



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 18, 2018

Summit Exposes Violations of Indians' Rights, Fringe Left Freaks

WHITEFISH, MONTANA — Speaking at the [“New Code of the West”](#) conference over the weekend, a pair of activists exposed some of the major problems with federal Indian policy. Comparing the U.S. government’s Indian policy to a “great big hippopotamus sitting on the United States,” Elaine Willman (shown) slammed the infringement on the parental rights and other liberties of those who live under federally funded tribal governments. Another speaker, Custer Battlefield Museum founder Chris Kortlander, highlighted dubious voting policies and restrictions on state jurisdiction over elections processes on Indian reservations, suggesting these issues threaten the integrity of the ballot. Fringe left-wing groups and their “fake news” allies went wild in the days before the conference, but the summit nevertheless succeeded in educating citizens, policymakers, and lawmakers from across the region.



Throughout her remarks, Willman focused mostly on problems with federal Indian policy, her area of expertise. She described it as the federal government’s “best kept secret.” Among other concerns, she blasted federal courts for creating the notion of semi-dependent, semi-sovereign tribal “nations” that treats Indian tribes as a dependent “federal trust.” This state of affairs was never envisioned in the U.S. Constitution or authorized by the U.S. Congress, Willman said. And it leads to all sorts of problems that harm Indians and non-Indians alike. The federal government and the tribal governments it funds often collaborate to trample on state sovereignty, too, and the consequences can be devastating for states and especially the Indians living under the thumb of federally funded tribal governments.

One major problem, Willman said, is that the rights of Indians are often not respected. And so, Willman highlighted some of the work done by the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance (CERA), where she sits on the board, to help Indians having problems with their tribal governments. “Many of my friends are tribal families,” Willman said, noting that she spent decades living on Indian reservations. “We provide whatever resources we can to tribal persons at odds with their tribal government. Within those tribal governments, members do not have the First Amendment, they do not even have parental rights.” In some cases, she said, tribal governments deprive parents of their parental rights and take their children away as a result of disagreements with tribal officials.

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Speaking of the powerful tribal governments, which basically act as federally funded surrogates, Willman slammed federal statutes authorizing gambling monopolies for tribal governments. The arrangement, she said, stuffs the coffers of tribal governments with gambling money, much of which is then funneled into the political campaigns of compliant politicians. “The gaming dollars were supposed to be for improving life on the reservations,” she said. “But instead, the casino profits are used to buy land, buy legal counsel — four or five law firms all over the country against one attorney in Idaho — they are used to buy legislators, and they are used to buy lobbyists.” Echoing concerns in her book *Going to Pieces: The Dismantling of the United States of America*, she said this state of affairs was having disastrous impacts on the nation and on Indians.

Ironically, CERA is one of the few organizations that actually helps Indians facing things such as the seizure of their children in retaliation for disputes with extremely powerful and wealthy tribal authorities. And yet, Willman and the organization, which promotes equal rights for Indians and all Americans, has been ludicrously smeared by fringe hatemongers as “anti-Indian.” CERA and Willman have both argued that federal policy should not be racial, and that everyone should be treated equally under the law — and that means Indians should have all of their constitutionally protected rights respected at all levels of government, just like anyone else. Somehow, though, hardcore leftists who seek to keep Indians down have argued that promoting equality is actually “anti-Indian.” Seriously.

Instead of reporting on what was said, left-wing extremists and their media allies dealt with the concerns expressed by Willman over the years by going absolutely bonkers over her attendance and spreading vile smears about the messenger. The attacks began weeks before the conference began. Somehow, a gentle, loving woman of Cherokee descent married to a direct descendant of Sacajawea — a woman who dedicates much of her time to helping Indians protect their rights — was painted as the “leader” of a supposed “anti-Indian” movement. Much of the “fake news” media uncritically parroted the deception of radical leftist groups such as the Montana Human Rights Network and the Southern Poverty Law Center, [which used racist stereotypes to paint Indians as “weak” in an attack piece on Willman](#).

But ironically, the deceptive fringe groups and those “reporters” who parroted the smears were left with egg all over their faces. Willman, who attracted perhaps the most controversy due to her criticism of federal Indian policy, began by thanking the far-left extremist group known as the Montana Human Rights Network, which a number of attendees said was a hate group. “They have been my biggest press agent for the last 20 years,” Willman said, smiling and chuckling along with the audience. “I have been grateful to them because they have been after me since the year 2000 — we’re talking 18 years.... Nobody else in the country has cared that much about me but [MHRN writer] Charles Tanner. He was like my personal biographer.” The crowd was roaring with laughter. The press, though, was clearly not amused.

Willman noted that when the group quotes her, the quotes generally are accurate. “They just call me bad names,” she added. “This event has greatly benefited from all the free publicity we received from the Montana Human Rights Network. I value their right to free speech, their right to say what they think. But it’s unfortunate that they don’t accept mine.” But, Americans are no longer buying into the name-calling, Willman said, noting that it “is not getting the mileage it did under previous administrations.” “They can call me any name they want,” she said. “They’ve painted me as this great big national thing, threatening over 500 tribal governments. They’ve greatly exaggerated my importance.” She thought that was funny, and so did the audience.



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Conference organizer Lauralee O'Neil, who received a standing ovation for her work putting together the event, slammed the press for its smears. "Having known and worked with Elaine for over four years, I find the slanderous denigration recently published by the Montana Human Rights Network calling her anti-Indian to be completely false," O'Neil told *The New American* in a statement. "Proud of her own Indian heritage, Elaine has dedicated her life to righting the wrongs perpetrated against tribal members by many of the federal Indian policies and national tribal leaders. Elaine has great respect and love for American Indians, and it is astounding to me that one person can rattle a whole industry (Bureau of Indian Affairs) by speaking the truth."

By the end of the conference, the news reports were far more balanced. It seems that after actually attending and listening to what was said, reporters realized that fringe groups such as the MHRN were seeking to mislead rather than inform the media and the public. A few were obviously duped early on.

Another expert on Indian policy issues, fellow CERA board member Kortlander, the founding director of the Custer Battlefield Museum and a very close friend of late Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Joe Medicine Crow, also spoke out fearlessly, despite having been brutalized and terrorized by heavily armed federal bureaucrats. Among other topics, the former Montana law-enforcement officer spoke about some key issues with federal Indian policy and elections.

In particular, he noted that non-tribal authorities from state and local government have no jurisdiction over polling places and elections on Indian reservations. And yet, state and federal voting takes place on those reservations. In the last election for the U.S. Senate in Montana, poll watchers were even kicked out. Democrat John Tester won by less than 3,000 votes in what many viewed as a suspicious election. But because of "tribal sovereignty," state authorities could do nothing about the widely observed irregularities occurring on reservations. The significance of the election was obvious — it changed the Senate from Republican to Democrat control. And yet, suspicions abound.

"We have a situation in Montana that needs to be corrected," Kortlander said, offering ideas for how to do that.

There are other problems with Indian policy, too, said Kortlander. For example, he noted that CERA, which both he and Willman are affiliated with, has been lobbying for laws ensuring the protection of the rights of Americans of native descent, even if they live under federally funded tribal governments. He explained that tribal governments, which are funded by the federal government, often trample on individual rights of both native and non-native American citizens. And so, Kortlander, Willman, and other CERA leaders have spent many years trying to protect the individual rights of everyone.

And Kortlander knows what it is to have one's rights trampled by government — he himself has been on the receiving end of federal abuses. In 2005, his popular museum was raided by a heavily armed federal SWAT team from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. "They took down my museum interns with M-16s aimed at the back of their heads with their legs spread eagle on the floor," he said. "They threatened that I would never see my special-needs son again." For the next 10 years, Kortlander fought them with everything he had. Close friends were even loaning him money to stay afloat amid the battle. In the end, Kortlander was never indicted or charged with a crime. But the horror turned his life upside down. And it made him determined to tell the world.

The excuse for the raid was an obscure statute dealing with Indian artifacts. In 2005, he said, the U.S. BLM sold him a button. And yet, that is the very artifact that was cited in the search warrant as the reason to terrorize him and his employees with machine guns. So horrifying is the terror inflicted by the



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BLM's outlandish "law enforcement" tactics that multiple people in the region have committed suicide as a result. "I wondered, what is going on that this many people took their lives after being targeted by the BLM," Kortlander said. "I know why these people committed suicide, because I was on the other end of these machine guns. They point guns at your head. They hope you will collapse. They hope you will plead to a lesser crime. And they hope that what I'm telling you will never get out."

Kortlander wrote a book called *Arrow to the Heart: The Last Battle at the Little Big Horn* detailing some of the abuses inflicted by the heavily militarized federal bureaucracy. Like others at the Montana conference, he praised the courage of [BLM whistleblower Larry Wooten, who exposed some of the outlandish criminality that permeated the disgraced bureaucracy](#). One key piece of legislation that Kortlander said would help improve the situation is the Local Enforcement for Local Lands Act, or H.R. 622, which would strip the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service of their law enforcement authority.

The goal of the legislation, which was originally sponsored by retired U.S. Representative Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), is to rein in the rogue federal agencies that have been running around terrorizing citizens since they were given "law enforcement" authority in 2001. "It's time to get rid of the BLM and US Forest Service police," Chaffetz said in a press release. "If there is a problem, your local sheriff is the first and best line of defense. By restoring local control in law enforcement, we enable federal agencies and county sheriffs to each focus on their respective core missions."

Overall, despite (or perhaps thanks to!) the shrieking and deception by fringe left-wing groups and their toadies in the press, attendees and speakers said the conference was a great success. Among other objectives, it succeeded in educating policymakers, lawmakers, and concerned citizens who came from all across the region on key issues including Indian policy and much more. O'Neil, the main organizer, suggested that much more was planned for the future.

Photo: hobart-wi.org

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