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The Morning Star

NORTHERN CHEYENNE TRIBAL COUNCIL

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December 23, 2025

VIA E-MAIL & U.S. MAIL

William Kirkland
Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Indian Affairs
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Assistant Secretary Kirkland:

On behalf of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council, I, Melissa Fisher, Sergeant-at-Arms for the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council, write to respond to recent communications you have received from Jennifer H. Weddle dated December 12 and December 18, 2025, and to respectfully request clarification regarding the Department's current posture toward governance and recognition issues within the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

First, the Council must correct the record. The assertions in Ms. Weddle's emails—that "all Northern Cheyenne Tribe processes are complete," that governance has returned to "normal," and that the October 30 election resolves all issues—are legal conclusions advanced by counsel for one faction. They do not resolve the core constitutional questions the Council has repeatedly presented to Indian Affairs: whether lawfully elected Council members were removed pursuant to the Northern Cheyenne Constitution, whether lawful vacancies existed, and whether the subsequent election was constitutionally authorized. Those questions remain unanswered by the Bureau even though the answers are clearly obvious.

Second, the Council is deeply concerned that Ms. Weddle's correspondence appears to be treated as authoritative despite the fact that the Tribal Council never approved a resolution authorizing an attorney contract with Ms. Weddle or her firm, nor has the Council approved any line-item budget for her compensation. The Council's understanding is that no such authorization exists. Under these circumstances, Ms. Weddle's communications purporting to speak for the Tribe raise serious concerns, and the Council respectfully requests that DOI/BIA not perpetuate this situation by acknowledging or relying upon correspondence from counsel who lacks Council authorization.

Third, Ms. Weddle's request that BIA "resume regular review and approval" of resolutions at the request of President Gene Small and the installed council underscores why the Council continues to demand a written interim recognition determination. Resuming approvals for one faction, without a reasoned explanation addressing *Goodface v. Grassrope* and the IBIA interim-

LITTLE WOLF AND MORNING STAR – Out of defeat and exile they led us back to Montana and won our Cheyenne homeland that we will keep forever.

recognition cases, would amount to recognition in practice and would further undermine the Department's stated neutrality posture. The Council therefore reiterates its request for a written determination identifying which governing body DOI/BIA recognizes for federal purposes pending lawful tribal resolution, with an explanation sufficient to permit administrative review.

Fourth, the Council must address process and fairness concerns. It is the Council's understanding that President Gene Small and Mr. Scott Davis have been personal friends for a number of years. While the Council makes no allegation of misconduct, it would feel more confident in the integrity and neutrality of the Department's handling of this matter if Mr. Davis were not involved in any way in decisions or communications relating to Northern Cheyenne governance during this dispute.

Fifth, the Council respectfully requests equal access. Unlike President Small, the Council does not have funds to travel to Washington, D.C. or Las Vegas for in-person meetings. The Council therefore asks for a meeting with you in Lame Deer, Montana, or alternatively in Billings, Montana, at a mutually convenient time. Providing equal opportunity to be heard would be consistent with the Department's neutrality policy and only seems right given that the Council's current predicament arose after BIA actions that treated the Chiefs' declaration as operative and relied on representations from President Small that the Council contends were false.

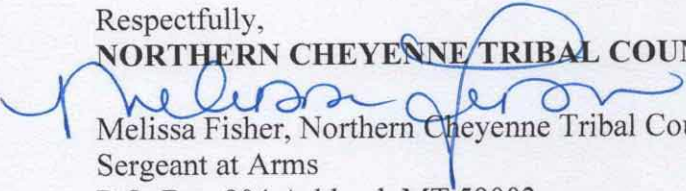
Sixth, the Council must also address a troubling implication in Ms. Weddle's correspondence that, if left uncorrected, risks misleading the Department and third parties. Ms. Weddle's emails suggest that the former Council members were "removed" due to "very serious allegations of financial fraud" and imply that those allegations justify the displacement of elected officials and recognition of a rival governing body. That implication is incorrect and must be expressly rejected. No Tribal Court, no federal court, no administrative body, and no competent tribunal has found that the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Business Council—or any individual Council member—committed theft, fraud, abuse, or any other unlawful act. To the contrary, all completed audits of federal funds and general fund monies—including CARES Act and ARPA funding—do not support any allegation of theft, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement by the Tribal Council or its members. These audits directly contradict the narrative advanced in Ms. Weddle's correspondence. No Article VII removal proceedings adjudicated any claims of financial misconduct, no due process determination exists, and no audit findings support the allegations being implied. Allegations advanced by one faction or its counsel—particularly after elected officials were forcibly removed and deprived of offices, records, and resources—do not constitute findings of fact and cannot be treated as justification for removal, vacancy creation, or recognition of a unlawful governing body.

Finally, the Council reiterates that it did not arrive at this position voluntarily. The confusion and paralysis now facing the Tribe were caused or materially escalated when BIA accepted and enforced a baseless declaration by self-styled Chiefs and acted on unverified complaints submitted by President Small and his staff/supporters, resulting in the arrest of four lawfully elected Council members and their families. Those actions conveyed a false message of legitimacy that continues to this day. The appropriate corrective step is not continued deferral, but a reasoned interim recognition determination grounded in the Northern Cheyenne Constitution and federal law.

We have sent numerous letters to the BIA concerning this matter. We trust you have received or have been apprised of all of them. If not, we would be happy to email them to you or provide you with the copies should you accept our invitation to meet.

We appreciate your attention to these matters and respectfully request a written response addressing the points above, along with confirmation of a meeting date in Montana at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,


NORTHERN CHEYENNE TRIBAL COUNCIL

Melissa Fisher, Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council

Sergeant at Arms

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