



October 11, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On Friday, October 8, 2021, President Joe Biden issued a proclamation commemorating Indigenous Peoples' Day, becoming the first President of the United States to do so. On a day that celebrates the many contributions my fellow Native Americans have made to our great country, including the highest rate of military service of any group of U.S. citizens, a legacy of sorrow and suffering still hangs over us all.

Therefore, on behalf of the Wounded Knee Massacre Descendants, I am compelled to remind our nation's leaders, and all Americans, that we still carry the pain of what happened on December 29, 1890, when women and children were murdered by U.S. Cavalry. Making the agony of that horrific day worse was the awarding of twenty Medals of Honor to the soldiers who committed those atrocities.

I must respectfully request and, indeed, insist on behalf of the Wounded Knee Massacre Descendants, and on behalf of all Americans who believe in justice, fairness, and truth, that you join your colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives; and that you take a formal vote on the floor of the U.S. Senate to include the Remove the Stain Act as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, and to do so before what will be the 131st anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29, 2021.

During House consideration of the NDAA, Congressman Kai Kahele of Hawaii offered an amendment that, "Rescinds twenty Medals of Honor awarded to the members of the United States army for killing hundreds of unarmed Lakota women, children and men on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, which later became known as the Wounded Knee Massacre."

The Kahele "Remove the Stain" amendment passed by voice vote. Not a single member of the U.S. House of Representatives was willing to go on record in opposition to this long-overdue recognition of the brutalities that were inflicted on defenseless women and children on that infamous day.

Congressman Kahele, who is an indigenous American, a veteran of the U.S. Military, and who is still active in the Reserves, honored all Americans by offering his amendment on the floor of the House, for all Americans to witness. That action is now a permanent and positive part of the



history of the Wounded Knee Massacre. The students of Wounded Knee school, and their fellow students across the country, the 7th generation, can now know the real truth of what happened on that day. We are eternally grateful to Congressman Kahele.

We are aware that the Remove the Stain Act was not included in the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act. It is as if we are still having to face opposition to rescission of the wrongly awarded Medals by the ghosts of those soldiers who committed the cold-blooded massacre at Wounded Knee. Inaction makes us relive the horrors of that day.

The U.S. Senate now has an opportunity to be on the right side of history even though 130 years have passed. That is why we respectfully request that you to bring this issue into the public square and sunlight and vote on the floor of the U.S Senate. Let's not hide in the shadows to defend the ghosts of the past and their sins against our ancestors.

We are decades, indeed more than a century, past the point where this issue needs to be "studied." A massacre is a massacre. Murder of women and children is murder, no matter the historical context. As then Commanding General of the United States Army, General, Nelson Miles wrote in a contemporaneous and confidential letter that is on file at Yale University, that **"the wholesale massacre occurred, and I have never heard of a more brutal, cold-blooded massacre than that at Wounded Knee."**

None of the descendants of the soldiers who were wrongly awarded those medals has come forward in opposition to the Remove the Stain Act. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with them and to heal together. We would introduce them to Wounded Knee Massacre Descendants of Richard Afraid of the Hawk, who survived the massacre when he was 13 years old and asked the Congress to remove the wrongfully awarded medals in 1934. His son Daniel Afraid of the Hawk, before he passed, passed on the stories of what happened on that fateful day to his daughter, Marlis Afraid of the Hawk, who has passed on the stories to her four children and twenty-four grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This great family now carries that pain, a pain that is made many times worse knowing that the soldiers who committed the mass murder of the people at Wounded Knee Creek continue to be honored as heroes by the country they love.

Marcella LeBeau, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, a great American, who will turn 102 years old on October 12, 2021, and who served with the 76th General Hospital Unit in England, France, and Belgium has made it her life's mission to right this egregious wrong. During D-Day, Marcella landed at Utah Beach, and treated the wounded service members, and served in Paris, France, where she was temporarily assigned to a hospital in the city, known to the American Army as the 108th General Hospital. The Belgian government awarded her a medal of honor during wartime. In June 2004, she was chosen as one of the 100 United States WW II Veterans to receive the French Legion of Honor Medal.

Marcella has stated the following: "A pervasive sadness exists on the Cheyenne River Reservation, the home of many descendants of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. There has never been closure to the sad and horrible massacre where innocent, unarmed men, women, and children were massacred under a white flag of truce."



Manny Iron Hawk is a direct descendant of Ghost Horse. Ghost Horse did not survive the Wounded Knee Massacre nor did his son; but his daughter, Alice Ghost Horse War Bonnet survived at age twelve and later in life had a child named Goldie War Bonnet Iron Hawk. Goldie War Bonnet has passed on the tragic events of Wounded Knee to Manny, and he has prepared his daughters, Claudia Iron Hawk and Michon Shaving, to carry on the story after his passing and they, in turn, are preparing Manny's twenty-four grandchildren and first great-grandchild, so that they can keep the oral history alive into future generations.

The Descendants have support to remove those Medals of Honor awarded for the Wounded Knee Massacre from Jeffrey H. Hotchkiss, whose ancestors invented Hotchkiss guns used during the Wounded Knee Massacre. Mr. Hotchkiss has shown his support by writing to the Honorable Representative Adam Smith, Chairman, Honorable Representative Mike Rogers, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee, Senator Jack Reed, Chairman, Senator James Inhofe, Ranking Member Senate Armed Services Committee, asking for the Medal of Honor awards to be removed.

The Descendants also have the support from Brad Upton, a 5th generation descendent of United States Army Colonel James William Forsyth, and whose great grandfather was John Mosby Bacon; both Forsyth and Bacon were at the Wounded Knee Massacre. Through the media, Mr. Upton has made his support to remove the Medal of Honor awards from the soldiers at the Wounded Knee Massacre publicly known.

These are all real people and great Americans, who want only for the country they love to be honest about what happened at the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29, 1890, and continues to inflict very real pain and suffering on them and our country. The Descendants, with moral courage and facts on their side, are simply petitioning the United States for redress of this grievous wrong. We have also attached a 4.5-minute video that underscores the Descendants petition for redress.

It is within your power to right this grave injustice. Please honor all Americans by voting to include the Remove the Stain Act through a floor amendment to the NDAA this year. Please do not let another solemn anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre occur without properly acknowledging and redressing what happened on that tragic day.

Vote aye or just remain silent when the Remove the Stain Act amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act is brought to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Respectfully,

Oliver Semans Sr.

Veteran United States Navy
Co-Executive Director Four Directions Native Vote