

No Broken Spoke in Our Sacred Hoop

by Debra White Plume, writing from the banks of Wounded Knee Creek in 1851 Ft. Laramie Treaty Territory a.k.a. Pine Ridge, SD

A Sacred Mountain near Sturgis, SD is being desecrated by Jay Allen, owner of Broken Spoke Saloons in four states. His construction of the "Sturgis County Line" is protested by American Indians from 30 Nations, many Meade County residents, Christian churches, environmental groups, and bikers.

On April 4, a protest march by 500 people who oppose Allen's development, began with a prayer at Bear Butte, and traveled through town, closing down Highway 34. Five hundred people at the Meade County Commissioners' hearing opposed Allen's liquor application. Five people supported it. All five are on his payroll. The commissioners approved his application for a beer/wine license. County residents responded by initiating a petition drive calling for a referendum vote. The commissioners refused the petition. Attorneys filed lawsuits asking the court for a decision regarding the commissioners' denial of the petition for a referendum vote. Tribal Nations, including my tribe, the Oglala Lakota, may file more lawsuits. Motions in that lawsuit will be argued on June 30.

The Gathering of Nations to Defend Bear Butte, opening on July 4, sponsored by the Intertribal Coalition to Defend Bear Butte, Bring Back the Way, Black Hills Sioux Nation Treaty Council, and other organizations, will bring Native Nations from the four directions to discuss protection of sacred places throughout "North America." We founded the Intertribal Coalition to Defend Bear Butte to fight for our Sacred Mountain and Way of Life. Opposing Allen's and Lippold's development is part of that fight.

The "Rally" is not popular in South Dakota, contrary to the claim of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally website that residents support the annual Motorcycle Rally of half-a-million bikers. Residents are sick of mounds of rally trash, people urinating in ditches, drunken drivers. They said the bar owners rake in millions while taxpayers pay for the cleanup. I'm not anti-biker, just repeating what residents said! As Native People, we oppose the liquor licenses based on the inappropriate location. All over the US, laws govern the treatment of churches, synagogues, hospitals, schools. That's all we want: the same respect given to Bear Butte and our Way of Life that is shown to the rest of America. This can be accomplished by a buffer zone around Bear Butte. Such a law is probably necessary, because developers and county commissioners haven't shown enough sense to keep the area pristine, Bear Butte is a State Park, after all, and a National Historic Site.

On SD Public Radio, Sheriff Merwin, Meade County, said a buffer zone will stop the encroachment on Bear Butte. The public record exposes Jay Allens' lack of sense-he just sees money! At the hearings, residents spoke of the growth of Allen's greed beyond attainment of a larger profit, rather he has taken his property rights to the level of oppressing county residents and Native Nations who pray at Bear Butte. Meade County Commissioners decisions are their participation in the oppression. Many said the license fee of \$500,000. guide the commissioners: look at the 60 bars and liquor stores in this area of 6,000 residents.

Geographically, Bear Butte is in the Black Hills territory of the 1851 and 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaties between the Lakota, ("Great Sioux Nation"), Cheyenne, Arapaho and the United States. The Treaty was violated when gold was "discovered" in the Black Hills. The US Supreme Court said the taking of the Black Hills was the ripest, rankest case of land theft in the history of the US. The illegal 1889 Allotment Act opened up Treaty land to homesteaders, some of whom "squatted" on Bear Butte, who eventually sold "their" land to the state. Bear Butte is in our Creation Stories, which teaches us the Black Hills is our Sacred Hoop. This is our Inalienable Right to pray and live our Way of Life there, it motivates our opposition to such development. We don't want another Broken Spoke in our Sacred Hoop.

Destruction near Bear Butte includes the expansion of Gary Lippold's Glencoe Campground for a 30,000 seat amphitheatre two miles from Bear Butte. The commissioners

approved his liquor license, and were paid \$500,000. The Full Throttle Saloon is building 110 dry cabins. The state is planning a new road near Bear Butte, which will increase noise and traffic, and will uncover a Ute Burial Ground. It's unknown if the new Sturgis County Line exit will require road expansion. Common sense says it will, as Allen is expecting 70,000 bikers.

In view of these development projects, a buffer zone around Bear Butte seems like a solution. Property owners maintain they can build a bar where they want to, they have a "right" to have a liquor license. It's not a right, it's a privilege. Who will determine that Bear Butte State Park, and Bear Butte Lake, a Wildlife Refuge, are worthy of an environment of integrity?

The Glencoe expansion sprawls to the edges of the Lake. Lippold says his effort creates a class act environment for his customers; we feel it disregards the environment of Bear Butte, the Lake, the Wildlife, and the Indigenous Peoples affected; we feel it as the effect of genocide. The desecration of our Sacred Mountain is the destruction of an integral part of our Way of Life, violating our Human Rights. Without our Way of Life, who are we?

Following the Meade County Commissioners May 2 decision to approve Gary Lippold's Glencoe liquor license, Bear Butte International Alliance did another petition drive asking for a referendum vote. Unable to gather enough signatures, the response reflected fear by some residents. The June 9 decision by the commissioners to approve Allen's hard liquor license has prompted them to do another petition drive. Across America would there be outrage at encroachment of a church, synagogue, school, or hospital?

We ask all bikers to stand with us in our fight to protect Bear Butte by resisting the temptation to come near the Sacred Mountain during the Sturgis Rally, we are praying there and having school there and receiving healing there. The noise from half a million bikes at Jay Allen's Sturgis County Line and Gary Lippold's Glencoe Campground (not to mention the concerts they will be having) will dominant the environment, hurting our attempts to live our Way of Life. If these business owners do not make such a large profit-perhaps they will close down. Maybe that is the answer-maybe the bikers have to close them down by not frequenting their establishments.

In Sturgis, SD, the commissioners did not hear ranchers, farmers, town and country folk express their opposition to development around Bear Butte! They did not hear Lakota and Northern Cheyenne Spiritual Leaders! They did not hear the Tribal Nations that own land there! Is this a rogue government? They didn't bat an eyelash when it became apparent, at the April 4 and May 2 hearings, that nine out of ten of the American Indian men who testified, are US Armed Forces veterans, many highly decorated, many carrying battle wounds, and irreversible health conditions from exposure to chemical warfare. They didn't respect the Warriors, Medicine Men, Traditional Chiefs, or their own voters. They said they didn't hear any testimony as to why they should deny the licenses! How will they react to a ruling at the upcoming court hearing if it is not in their favor? Will the SD governor ever take notice of this turmoil? Will SD Games, Fish, and Parks ever heed this destruction? What will it take to protect our Sacred Mountain? What will it take to stop the building of another Broken Spoke in our Sacred Hoop?