

Commission on Native Children – Quotes from North Dakota Supporters

“In our culture, children are sacred. They are the future leaders of tribes, and the future parents and grandparents who will help carry on our traditions. As a strong advocate for Native families, Senator Heitkamp’s Commission on Native Children is a crucial step toward making sure Native children get the education, health care, and support they deserve. It’s also deeply appropriate the bill is named after the late Alyce Spotted Bear. As a lifelong educator, Alyce was dedicated to the cultural standard of caring for our children. This Commission would continue her great work.”

-- Tex Hall, Chairman, Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation

“We consider children as sacred gifts. Every child is a whole person with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. We strongly support Senator Heitkamp’s Commission on Native Children bill as a vital step in creating the assurance that our children receive the education, health care, protection, and support they deserve. Furthermore, in these times in our history, there is an even greater need for educated, dedicated adults to serve as advocates for our children in juvenile justice programs and for proper protection of each individual child. Our children are the future hope for our nation – this bill will help us give them every opportunity to do well.”

-- Richard McCloud, Chairman, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

“We greatly appreciate Senator Heitkamp’s continued leadership and commitment to highlight the significant need among Native American populations. Her Commission on Native Children legislation, which we whole-heartedly support, only continues that mission. This Commission would help bring to light the many issues facing Native children such as higher rates of health disparities, juvenile incarceration, and the critical need for child protection and foster care services among our people. The identification of best practices and solutions to help Native children gain the foothold they deserve to grow and succeed are paramount to this effort. This Commission will greatly help Spirit Lake Nation’s children in foster care as we continue to try to build an environment where our children can prosper.”

-- Leander “Russ” McDonald, Chairman, Spirit Lake Dakota Nation

“It is my privilege to express the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s unequivocal support for the formation of a Commission on Indian Children. As you know, Native children, our future, are the most at risk population in the United States. Facing obstacles that would challenge even resilient adults, our children welcome the exploration of solutions, by the Commission, to problems such as substandard education, deficient healthcare, substance abuse, and poverty. Thank you for taking the initiative to establish a Commission on Indian Children.”

--Dave Archambault II, Chairman, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

“There is not a better champion for Native Americans, particularly Native children, than Senator Heitkamp. Growing up just miles from our reservation, she understood at a young age the challenges facing Native children, and has worked tirelessly to help tribal nations to find solutions. It is fitting that her first bill as a U.S. Senator will examine how we can improve the lives of Native children. This is a conversation that has long been missing in Congress. By better investing in the education, health, safety, and well-being of Native youth, it will help erase many of the disparities they too often face, while also strengthening Native communities

throughout North Dakota and the country. We believe Senator Heitkamp's legislation is a crucial step in the right direction, and look forward to working with her to get it signed into law."

-- Robert Shepherd, Chairman, Sisseton-Wahpeton Reservation

"Senator Heitkamp is a longtime champion for Indian Country and I am proud of her for taking a leadership role in making American Indian children a top priority. When I chaired the Indian Affairs Committee in the Senate, I knew that Indian children were the most at-risk population in America. I created the Center for Native American Youth to shine a light on the difficulties they face to find solutions to the challenges of teen suicide, inadequate health care, and education opportunities, and more. Senator Heitkamp's legislation is a very positive and welcome step towards ensuring that Indian children will not be overlooked by policy-makers anymore."

-- U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (ret.), founder and chairman of Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute