



ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE

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March 24, 2021

The Honorable John Thune
U.S. Senator - South Dakota
511 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Rounds
U.S. Senator - South Dakota
502 Senate Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Please Support the Remove the Stain Act

Dear Senator Thune and Senator Rounds:

On behalf of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, I write to request that you support the enactment of the Remove the Stain Act. This Bill will call upon the United States to withdraw the Medals issued to the Seventh Cavalry for the Massacre at Wounded Knee in December 1890.

I know that this might be a difficult request because others may suggest that you should not do so. We make this request because it is important for America to understand justice for Native Americans, and justice for Lakota people. It is important for healing for our folks and for America as a nation, with responsibilities for all American citizens.

Senator Merkley and Senator Warren are preparing to re-introduce the Remove the Stain Act to withdraw the Medals of Honor that were awarded to the Seventh Cavalry for their participation in the Wounded Knee Massacre.

The Wounded Knee Massacre is a terrible tragedy that happened in South Dakota, just after statehood. The United States of America caused the chain of events that led to the Wounded Knee Massacre and the Seventh Cavalry carried out the Massacre against our Lakota men, women and children, who had just been disarmed. There was no honor for the United States at Wounded Knee. There was only inhuman cruelty.

To pave the way for South Dakota Statehood, the United States called upon the Great Sioux Nation to cede 9 million acres from the Great Sioux Reservation, our "permanent home." That was half of our Reservation. Sitting Bull and other leaders opposed the sale of the so-called "surplus" lands and the division of our Reservation. He sang, "My nation gave me a name, so in courage I shall live." He went around his northern camp and sang every night. In Lakota, they all knew he was opposing the sale and calling upon their traditional values to join him. Vine Deloria, our famous cultural historian, writes that General Crook was at the table to let our Lakota people know that if they did not cede the lands, the United States would take them. Still only perhaps 10% of the

Lakota People agreed. Sitting Bull and 90% disagreed. The United States took the land in violation of our 1868 Treaty, which required 3/4s consent to any sale. General Crook promised our Lakota People that there would be more food, so he asked the President to increase rations. Instead, the Secretary of the Interior intervened and sent out an economic expert, who reported that Indian rations should be cut in half to provide the necessary incentive for farming. People were starving. General Crook could not keep his word.

The next year, the United States assassinated Sitting Bull for his opposition to the land sale, acting through the BIA with the backup of the U.S. Cavalry. Buffalo Bill tried to save his friend Sitting Bull, but the BIA Indian Agent stopped him and issued his own BIA arrest warrant for Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull's people fled to Cheyenne River in the wake of his murder.

At Cheyenne River, Chief Spotted Elk or Big Foot, Mnicoujou Lakota, was known for his diplomatic skills, and Chief Red Cloud had invited him down to Pine Ridge to help diffuse tension between our Oglala Lakota brethren and the United States. Some of Sitting Bull's people came to him for refuge, and he took them in. They were relatives. On their way to Pine Ridge, the reformed 7th Cavalry stopped Big Foot and the Mnicoujou Lakota at Wounded Knee, and directed them to camp overnight there. Col. Forsythe and his men encircled them with his troops and howitzers. Chief Big Foot objected and told the Colonel that he and his people would prefer to travel on to Pine Ridge but Forsythe refused despite the winter weather.

On December 29, 1890, after a bitterly cold night on the prairie, the 7th Cavalry lined the Lakota men and large boys in front of their guns at Wounded Knee and disarmed them. When one Lakota man, who was deaf, did not immediately surrender his rifle the Cavalry troops struggled with him and the gun went off, firing into the air. The 7th Cavalry murderously opened fire and massacred women, children, babies, old men and the men and large boys who were lined up in front of the guns.

Marcella LeBeau, 101, our Mnicoujou Lakota elder who served as a nurse in World War II believes that there is a pervasive sadness among our Lakota relatives, who lost their family members, because the Wounded Knee massacre has never been properly addressed.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe strongly supports the enactment of the Remove the Stain Act. As our Senators, we call upon you to co-sponsor the Remove the Stain Act, and take the necessary step to remove the medals given to the 7th Cavalry in the wake of this terrible massacre.

Please understand the meaning of this terrible tragedy among our Lakota People. Please stand with us on the right side of history, on the right side of justice. Please support this important legislation. We appreciate your leadership.

Sincerely,

President Rodney M. Bordeaux

Cc: Senator Merkley
Senator Warren