



Native American Rights Fund

“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.” - Chief Seattle

April 13, 2005

Dear XXXXXXXXXX,

My name is John E. Echohawk. I am Pawnee, a lawyer, and co-founder of the Native American Rights Fund. I am writing to you today because I need your help to fight the battles that can make the difference in determining if the children of Native American families will grow up healthy and productive or have to continue to battle just to survive as our ancestors did.

Suppose the government of the United States took your land, lost or stole your money, and broke virtually every promise it ever made to you...Suppose your rights, *your constitutionally guaranteed rights*, were being violated every day...Suppose you were a member of the poorest, most underserved, most discriminated against population in the country.

What would you do to get justice?

For Native Americans like me, the suppositions I've described above are real, as is the steadfast longing for justice.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (which began in 1824 as the Office of Indian Affairs in the Department of War) and the Indian nations signed hundreds of treaties with the U.S. government in good faith.

The hands of the government that were supposed to safeguard Native rights, protect and preserve natural rights for subsistence and embrace the traditional Indian way of life instead turned tribes away. One after another, the treaties were violated.

Every tribe in the United States, by treaty and by law, is a sovereign nation, and the government is supposed to deal with those tribes on a nation-to-nation basis. Yet for centuries, this country has evaded Indian self-determination by illegally legislating away the rights of tribes and terminating our sovereignty almost at will.

Assimilation policies were designed to do away with our culture, our religion, our laws, our governments, our homes, our Native souls and spirits.

To find justice today, the only viable option for Native Americans is to petition federal, state and local governments to enforce the laws, treaties and promises made through their own courts of law.

To win justice, Native Americans need an organization of advocates who truly understand what rights have been denied to Native people and who have the knowledge, the expertise, *and the passion* to fight for those rights throughout the country. That organization is the Native American Rights Fund (NARF).

By using their expertise in Indian law to establish case law and set precedents, NARF attorneys and staff give back personal meaning to what is right for those who

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benefit from our services and dedication. At NARF, we believe that each case we take on serves a greater need to our society by making it clear that the promises made to Native Americans are still valid and relevant. We believe that our clients deserve representation that can lead them to realizing their dreams for the future.

Over the past thirty four years since NARF was founded there has been more Indian litigation than in the previous two hundred years...and NARF is proud to say that it has been involved in most of the major cases during that time, involving:

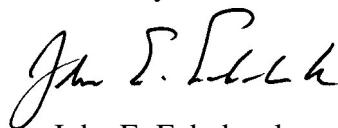
1. Billions of dollars being lost or stolen from Native American bank accounts...money that was supposed to be held in trust by the federal government.
2. Unsettled land and water rights claims, some dating back centuries that have been stonewalled by federal, state and local governments.
3. Ongoing tribal recognition battles from Alaska to Hawaii, from Massachusetts to Indiana, from New York to New Orleans.
4. Fighting for better education for our young people...or land for our elders to return to after having been denied their homelands for so long.

There are no easy answers to many of the conflicts we face, but NARF battles on, often against unbelievable odds because with the help of caring people like you, we know we will prevail and win justice for our clients.

I invite you to join with us as an active advocate for Native American rights. As a first step to this call to action, please visit our website at www.narf.org and register to become a part of our E-Action Network. This will help us achieve another very important part of our mission -- promoting the ongoing development of Indian law and educating the public about Indian rights, legislation and issues.

I leave you with this one thought. The Native American Rights Fund asks for nothing more...and will accept nothing less...than the United States government keeping the promises it has made to Native Americans. Please join us in this noble cause.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Echohawk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

John E. Echohawk
Executive Director