

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

MAY 17, 2000

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 1658

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RECONCILIATION PLACE

Mr. Chairman, Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and members of this distinguished United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. My name is Clarence W. Skye, the Executive Director of the United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation since 1970, except for 3 years in which I was employed by the federal government. I am honored to testify on Senate Bill 1658, calling for the establishment of the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place in Fort Pierre, South Dakota, where there is a wealth of Indian history and pioneer heritage on the Great Plains, and where the Missouri River divides the state and empties into the mighty Mississippi River.

This project is the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place that will be located on the banks of the Missouri River in the state of South Dakota, where the nomadic Teton people lived since the dawn of the white man in Europe. Many of us have forgotten what it is like to live in a tepee out on the windy plains or to live in a sod hut with no running water. We have so many conveniences today. The tourist traveling through the state can only imagine how the native peoples must have lived, hunting the buffalo for food on the grassy plains. The Sioux people are proud to have a first class cultural center constructed at Fort Pierre, South Dakota. The Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place and Economic Development Center constructed here on the Great Plains and dedicated to the Sioux people's great past will be a landmark to their effort to hold their land. The Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place is designed to be a structure to provide an education to anyone interested in the growth and development of our history. Included in Senate Bill 1658, is the Native American Development Council to assist the Sioux people in providing opportunities for business development on Indian reservations and urban Indian communities, wherever Indian people are located.

The non-Indian people need to know that our Indian people are out there working and raising families just like everyone else, but we cannot as long as there remain impediments to the Sioux people's progress in business. We need more Indian people in business around the state and in Indian Country. Mr. White Man still continues to think that Mr. Indian receives a welfare check each month from the United States Government. The thinking in South Dakota is the

same as it was in 1873, when the military tried to annihilate the Sioux people living on the plains.

The United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation was organized May 19, 1970, to resist state jurisdiction over Indian people and Indian lands and to improve the quality of life for Indian people in the state of South Dakota. The United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation has worked hard over the years to break the barriers among the non-Indian people so that our Indian men and women could seek and find employment with businesses in the private sector. The United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation is working jointly with bankers, businessmen, and other professionals, and through the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place, to educate the ignorant and find new ways to work together.

This great complex has several parts including; Judges Chambers, Law Library, Courtroom, Court Clerk Offices, a genealogical center to research family genealogy, a theater for student lectures, a story circle for children of all ages, a museum of Native American Art from the Great Plains, and a repatriation center for Indian people to decide where questionable funerary remains and artifacts of our ancestors should belong as only the Indian people can deal with the ceremonial articles of our ancestors and how the remains of our ancestors should be interred. There will be a gift shop for present day Native Americans to market their wares and other items to the tourists visiting the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place. The tourist will have an opportunity to visit the Native American culture and other cultural heritage groups that settled this great country. There are millions of dollars brought into the state of South Dakota and these tourist dollars should be shared with the Indian people. Right now, the state of South Dakota makes millions of dollars from many different businesses, but with the Native American industry from Indian people, the tax revenues should be shared with the Indian tribes. There will also be office space for the Wakpa Sica Historical Society and the United Sioux Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation, as well as a wacipi dance arena for tribal pow wows as this is a way for the Sioux people to practice their culture and catch a glimmer of the past. There are many ceremonies that are conducted by the tribes, such as the Buffalo Dance, Deer Dance, Kettle Dance, and the Fallen Feather Dance that pertains to the veterans. The different tribes will have religious meetings at the wacipi dance arena, such as the Episcopal Church Convocation meetings where church issues are discussed among the parish people from each of the reservations. The parking area must have a gravel base, so people attending the meetings will not be getting stuck due to inclement weather. The interpretive paths will have different tribal designations and some explanations of each tribe.

Everyone is excited about this project and many questions were received about the project at the recent Great Sioux Nation Conference in Rapid City, South Dakota. The majority of the questions dealt with when the cultural and economic center would be constructed. In the early years of the United Sioux

Tribes of South Dakota Development Corporation, the Sioux leaders would talk about a place where they could go to discuss the issues affecting the Indian people. For many years, the Great Sioux Nation would come together on many items for discussions and relate information about their ancestors and different customs. The Sioux people are great on tradition, but not much history is written and this would be one of the places where there is an opportunity for Indian people to relate their knowledge to young people at the cultural center. The state, tribal, and federal law enforcement people can meet and discuss new methods of training and course work that could be used in the daily work of enforcing the law.

In the past, the Sioux tribes worked together to fight state jurisdiction and cooperatively defeated PL. 280 in the state in 1963. But now, it is more important to work with the state of South Dakota to provide more effective law enforcement on the reservations and around the state. The federal government must change their thinking about Indian people by building prisons on our Indian reservations and work with reservation law enforcement to make improvements in prison life. With the Sioux Nation Supreme Court, the tribes will have input in both state and federal court systems to improve the tribal court. Most Indian people that go through state and federal court systems are shanghaied non-stop to prison. The Indian people are not given a fair deal in the state and federal courts because we have had to report on the state highway patrol profiling Indian reservations at the Lower Brule, Rosebud, Pine Ridge, and Crow Creek reservations. We know there is institutional racism in our state as well as surrounding states. We know all these problems can be discussed at meetings between the state and the tribes through the Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place. We must find other solutions to incarcerating people, because putting individuals away in some prison is not the answer. Law enforcement people must sit down with each other and develop some new methods to this growing problem. Presently, we have a Native American juvenile custody rate of 1,204 per 100,000. In comparison to non-Indians, our Native American juveniles are being locked up at 3 times the rate for non-Indians. There is discrimination in the court systems, but it must be handled properly and the Sioux Nation Supreme Court System would be able to handle those problems in conjunction with law enforcement officials.

There is so much Native American history in South Dakota that it will take years to interpret and decide which tribe has ownership over many of the cultural artifact that have been found. The Wakpa Sica Reconciliation Place will be a facility where young people can learn about Native Americans instead of the usual movies watched at local theatres concerning Indians. These same young people need to be better informed about Indian reservations and their style of life.

In 1989, the Bureau of Indian Affairs did a B.I.A./Tribal Task force on B.I.A. reorganization and in one of their reports they came up with (6) economic development centers around the country. The B.I.A. promised one to the Aberdeen area or now called the Great Plains Region and said it would be built

in Rapid City, South Dakota. Mike Jandreau, chairman of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Harold Salway, President of the Oglala Sioux tribe, our area director, and myself met with the Assistant Secretary about the economic development center. The Assistant Secretary told our group that he would support the effort in the next year's budget. This never happened and the Sioux tribes are in support of such a program because we have always been on the short end of the stick. The economic development center would be a godsend from Congress because we work very hard out here and everyone seems to ignore our efforts to gain projects for the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota people. We support the legislation for a Native American Economic Development Council for the growth and development of the Sioux Nation. Technical assistance is needed to provide the tribes with knowledge to overcome many of the barriers for financial development in a business package. It takes a lot of work and research to study the demographics for all the reservation communities. Land and road maps are necessary to provide locations for potential businesses to view before making decisions on where to locate. Qualified staff with the needed expertise to bring together the information and resources for the tribes present suitable business packages to financiers. Grant writers are a necessary function for the Economic Development Council, such as mini-grants to include with other financial resources from the private sector that are available to complete the whole business package. The Sioux Nation is always held back by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We were not included in the business development grants available to tribes in other B.I.A. areas. The Small Business Administration was not able to connect with the Sioux tribes, as they never took the step to meet with the tribal councils. SBA grants should have been by state and not to a region. Program grants awarded to other states did not encourage the Sioux tribes to be involved in the Small Business Administration Program. A lot of work must be done with the financial institutions because the Bureau of Indian Affairs Economic Development Division had poor relations with commercial lending institutions by not following through on guaranteed loan agreements. The Bureau of Indian Affairs refused to pay off their obligations to some South Dakota banks involved with guaranteed agricultural loans. There used to be over 325 Indian livestock operators on one reservation. Since the Department of Agriculture's Agri-Programs foreclosed on these Indian livestock operators, there are now only 25 left. Many of our Indian livestock operators will refuse to accept any programs from the Department of Agriculture because they seem to pester the Indian livestock operator. Since the Bureau of Indian Affairs does not have an agricultural program for the Indian livestock operators, they are forced to seek other means to make a living.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for inviting me to speak before you on Senate Bill 1658 and I hope it passes with flying colors.