

In 1998, Colorado state lawmakers mandated that American Indian history and culture be included in the curriculum of high schools in Colorado, based on the persistent efforts of Comanche State Senator Suzanne Williams. In 2003, they broadened the law mandating that in order to graduate students must satisfactorily complete a civil government course which includes the history, culture and social contributions of Indians and other groups. Yet tens of thousands of students graduate each year in the state without learning any of the information that is mandated in that single state graduation requirement. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission noted in 2018 that the "lack of appropriate cultural awareness in school curriculum focusing on Native American history or culture" can (1) be harmful to American Indian students; (2) contribute to a negative learning environment; (3) be isolating and limiting; (4) trigger bullying; and (5) result in negative stereotypes across the board. In Colorado, 81% of American Indian students don't meet state math benchmarks, 85% don't meet state science benchmarks, and 70% don't meet state English language benchmarks. Colorado's continuing neglect of Indian students by excluding anything Indian from their education is harmful. The state is denying Indian students' rights to see themselves in their education, which is necessary to ensure their academic success. The arguments made in this book are rooted in a sacred commitment to protect Indian children.