

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1495

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### As Passed House:

March 9, 2005

**Title:** An act relating to teaching Washington's tribal history, culture, and government in the common schools.

**Brief Description:** Requiring that tribal history be taught in the common schools.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives McCoy, Roach, Simpson, P. Sullivan, McDermott, Santos, Appleton, Darneille, Williams, Hunt, Haigh, Chase, Sells, Conway, Kenney, Kagi, Moeller, Ormsby and Blake).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Education: 2/9/05, 3/1/05 [DPS].

#### Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/9/05, 78-18.

### Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Encourages the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) to convene regional meetings with Indian tribal councils in order to establish government-to-government relationships and develop tribal history and culture curricula.
- Requires the WSSDA to report to the Legislature regarding the regional meetings and progress of efforts to establish relationships and develop curricula.
- Encourages school districts to incorporate in their history and social studies curricula information regarding the history, culture, and government of one or more Washington Indian tribes.
- Requires that the mandatory high school course in Washington State history include information about the history, culture, and government of Washington Indian tribes.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos and Shabro.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis and Tom.

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

Washington has a rich Native American heritage that dates back thousands of years. There are 29 federally-recognized Indian tribes whose reservations are located in Washington. The Governor's Office of Indian Affairs reports an additional seven tribes in Washington who are non-federally recognized.

Washington's high school graduation requirements include a minimum of one-half credit of course work in Washington State history and government. Courses designed to meet this requirement are encouraged, but not required, to include information on the culture, history, and government of Washington Indian tribes.

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) was created for the purpose of coordinating programs and procedures pertaining to the policymaking, control, and management of school districts in the state. The WSSDA reports annually to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) regarding recommendations to increase the efficiency of the common school system.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The WSSDA is encouraged to convene regional meetings between local school boards and tribal councils to establish government-to-government relationships. Meetings should be scheduled at least annually beginning in 2006 and through 2010 and should be for the purposes of: (1) developing and implementing curricular materials to teach about the history, culture, and government of Washington Indian tribes; and (2) identifying strategies to close the achievement gap. The WSSDA is directed to report to the Legislature in 2007, 2009, and 2011, regarding the progress made in developing the curricula and the potential for the curricula to contribute to efforts to close the achievement gap.

The one-half credit course in Washington State history required for high school graduation must include information regarding the history, culture, and government of Washington Indian tribes.

School districts are encouraged to incorporate this information into other social studies courses in which Washington or United States history is taught. Districts also are encouraged to facilitate opportunities for cultural exchanges with tribes and to make good faith efforts to collaborate in the development of curricula with tribes whose reservations in whole or in part

lie within the school districts' boundaries. The OSPI is encouraged to assist districts in determining the locations of the reservations and traditional lands and territories of Washington Indian tribes.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** (In support of original bill) The tribes have a rich and vibrant culture and history in Washington. We have learned recently of the discovery of a 2,007 year-old village in Port Angeles. The history and culture of the tribes should be taught in our schools. This is one of the ways to encourage Native American students to stay in school. Within our tribe we have students in three different school districts and there is nothing about our local history included in the schools. Native American students would like to see their culture represented in schools.

With every generation our culture, language, and history is being lost and it is all we will have to pass on to our children and grandchildren. Most high schools only provide French or Spanish for foreign language study. The English language is being overpowered by the Spanish population. If we could even just take a course about our history and culture through the tribal center and get credit for public schooling, that would help.

It is important to keep language and culture together. Some tribes have certified teachers who can develop curricula for the teaching of the tribe's history and culture in the public schools. In districts where this is being done, WASL scores are rising and it is helping to close the achievement gap. It would allow Native American students to learn as a whole child and to keep their identity in tact. If they have to shed their identity at the school door, you will lose them. Students need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum in order to be engaged. Teacher training programs do not include information about Washington tribes. This is concerning and appalling. How are teachers in this state relating to Native American students in the state?

The people in Washington are interested in tribal history. This bill would have the potential for important civics lessons as well. It would help build understanding and teach about how history impacts present day conflicts.

Isn't it about time we learn about state tribal and local governments free of European content? Isn't it time we learn about all of our neighbors? We have been appalled by some of the textbooks being used that include misinformation about Washington's tribal history. We believe it is important to understand the role Indians are playing in our lives today. Some of the textbooks actually contain information that is very inappropriate.

Tribal information should be more included than it is now in our textbooks. Tribal history should be taught equally to what is being taught with other history today; it should be 50 percent of the history curriculum. If tribal information is not included in the public schools, the curriculum is not relevant to Native American students.

(With concerns on original bill) This bill is an example of one way to address the diversity issues and equity issues in Washington. The collaboration model is excellent. The people connections are invaluable. However, if this is not funded, it becomes yet another unfunded mandate to school districts. We would like to avoid a mandate and instead create incentives to districts to reach out and collaborate with tribes. We would like to look to the voluntary collaboration efforts currently being done in some districts to see how best to get more tribal history and culture in our classrooms. Districts could do this as part of their social studies adoption process if the materials were already developed.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support of original bill) Representative McCoy, prime sponsor; Agripina Smith and Rosemary Kelly, Nooksack Tribe; Jamie Valadez, Klallom Tribe and Port Angeles School District; Cynthia Clauson, Marysville School District; Karen Verrill, League of Women Voters of Washington; Sally Brownfield, Squaxin Island Tribe; Edgar Achambault and Kamala Waterman, Hood Canal School; Dave Nicandri, Washington State Historical Society; and Robert Whitman, Eastern Washington University.

(With concerns on original bill) Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals; and Robert Butts and Denny Hurtado, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Persons Providing Information:** Denny Hertado, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.