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Bad pine nut harvest predicted in Northern Nevada drought

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Aug. 16, 2012

ELY - Lingerin drought has commercial pine nut gatherers betting on a bad crop in Nevada this year.

The Bureau of Land Management said it raised only \$2,100 at its annual pinion pine nut auction in Ely on Tuesday. That's down from more than \$35,000 in 2011.

Commercial bidders speculating on the size of the crop bid the same 25 cents per pound they did last year in the Ely and Elko districts.

But they predict a harvest of only 8,400 pounds this year - a fraction of last year's 144,500 pounds.

There is no guarantee they'll be able to harvest even that much.

Commercial harvesters must allow the public to pick nuts within the sale area for personal use.

The first 25 pounds per person are free. Anything more costs 25 cents a pound.

Unique vertical Zapotec tomb found in Oaxaca Saturday, July 21st, 2012

A Zapotec tomb with a unique vertical structure has been [discovered in the Oaxacan archeological site of Atzompa](#). The three-chambered funerary complex is 1100 years old and is unlike any other Zapotec tombs discovered thus far. It was built above ground, one chamber on top of the other, whereas all other Zapotec tombs discovered to date have been under the floors of houses and palaces. Also, one of the burial chambers has some richly colored murals that refer to the Mesoamerican ballgame. Zapotec ball courts have been found before, but these are the first wall paintings with a ballgame motif discovered in a Zapotec tomb.

Atzompa was founded in the Late Classic period (650-900 A.D.) as a satellite city of the Zapotec center of Monte Albán. [According to the National Institute of Anthropology and History](#) (INAH) press release on the find, the unique architecture and artistic motifs of this tomb suggest that

Atzompa didn't just duplicate the culture of Monte Albán, but developed their own forms of cultural expression.

No human remains have been discovered so far (one of the three chambers has yet to be opened), but archaeologists believe the burial chambers must have been constructed for important personages because the complex is adjacent to the House of the Altars, a home for the town's elite who probably had connections to the mother city of Monte Albán.

The first chamber is about eight feet wide, six feet high and 15 feet deep with a vaulted ceiling. It was created with large stone slabs placed over stone walls that bear the remains of stucco decoration. It appears to have been deliberately filled in with earth and stone in antiquity.

The second chamber is 15 feet deep and just one square meter tall and wide. The roof is flat, made from stone slabs, and the walls are covered with murals frescoed over a thin stucco layer. These are the paintings depicting the ballgame. They are abstract — no human figures playing ball are depicted — but the yellow shapes that look like a capital I represent the ball court. The small white circles covered with squiggles represent the game in play. The large white circles with the black outline are probably representations of the *pelota*, i.e., the ball. The smallest back wall — the center when you're looking at the chamber from the entrance — has been damaged. Archaeologists speculate that area might have contained the name of the person buried in the tomb.

The ballgame had ritual significance in every Mesoamerican civilization which played it. It was used to solve boundary disputes, as a proxy for war. The Maya linked the game to human sacrifice, playing rigged ritual ballgames where the pre-ordained losers would be sacrificed, sometimes even sacrificing professional players. Ball courts were thus literal portals to the underworld as well as figurative ones, where the eternal cosmological struggle between life and death, dark and light, good and evil, was played out over and over.

It makes sense that the game would appear in a funerary context, therefore, and indeed it has in a number of Mesoamerican cultures. The Oaxacan Zapotecs, however, depicted priests and priestesses performing rituals or people accompanying the deceased to the underworld in their funerary paintings. It's only this one tomb that features the allegorical ballgame motif.

Archaeologists also found an offering in the second chamber consisting of small pottery vessels, a turtle bone, an engraved turtle shell, a fragment of shell that they think was the eye of a sculpture or death mask, a jade bead and a miniature *metate* (a mealing stone or mortar). The third chamber has only been observed through a small opening at this point, but archaeologists have seen a partial roof canopy and some murals. Excavation of this chamber is about to begin.

As the first chamber indicates, it seems this tomb complex was intentionally damaged in antiquity. Experts think it was a ritual destruction performed when the city was abandoned at the end of the period, between 850 and 900 A.D. after the collapse of Monte Albán power. The Zapotecs would have seen this as the end of a cycle, and since important buildings were seen as having a life of their own, they would be emptied and cancelled out to properly close the cycle.

So far only INAH experts have worked on the site. Going forward, they will enlist Harvard scientists to analyze the artifacts. The pottery and animal remains will be radiocarbon dated. The paint in the murals will be sampled so the pigments can be identified.

Posted in [Ancient Treasures](#) | [5 Comments](#) »

An Iron Age olive pit in England

Friday, July 20th, 2012

One of the neatest aspects of archaeology is how one small, seemingly pedestrian artifact can have a massive impact on our understanding of the past. Take a single olive pit, for example. It would be an entirely unremarkable find in southern Europe, no matter how old the pit was, and almost as unremarkable a find in Roman Britain. An olive pit from first century B.C. Britain, on the other hand, is a revelation.

Archaeologists from the University of Reading excavating the site of Silchester in Hampshire [found a single olive pit in an Iron Age well](#). The layer it was found in has been firmly dated to before 43 A.D., the year of the Roman invasion of Britain under the Emperor Claudius, which means that the olive made its way to Iron Age England before the Romans did. Celery and coriander seeds were also found in the same well. Taken together they indicate that Britons were enjoying Mediterranean cuisine long before they had a direct link to it.

Professor Michael Fulford, from the University of Reading's Department of Archaeology, said: "These plant foods were all cultivated in the Mediterranean region and literary evidence shows they were part of Roman cuisine. Whilst the import of olive oil and wine during the Late Iron Age is evidenced at Silchester and elsewhere throughout southern Britain, we were unaware that olive fruits and seasonings were also being imported – until now.

"Topics such as global food trade, food security and self-sufficiency may seem like issues only for the present day, but this unique discovery shows just how sophisticated Britain's trade in food and global links were, even before the Romans colonised in the first century AD.

"We take these culinary treats for granted but over 2000 years ago trade in these foodstuffs would have been essential, at least for the wealthy tribal aristocracy of Iron Age Britain. A journey to Britain from the Med would have taken several weeks, either by sea around the coasts of Spain, Portugal and France, or overland through France. This is the first olive from Iron Age Britain!"

The olive pit shows signs of charring, which may have helped it survive the next two millennia. Professor Fulford hopes they will find more olive pits indicative of a wider trade in luxury Mediterranean foods, but they could easily have rotted away.

Silchester has been a source of fascinating discoveries since the Victorian era. The site of an important Roman-era town called Calleva Atrebatum, Silchester exploded on the archaeological scene in 1866 when Reverend J.G. Joyce found a cast bronze eagle in the forum basilica between two burnt layers. He thought its exquisite detail marked it as the imperial standard of a Roman legion which had been removed from its staff and hidden in the rafters of the basilica during an attack on the city. When the basilica was burned down, the eagle went down with it. It was this

discovery and Joyce's theory about it that [inspired Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Eagle of the Ninth*](#) and ever so many sub-par movies.

Professor Fulford thinks Joyce's interpretation of the archaeological data was incorrect. According to his analysis, the two burnt layers date to the time of the basilica's construction (early second century A.D.) and from smithing fires once the building was in use. He thinks the eagle dates to the early first century A.D. and was once part of a larger statue, an attribute of the god Jupiter or a Roman emperor. A hundred years later, the eagle, now missing its wings and its deity, was incorporated into the foundations of the basilica as a sacrifice or for good luck.

Speaking of sacrifices, an unusual number of complete dog skeletons have been found buried in Silchester since Fulford's University of Reading teams began excavating in 1997. They appear to have been buried deliberately over a span of two centuries, sometimes very carefully positioned. Three of them are of two dogs buried together, one of a dog buried with a human infant, and one of a dog standing up. Earth was packed in around his feet and legs to ensure he remained in that posture in the grave. We don't know if they were sacrificed or buried after natural death.

Last year they discovered yet another dog burial, this one of a tiny toy dog only 11 inches (29 centimeters) high at the shoulder. It was not a puppy but a full-grown lapdog, likely another luxury import from the continent. It was discovered buried in a natural resting posture in the foundations of a large Iron Age house, a house that is at least 164 feet long (50 meters) and may turn out to be the largest Iron Age building ever discovered in Britain. The owner must have been a highly prominent citizen, possibly the chief. Again, archaeologists can't tell if the dog was killed deliberately as a sacrifice or it just died in time to be buried in the foundations of the house.

Another discovery in keeping with the dog theme but with a far more entertaining spin is a folding knife or shaving razor that has an elephant ivory handle carved in the shape of two dogs having sex. It was made in the second century and again was a continental import, possibly from Italy, France or Germany. It is a unique find in the Roman world.

There's tons of information about the history of Silchester and excavations current and historic on the [University of Reading's website](#). The [excavation blog](#) is excellent. There are many pictures of the Somme-style mud pits the poor archaeologists have to deal with thanks to the crazy rain England has been experiencing this summer. If you're in the neighborhood, [they welcome visitors](#) during the excavation season. Posted in [Ancient, Treasures | 2 Comments](#) »

15th century bra found in Austrian castle

Wednesday, July 18th, 2012

The bra as we know it today — with cups for each breast and back and/or shoulder straps — was invented in the second half of the 19th century in a number of configurations under different names. The term “brassiere” took off when it got a mention in a 1907 issue of *American Vogue*, and brassieres themselves were fully established in retail outlets by the end of World War I. Before that, women wore corsets or chemises or, going back into antiquity, tied straps over or under their breasts, to contain them in the former case or enhance them in the latter.

A [treasure trove of Medieval garments discovered in Lengberg Castle](#), East Tyrol, Austria, has advanced the era of the bra 500 years or so. The clothes were discovered during the course of renovations which began in the summer of 2008. In 2009, researchers discovered a vault filled with dry materials behind a wall in a second floor room.

The fill had been packed in layers, among them twigs and straw, 200 coins, 160 cardboard playing cards, metal fragments, bones, glass, pottery sherds, carpentry scraps, writing scraps, leather shoes and fabric, lots and lots of fabric. The final tally was more than 17 boxes filled with 4,000 sundry fragments. From that massive cache, 2,700 of them were fragments of woolen, silk and linen textiles. Archaeologists thought they must have been placed in the wall when a second story was added to the castle in 1485. Radiocarbon dating on some of the fabric fibers confirmed the age: these were extremely rare surviving textiles from the late 15th century.

The surviving fabric was mainly linen, some of it used to make entirely preserved garments like shirts with pleats on the collars and sleeves and fabric buttons. The small cuff circumference suggests those shirts were for children or women. Some of the linen pieces were linings of wool garments, including the crotch of a pair of red and blue men's pants. A complete pair of linen underpants that look like a string bikini were also menswear. [Exceptional examples of needlework lace](#) were found decorating some of the seams, suggesting those garments had been worn by the masters and mistresses of the house before being put to use as a wall filler.

Four pieces out of the 2,700 drew the particular attention of historians because of their cut and sewn cups. Two of them are highly fragmented but appear to have been bustiers of sorts, a bra with visible shirt elements under the breast and providing some cleavage coverage above. The bottom hems are decorated with braided lace stitching which in addition to being pretty also provide additional support under the breasts.

The third "bra" looks a lot more like modern bras with two broad shoulder straps and a possible back strap, not preserved but indicated by partially torn edges of the cups onto which it was attached. The knot in the shoulder straps is secondary. This "bra" is also the most elaborately decorated with needle-lace on the shoulder straps, sprang-work between the two cups and, like the two aforementioned "bras", a finger-loop-lace and needle-lace at the lower end.

The fourth "bra" is the one that resembles a modern bra the most. At the first assessment this garment was referred to in German as "Mieder" (= corsette in English) by the excavating archaeologists. It can also be described with the term "longline bra". The cups are each made from two pieces of linen sewn together vertically. The surrounding fabric of somewhat coarser linen extends down to the bottom of the ribcage with a row of six eyelets on the left side of the body for fastening with a lace. The corresponding row of eyelets is missing. Needle-lace is sewn onto the cups and the fabric above thus decorating the cleavage. In the triangular area between the two cups there might have been additional decoration, maybe another sprang-work.

Sprang is needlework construction similar to netting that provides a natural elasticity, an ingenious construction element for a 532-year-old bra.

Doctoral student [Beatrix Nutz](#) will be analyzing the textiles in more depth. In addition to microscopic analysis of the fabrics, she also plans to do DNA tests CSI-style to hopefully

determine which gender might have worn the garments, and to do chemical analyses of the pigments.

Sealing her awesomeness, Beatrix Nutz has also translated a stanza of *Meister Reuauß*, a 15th century German satirical poem which is very much on point:

Many a woman makes two bags for the breasts with
it she roams the streets,
so that all the guys look at her,
and see what beautiful breasts she has got;
But whose breasts are too large,
makes tight pouches,
so it is not told in the city,
that she has such big breasts.

Posted in [Medieval](#)

[Lost silent film with all-Native American cast found](#) [Monday, July 16th, 2012](#)

The Daughter of Dawn, an 80-minute feature film, was shot in July of 1920 in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge near Lawton, southwest Oklahoma. It was unique in the annals of silent film (or talkies, for that matter) for having a cast of 300 Comanches and Kiowas who brought their own clothes, horses, tipis, everyday props and who told their story without a single reference to the United States Cavalry. It was a love story, a four-person star-crossed romance that ends with the two main characters together happily ever after. There are two buffalo hunt sequences with actual herds of buffalo being chased down by hunters on bareback just as they had done on the Plains 50 years earlier.

The male lead was played by White Parker; another featured female role was played by Wanada Parker. They were the son and daughter of the powerful Comanche chief Quanah Parker, the last of the free Plains Quahadi Comanche warriors. He never lost a battle to United States forces, but, his people sick and starving, he surrendered at Fort Sill in 1875. Quanah was the son of Comanche chief Peta Nocona and [Cynthia Ann Parker](#), the daughter of Euro-American settlers who had grown up in the tribe after she was kidnapped as a child by the Comanches who killed her parents. She was the model for Stands With a Fist in *Dances with Wolves*.

Written and directed by Norbert Myles, an opinionated, hot-tempered West Virginian whose conflicts with studio bigwigs led him to seek work outside of Hollywood, the movie was produced by the fledgling Texas Film Company whose founder, Richard E. Banks, had worked and lived with Indians for 25 years. It was Banks who ensured the script told an authentic story from the perspective of the Plains peoples instead of the already clichéd cowboys-vs.-Indians shoot-em-ups.

In one scene a young buffalo bumps into one of the riders. The Kiowa is knocked from his horse to the rocky terrain of the Wichita Mountains area.

“The rider just gets back up, and goes on,” said Matt Reed, a curator at the Oklahoma Museum of History. “You’re like, ‘Wow, you’re in a breechcloth and moccasins and riding at full speed you just fell from a horse and it didn’t even faze you.’ These are some tough, tough people.”

According to the October 17, 1920, issue of the influential industry trade magazine *Motion Picture News*, an exclusive preview of *The Daughter of Dawn* had been shown earlier that week at the College Theater in Los Angeles to great critical acclaim. It was an “original and breath-taking adventure” which had “hardly been duplicated before.” Notwithstanding the fine notices, there’s no evidence that the movie was ever distributed any further.

Many silent pictures, even the ones that were immensely popular, were lost over the years, and it seemed that *The Daughter of Dawn* had suffered that sad fate. The reservation tribes people knew about the movie from word of mouth, and there were 36 production still in the [Museum of the Western Prairie](#), and a complete script in the Library of Congress, but that was it.

In 2005, Brian Hearn, the film curator at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, received a phone call from a private investigator offering to sell him a silver nitrate film that he had received as payment from a client. The PI hadn’t watched it, but he thought it was *The Daughter of Dawn*. The museum did not have a film collection at that time, so Hearn enlisted the aid of the [Oklahoma Historical Society](#). After copious fundraising, the OHS was able to purchase the reels and restore them so this priceless record of Comanche and Kiowa history, Oklahoma history and early film history could get the audience it never had a chance to get in 1920.

The Daughter of Dawn was screened for the first time in almost a century last month at the deadCENTER Film Festival in Oklahoma City. Future screenings haven’t been scheduled yet, but keep an eye [on the website](#) for news. The Oklahoma Historical Society also plans to release the movie on DVD and Blu-Ray, complete with features on the history of the film and one particularly important artifact therefrom.

As staff visited with Kiowa and Comanche friends who identified people in the movie and described some of the objects brought from their homes to the set, one object in particular stood out. It was a tepee with bold horizontal stripes positioned at a key spot in every scene. The Kiowas said it was an especially significant tepee that disappeared in 1928.

Just a few years ago, while one of their curators was going through collections at the Oklahoma History Center, he pulled a canvas tepee off the shelf, unrolled it, and recognized it as the tepee in the movie, Blackburn said.

“If he had never seen ‘Daughter of Dawn,’ the tepee might still be undiscovered,” Blackburn said. “And next year, the tepee will be used in a new museum exhibit.”

That tipi was given to the Kiowas by the Cheyenne in the 1830s as a symbol of peace between the peoples. In 1916, new images were painted on it by artists Silverhorn and [Steven Mopope](#), the latter one of the famous Kiowa Five, a team of artists who became internationally known for their virtuoso skills in the traditional arts. You can see the tipi at the Oklahoma Historical Society in the [video at the top of the linked article](#).

Here are the first ten minutes of *The Daughter of Dawn*. Dawn is played by Esther LeBarre. Her father the Chief is played by Hunting Horse. Her lover, White, is played by White Parker. Wolf, the man who loves her unrequited, is played by Jack Sankeydoty. Red Wing, who loves Wolf unrequited, is played by Wanada Parker. The score is by Comanche symphonic composer [Dr. David Yeagley](#).

On August 2, our **Clean Energy Victory Bond bill was introduced in Congress.**

And as of today, [the Library of Congress has published the Clean Energy Victory Bonds Act of 2012](#), the culmination of several years of hard work here at Green America, and **the support of clean-energy advocates like you all across the country.**

Just like World War II era victory bonds enabled ordinary Americans to raise billions of dollars for the war effort, these new bonds are projected to raise enough money to **generate 1.7 million new jobs** manufacturing, deploying, and maintaining renewable energy projects. This bill ends the financial uncertainty around current federal programs, extending the imperiled Production Tax Credit for wind energy -- and other renewable energy incentives -- for as long as a decade.

Big thanks to Rep. Bob Filner (D, CA), who is sponsoring the bill, along with 10 co-sponsors, and big thanks to more than 40 other organizations* who are backing the bill with us. Now we need to get this bill passed. Here's where your support is crucial. This is what we need you to do:

1. Call your representative -- [Look up your representative's telephone number here](#), give their office a call, and tell them that you enthusiastically support H.R. 6275, the Clean Energy Victory Bonds Act of 2012. If you would be willing to buy some of these savings bonds (as little as \$25 is enough), tell them that too. We need to rapidly bolster bi-partisan support for this job-creating, renewable-energy-boosting bill.

2. Pledge to buy the bonds -- If you haven't already signed on at cleanenergyvictorybonds.org as a future purchaser of the bonds after the legislation passes, [please do so right now](#). We need to be able to show clearly that these bonds have the support of the American people in every congressional district in the country. It's a win-win-win. You support clean energy and American jobs, you put some of your money away in a savings bond, and when they mature in 10 years, you'll get back the purchase price plus interest.

3. Tell your friends -- **This part is key!** We need to rapidly spread awareness of this bill. Everyone who hears about this strategy loves it, because the bonds advance goals that both Republicans and Democrats can get behind. If you have ever thought about forwarding an e-mail from Green America **to your entire address book**, [this is the e-mail to forward](#). Tell your friends to sign on at cleanenergyvictorybonds.org, and post a link to the site on your Facebook page. Tweet about it, blog about, tell your neighbor over the fence. However you communicate with others, **please share the news of this bill.**

This might just be the most exciting project Green America has ever worked on. Thank you so much for being a part of it.

Here's to a clean-energy victory,

Alisa Gravitz, Executive Director , Green America

The Threat of Yucca Mountain Has Reared Its Ugly Head

The Nevada Legislature's High-Level Radioactive Waste Committee is holding a meeting on Tuesday August 21, 2012 to consider recommendations to be made by the Committee to the 2013 Nevada Legislature.

One of those recommendations is to keep Yucca Mountain open as a nuclear waste dump.

Pro-Yucca factions inside and outside Nevada will mount a full court press on the Legislature in an effort to get Nevada to blink and indicate some measure of support for Yucca and/or some form of interim storage or reprocessing that would require bringing thousands of tons of dangerous nuclear waste into our state. Proposals are also already being circulated that would offer up Yucca (or parts of the Test Site) for a nuclear energy park to include centralized storage of spent nuclear fuel, a reprocessing facility, even a commercial-sized nuclear reactor.

It is critically important that the Legislature's HLW Committee does NOT adopt these recommendations at its meeting Tuesday (or any other recommendations that reflect a weakening of Nevada's opposition), and that the Committee hears loud and clear from constituents in Nevada that caving in on Yucca is not acceptable, especially now when the State is so close to defeating the project.

Date: August 21, 2012 (Tuesday)

Time: 9:00am

Where: Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 E. Washington Ave., Las Vegas, NV.

Video-conferenced to Room 3138 of the Legislative Building, 401 S. Carson St., Carson City,

You can also write to the HLW Committee and urge them to ignore the recommendations from Nye and Lincoln counties and others:

Sen. David Parks, Chairman, Legislature's Committee on High-Level Radioactive Waste

c/o Patrick Guinan

Principal Research Analyst, Legislative Counsel Bureau 401 S. Carson Street

Carson City, NV 89701-4747

Email: PGuinan@LCB.STATE.NV.US

The Sioux Campaign to Buy Back the Black Hills That Belong to Them

By Dana Lone Hill, Guardian UK 16 August 12

The Black Hills were stolen from the Sioux in 1877. Now, Indians are in a desperate quest to buy back their sacred sites.

When I was a little girl, a long time ago, we would go camping in the Black Hills of South Dakota. We had to pay, just as tourists do, to camp there and enjoy the beauty of the Black Hills or, in Lakota, of the Paha Sapa or He Sapa. When I say we had to pay, I always remember someone griping about having to pay to camp in our sacred hills. But perhaps the way we enjoyed the Black Hills was a little different than the way the average tourist experienced them.

We felt at home, at peace, as content as a soul could feel, unless, otherwise, in heaven. We were taught to walk with care among the soft pine-needle beds and treat every living being from the smallest of creatures to the tallest of trees with respect. We breathed deeply of the pine-scented air and appreciated how the sun would find us, even through the thick veil of trees. We were taught how to pray and give thanks there, and as children, we ran and played among the hills without fear.

Even to this day, you can ask any member of the Oceti Sakowin, or Sioux Nation, how their hearts feel when in the Black Hills: there, they find a mood of melancholy and an inner peace that some people seek all their lives.

And then, we would go home to the reservation. What some people on the reservations refer to as modern-day prison camps that were given to us after the United States whittled Indian land down to only nine reservations from the whole western half of South Dakota and parts of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, and North Dakota, which was the territory originally negotiated in the [Fort Laramie Treaty](#) of 1868. The reservations broke up all the bands of the Sioux Nation; some say this was part of a campaign to weaken us.

Our reservation has been in the news many times for the poverty and deprivation that most people are shocked to find exist right here in America. So, for us to go from the beautiful Sacred Paha Sapa back to the reservation was always a downer. Especially when you learned from your parents that not only are the Black Hills sacred and that they belong to us, but they were stolen by the United States after the discovery of gold.

The Fort Laramie Treaty granted the Black Hills to the Sioux Nation, and prohibited white settlement of the land. At first, in his [exploratory expedition in July 1874](#), General Custer deemed the Black Hills worthless - maybe good for agriculture but "infested with Indians". That assessment changed, just weeks later, when gold was discovered in the hills, in August of 1874.

The Sioux peoples' treaty rights were constantly violated by gold prospectors, who kept crossing the reservation border. When they were attacked by our people defending their land, the United States government seized the Black Hills, in 1877 - illegally. This occurred just one year after Custer and the 7th Cavalry were defeated at the Battle of Greasy Grass, in which our ancestors were defending their land and their way of life. And so the Black Hills were stolen from us.

The battle for the Black Hills has been going on ever since, for as long as I can remember. Nearly a century after the expropriation, in 1975, the US court of claims described the US government's conduct thus:

"A more ripe and rank case of dishonorable dealings will never, in all probability, be found in our history."

But it wasn't until June 1980, in the case *United States v Sioux Nation of Indians*, that the United States supreme court upheld an award of \$15.5m for the market value of the land in 1877, along with 103 years worth of interest at 5%, for an additional \$105m in damages. Today, that sum is over \$1bn - and remains untouched - [as Paul Harris called it in the Observer, in 2007](#), "a heroic, some might say unfathomable, act of defiance". In the same article, my mother explained:

"They should not touch it [the financial compensation]. Then white America will never own the Black Hills."

But we are tired of waiting for the government to come through, realize they are in the wrong and restore our land rights. We are tired of the promises: our President Barack Obama gave us hope in 2009 by telling the Native American population that "You deserve to have a voice", and "You will not be forgotten as long as I'm in this White House." We hadn't received a presidential nod like that since President Clinton - and we had hope.

Just this year, United Nations special rapporteur James Anaya conducted a 12-day tour of Native American land, to determine how the United States is faring on the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), a survey endorsed by the Obama administration in 2010. Anaya met with tribes in seven states on reservations and in urban areas, as well as with members of the Obama administration and the [Senate committee on Indian affairs](#). The UN special rapporteur tentatively recommended the return of lands to some tribes, including the Black Hills to the Sioux. His full official report with recommendations is due in September 2012.

We still have hope, but we know such encouragement has come and gone before. But we know in our hearts that the Black Hills, or what we call Cante Wamakaognake ("the heart of all that is"), because we belong there, because we come from there. Our origin, our beliefs, our entire way of life all revolve around the Black Hills. It is because of the history we have with this sacred land and the stories passed down from our elders that we know who we are. While the United States government labeled us savages long ago, claiming we needed to be civilized, they had no idea that we had astronomers, philosophers, doctors, teachers, midwives, artists, warriors, and more among us. This is the same land we fight for today.

One of the most sacred areas of the Black Hills, Pe' Sla, is under threat of turning into a saltwater taffy stand, or condos, or a golf course, or some other tourist trap - like the hundreds already spread through our sacred Black Hills. The state of South Dakota even has plans to put a road through the middle of this, one of our most sacred areas.

For this reason, our flagship media group [lastrealindians.com](#) and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe have combined in an attempt to buy back Pe' Sla - land due to be auctioned off for development on 25 August 2012. You may see the irony that the Sioux Nation, having put aside the \$1bn offered in compensation for the original theft, is now trying to buy back the land we believe always belonged to us. All the same, that is what we're doing: raising money to buy back our birthright.

Whatever I do in this life and whoever I become, I know in my heart that I belong to that land, as my ancestors did and my children do. This is why we must do this. The Black Hills are, for us, the heart of all that is.