

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. J. RES. 14

To acknowledge a long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes and offer an apology to all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 30, 2009

Mr. BROWNBACK (for himself, Mr. INOUE, Mr. BAUCUS, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. COBURN, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mr. TESTER) introduced the following joint resolution; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs

JOINT RESOLUTION

To acknowledge a long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes and offer an apology to all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States.

Whereas the ancestors of today's Native Peoples inhabited the land of the present-day United States since time immemorial and for thousands of years before the arrival of people of European descent;

Whereas for millennia, Native Peoples have honored, protected, and stewarded this land we cherish;

Whereas Native Peoples are spiritual people with a deep and abiding belief in the Creator, and for millennia Native

Peoples have maintained a powerful spiritual connection to this land, as evidenced by their customs and legends;

Whereas the arrival of Europeans in North America opened a new chapter in the history of Native Peoples;

Whereas while establishment of permanent European settlements in North America did stir conflict with nearby Indian tribes, peaceful and mutually beneficial interactions also took place;

Whereas the foundational English settlements in Jamestown, Virginia, and Plymouth, Massachusetts, owed their survival in large measure to the compassion and aid of Native Peoples in the vicinities of the settlements;

Whereas in the infancy of the United States, the founders of the Republic expressed their desire for a just relationship with the Indian tribes, as evidenced by the Northwest Ordinance enacted by Congress in 1787, which begins with the phrase, “The utmost good faith shall always be observed toward the Indians”;

Whereas Indian tribes provided great assistance to the fledgling Republic as it strengthened and grew, including invaluable help to Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their epic journey from St. Louis, Missouri, to the Pacific Coast;

Whereas Native Peoples and non-Native settlers engaged in numerous armed conflicts in which unfortunately, both took innocent lives, including those of women and children;

Whereas the Federal Government violated many of the treaties ratified by Congress and other diplomatic agreements with Indian tribes;

Whereas the United States forced Indian tribes and their citizens to move away from their traditional homelands and onto federally established and controlled reservations, in accordance with such Acts as the Act of May 28, 1830 (4 Stat. 411, chapter 148) (commonly known as the “Indian Removal Act”);

Whereas many Native Peoples suffered and perished—

(1) during the execution of the official Federal Government policy of forced removal, including the infamous Trail of Tears and Long Walk;

(2) during bloody armed confrontations and massacres, such as the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864 and the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890; and

(3) on numerous Indian reservations;

Whereas the Federal Government condemned the traditions, beliefs, and customs of Native Peoples and endeavored to assimilate them by such policies as the redistribution of land under the Act of February 8, 1887 (25 U.S.C. 331; 24 Stat. 388, chapter 119) (commonly known as the “General Allotment Act”), and the forcible removal of Native children from their families to faraway boarding schools where their Native practices and languages were degraded and forbidden;

Whereas officials of the Federal Government and private United States citizens harmed Native Peoples by the unlawful acquisition of recognized tribal land and the theft of tribal resources and assets from recognized tribal land;

Whereas the policies of the Federal Government toward Indian tribes and the breaking of covenants with Indian tribes have contributed to the severe social ills and economic troubles in many Native communities today;

1 (1) recognizes the special legal and political re-
2 lationship Indian tribes have with the United States
3 and the solemn covenant with the land we share;

4 (2) commends and honors Native Peoples for
5 the thousands of years that they have stewarded and
6 protected this land;

7 (3) recognizes that there have been years of of-
8 ficial depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the
9 breaking of covenants by the Federal Government
10 regarding Indian tribes;

11 (4) apologizes on behalf of the people of the
12 United States to all Native Peoples for the many in-
13 stances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect in-
14 flicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United
15 States;

16 (5) expresses its regret for the ramifications of
17 former wrongs and its commitment to build on the
18 positive relationships of the past and present to
19 move toward a brighter future where all the people
20 of this land live reconciled as brothers and sisters,
21 and harmoniously steward and protect this land to-
22 gether;

23 (6) urges the President to acknowledge the
24 wrongs of the United States against Indian tribes in

1 the history of the United States in order to bring
2 healing to this land; and

3 (7) commends the State governments that have
4 begun reconciliation efforts with recognized Indian
5 tribes located in their boundaries and encourages all
6 State governments similarly to work toward recon-
7 ciling relationships with Indian tribes within their
8 boundaries.

9 (b) DISCLAIMER.—Nothing in this Joint Resolu-
10 tion—

11 (1) authorizes or supports any claim against
12 the United States; or

13 (2) serves as a settlement of any claim against
14 the United States.

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