

Dear Editor,

With the much need it attention in the media on how the State of South Dakota violates the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), I would like to remind readers how vital this struggle is to our tribes and future generations.

Recently, a summit took place in Rapid City, SD, that shed light on this important issue. Judge William A. Thorne conducted a presentation that gave us greater insight and statistics. Thorne's presentation showed with

12 month's of a study that was conducted 54.4 percent of children was diagnosed with a disorders, with 25.2 percent having Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), which is twice the rate of Vietnam Veterans. 16.8 percent are on public assistance, 33.2 percent live below the poverty level, and 33 percent have no health insurance.

I would like to offer readers another statistic that was not touched on, probably for political reasons. The State of South Dakota houses 29 percent of Native American prisoners, which is the highest percentage of Native Americans incarcerated in the USA. Many readers need to know that the majority of Native Americans currently incarcerated today were processed through abusive adoption homes, through discriminatory juvenile correctional facilities, and finally on to South Dakota's prison system. Even, here the abuse continues through religious violations, discrimination, and lack of educational opportunities. When

I hear these stories and when I experience them first hand, I think about our grandparents and their abusive experiences in the Indian Boarding Schools. I wonder how much culture, language, and knowledge of our ancestors been lost in these boarding schools? I wonder how much been lost in the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota behind the walls?

Maybe, if this summit took place a decade ago, would there be as many of Native Americans incarcerated today? With the wealth of information gathered during this summit, I hope and pray we can research the total effects of the (ICWA) violations, including the prison system in South Dakota. We can together stop the mothers, grandparents, and tribes from losing our most precious resource, our children.

I would also like to remind readers that our ancestors believed in a sacred word that brings us back to our centers, and the sacred teachings of the (Great Spirit), "Mitakuye Oyasin". (We are all related). Regardless of our labels in this life or our status, we are all related. This thought process and spiritual contract to one another and all humans' needs to be instilled within us again.

In conclusion, I am looking for an advocate to help me find solutions and properly address my concerns. You can contact me at the address shown below.

Respectfully,
Robert A. Horse #13466
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TO THE EDITOR ~