



SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBE

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Southern Ute Indian Tribe Warns Against Erasure in National Park Signage

Southern Ute Indian Reservation - Tribal Council is aware of a circulating article from the Vail Daily and affirms the Southern Ute Indian Tribe's stance on the ongoing effort by federal agencies to remove educational materials that federal officials deem to be disparaging of the United States.

Many of today's National Parks were once Tribal lands, as evidenced through oral histories and countless archaeological sites. What is now known as Mesa Verde National Park was formerly part of the Consolidated Ute Indian Reservation under the terms of a treaty negotiated with the federal government. That treaty—like many treaties between the United States and Tribal Nations—was ultimately violated by the federal government, resulting in the significant reduction of our Reservation lands today.

It is important that visitors to our National Parks learn about the people who called – and still call – these places home. The United States tried to eradicate our people and our culture. *We still exist.* Eliminating mention of Tribes and our histories from educational materials is the modern-day version of Indian boarding schools and Tribal Termination.

The history of our Tribe is not an abstract account of the past. Our lived history and its effects are carried forward by our communities today. The federal policies and actions that resulted in displacement, cultural suppression, and attempted erasure were systematic and intentional. When these realities are minimized or removed, the cycle of erasure persists—causing harm not only to Tribal communities but also to the public's understanding of history.

This is not about politics, partisanship, or blame. Presenting a complete and accurate history is a matter of education and justice. With the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, this moment calls for the courage to share the whole truth about our history and to demonstrate that we have moved beyond such policies. Acknowledging ugly truths does

not weaken us as a nation; it makes us stronger. Acknowledging these truths raises awareness and encourages reflection to ensure that such policies are neither repeated nor forgotten.

By our presence and existence, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe continues to hold the federal government accountable for a complete and accurate depiction of history. These signs are an acknowledgment of that. Our voices, perspectives, and lived experiences are essential to an accurate and respectful interpretation, and we look forward to leading decisions and conversations that shape the public's understanding of our homeland.

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