

## Victim Impact Statement

### Tamara Stands and Looks Back–Spotted Tail

My name is Tamara Stands and Looks Back–Spotted Tail. I am an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, the Sičhánǵu (Burnt Thigh Nation), one of the bands of the Oceti Šakowin — the Seven Council Fires, the historic alliance of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota peoples. Our nation was built on kinship, diplomacy, and a sacred responsibility to our Oyate—our people—and to the land entrusted to us by the Creator.

As Lakota people, we carry a sacred creation story that teaches us we are spiritually connected to our ancestors, our homelands, and all living beings. This connection grounds our identity and reminds us that we have a responsibility to protect our people, our culture, and the truth of who we are for generations to come.

I come from a long line of Lakota leadership and resistance. My great-great-grandfather, Chief Stands and Looks Back, fought in the Battle of the Greasy Grass alongside Lakota warriors who defended our people and our homelands. I am also married to Chief John Spotted Tail, the fifth direct descendant of Chief Spotted Tail, one of the most respected leaders of the Sičhánǵu Lakota. His legacy of leadership, diplomacy, and protection continues to guide our community today.

From an early age, I dedicated myself to spiritual connections, family, education, cultural preservation, and community service. My goals have always been to strengthen Lakota identity, empower our women, preserve our language, and protect our sovereignty through teaching, leadership, and cultural work.

I previously earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Lakota History and Culture, dedicating my studies to understanding and preserving the history, traditions, and governance of our people. My decision to pursue higher education was rooted in a deep responsibility to carry forward the knowledge and teachings of our ancestors. Because of this commitment, I chose to enroll in the master's program at Sinte Gleska University, believing in its mission to uplift our people and provide a safe environment for Lakota scholars to continue their education and leadership development.

Sinte Gleska University was founded in 1971 by the Sičhánǵu Lakota Oyate to protect our culture, preserve our language, and provide higher education grounded in Lakota values, governance, and identity. It was meant to be a place where our people could learn, grow, and strengthen our nation.

Unfortunately, my experience there became the opposite of that vision.

When I raised legitimate concerns about an individual working within the university who falsely claimed Indigenous identity. I did so not out of hostility, but out of responsibility to protect the integrity of a tribal institution that belongs to our people.

Instead of addressing these concerns, the administration responded with hostility and retaliation. When I attempted to organize a peaceful forum where students and employees could speak openly about concerns regarding a hostile work environment and the loss of jobs held by tribal members—particularly Lakota women—I was met with anger, intimidation, and unprofessional conduct.

I filed a formal complaint. Only five days later, the president of the university-imposed sanctions against me.

These sanctions barred me from attending campus, disrupted my education, and prevented me from participating in cultural and arts events that were part of my livelihood. I was treated as though I was the problem of raising concerns, while those responsible for the harm were protected.

Rumors circulated that if I returned to campus, law enforcement would be called and I could be removed. As a Lakota woman on my own homeland, I was threatened with being treated as a trespasser on land that my ancestors fought to protect.

The emotional impact of this treatment was profound. As a descendant of Lakota leaders who defended our land and identity, being excluded and silenced within a tribal institution created deep historical trauma.

This harm was compounded by the leadership crisis within the university.

The past president of Sinte Gleska University, Dr. Erica Moore, publicly claimed Indigenous taino ancestry. However, after rigorous investigation, it was determined on December 8, 2025, that there was no verified American Indian or federally recognized tribal ancestry supporting these claims. Furthermore, it was determined that the taino groups referenced are organized as nonprofit organizations and are not historically continuous or federally recognized tribal nations. Many of these organizations profit from a manufactured identity through grants, cultural programming, and representation in spaces intended for legitimate Indigenous tribal nations.

This revelation confirmed what many of us had questioned from the beginning.

Yet what was even more disturbing was what happened next.

Instead of protecting tribal citizens and acknowledging the harm done, many individuals, including non-tribal employees and supporters—chose to defend the false identity. In doing so, they began to weaponize Lakota values such as compassion, respect, and forgiveness against tribal members who were simply asking for truth and accountability.

Non-tribal individuals used our own cultural teachings to silence Lakota voices.

They labeled tribal members as “divisive” or “hostile” simply for protecting our identity and sovereignty. They attempted to shame us into silence by misusing our own values against us.

This created a deeply harmful environment where tribal citizens were discriminated against within our own tribal institution, while those falsely claiming our identity were protected.

The result was a reversal of justice: the people who belong to this land were treated as outsiders, and those without legitimate ties were elevated above them.

This type of identity fraud does not only harm individuals. It harms entire communities. It erodes trust, divides our people, and allows outsiders to occupy positions meant to uplift Indigenous voices.

I also discovered that the master’s programs in which students had invested time, money, and hope were not properly accredited. This represents a serious institutional failure that affected many students and undermined the credibility of the university itself.

Despite the pain and injustice I experienced, this ordeal has also strengthened me.

It has clarified my purpose and reinforced my commitment to protecting our institutions, defending our identity, and ensuring that future generations of Lakota people do not face the same injustices.

This experience also revealed something especially important: it showed who in our community is willing to stand for truth and who is willing to defend deception.

I am deeply grateful to the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds, who stood with me when I felt isolated, intimidated, and targeted for speaking the truth. At a time when many attempted to silence or discredit my concerns, their support provided validation, guidance, and the courage to continue forward. Their work helped expose a larger and deeply troubling pattern of identity fraud that is harming Indigenous communities across this country.

Organizations like the Tribal Alliance Against Frauds play an essential role in protecting the integrity of tribal nations by bringing attention to individuals and institutions that falsely claim Indigenous identity for personal, professional, or financial gain. Their advocacy helps ensure that opportunities, resources, and representation meant for Indigenous peoples are not taken by those who do not belong to our communities.

Through their support and the work of others committed to truth and accountability, a broader conversation has emerged about the importance of protecting Indigenous identity, sovereignty, and the integrity of our tribal institutions. I am grateful for their willingness to stand with tribal citizens who are often placed at risk for speaking out.

Their work reminds us that protecting our identity is not just a personal responsibility, it is a collective responsibility shared by Indigenous people and our allies who respect and honor the sovereignty of our nations. With their support, I found the strength to speak up, to confront injustice, and to defend the truth of who we are as a people.

My story is both a personal account and a warning.

Indigenous identity is not something that can be claimed, performed, or borrowed. It carries generations of responsibility, history, sacrifice, and connection to land, language, and community. Our identities are not symbolic titles or opportunities for personal advancement—they are living responsibilities passed down through our ancestors.

For Lakota people, identity is tied to our families, our treaties, our homelands, and our responsibilities to the Oyate. It is something we are born into and something we must honor through our actions.

Our ancestors endured tremendous hardship so that we could remain who we are. They survived war, forced removals, boarding schools, and policies designed to erase our identity and culture. Because of their strength and sacrifice, we are still here today.

We owe it to them—and to our future generations—to protect that truth.

When individuals falsely claim Indigenous identity or institutions allow those claims to go unchallenged, it harms not only individuals but entire communities. It erodes trust, displaces legitimate Indigenous voices, and takes opportunities meant for our people.

On February 17, 2026, the Sinte Gleska University Board of Regents formally terminated Dr. Erica Moore's contract as president. According to the official termination letter, the Board cited multiple reasons for termination, including the creation of a hostile work environment, failure to meet contractual obligations such as providing required annual performance goals for evaluation, an inability to work constructively with the Board of Regents, retaliatory conduct toward board members, and failure in the academic accreditation process for two master's degree programs. The Board further determined that her actions had substantially and adversely impacted on the University's students, staff, and operations.

Speaking the truth about these harms should never result in retaliation, intimidation, or exclusion. Yet that is what I experienced. Despite that, I refused to remain silent because protecting the integrity of our people and our institutions is more important than personal comfort.

This experience has strengthened my resolve. It has reminded me that protecting our identity, our sovereignty, and our institutions is a responsibility that belongs to all of us.

Despite everything I endured, I remain committed to that responsibility.

As a Lakota woman, and as a descendant of leaders who stood for our people at the Battle of the Greasy Grass and throughout our history, I carry the responsibility to speak the truth, to defend our people, and to protect the legacy our ancestors fought so hard to preserve.

Mitákuye Oyás'ij

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops on the left side that transition into a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line extending to the right.

Tamara Stands and Looks Back–Spotted Tail  
Sičhánǵu Lakota, Rosebud Sioux Tribe  
Sičhánǵu Lakota Oyate