



For Immediate Release

May 23, 2024 - Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe

In regards to fostering relationships with Tribal Nations, within the borders of South Dakota, it starts by understanding that we are all different nations. Flandreau being formed from exiles from the Dakota War of 1862, who after the signing of the Fort Laramie Treaty, converted to Christianity and took to agriculture as a way of survival. Our history much different from that of our fellow tribal nations.

It is unrealistic to believe that one person should know every facet of our culture or vice versa and we certainly do not expect any Governor to be a guru of Native American history, philosophy or to have an appreciation for our way of life. However, when choosing a secretary, whose sole purpose is to develop and foster relationships between the nine tribes and the State of South Dakota, isn't cultivating the advancement of diplomatic government-to-government partnerships; it's time to examine the effectiveness of this office. On Monday, we were shocked to learn that our delegation's meeting with Governor Noem was the first of its kind.

Secretary Flute of the State's Department of Tribal Relations was appointed to this position over 5 years ago. Our expectation of this office is to conduct itself in a manner that exemplifies its mission statement. As of today, two seats remain open on the Secretary's Indian Education Advisory Board, one seat belonging and unknown to the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe.

There are many areas where cooperation is essential between the nine tribal nations and the state, two of which relate to the comments made by the Governor; Education and Law Enforcement. In regards to the Governor's comments on the educational challenges of Native American children, you would think that someone would have informed her of the state's data that clearly shows, where there is diversity in the state's school districts, the ability of that district to meet the needs of all students regardless of race, declines significantly, while labeling children as disadvantaged and receiving state and federal funding for their efforts to educate our labeled children.

In terms of law enforcement, our tribal police department works cooperatively with city, county & state police departments to ensure that our communities are safe. One of our fellow tribal nation's leaders describe the sheer differences between the numbers of law enforcement officers in Rapid City vs. the numbers on their tribal nation; a disparity not mentioned in the governor's comments.

In light of the recent expulsion bans, with Governor Noem at the center of the nine tribe's displeasure, we must join others in asking who is advising the governor. It clearly seems that the wrong advice has been given.

We would like to reiterate that our meeting with the Governor this past Monday, was a model of cordiality, respect and productivity, which only a face to face meeting can deliver.

The Governor providing this written statement to our Executive Council:

*"It was never my intent to cause offense by speaking truth to the real challenges that are being faced in some areas of Indian country. I want to focus on solutions that lead to safer communities for all our families, better educational outcomes for all of our children, and declining addiction numbers for all of our people. It is my hope that the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe will give us the opportunity to partner together in a way that can be an example for all."*

President Reider adding his thoughts:

*"The far left wing and the far right wing are very far apart and don't realize they belong to the same bird. We all need to work together and as native people, we believe it all stems from the heart, which lies in the center of the bird. When you get too far from the center the balance is thrown off.*

*We need to come back to the center, find that balance by working cooperatively and respectfully with one another. Building a model that transcends our respective borders and if allowed to flourish, has the potential to unify a divided nation and provide a better life for all our citizens."*