Overview. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) team met with members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to continue the communication, and consultation between both government entities. This was the NDDPI’s second meeting to participate in thoughtful and meaningful consultation with a North Dakota Native American Tribal government. This is the best way to truly engage Native communities to improve outcomes for native students. This is a continuous process with open communication and coordination.

During consultation, the members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe prepared a traditional meal in which members of the NDDPI staff enjoyed; during the meal NDDPI staff and Tribal members informally discussed topics pressing to Indian people, especially children. The NDDPI staff were honored to be able to view and participate in a traditional prayer performed by Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Lakota Immersion Nest children. The young children performed the ceremony entirely in the Native Lakota language.

ESSA Update. During the consultation, Superintendent Kirsten Baesler and Director of Indian and Multicultural Education, Lucy Fredericks, gave an overview of the new federal education law, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Along with an overview, the presentation highlighted how ESSA dramatically differs from the previous law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Most notably, ESSA gives a substantial amount of decision-making authority back to local education agencies (LEA). With this transition to local control, tribal governments play an integral part in oversight and implementation.
**Discussion/Recommendations.** Members of the Tribal council discussed the consultation process NDDPI is undertaking. Cody Two Bears commented on how important consultation is for the Tribal Council, and the people of Standing Rock. In addition, he discussed the “dashboard” feature under ESSA. He stressed that it is very important to reflect an accurate dropout figure on the dashboard. Mr. Two Bears stressed how important it is to teach children the culture of their people, and how language immersion is a very important aspect to their culture.

More highlights of the discussion are below:

- Joe Dunn commented on standards and how he would like to see students in North Dakota study Native American History. Mr. Dunn passionately commented that, “one of my dreams is to have Lakota/Dakota language across the curriculum.”

- Joe White Mountain condemned the Common Core and how its “one size fits all” model doesn’t work for Native children. Mr. White Mountain recommended that personalizing lesson plans and curriculum would allow teachers to be more innovative and enable Native students to succeed.

- Linda Lawrence commented on a topic previous discussed: language immersion and its importance. Her primary concern with the new ESSA law is communication with NDDPI and the BIE –the dashboard at her school will be empty unless there is a data sharing agreement.

- Yuliya Manyakina, Program Director of the Lakota Language NEST program at Sitting Bull College, emphasized the need for language immersion and the importance of learning the native language. She cited research on students who are bilingual and their success rate in schools. She made the recommendation for her program to be a pilot program for early learning and language immersion.

- Adjunct faculty members of Sitting Bull College, Chris Reed and Tasha Hoff, commented on the importance of Native language and keeping it alive.

- Carmelita Bear Ribs, Program Director of the Standing Rock Head Start program, spoke about language and culture programs and how sometimes focusing on culture hurts them academically –what the federal government is looking for regarding proficiency is not what her Head Start program is being directed to do. Ms. Bear Ribs also explained the language immersion program she is creating at her Head Start centers.

- Sunshine Archambault-Carlow voiced concern regarding ESSA, saying, “There isn’t enough teeth.” She cited Montana’s effort to ensure the state’s Native American culture standards by putting them into state law. She supported such measures in North Dakota.

- Twila Jarrett, Assistant Principal, SRES, was concerned the BIE, Tribe, and State need better collaboration with school improvement which supports the well-rounded child in ESSA.

- Rhonda White, SRC Special Ed Director, mentioned including GED attainment and the dropout rate tracking system 4-6 year cohort.

- Justin Fryer, Superintendent Solen Public School. Mr. Fryer is unique as a superintendent on the reservation, and he works with the Tribe and State. He understands the flexibility needed to meet the needs of his students. He appreciates the support from NDDPI with SIG Grants at the elementary and high school level.

- Phyllis Young, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe member and Tribal Elder, commented on how she appreciates the support and effort Superintendent Baesler is making in advocating for Native American children. She mentioned that cultural competency is virtually silent to the point it is absent. She recommended Native American history be taught to all children in the state. In addition, she feels it is important to measure progress of students, not just end-of-year testing.
Key Themes

**Culture and Language.** As mentioned in Belcourt, the Tribal Council and community members brought up that a focal point of ESSA must be the commitment to local Tribal culture and language. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribal members went into detail on how being immersed in the native language is a direct link to preserving their natural heritage and culture. The two are interconnected.

**Meaningful Consultation.** Many members of the community and Tribal Council commended the NDDPI staff on their effort to reach out to the Tribes. However, they did mention that this communication must continue to ensure the success and outcome of our Native children and people.