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Bryan V. Brewer
(Tatanka Luta Hoksila)
PRESIDENT

April 29, 2013

Mr. Bruce Loudermilk
GPRO Regional Director
115 4th Avenue, SE
Aberdeen, SD 57401

Dear Mr. Loudermilk,

As a steering committee member for the upcoming BIA-sponsored summit on Lakota foster care, and as a tribal leader who has participated in planning this watershed event from its beginnings in January of this year, I wish to express my strong support for the position taken by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe concerning the summit agenda. Now there are two weeks left before the summit occurs, and had the concerns of Standing Rock been honored by the BIA when they were first put forth two weeks ago by Terry Yellow Fat, ICWA director for SRST, it seems to me that there would have been ample time to make the important changes requested.

I agree with Jesse Taken Alive, the chairman for the Health, Education, and Welfare Committee for Standing Rock, that we tribes have to be aggressive in challenging the decades, indeed centuries, of abuse that we have experienced at the hands of state-run social services organizations. The fact that tens of millions of federal dollars flow annually into South Dakota state coffers to provide services to our foster and adoptive children, while the Department of Social Services regularly ignores ICWA, is an inexcusable scenario. It is true that our tribes must improve certain aspects of our handling of ICWA—but we can only do so much when our child welfare programs are funded by the federal government at a fraction of the level that South Dakota's are.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe, like the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, is very eager to develop a direct relationship with the federal government when it comes to the provision of

foster care services for our children. We are unique among the South Dakota Sioux tribes in that we already have a contract with the state that transfers monies to us so that we can provide foster care and adoptive services for children taken on our reservation. However, we are not funded at the levels that South Dakota is, in part because our federal monies flow through the state before reaching us. We would prefer that our funding not pass through the hands of the state. For it to do so only provides an opportunity for our children to become a source of income for agencies essentially foreign to us. We Sioux tribes constitute a sovereign nation, and we must assert ourselves when it comes to foster care and adoption policy.

The upcoming BIA-sponsored summit is the fruit of much work by tribal members and NGO's, in addition to the BIA—and many of the tribal leaders and NGOs to which I refer have made substantial sacrifices to shine a light on the travesty of state-run foster care in South Dakota. We Oglala's appreciate the BIA's work to make this summit happen, but we believe that our nine tribes, and our NGO allies, must also lead when it comes to the content represented at the summit to lawmakers and the public at large.

Therefore, I and my tribe's ICWA office support fully Standing Rock's several demands concerning the agenda for the upcoming summit. If it is now too late for these demands to be met, we will join Standing Rock in supplementing the BIA's agenda by hosting our own events during the evenings of the three days during which the summit will run. We hope that the BIA will affirm this as an effort to enhance, rather than detract, from the main goals of the summit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan V. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bryan V. Brewer
Oglala Sioux Tribe