

CHAIRMAN WILLIAM J. BLIND
33RD BUSINESS COMMITTEE
SO. CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES
PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS, April 14, 2004

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EL RENO, OKLAHOMA

On behalf of the So. Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, we are here to make a very important announcement.

Today, we have filed with the Department of Interior, a petition regarding what we believe to be some very valid claims to lands and water resources in Colorado. We wish to negotiate a fair, quick and equitable resolution with the federal government for the placement of a relatively small tract of land into trust for economic development purposes. If left unresolved, these Claims are expected to increasingly cloud title to land and water rights in the state for years.

The So. Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes are originally from what is now known as the State of Colorado. In the late 1800's we were forcibly removed from Colorado by the United States government, and relocated here, in Oklahoma. Our ancestors were taken from their homelands, leaving behind some very important cultural and spiritual connections in the vast area that we still refer to as our homeland. Today, Colorado mountains, streams and valleys are known to many of our elders by their original Cheyenne and Arapaho names.

Reclaiming land in Colorado will serve to assist the So. Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in their social needs: health, education, community and economic development; all of which are needed tremendously. The Homecoming Project will serve both the Tribes and Colorado well. Colorado will benefit economically from our presence through employment opportunities and more.

The Claims outline a sad brutal history. They demonstrate that the Nations entrusted themselves to the United States during a time of unlawful settlement on our land. While under the guardianship of the United States, the Government began a documented, forced and systematic removal of the Nations from Colorado following the discovery of gold. Undisputed facts show a deliberate plan of genocide that sought to destroy the Nations as functioning sovereign entities through their removal and through the massacre of women, children and many tribal leaders. Once the Nations were deliberately disabled with respect to the United States, the Government used invalid treaty processes to remove the Nations out of the state. As a result, the Nations still enjoy title and possess valid claims to 27 million acres of land and water rights in eastern Colorado.

The Claims are further supported by dynamic, new developments in the areas of international law, the law governing the United States' role as fiduciary and guardian, significant Colorado Supreme Court rulings validating similar land claims, and recent

admissions by the United States of facts constituting the continuing disability of the Nations.

I would like to emphasize that the Claims do not seek reparations for the events at Sand Creek and do not affect the claims of any individuals relating to that tragedy.

The Tribal Council, of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, on October 4th, 2003, by a vote of 227 for and 4 opposed, supported the reclaiming of those very same lands in the State of Colorado for the purposes of conducting economic activities.

In closing, the 33rd Business Committee of the So. Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes have the obligation to carry out that mandate of the Tribal Council. We are prepared and are committed to seeing to it that the Business Committee's obligations are fulfilled and that this project is completed. We are hopeful that the petition will be a useful tool in reaching a settlement that is reasonable and fair for all parties involved.