



UNDERSTAND
NATIVE
MINNESOTA

Presentation to SCALE
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Introduction



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What is Understand Native Minnesota?

- The latest philanthropic and educational campaign of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Focused on improving the narrative about Native Americans in Minnesota's K-12 schools
- Grantmaking, groundbreaking research, statewide collaborations with a variety of stakeholders
- \$5 million over three years



What is narrative change?

The intentional practice of changing public attitudes about a group of people through education, awareness raising, and constructively challenging misunderstandings and misperceptions

Recent Native narrative change developments



- Reclaiming Native Truth national research project *(2016-18)*
- Retirement of stereotyping mascots in sports *(e.g., Washington NFL team, Cleveland Indians)*
- Gradually increased references to and improved coverage about Indigenous people in news media
- High-profile Native officials *(e.g., Lt. Gov. Flanagan, Interior Secretary Haaland)*

Why is Native American narrative change important?



- Most Minnesotans have limited knowledge about:
 - The state's 11 tribes (4 Dakota, 7 Ojibwe)
 - Native history and culture
 - Tribal sovereignty and tribal governments
 - Contemporary Native experience
 - Tribes' economic and social contributions
- Native Americans are largely invisible in popular culture and general society

The public supports Native narrative change in schools



National polling: 72% of Americans agree it is necessary to make significant changes to school curricula about Native American history and culture

Reclaiming Native Truth report (2018)

Benefits of Native narrative change in education



- Non-Native students and parents: Greater awareness and more accurate understanding about Indigenous people, the troubled history of Native communities, and Native individuals and their contributions
- Native students and parents: Enhanced sense of self-worth by seeing their own tribe's history and culture treated more accurately and sympathetically

Native narrative change in Minnesota's schools



- Despite state law and academic standards, there are no enforceable requirements that Native American subject matter be taught
- Educators face challenges in teaching Native subject matter
 - Anxiety about teaching it incorrectly
 - Many lack access to accurate curriculum
 - Limited or no training

Key facts which many don't really know



- Native Americans in Minnesota
 - Make important economic, social and cultural contributions to our state every day
 - Most live on tribal reservations and in urban centers
- Tribes
 - Operate modern governments
 - Are building thriving communities
 - Contribute greatly to the success of surrounding non-Native communities

Understand Native Minnesota campaign



- Launched in October 2019
- Suspended in March 2020 because of the pandemic
- Relaunched in November 2020
- New opportunities because of racial equity discussions
- Parallel to but separate from Walz Administration's Indigenous Education for All proposal

Goal



To improve public attitudes toward Native Americans by incorporating greater awareness and sensitive treatment of Native Americans, along with accurate information about their history, culture and modern tribal governments, into Minnesota's K-12 education system



Programming

- Research
 - Resource scan
 - Public opinion surveys
 - Regional listening sessions
- Awareness-raising
 - Convenings of stakeholders on specialized topics
 - Social and traditional media
- Grantmaking
 - Curricula and resources for teachers and students
 - Teacher training and continuing professional development
- Partnerships with K-12 stakeholders
- Involving other funders

Future Scott County activities



- Listening session with leaders of Scott County area school districts
- Collaboration with Scott County Libraries
- Collaboration with Scott County and local historical societies

Stay informed and engaged



- Sign up to receive updates about the campaign at UnderstandNativeMN.org
- Follow @NativeMNFacts on Instagram and Twitter
- Watch or listen to new podcast series, Native Minnesota with Rebecca Crooks-Stratton (via Apple, YouTube and Spotify), featuring Native thought leaders and changemakers



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Questions?