reflection and to deepen their understanding of Indigenous cultures, governance, and rights.

CR-SE is embedded throughout these policy recommendations and is a guiding star for the entirety of this work, now and in the future. It affirms that cultural identity is not a barrier to overcome but a powerful foundation for learning. It reflects our belief that educational equity cannot be achieved without cultural relevance. In honoring Indigenous principles through the CR-SE lens, we seek to restore balance, dignity, and belonging for Indigenous students—and to strengthen our collective capacity to foster educational opportunity for all.

Updates on the 1975 Recommendations

The 1975 *Statement of Policy and Proposed Action* included nine foundational recommendations regarding the education of Indigenous students in New York State. The full document is available at:

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/Indigenous-education/statement-of-policy-and-proposed-action-1975.pdf>.

This work is ongoing, and all relationships need continual tending. As such, to ground our recommitment to this work in a shared historical context, the following provides an update on the status of those original recommendations:

1. Indigenous Education Advisory Committee

This recommendation was realized in 2023 with Commissioner Rosa's establishment of the first statewide Indigenous Education Advisory Committee. As envisioned in 1975, the Committee advises and consults with the Commissioner and Department staff on educational policies and practices affecting Indigenous students. Its scope also extends to broader issues impacting all New Yorkers such as the development of instructional resources related to Indigenous education and student health initiatives.

2. Regional and Local Engagement

This recommendation was not fully implemented. However, the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee has achieved some of these goals by expanding opportunities for engagement. The work originally set forth in this recommendation is carried forward and broadened through the 2025 recommendations.

3. Recruitment and Retention of Personnel

Pursuant to tuition contracts between NYSED and the 13 school districts responsible for educating Indigenous students, districts are required to engage in meaningful efforts to attract and retain certified instructional and non-instructional personnel. These efforts are monitored through an annual data

reporting process managed by NYSED's OIE. As such, this recommendation is being worked on.

4. Teacher Training in Indigenous Culture and Language

In 2023, the Board of Regents created the state's first Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate. This milestone, along with the development of teacher preparation programs to support the certificate, partially fulfills the 1975 recommendation to provide courses and training experiences related to Indigenous cultures and heritage. NYSED will continue to work with institutions of higher education and regional professional development organizations on this recommendation.

5. Curriculum Development

This recommendation has not been fully implemented. As New York is a local control state, the responsibility for curriculum development rests with individual school districts, while the State develops academic standards. Nevertheless, NYSED is starting the process of creating curricular resource materials informed by Indigenous Nations and educators to support districts in this work as further described below. The Department remains committed to ensuring that all students, including Indigenous students, have access to high-quality educational opportunities. The goals of this 1975 recommendation are continued and expanded in the 2025 recommendations.

6. Continuing Education Programs

This recommendation has not been fully implemented. However, NYSED continues to work in partnership with Indigenous Nations to support continuing education opportunities for individuals within their communities. The Department's work to strengthen these offerings is expanded in the 2025 recommendations.

7. Post-Secondary Grant-in-Aid Opportunities

Significant work remains to expand post-secondary grant-in-aid opportunities for Indigenous students. Efforts to address this are ongoing and are further developed in the 2025 recommendations.

8. Teacher Education and Professional Development

The need to enhance teacher education programs focused on Indigenous cultures and histories remains an ongoing priority. This area of work is continued and expanded through the 2025 recommendations.

9. Intergovernmental Collaboration

NYSED works closely with partners at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as with philanthropic organizations, to provide supports and scaffolds that create educational opportunities for Indigenous students. This collaborative work reflects the spirit of the original recommendation and is further expanded in the 2025 recommendations.

Regents Policy Recommendations to Strengthen Indigenous Education in New York State

These recommendations are not intended to serve as an exhaustive or final list of actions. Rather, they are designed to prompt continued dialogue, inquiry, and co-construction of solutions in close partnership with Indigenous Nations, school districts, and educators. It is our hope that these preliminary recommendations will serve as a foundation for sustained engagement with the Indigenous Education Advisory Council, through which we will collaboratively refine and expand these ideas into more comprehensive plans. At this stage, they should be viewed as guiding policy priorities rather than fully developed initiatives.

Accordingly, the New York State Board of Regents recommends that the New York State Education Department:

1. Strengthen and Continue to Uplift the Indigenous Education Advisory Council

The statewide Indigenous Education Advisory Council should continue to convene at least twice annually to advise and consult with the Commissioner of Education and NYSED staff on matters related to the education of Indigenous students. The Council will consist of representatives from federally- and/or state-recognized Indigenous Nations with government-to-government relationships with New York State (Cayuga Nation of Indians, Oneida Indian Nation, Onondaga Nation, Seneca Nation of Indians, St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, Shinnecock Nation, Tonawanda Band of Seneca, Tuscarora Nation, and Unkechaug Nation). Each Nation will be invited to designate one representative and one alternate.

The Indigenous Education Advisory Council will serve as a consultative body to guide NYSED's work in embedding Indigenous voice, history, language, culture, and sovereignty across all schools and districts through the development of curricular resources, content-specific briefs, and the development and dissemination of professional learning opportunities aligned to the CR-SE Framework. The participation of, and consultation with, Indigenous Nation representatives is vital to NYSED's mission of raising the knowledge, skill, and opportunity of all the people in New York.

In consultation and collaboration with the Advisory Council, NYSED will develop resources and tools, where feasible, to help inform and guide connections and future conversations between NYSED, school districts, and others with Indigenous Nations.

2. Expand Regional Indigenous Education Committees

To better inform statewide policy and practice, NYSED will collaborate with existing regional Indigenous education committees or groups comprised of Indigenous Nation representatives, Indigenous youth, community members, school district leaders, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders. When the need for a regional committee or group is identified where one does not currently exist, NYSED will partner with Indigenous Nations and educators to foster the establishment of such committees or groups. These committees or groups will identify local needs, support culturally responsive initiatives, and promote differentiated, place-based approaches to Indigenous education.

Regional committees or groups will also expand opportunities for engagement of off-nation Indigenous populations, nations without a government-to-government relationship with the State, and other Indigenous stakeholders. NYSED and Advisory Council members will ensure that feedback from these committees inform statewide priorities.

3. Advance Educational Equity and Outcomes

NYSED will support the elimination of disproportionate outcomes for Indigenous students across the P–20 continuum³ by working towards, among other action items:

- a. Establishing clear outcome goals rooted in CR-SE principles and Indigenous community strengths, collaborating with offices across NYSED to ensure that an equity lens is used in considerations regarding equitable access and opportunities in Indigenous education.

³ P-20 refers to a state-level initiative focused on connecting all levels of education, from Pre-kindergarten through 20 (graduate school and beyond), to improve student outcomes and promote college, career, and civic readiness. It involves collaborative efforts across different educational organizations, including alternative and technical schools, sectors to ensure a smooth transition and alignment of learning experiences from early childhood to higher education and the workforce.

- b. Partnering with districts and Indigenous Nations to monitor student progress through the ongoing review of student data both quantitatively and qualitatively, promoting transparency through data sharing, and providing technical assistance to districts and Indigenous Nations. NYSED will examine student data, have conversations with students, staff, and communities, and then work with these groups to enact changes to better support students.
- c. Ensuring supplemental program funding allocations are equitable and responsive to Indigenous student needs.
- d. Supporting ongoing dialogue between districts and Indigenous Nations to ensure the Nations are meaningfully consulted as part of the development and renewal of tuition contracts.
- e. Expanding access to appropriate services, supports, and evaluations for Indigenous students with disabilities, with a commitment to building local capacity to meeting their needs within their communities, whenever possible. NYSED will work closely with parents and local school districts to strengthen the availability of qualified professionals who can assess, support, and advocate for these students to ensure equitable educational opportunities and outcomes.
- f. Supporting culturally responsive professional learning opportunities for educators to convey Indigenous ways of knowing and best support Indigenous students.
- g. Respecting Indigenous sovereignty by ensuring Indigenous Nation consultation in decisions regarding the education of their children.

NYSED will also coordinate with other state agencies and institutions to support and analyze longitudinal outcomes for Indigenous students, including college enrollment, career attainment, and civic readiness.

4. Ensure Success and Access for Indigenous Students in Graduation Measures and Portrait of a Graduate Implementation

NYSED will work closely with Indigenous Nations, Indigenous communities, school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and institutions of higher education to support the success of Indigenous students as New York State implements the Graduation Measures initiative and embeds Portrait of a Graduate competencies into educational practice.

In recognizing the strengths of Indigenous students — such as innovative problem-solving, critical thinking, relational learning, and leadership — NYSED will:

- a. Collaborate with Indigenous communities to ensure Graduation Measures reflect and elevate Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and leading, affirming the holistic development of students through intellectual, emotional, physical, and holistic growth.
- b. Work with Indigenous Nations, districts, and professional development organizations to facilitate professional development opportunities for educators, counselors, administrators, and staff serving Indigenous students to ensure understanding and effective implementation of new diploma requirements, Portrait of a Graduate domains, and related assessment changes. NYSED will work with stakeholders and Indigenous Nations to develop curricular resources to help facilitate this.
- c. Build Indigenous educator, community, and stakeholder awareness of the changes to graduation expectations through targeted communication and professional learning that is culturally responsive and sustaining.
- d. Develop resources and supports that empower Indigenous students to successfully apply Portrait of a Graduate domains, such as critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving, in and out of school.
- e. Ensure that the voices of Indigenous educators, students, and communities continue to be represented in the implementation of Graduation Measures, maintaining an emphasis on equity, access, and culturally sustaining pathways to graduation.

Through this work, NYSED will honor the sovereignty, strengths, and aspirations of Indigenous Nations and ensure that all Indigenous students are supported to achieve excellence and success in a manner that affirms their identities and prepares them for lifelong learning, career, and civic engagement.

5. Ensure Inclusive State Learning Standards and the Development of Curricular Resources

When NYSED updates state learning standards, it will incorporate accurate, inclusive Indigenous content across disciplines. Curricular resources will also be developed by NYSED in partnership with Indigenous educators to help inform instructional practices and the development of standards. This will include:

- a. Developing curricular resource briefs in partnership with Indigenous leaders, educators, content experts, artists, and knowledge holders to share and uplift Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and culture with school districts and educators across New York.
- b. Consulting with Indigenous Nations and educators in the development of standards to ensure their histories, perspective, and voice are embedded within any future state learning standards.
- c. Integration of Indigenous perspectives, histories, languages, philosophies, and contributions.
- d. Development of instructional resources and professional learning aligned with CR-SE principles.
- e. Embedding Indigenous content into state assessments and graduation requirements.

Inclusive standards are essential to fostering culturally responsive learning environments and promoting critical consciousness among all students. As such, NYSED will work with Indigenous Nations and educators to develop curricular resource briefs to provide all New York State educators with information on how to recognize the impact of Indigenous Nations and peoples on the history of this country and New York State to the present day, as well as awareness of modern Indigenous culture and concerns. Briefs will also address how to incorporate Indigenous voice and perspective in teaching of academic content areas.

6. Enhance College, Career, and Workforce Pathways

NYSED will partner with Indigenous communities, school districts, BOCES, higher education institutions, and workforce agencies to:

- a. Strengthen guidance counseling services beginning in middle school, with a focus on culturally responsive college and career readiness.
- b. Expand participation in pre-college and career bridge programs, internships, co-ops, and career exploration opportunities.
- c. Grow Indigenous access to career pathways, addressing representation in high-need employment areas in Indigenous communities by identifying barriers to recruitment, preparation, and retention and creating access to experiences, training, internships, and mentorships.
- d. Promote continuing education programs in community settings that emphasize high school equivalency, Indigenous language and cultural courses, leadership development, financial literacy, technological literacy, and career and technical education to build scaffolds and supports for Indigenous students.
- e. Create pathways and opportunities for Indigenous students into educational professions that will support and sustain Indigenous education for current and future students such as teaching, administration, and student support careers in partnership with other state agencies.

7. Expand Indigenous Language and Culture Programs

Recognizing the centrality of language and culture to Indigenous identity, NYSED will:

- a. Monitor districts contracting with NYSED for the education of Indigenous students to ensure the offering of Indigenous language and culture programs.
- b. Support the development of bilingual and bicultural instructional resource materials in collaboration with Indigenous Nation representatives and specialists in Indigenous history, language, and the arts.
- c. Promote the revitalization and transmission of Indigenous languages through early childhood, K–12, and adult education settings.

- d. Continue to convene Indigenous language consultation committees and provide funding to support Indigenous-led language and culture instruction and capacity building.

8. Advance Early Learning and Parent Engagement

The Indigenous Education Advisory Council, regional councils, and OIE will work with NYSED's Office of Early Learning and Office of Special Education to:

- a. Facilitate the development of parent training programs that support Indigenous families in navigating the educational system and advocating for their children's needs.
- b. Promote early childhood programs that affirm Indigenous foundations of understanding, language, and relational learning.

9. Expand Post-Secondary Support for Indigenous Students

NYSED will expand postsecondary grant-in-aid programs for Indigenous students by:

- a. Seeking an increase in post-secondary grant awards, reflecting the rising cost of higher education, and supporting graduate and professional study.
- b. Supporting non-traditional educational pathways such as apprenticeships, technical certifications, and continuing education.
- c. Advocate for funding to support and expand Indigenous-led language and culture programs.
- d. Coordinating postsecondary aid with State and Federal opportunities to maximize support.
- e. Providing increased outreach, technical assistance, and the reductions of barriers to entry to ensure Indigenous students and communities are fully aware of available programs.

The fundamental purpose of these grants are not about "minority" students. Rather, they are longstanding obligations to honor treaties with Indigenous Nations. In the past, those treaty mandates and obligations were ignored by the United States. Today, we are trying to rectify those past transgressions.

10. Strengthen Tuition Contract Technical Assistance and Tribal Consultation

NYSED will provide technical assistance to districts and Indigenous Nations in developing, implementing, and monitoring tuition contracts for Indigenous students, including consultation agreements.

NYSED will ensure that tuition contracts and associated educational services are aligned with CR-SE principles and centered on affirming Indigenous identities, supporting sovereignty, and advancing educational equity.

As stated in the 1975 Policy recommendations, nothing in these renewed recommendations shall preclude or restrict the ability of people of Indigenous heritage to pursue educational opportunities, whether through culturally sustaining models or through full participation in the broader education system of the State of New York. Each student’s autonomy and agency must be respected.

These recommendations reaffirm New York’s historical commitments while advancing a contemporary vision rooted in the CR-SE Framework—one that elevates Indigenous voices, affirms cultural identities, and strengthens the collective future of all New Yorkers.

Closing

This updated policy statement is not the final word—it is a living, breathing document that must continue to grow and evolve alongside the communities it seeks to serve. We have taken meaningful steps since the publication of the original 1975 policy statement, but there is still much work to do. The progress achieved over the past fifty years reflects a renewed commitment to shared responsibility, cultural respect, and government-to-government partnership.

Yet we cannot wait another fifty years to fully realize the aspirations set forth here. True partnership requires continuous dialogue, active listening, and accountability to carry out promises made. Promises and relationships have been neglected for far too long. This policy seeks to change that and create a bright bold future for all peoples. It requires that we honor the voices, histories, and futures of Indigenous peoples by embedding their perspectives into every level of the education system—not as something that is supplementary, but as a foundation.

As we move forward, let this document serve as a reminder of both the strides we have jointly made and the enduring responsibilities we together hold. Through mutually constructed shared vision and sustained effort, we can build an education system that truly reflects the dignity, diversity, and sovereignty of Indigenous Nations.

We close with the words of the Kaianere'kó:wa – the Great Law of Peace, which continues to be a north star for this work and our collective purpose:

Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people, and have always in view not only the present, but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground — the unborn of the future Nation.

Appendix: Indigenous Nation Letters of Support

ONEIDA INDIAN NATION



ONEIDA INDIAN NATION HOMELANDS

August 11, 2025

New York State Board of Regents
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Members of the Board of Regents:

Shekólih, greetings. The Oneida Indian Nation is pleased to express our strong support for the attached *Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action*. The statement was developed through extensive collaboration between New York's tribal nations and the New York State Education Department. It promotes educational frameworks and policies that respect and elevate our rich historical and cultural legacy while providing a roadmap for deeper, sustained collaboration between our Nation and the State.

Fittingly, the statement frames the Education Department's commitment to educational sovereignty with the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship, which the Continental Congress invoked to thank our Oneida ancestors for their support in the Revolutionary War. The use of this symbol highlights the respect we have been shown throughout this partnership.

The New York State Education Department's establishment of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council marks a meaningful shift toward a more respectful and partnership-driven approach to Indigenous education.

We appreciate the Board of Regents', Commissioner Rosa, and Assistant Commissioner David Frank's leadership in ensuring this policy was developed with the input of tribal nations and we look forward to continuing this partnership for the benefit of future generations.

Na ki? wa,


Ray Halbritter
Nation Representative

5218 Patrick Road • Verona, New York 13478



HAUDENOSAUNEE
ONONDAGA NATION

4040 ROUTE 11 • NEDROW, NEW YORK 13120

September 7, 2025

New York State Board of Regents
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Nya-weñha Sgé-noñ Members of the Board of Regents:

Brothers, the Onondaga Nation sends greetings that this letter finds you in good health.

We write to express our support for the attached Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action. This statement represents the culmination of sustained engagement, respectful dialogue, and collaborative authorship between our Nation and the New York State Education Department, through the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Indigenous Education and the leadership of Assistant Commissioner David Frank.

The New York State Education Department's establishment of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council marks a meaningful shift toward a more inclusive, respectful, and partnership-driven approach to Indigenous education. The banning of Indigenous mascots in consultation with Nations, the creation of an Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate, and the forthcoming development of Indigenous Education Briefs to elevate Indigenous voice are all important and long-overdue steps in building this new relationship. These actions reflect the shared values of respect, equity, and educational self-determination in creating educational opportunities that honor our histories, cultures, and future generations.

We appreciate the Board of Regents', Commissioner Rosa, and Assistant Commissioner David Frank's leadership in ensuring this policy was developed not for us, but with us—and we look forward to continuing this vital partnership through continued meetings by polishing the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship.

Da-ne'thoh,



Chief Sidney Hill
Tadodaho



THE SENECA NATION OF INDIANS

90 Ohi:yo' Way
P.O. Box 231
Allegany Territory
Seneca Nation
Salamanca, NY 14779
Phone (716) 945-1790

PRESIDENT
J. Conrad Seneca

TREASURER
Al E. George

CLERK
Lenith K. Waterman

12837 Route 438
Cattaraugus Territory
Seneca Nation
Irving, NY 14081
Phone (716) 532-4900

August 22, 2025

New York State Board of Regents
New York State Education Department
ATTENTION: David Frank, Assistant Commissioner
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

VIA EMAIL: David.Frank@nysed.gov

Dear Members of the Board of Regents:

On behalf of the Seneca Nation (the "Nation"), we write to express our support for the *Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action*. This statement represents the cumulative dialogue, and collaboration between our Nation and the New York State Education Department ("NYSED"), via the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Indigenous Education under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner David Frank.

As a sovereign Indigenous Nation with a government-to-government relationship with both New York State and the United States, we have participated in the development of this policy in alignment with our Nation's vision for education. The statement reflects the advice and consent of our designated representative and is grounded in shared values of respect, equity, and educational self-determination.

The NYSED's establishment of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council marks a meaningful shift toward a more inclusive, respectful, and partnership-driven approach to Indigenous education. The banning of Indigenous mascots in consultation with Nations, the creation of an Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate, and the forthcoming development of Indigenous Education Briefs to elevate Indigenous voices are important and long-overdue steps in building this new relationship.

We believe that the *Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action* serves as a roadmap for a sustained collaboration between our Nation and the State. It provides a framework to advance educational opportunities that honor our history, culture, and future

generations; it reflects a shared commitment of highlighting Indigenous knowledge and ensuring that all our students are supported throughout their educational journey.

Nya:wëh,



J. Conrad Seneca
President, Seneca Nation

Cc: Clarissa Jacobs, Coordinator
NYSED Office of Indigenous Education
Clarissa.Jacobs@nysed.gov



SHINNECOCK INDIAN NATION

Shinnecock Indian Territory
P.O. Box 5006 Southampton, New York 11969-5006
Phone (631) 283-6143 Fax (631) 283-0751

*The oldest self-governing
Tribe of Indians in the United States*

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*Lisa Goree, Chairwoman
Lance A. Gumbs, Vice Chairman
Seneca Bowen, Treasurer
Sienna Hunter-Cuyjet, LICSW., Council of Trustees Secretary
Edgar L. Franklin III, General Council Secretary
Linda Franklin, Sunksqua
Daniel Collins Sr., Sachem*

August 6, 2025

New York State Board of Regents
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Members of the Board of Regents:

On behalf of the Shinnecock Indian Nation, we write to express our strong support for the attached *Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action*. This statement represents the culmination of sustained engagement, respectful dialogue, and collaborative authorship between our Nation and the New York State Education Department, through the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Indigenous Education and the leadership of Assistant Commissioner David Frank.

As a sovereign Indigenous Nation with a government-to-government relationship with both the United States and the State of New York, we have participated in the development of this policy in alignment with our Nation's vision for education. The statement reflects the input, advice, and consent of our designated representative and is grounded in shared values of respect, equity, and educational self-determination.

The New York State Education Department's establishment of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council marks a meaningful shift toward a more inclusive, respectful, and partnership-driven approach to Indigenous education. The banning of Indigenous mascots in consultation with Nations, the creation of an Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate, and the forthcoming development of Indigenous Education Briefs to elevate Indigenous voice are all important and long-overdue steps in building this new relationship.

We believe that this *Statement of Policy and Action* serves—and must continue to serve—as a roadmap for deeper, sustained collaboration between our Nation and the State. It provides a framework to advance educational opportunities that honor our histories, cultures, and future generations. It reflects a shared commitment to lifting up Indigenous knowledge and

ensuring that all Indigenous students are supported and affirmed throughout their educational journey.

We appreciate the Board of Regents', Commissioner Rosa, and Assistant Commissioner David Frank's leadership in ensuring this policy was developed not for us, but with us—and we look forward to continuing this vital partnership in the spirit of the Silver Covenant Chain.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lisa R. Goree".

Lisa R. Goree, Chairwoman
Shinnecock Indian Nation
Contact: 631-697-2284



Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Michael Conners
Chief Donald Thompson, Jr.
Chief Ross Garrow
Sub-Chief Agnes Jacobs
Sub-Chief Benjamin Herne
Sub-Chief Derrick King

Sesehkó:wa | September 4, 2025

New York State Board of
Regents
New York State Education
Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Tekwanonhwerá:ton | Greetings Members of the Board of Regents,

On behalf of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, we write to express our support for the attached *Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action*. This statement represents the culmination of sustained engagement, respectful dialogue, and collaborative authorship between our Tribe and the New York State Education Department, through the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Indigenous Education and the leadership of Assistant Commissioner David Frank.

As a sovereign Indigenous Tribe with a government-to-government relationship with both the United States and the State of New York, we have participated in the development of this policy in alignment with our Tribe's vision for education. The statement reflects the input, advice, and consent of our designated representative and is grounded in shared values of respect, equity, and educational self-determination.

The New York State Education Department's establishment of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council marks a meaningful shift toward a more inclusive, respectful, and partnership-driven approach to Indigenous education. The banning of Indigenous mascots in consultation with Tribe's, the creation of an Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate, and the forthcoming development of Indigenous Education Briefs to elevate Indigenous voice are all important and long-overdue steps in building this new relationship.

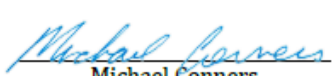
We believe that this *Statement of Policy and Action* serves—and must continue to serve—as a roadmap for deeper, sustained collaboration between our Nation and the State. It provides a framework to advance educational opportunities that honor our histories, cultures, and future generations. It reflects a shared commitment to lifting up Indigenous knowledge and ensuring that all Indigenous students are supported and affirmed throughout their educational journey.

71 Margaret Terrance Memorial Way
Akwesasne, New York 13652
Phone: (518) 358-2272
www.srmt-nsn.gov

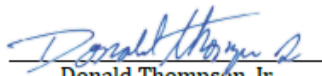
We appreciate the Board of Regents', Commissioner Rosa, and Assistant Commissioner David Frank's leadership in ensuring this policy was developed not for us, but with us—and we look forward to continuing this vital partnership in the spirit of the Silver Covenant Chain.

Skén:nen | In Peace,

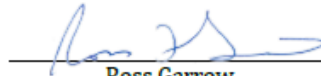
SAINT REGIS MOHAWK TRIBAL COUNCIL



Michael Conners
Tribal Chief



Donald Thompson, Jr.
Tribal Chief



Ross Garrow
Tribal Chief



HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK • ONEIDA • ONONDAGA • CAYUGA • SENECA • TUSCARORA

TONAWANDA SENECA NATION

PO BOX 795 • 7027 MEADVILLE ROAD • BASOM, NEW YORK 14013

PHONE (716) 542-4244 • FAX (716) 542-4008

E-MAIL: tonsenec@buffnet.net

September 5, 2025

New York State Board of Regents
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Members of the Board of Regents:

Nya:wëh Sgë:nö'. On behalf of the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, we write to express our strong support for the attached *Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Action*. This statement represents the culmination of sustained engagement, respectful dialogue, and collaborative authorship between our Nation and the New York State Education Department, through the Commissioner's Advisory Council for Indigenous Education and the leadership of Assistant Commissioner David Frank.

As a sovereign Indigenous Nation with a government-to-government relationship with both the United States and the State of New York, we have participated in the development of this policy in alignment with our Nation's vision for education. The statement reflects the input, advice, and consent of our designated representative and is grounded in shared values of respect, equity, and educational self-determination.

The New York State Education Department's establishment of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council marks a meaningful shift toward a more inclusive, respectful, and partnership-driven approach to Indigenous education. The banning of Indigenous mascots in consultation with Nations, the creation of an Indigenous Language and Culture teaching certificate, and the forthcoming development of Indigenous Education Briefs to elevate Indigenous voice are all important and long-overdue steps in building this new relationship.

We believe that this *Statement of Policy and Action* serves—and must continue to serve—as a roadmap for deeper, sustained collaboration between our Nation and the State. It provides a framework to advance educational opportunities that honor our histories, cultures, and future generations. It reflects a shared commitment to lifting up Indigenous knowledge and ensuring that all Indigenous students are supported and affirmed throughout their educational journey.

We appreciate the Board of Regents', Commissioner Rosa, and Assistant Commissioner David Frank's leadership in ensuring this policy was developed not for us, but with us—and we look forward to continuing this vital partnership in the spirit of the Silver Covenant Chain.

Da:h ne'hoh,



Christine G. Abrams
On behalf of the Council of Chiefs
TSN Office Administrator
Tonawanda Seneca Nation
Email: tonseneca@aol.com
Office: (716) 542-4244



HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK ONEIDA ONONDAGA CAYUGA SENECA TUSCARORA

SKARÛ-RE? KAYETÁ-KRE? - TUSCARORA NATION

5226 Walmore Rd
Tuscarora Nation
Via: Lewiston, NY 14092
Tel: 716-264-6007x110

September 15, 2025

New York State Office of Indigenous Education:

Čwé:ʔn. Greetings from the Tuscarora Nation. I hope you are doing well and in good health. Here at Tuscarora we are excited for the changing of the seasons and the time of harvest.

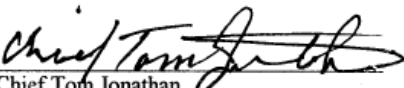
This letter is in support of the revised Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Proposed Action being presented to the NY State Board of Regents. We have been provided a working draft of the document, had time to propose changes and contribute to the revised document. This document will strengthen the education partnerships, programs and learning environment to ensure the holistic development of Tuscarora children.

We are certain the revised Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Proposed Action will be the kind of document to support our teachers, children and community educational needs. We believe the statement of policy will enhance the quality of education teachers and administration is able to provide and create an environment that treats indigenous education as important; and recognizes the goals of increasing diversity, equity and inclusion.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments for the Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Proposed Action; we look forward to the approval of the Board of Regents and its publication.

It has been a year of hard work to get to this point and the Tuscarora Nation supports the revised Indigenous Education Statement of Policy and Proposed Action. In no way does this letter and statement affect the sovereignty of the Tuscarora Nation.

Nyá:wę,


Chief Tom Jonathan
Tuscarora Nation, Clerk