

[tribal letterhead]

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## **News Release**

### **Northern Cheyenne Tribe Sues BIA for Failure to Address Public Safety**

Lame Deer, MT—On December 15, 2020, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe filed suit against the Bureau of Indian Affairs and related parties for BIA’s failure to award the Tribe a contract that the Tribe requested to address longstanding law and order problems on the Reservation. BIA, which is solely responsible for enforcing the criminal laws on the Reservation, has fallen down on this sacred trust and statutory obligation for many years. As a result, the Tribe and the Reservation membership have paid the high price of violent crime, including missing and murdered indigenous women, unlawful drug use and distribution, and other crimes.

To address BIA’s chronic law enforcement understaffing, earlier this year the Tribe proposed to take over certain law enforcement responsibilities from BIA, including criminal investigatory work, under the Indian Self-Determination Education and Assistance Act, PL 93-638. BIA breached its obligations by stalling consideration of the application, failing to share information to ensure the success of the Tribe’s proposal, and ultimately unlawfully denying the proposal. In doing so, BIA ignored both the spirit and express requirements of PL 93-638, which was designed by Congress to assure maximum tribal participation in the direction of federal services to tribal communities, and allow an orderly transition from federal domination of such services to effective and meaningful participation by tribes in the planning, conduct and administration of services to tribal communities.

The Tribe only seeks that to which it is lawfully entitled. It has asked the court for an injunction ordering BIA to accept Plaintiff’s proposal and to enter into the law enforcement services contract. We look forward to a ruling on the merits.