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42 mins ·

I rise today to speak about a group of constituents in my district that have a unique history...culture...and place in our State and which they maintain to this day. The Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa occupies the Meskwaki Settlement in Tama County along the Iowa River. Native American issues is not a topic that is covered every day by the Iowa Senate but the history of this body shows a willingness to not only embrace this Tribe and its members but to also look forward in our relationship with them.

It is true that our nation has a very difficult history with Native American Tribes, which I do not wish to dwell on, but instead I want to focus on how our State has chosen to do the right thing for the Meskwaki Nation over the past 150 years AND want to make sure that we continue to do the right thing for this community.

Overall, Native Americans represent a little over 1 percent of the entire population, so it can be easy to forget about this segment of our society. Most people across the country have never met a true Native American and in the state of Iowa the number is much smaller at less than one percent with roughly 1500 to 2000 members and descendants living in the Tama County area. Despite this small number, our state has found a way to show open arms to the one Tribe who chose to return to our State.

The original inhabitants of our state included Tribes like the Mandan and the Ioway, which were long gone by the time even Lewis and Clark moved through the Territory. These Tribes were replaced with Tribes like the Oto's who were some of our first farmers.

The Sac and Fox Tribe first moved through Iowa after migrating from Upstate New York and through Wisconsin as non-natives moved west. One of their original villages is just a few miles down the river from where we currently sit. They were eventually moved to a reservation in Oklahoma where they found the climate and land to be different from their culture and way of life.

A portion of this Tribe took a risk and came back to Iowa to purchase 80 acres along the Iowa River. Instead of being granted land by the Federal government, these tribal members purchased the land that they own and have continued this self-reliance ever since.

Governor James Grimes accepted their land into trust by the State of Iowa in 1857 and held true to this promise despite the federal government's land policy being shaped by the Homestead Act and the Dawes Act in 1887.

This progressive stance toward the Meskwaki's continued with the first in the nation Iowa Graves Protection Act in 1976 that came into law before the federal version and more recently with the development of the Meskwaki Tribal Court System in 2005 with its first case being tried in 2006. The State also recognized the tribal police and they now participate and are certified at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy.

One area where our state and country have failed Tribes across the country is in the conveyance of criminal and civil jurisdiction away from these sovereign nations. Sadly, it was the policy of this country shortly after World War II to terminate Native American Tribes. This Termination Era was sandwiched between a policy of formal recognition under the Indian Reorganization Act in 1933 and an era of self-determination under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act in 1973.

Tribes across the country, many in the Midwest such as the m uh - N AA M - uh - n ee Menominee Nation in Wisconsin and the Red Lake Band of O Jib waY (Ojibway) in Minnesota, were stripped of their status as Indians by the federal government through specific legislation that removed jurisdiction from their tribes and then eventually full recognition. Thankfully these Tribes knew that federal and state governments had no say over

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Steve Sodders - I rise today to speak about a group of...

their culture and traditions, and fought hard over 25 years to change the course of federal and state policy.

One of those Tribes also impacted is the Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa. The federal government decided in 1948 to include the Meskwaki Nation in this grouping of tribes and transferred criminal jurisdiction to the State of Iowa. This same legislative language was the precursor language for terminations seen in other states.

This 1948 Law at the Federal level needs to be repealed. We here in the State of Iowa should assist and work so that it is repealed. I will continue to work to see in what ways that Iowa can have a positive impact on this change.

Closing:

- While other states are working against the Tribes in their state, I want to make sure our state is working with our Native American community.
- We can't erase the United States history with Native Americans but we should embrace Iowa's positive history with the Meskwaki Nation.

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Steve Sodders my points on the floor of the Iowa Senate today  
40 mins



Dava James I stand with U on this, too  
37 mins