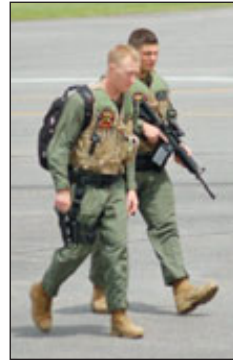




**ABOVE:** President Barack Obama, left, and tribal council member Frank Whitebull, right, hold up a red, white and blue star quilt presented by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe to the president and first lady Michelle Obama, far right, during their visit to Cannon Ball on Friday. (TOM STROMME/Tribune)



**LEFT:** Obama and first lady Michelle Obama greet a young dancer after an honoring song at the powwow on Friday. (TOM STROMME/Tribune) **ABOVE:** Marine One is shown in the foreground as Air Force One taxis down the runway at the Bismarck Airport. (BRIAN GEHRING/Tribune) **RIGHT:** Soldiers wait for the arrival of the president in Bismarck on Friday. (BRIAN GEHRING/Tribune)



BRIAN GEHRING/Tribune

First lady Michelle Obama meets a welcoming committee of local officials, including Gov. Jack Dalrymple and first lady Betsy Dalrymple, Kent Conrad and wife Lucy Calautti, and Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk and Connie Sprynczynatyk.

## At the airport

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phers and videographers in order.

The plane arrived at 2:13 p.m., and shortly thereafter the president and his wife came down the stairs. Michelle Obama, in green and black, had her hair back tight as if in preparation for the bluster of the state she was visiting.

The Obamas talked with Gov. Jack Dalrymple, former Sen. Kent Conrad and his wife, Lucy Calautti, and Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, adjutant of the North Dakota National Guard, and his wife, Connie, before making their way to a waiting helicopter.

Marine One lifted off at 2:30 p.m. to head to Cannon Ball. The media was whisked back to a hangar to await its return. At least half left to file stories or photos.

Before the president

even finished his speech at the powwow, White House staffers prepared the media for the return to the tarmac. A dog again sniffed through the bags, just to make sure nothing was picked up during the down time. Then, the buses took everyone back to the tarmac.

Marine One landed back in Bismarck at 5:45 p.m. The Obamas got out, walking close together back to Air Force One. They walked up the stairs, turned and waved. After his wife entered the plane, the president turned, gave one last wave and left, their historic visit to Indian Country complete.

The plane took off at 6 p.m., heading to California.

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# Obama makes historic visit to North Dakota

Continued from 1A

which he said is just one example of the sincere efforts being made by the Obama administration.

"In his remaining two years he will work ... hard to come up with even more solutions," Archambault said.

Before turning the podium over to Obama, Archambault and tribal leaders presented Obama with a star quilt and first lady Michelle Obama with a Standing Rock Sioux tribal flag. He said their gifts symbolize love and appreciation of great leaders.

Obama responded to their warm welcome with one of his own.

"Michelle and I are honored to be in this sacred and beautiful place. It's easy to see why it's called God's country," Obama said. "We're a little early, but thank you for giving us a sneak peek of your celebration."

Obama quickly turned to the theme he was pressing during his visit: taking a strong step toward improving federal and tribal relations as well as the quality of life for tribal members.

"I know that throughout history, the United States often didn't give the nation-to-nation relationship the respect that it deserved," Obama said. "So I promised when I ran to be a president who'd change that — a president who honors our sacred trust, and who respects your sovereignty."

Obama said since visiting the Crow Nation in Montana during his 2008 campaign he's pushed consistently to improve conditions on the reservation. Among those were efforts to strengthen the sovereignty of tribal courts and sentencing of people who commit violent acts against tribal women.

One of the most important ways of strengthening communities on and off the reservation is by providing quality education to all students, he said.

"That means returning control of Indian education to tribal nations with additional resources and support so that you can direct your children's education and



President Barack Obama addresses members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in the powwow arbor in Cannon Ball on Friday afternoon. He spoke of the challenges tribal members, and especially the youth, face on the reservation and spoke of efforts to improve the quality of life. (TOM STROMME/Tribune)

reform schools here in Indian Country," Obama said.

Prior to his speech, the president and first lady landed in a field on the edge of the community of less than 900 and traveled to Cannon Ball Grade School. The two spent an hour in a private meeting with several tribal children in one of the classrooms, where they heard stories of life on the reservation and the challenges their families face.

"I love these young people. I only spent an hour with them. They feel like my own. And you should be proud of them — because they've overcome a lot, but they're strong and they're still standing and they're moving forward," Obama said.

His administration released a series of proposals earlier Friday targeting improvements in both tribal education and economic development.

A new set of initiatives through the Bureau of Indian Affairs included a new rule to streamline the approval process for right of

way on tribal land.

Also released was a blueprint for reform of the Bureau of Indian Education. Among its goals are to improve high-speed Internet to students at BIE schools, flexibility waivers for schools to enact improvements at their campuses and paid training for instructors.

### Righting wrongs

Obama said efforts to overcome the wrongs of the past won't come overnight.

"My administration is determined to partner with tribes, and it's not something that just happens once in a while. It takes place every day, on just about every issue that touches your lives. And that's what real nation-to-nation partnerships look like," Obama said.

The Standing Rock Sioux Reservation spans approximately 2.3 million acres between North Dakota and South Dakota. Total population on the North Dakota portion of the reservation was 4,153 according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

Unemployment and poverty rates have long plagued the reservation. According to Standing Rock officials, the unemployment rate on the reservation is approximately 60 percent, while the poverty rate is hovering around 40 percent.

The North Dakota unemployment rate in April was 2.6 percent; nationally, it was 6.3 percent.

The North Dakota portion of Standing Rock is located in Sioux County, one of few places in the state where a majority of voters have been supportive of Obama and his party's policy.

In the 2008 election, more than 83 percent of Sioux County voters cast their votes for Obama compared to 15.6 percent for Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. In 2012, Sioux County voters went for Obama 78.7 percent to Republican Mitt Romney's 19.7 percent.

By contrast, the state of North Dakota went for McCain over Obama by a 53.2 percent to 44.6 percent

### HEITKAMP GLAD OBAMA FOCUSED ON NATIVE KIDS

CANNON BALL (AP) — Sen. Heidi Heitkamp says she's pleased that President Barack Obama focused on Native American children during his trip to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.

Obama gave an afternoon speech Friday on the powwow grounds in Cannon Ball. He said that young people should be able to live, work and raise a family on the land of their fathers and mothers.

Heitkamp said Obama's message is one that rings true not only on Standing Rock but across all of Indian Country.

The North Dakota Democrat said she's working on passing a bill endorsed by North Dakota's tribes that would create a national commission on Native American children to study on the effects of poverty, unemployment, child abuse, domestic violence, crime and substance abuse.

### ATTORNEY SAYS VISIT LARGELY A POSITIVE ONE

CANNON BALL (AP) — A North Dakota attorney and Native American rights activist says President Barack Obama's visit to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation was overwhelmingly positive.

Chase Iron Eyes said he would have liked to hear some concrete plans dealing with Native American issues unveiled during Friday's visit. But he said that Obama's trip to North Dakota was an important gesture to Native American people.

Iron Eyes is a Bismarck attorney who recently moved back to Standing Rock. He runs a website called Last Real Indians, an indigenous people media network.

Obama during his speech in Cannon Ball said that the deck has been stacked against many Native Americans, but if the federal government does its part it can break the cycle.