

1581

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Appropriations committee. We meet again for the final time.

My name is Austen Schauer, District 13, West Fargo.

I have nothing against **Josh Duhamel** of Minot. From every indication, he's a good guy, a good actor and a good voice for North Dakota.

But when it comes to tourism and when it comes to *interest* from people in the United States and internationally, Josh Duhamel does not hold a candle to the story of the **North American Indigenous people**.

It is a story of loss, hardship, violence, betrayal, and misappropriation.

It is also a story of community, bravery, honor, resilience and the buffalo.

We're told the **attention** on *tribal travel experiences* has never been stronger.

People are fascinated with the encounters between European settlers and Native tribes.

They want to know more about the French and Indian War, the Creek War, the Indian Removal Act, the Seminole Wars, the Trail of Tears, the Long Walk of the Navajo, the Battle of Little Bighorn, the massacre at Wounded Knee, and the plight of the Sioux.

They want to know about Sakakawea and her role in the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Few history books capture the beauty and complexity of indigenous life and rich Native American history.

But we don't need a history book to tell the story.

The Native American story is alive and well and on display right here in North Dakota within its five Tribal Nations.

The tribes **want** to tell their story. They **want** visitors. They **understand** the value of tourism and **HB 1581** allows it to happen.

**HB 1581** is a partnership between the State of North Dakota and the Tribal Nations to provide **one-to-one matching grants** for tourism.

The State will appropriate **\$100 thousand dollars** and each of the five tribes can seek up to **\$20 thousand dollars** to promote and enhance **tribal tourism**.

A grant application must be made to the Commerce Department and include a plan for using the funds. Commerce will submit a report to Legislative Management at the end of the biennium.

The support of **HB 1581** seen in **LAWS** does not do justice to the passion and desire of Native leaders to tell their story especially as we near our country's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Semi-quin-centennial.

And the good news is...the **framework** for tribe tourism is already in place.

The North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance (**NDNTA**) is one of the most successful Native tourism models in the country.

The **NDNTA** consists of two Tribal Members from each of the five Nations. The group has already been involved in several International Roundups and conferences.

The **NDNTA** has developed a strong partnership and collaboration with the ND Tourism Office to market their story.

Despite the desire to host visitors and provide a first-hand experience in Native culture, tourism development among the tribes faces challenges.

There are competing priorities such as healthcare, housing, public safety, addiction, and education. Thus, the need for **HB 1581**.

If approved, **HB 1581** can be used in the following ways.

- **Start-Up Grants for Indigenous Entrepreneurs. Seed money for tourism-related small businesses to develop authentic cultural experiences, crafts and services to tourists.**
- **Tourism Infrastructure. Grants to improve cultural centers, museums and sites within Tribal lands.**
- **Park Improvement Funding. Enhance existing parks and recreational areas to make them more accessible and appealing to visitors.**

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, timing is everything.

With the opening of **Teddy Roosevelt Presidential Museum**, the nation's **250<sup>th</sup> birthday** and a strong *appetite* to seek Native **American history and culture**, we can truly create a **memorable experience** for visitors to our state.

One, that Josh Duhamel would be proud of...along with you and me.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I stand open to questions.