

To be or not to be?

Guest Column

BY SERENITY BANKS

Back in April, there was word that U.S. Senator Tom Daschle's office and Rosebud Sioux Tribal President Charles Colombe's office were going to be working cooperatively to organize a tribal summit in the Black Hills at the end of August to initiate more effective communication between tribal, state, and federal governments.

Well, here we are in the middle of August, and nobody seems to have heard anything about it.

One would think, if this gathering is really going to happen, someone might know when, where, and who is involved. But nobody's talking, so what does that tell us?

The idea for the summit came from Tim Giago when he was running as an Independent for the U.S. Senate. He met with Daschle in April to discuss key issues facing Indian people in South Dakota and he suggested the concept of a gathering to bring tribal leaders and legislative leaders together for meaningful dialogue. In fact, the basis of Giago's dropping out of the race was Daschle's



"word of honor" that this would happen.

Giago braved the disappointment radiating out from the South Dakota reservations following the announcement that their lone Indian candidate had dropped out. He did so because he trusted the word of a politician and, consequently, trusted that his supporters would also look to Daschle for action.

According to reports from all involved parties, Colombe was to be responsible for the task of organizing the summit. In other words, he was expected to contact each of the tribal leaders in South Dakota as well as the Three Affiliated Tribes and inform them of the gathering and invite them to attend. But even officials of the Rosebud Sioux Reservation's closest neighbor, Pine Ridge, say they haven't heard anything

about it.

Same story with Daschle's office. After repeated phone calls and inquiries, Daschle's deputy press secretary still says he hasn't been able to find anyone who knows what's going on.

But at least Daschle's office is willing to disclose their cluelessness. Colombe's people won't even return phone calls.

So, is it going to happen or not?

Giago said in April that "every Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota will be shocked and surprised at some of the issues Senator Daschle will bring forth."

So far we haven't seen anything we haven't seen before—just the typical political foot-dragging and question-dodging we're all used to in all forms of government.

Daschle has worked hard and gained a lot of support in Indian Country for the upcoming November elections, but some of us are still expectantly waiting to see if he will live up to his "word of honor" right now. The Lakota people live by their word; wouldn't it be nice if politicians did the same?

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