



February 4, 2021

SB-2297 Testimony from Spirit Lake Tribal Chairman Douglas Yankton Sr.

Chairman Clemens, members of the Senate Transportation Committee for the record my name is Douglas Yankton Sr., Chairman from the Spirit Lake Tribe. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2297.

We are honored to have Highway 57 that runs through our reservation be named after, our Warriors, our Enforcers, our Veterans.

I want to share some history on the word Akicita from one our local historians, Louis Garcia.

The Dakota nation usually gathered for four events a year, the spring and summer buffalo hunts; a religious event such as the Sun Dance; or when the nation was at war.

These national gatherings attracted hundreds of people. To determine how many warriors were in the camp, each male who could bear arms was required to give a Counting Stick to the Council Tent.

The Councilmen would have an accurate census of the warriors in the camp. In the case of a hasty gathering for war the Counting Sticks would be simple, quickly made, and undecorated. At other times great care was employed in their manufacture.

Counting Sticks are short sticks, usually about eight inches long. The diameter of the stick is the thickness of a man's finger. All the bark was removed; those men who have no war record leave the stick un-decorated. Those who have been wounded in battle paint their stick red, and those who have killed an enemy paint their stick black. A notch is cut into their sticks to indicate the number of times an event occurred.

These Counting Sticks served four uses, 1) for a census of the camp warriors, 2) used to keep score in male gambling games, 3) to request food for the Councilmen during their meetings, and 4) a symbol for a horse given away to the poor by a generous man.



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Back then the Tribal government was composed of ten men who were selected to act as a council usually twice a year during the spring and fall buffalo hunt.

The council would select four hunt leaders, and a man with a loud voice to be the Announcer or Speaker and four Policemen (Akicita), one being the Police Chief (Akicita Itancan) who enforced the proclamations of the Council.

There are many stories of how in the Buffalo days if you resisted the Akicita you were severely punished. Even had your horse and dogs killed, weapons broken, etc. And any further punishment was decided before hand by the Council and the order directed to the Akicita to carry out.

The word Akicita encompasses our warriors, our enforcers, a soldier, a veteran or a member of the armed forces.

The Spirit Lake Tribe is honored that this joint venture is a start in acknowledging our language, our tribe and our people. This is a sign of thank you to all of the nation's veterans.

Lastly, I urge you to vote a DO PASS on Senate Bill 2297.