

Grace Hooke
Topsham, Maine
May 8, 2025

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Kwe, ni'n teluisi Grace Hooke, ni'n na L'nu (Hello, my name is Grace Hooke, I am Mi'kmaw). I live in Topsham and I am here today in opposition of the bills before the committee.

Firstly, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. Thank you also for the opportunity to practice Mi'kmaw. I'm learning my native language now, three generations after it was stolen. When my great grandmother first came to live in Salem, Maine. She spoke no English or French, only "indian". She came to Maine to escape the Shubenacadie Residential School, where her older siblings were. A place that banned speaking "indian" forced children to cut their hair, used children for hard labor, and made practicing any aspect of their culture a punishable offence.

While she was lucky to escape the cruelty of residential schools, soon after her arrival she was forbidden to speak her language in school and at home because it was becoming a classroom disturbance. She quickly lost her ability to speak Mi'kmaw and was not able to pass it on to my grandmother or father. I wish I had been able to speak Mi'kmaw with her.

Recently, I learned that there are no gendered pronouns in Mi'kmaw. There is only one, nekem.

"It encapsulates all the pronouns in English. There is just one in Mi'kmaw and it's not gendered. You are directly referring to that life force and that person,"¹

From time immemorial gender diverse, trans, and non-binary people have existed in this land and attempts at legislating away observable truth will not outlast peoples determination to live freely and authentically. When the US and Canadian governments discovered they could not stop Natives from being Natives what did they do? They targeted children. They legislated shame and disconnection, banned books, languages and words. And now anti-trans groups are utilizing those same strategies to target children with anti trans bathroom bills, pronoun bills, sports teams bills, etc etc. All in the name of "children's safety" just like they were trying to "kill the Indian to save the man".

I urge you to reject fascism and vote that these bills "Ought not to pass". I also want you to know I will never stop fighting for trans people to live freely and authentically. I will never accept the altered reality these bills attempt to make real.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. I urge you to vote "Ought not to Pass" on these bills.

Wela'lin (thank you),
Grace Hooke

¹ Tuma Young, 2022 Pride Ambassador for the Halifax Pride society as quoted in Global News Canada 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/8998997/pronouns-mikmaw-nova-scotia/>

