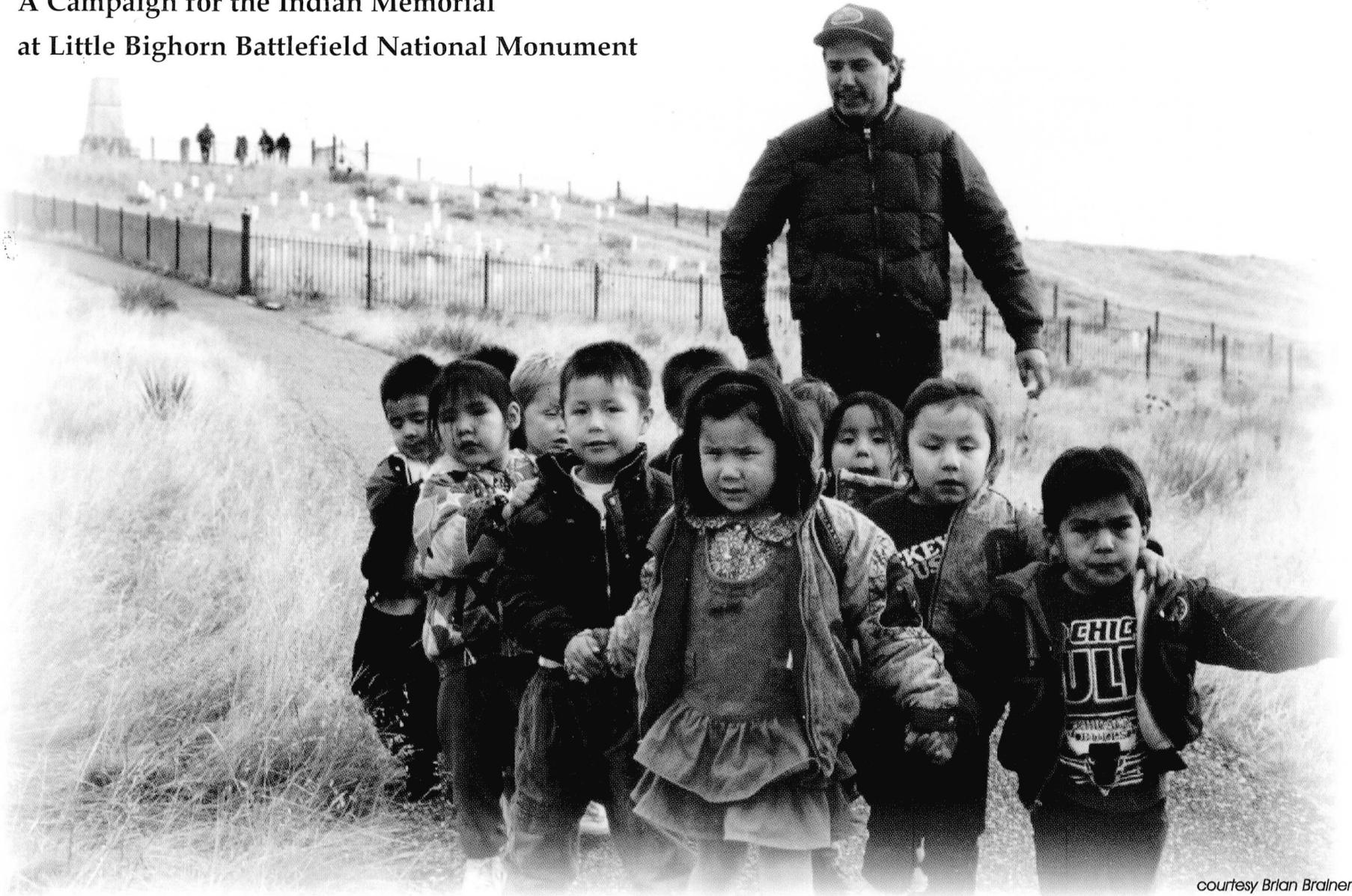


# PEACE THROUGH UNITY

A Campaign for the Indian Memorial  
at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument



*courtesy Brian Bralnerd*

Busby, Mont.,  
July 27, 1925.

Dear Sir:

My father Yehocaine ----- was among the Cheyennes who was killed at the Custer Battle. He was a Cheyenne Chief, and there are ~~the~~ Cheyenne men living, who know where he fell and where he was buried. We would be glad if you could help us to get the places marked, so that the place might be remembered on the next anniversary.

If you can assist us in the matter and get the markers we shall be glad to cooperate in finding the exact places. In case you do not have the authority to do that, will you please tell us to whom we may write in order to get this matter tended to properly.

Respectfully yours,

Mrs. Thomas Soeverheart,  
Busby, Mont.

*A copy of a letter, at left, sent to the U.S. Army in 1925 by a Northern Cheyenne woman requesting a memorial marker for her father killed at the battlefield. The Army and Indians met, above, on June 25, 1926, to commemorate the battle's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*



# A Vision: The Indian Memorial at the Little Bighorn

**“My father,”** the letter began, “...was among the Cheyennes who was killed at the Custer Battle.”

Long ago, the daughter of a Cheyenne chief killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn sought help from the battlefield’s custodian, the U.S. Department of the Army.

It was 1925.

“...There are two Cheyenne men living who know where he fell and where he was buried,” Mrs. Thomas Beaverheart wrote. “We would be glad if you could help us get the places marked, so that the place might be remembered on the next anniversary.”

The Army never sent a reply to the woman. Nearly 75 years later, however, her dream to memorialize her father finally will be realized.

Soon, an American Indian Memorial is to be built at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument--to give the forgotten a marker and place in history.

The national campaign for the Indian memorial needs your support.

**“The time has come to give equal honor to the Indian people who’ve been denied that for so long.”**

*--U.S. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne), Co-author of the 1991 law creating the Indian Memorial*



*For generations, history described the battle as a one-sided “massacre.” Until his death in 1994, Austin Two Moons, a great-grandson of the Cheyenne chief at the battle, helped advise the Indian Memorial process.*

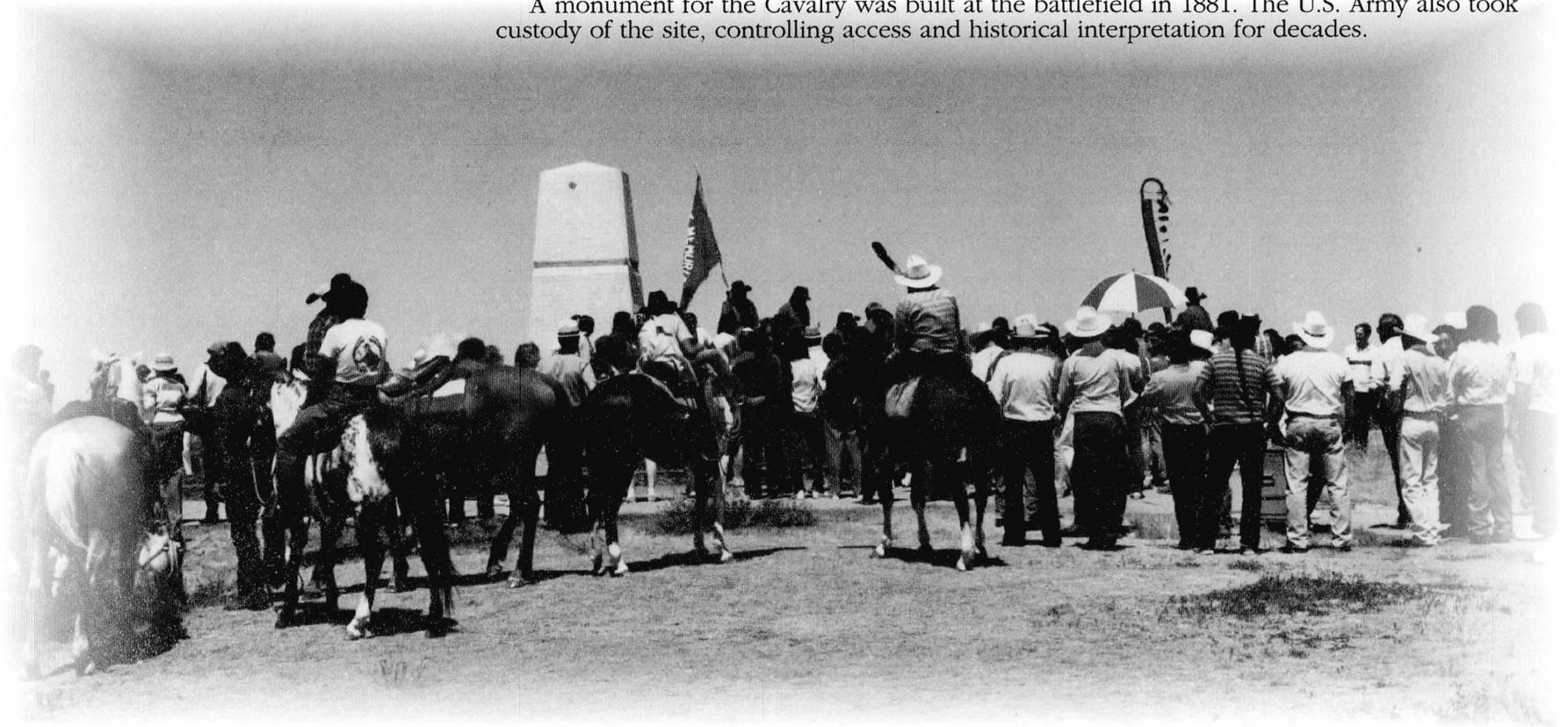
## Why an Indian Memorial?

**It is sacred ground** for the people who died there on June 25 & 26, 1876.

The Little Bighorn Battlefield is a national monument, a place for all Americans. But since the violent clash along the Little Bighorn River in southeastern Montana, controversy and conflict have continued to simmer.

Lt. Col. George A. Custer and 262 soldiers, scouts and civilians attached to the 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry were defeated by at least 1,500 Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho warriors. Custer and all his men died.

A monument for the Cavalry was built at the battlefield in 1881. The U.S. Army also took custody of the site, controlling access and historical interpretation for decades.



*On June 25th, 1988, the American Indian Movement cements a metal plaque into the grassy base of the memorial which marks the mass grave of the 7th U.S. Cavalry atop "Last Stand Hill".*

*courtesy Michael Donahue*

## Help Support the Vision

**As many as 100** Native American men, women and children died, too. They fought in defense of their families, land and traditional way of life. The Indians' courageous effort, however, was never formally recognized—until now.

In 1991, the U.S. Congress decided historical change was necessary. Congress changed the name of the battlefield and ordered construction of a memorial for the Indians, which would be built with private monies.

**Now, the American public is being asked to contribute support so the Indian Memorial can become reality.**

**“The ‘peace through unity’  
theme is for every  
American. The battlefield  
is a place that is the end of  
a culture for a people, and  
we can’t forget that.”**

*--Gerard Baker (Mandan/Hidatsa)  
former Little Bighorn Battlefield  
Superintendent*



*“Battle of Little Bighorn” by White Bird, Northern Cheyenne  
West Point Museum Collections, United States Military Academy*

## The Battle: A Watershed Event in Western History

**The Battle of the Little Bighorn** was the climactic engagement of the Great Sioux War. That conflict – a series of battles and skirmishes between the army and Sioux, Arapaho and Northern Cheyenne Indians in 1876 & 1877 – occurred after white Americans moved into lands specifically set aside for the Indians by the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868. That accord had created the Great Sioux Reservation in present-day western South Dakota, providing Indian hunting grounds in eastern Wyoming and southeastern Montana. White incursions into the latter tracts met resistance by Lakota followers of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse who had refused to sign or follow the treaty. An influx of miners into the Black Hills portion of the Sioux reservation following an 1874 gold discovery there by Lt. Col. George Custer's expedition, led the federal government to attempt purchase of the Indians' land. When that failed the frustrated Grant administration responded by ordering all tribal bands residing in the Yellowstone and Powder River country to report to their reservation agencies by January 31, 1876. When the bands refused to comply as the civilian and military authorities already knew they would, troops were ordered into the field to force submission.

The military operations lasted from March 1876 to May 1877 – and involved many sharp engagements. Army plans called for three columns to close on the country of the Yellowstone and Powder rivers where the non-reservation people lived. In March a column headed by Brig. Gen. George Crook attacked tribesmen on the Powder without success. Lakota and Cheyenne allies again fought Crook at Rosebud Creek, Montana, on June 17 forcing his withdrawal from the war zone. The Rosebud success inspired the warriors and set the stage for their greatest triumph, as thousands of Indians (including as many as 2,000 warriors) gathered along the Little Bighorn River for religious and communal purposes. Brig. Gen. Alfred Terry and Col. John Gibbon, commanding the other columns, had no knowledge of Crook's defeat or Crook of Terry's and Gibbon's intentions.



*Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux believe Sitting Bull had a vision before the battle which foretold the Indians' great victory.*

On June 22, Terry sent the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry under Custer up Rosebud Creek from the Yellowstone to find the Indian encampment. On June 25, Custer's Crow and Arikara scouts located the village. Custer divided his regiment and advanced to attack. A battalion under Maj. Marcus Reno crossed the Little Bighorn and struck the south end of the huge camp, but was forced to retreat with heavy casualties. He rode to bluffs east of the river, where he was reinforced by troops under Capt. Frederick Benteen. Custer, meantime, had proceeded north, apparently planning to attack the village at another point.

Instead warriors freed after defeating Reno countered Custer's advance downstream. Led by such chiefs as Crazy Horse, Gall, Crow King and Two Moon, they destroyed Custer's battalion in a contest lasting but a few hours. No one of Custer's command survived. The Sioux and Cheyennes then renewed their efforts against the troops of Reno and Benteen on the bluffs four miles away. Finally, the tribes packed their belongings and started south toward the Big Horn Mountains as Terry and Gibbon's columns, approaching from the north reached the battlefield on June 27.

The overwhelming nature of the Indians' victory at the Little Bighorn stunned the nation and thwarted the military campaign. Gen. Philip Sheridan now moved to occupy the Yellowstone country and deny the Indians their best hunting ground. New forts were built and troops from them constantly harassed Sitting Bull's followers and allies.



*Alongside Custer, scouts from the Arikara and Crow tribes fought their Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho enemies.  
From left to right, Crow scouts: White Man Runs Him, Hairy Moccasin, Curly, and Goes Ahead.*

**“My great-grandfather, White Man Runs Him, was one of five Crow scouts for Custer. It is part of our identity within our tribe and, I believe, also within Indian Country today.”**

*--Linda Pease (Crow)  
Memorial Advisory Committee*

In November, Crook destroyed a large Cheyenne village under Dull Knife. Miles fought Crazy Horse at Wolf Mountains in January 1877, so that by the spring – under relentless military pressure and beset by starvation – the coalition of tribes that had bested Crook and Custer unraveled. Sitting Bull and his remaining followers took refuge in Canada, while most of the other Lakotas and Northern Cheyennes turned themselves in at the agencies. Crazy Horse led his people into Camp Robinson in May 1877, and was soon thereafter killed while resisting arrest. The war was over, but the struggle was just beginning.

*American Indian veterans from all U.S. military services typically lead ceremonies at the battlefield, giving equal honor to both tribal and United States flags and regalia.*

**“The Indian participants of the battle sacrificed much of their human spiritual energy so that their people would survive and prosper in the future. Today the Plains Indian Nations are alive and vibrant.”**

*--Dennis Sun Rhodes (Northern Arapaho)  
Memorial Advisory Committee*

*courtesy David Cournoyer*

# The Indian Memorial: “Peace Through Unity”

## “The public interest,”

according to Public Law 102-201, “will best be served by establishing a memorial...to honor and recognize the Indians who fought to preserve their land and culture.”

On Dec. 10, 1991, President George Bush signed legislation to change the battlefield’s name from “Custer” to “Little Bighorn” Battlefield National Monument and to create the Indian Memorial. The law authorized a national design competition and construction of the memorial and acceptance of donations.

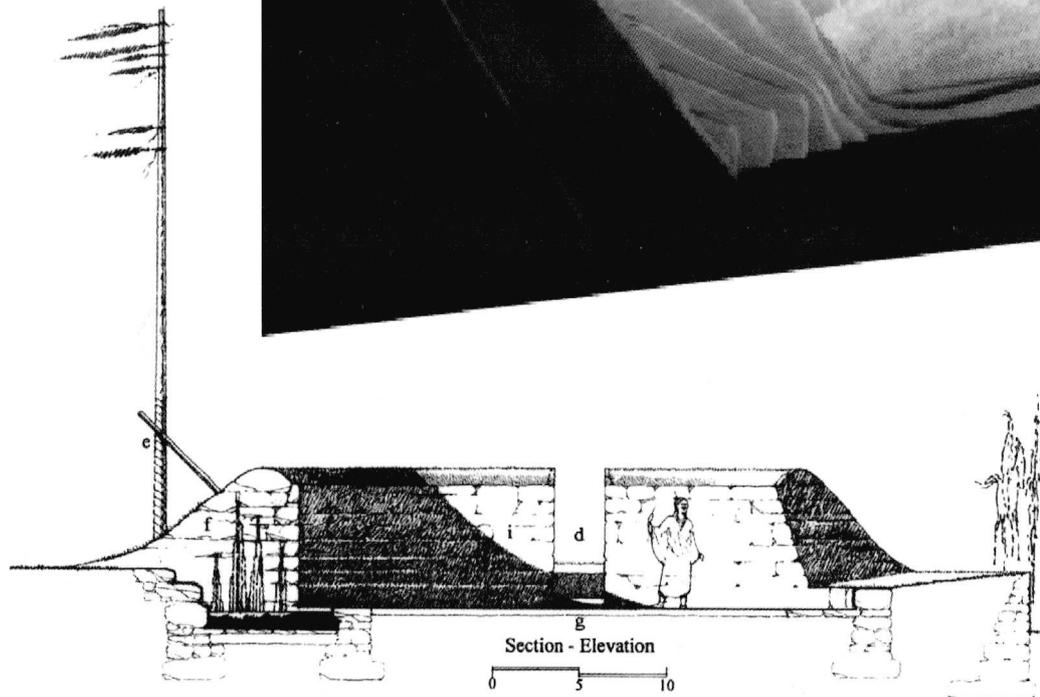
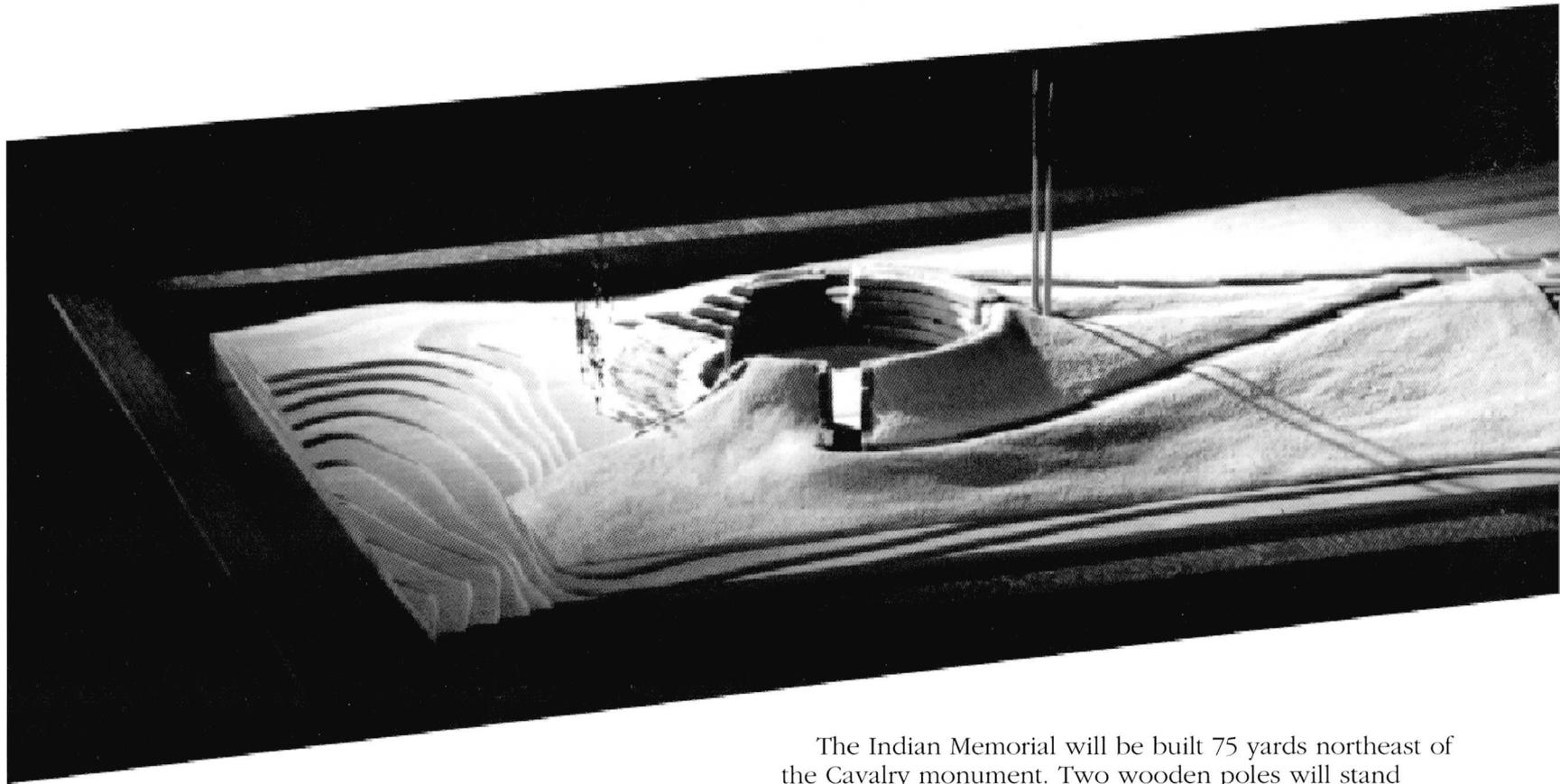
An advisory committee made up of members of the Indian tribes involved in the battle, historians, artists and landscape architects would oversee the process. The committee adopted the theme “Peace Through Unity” in accordance with the advise of Elders Austin Two Moons (Northern Cheyenne) and Enos poor Bear, Sr. (Oglala Lakota).

The theme would help “encourage peace among people of all races,” as required by law.

*courtesy Bruce Dale Photography*

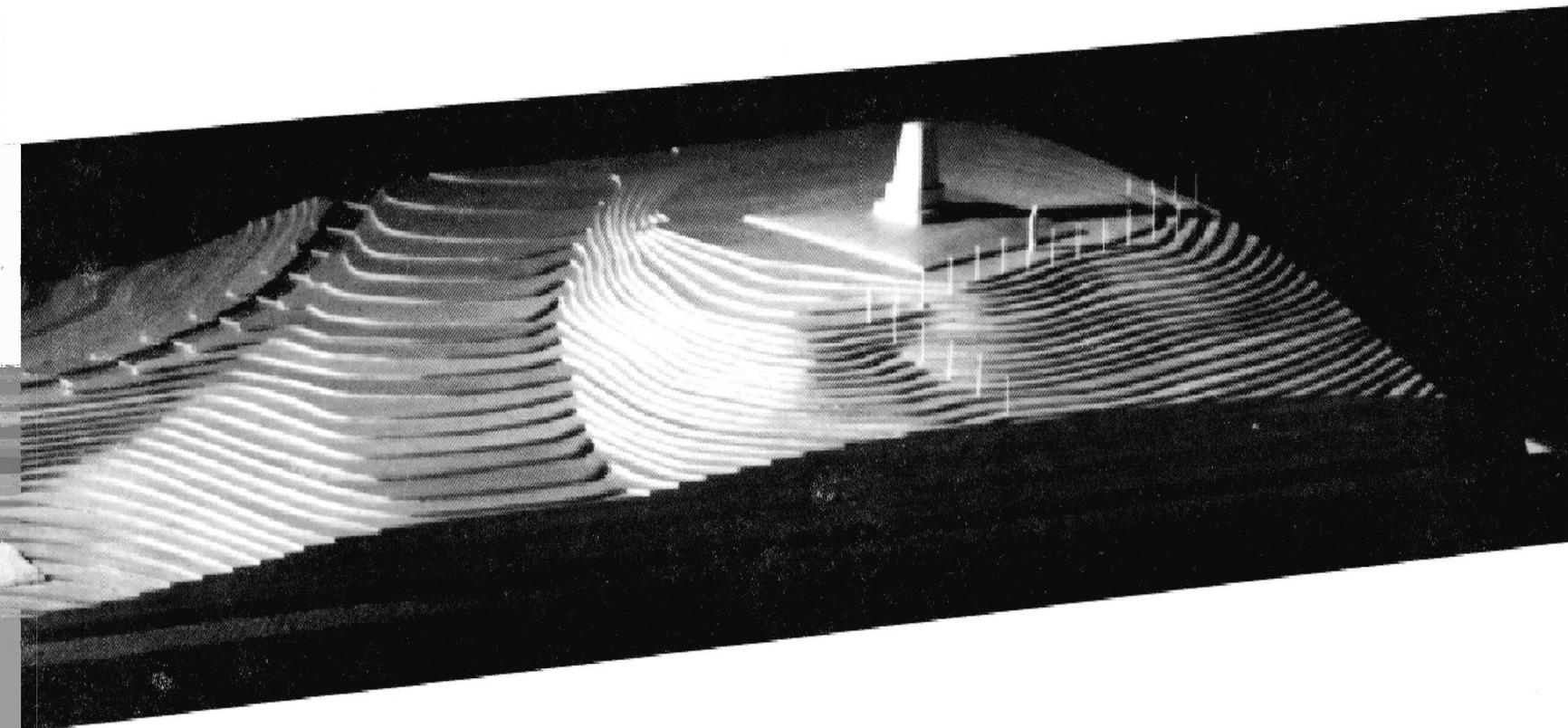


*“We want a place where the Native descendants can feel welcome..”*



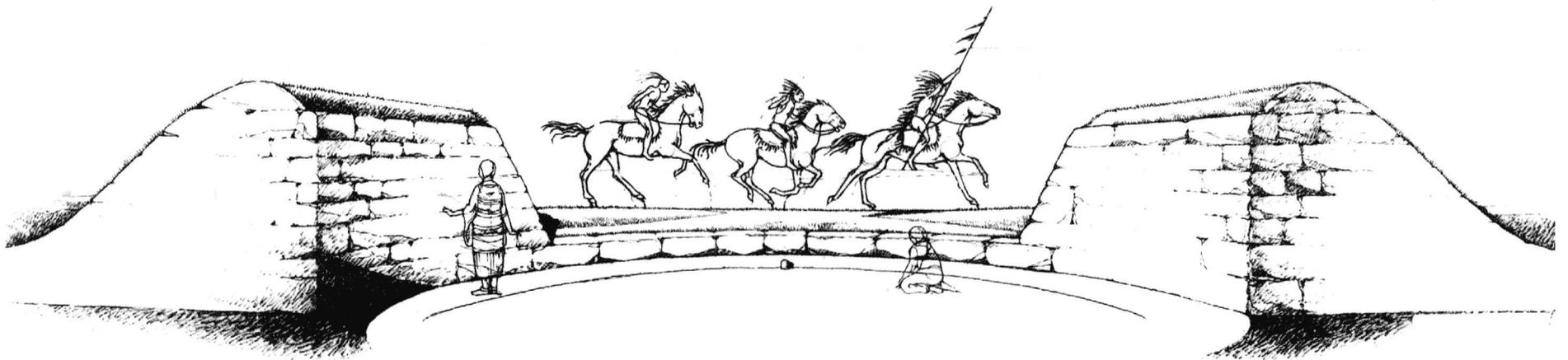
The Indian Memorial will be built 75 yards northeast of the Cavalry monument. Two wooden poles will stand solemnly, the only visible markers for the circular earthwork to be carved gently from the prairie.

For visitors, the poles will frame a view of the Cavalry obelisk. Through this “spirit gate” window, the Cavalry dead will be symbolically welcomed into the memorial’s circle. For many tribes, a circle is sacred, and it will remain open for ceremonial events. The surrounding walls will be covered with a variety of tribal art and symbols in an evolving, “living memorial.”



*...and believe one's people had done a courageous and good thing..."*

*--Arthur Amiotte (Oglala Lakota)  
Memorial Advisory Committee*



## Memorial Advisory Committee

**The legislation** creating the Indian Memorial established an Advisory Committee to ensure that the memorial designed and constructed shall be appropriate to the monument, its resources, and landscape, sensitive to the history being portrayed, and artistically commendable. The committee consists primarily of members of Indian tribes involved in the battle, in addition to historians, artists and landscape architects. Seven members of this committee juried the design competition consisting of 554 entries.



*Seated left to right: Leonard Bruguier, A. Gay Kingman, Carol Redcherries, Linda Pease, Dennis Sun Rhodes  
Standing left to right: Chauncey Whitright, Arthur Amiotte, Paul Hutton, Kevin Red Star, Richard Pohl  
Not Shown: Donald Malnourie*

\***Arthur Amiotte, Oglala Lakota, Artist** — An artist and art educator, Amiotte is the Plains co-curator of the North American Indian Hall at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History.

♦ **Leonard R. Bruguier, Ph.D., Yankton Sioux, Univ. of So. Dakota** — A professor of history, Bruguier directs the Institute of American Indian Studies and the South Dakota Oral History Center.

\* **Paul A. Hutton, Ph.D., Univ. of New Mexico** — Executive director of the Western History Association, Hutton is a professor, author and nationally-recognized military history scholar.

\* **A. Gay Kingman, Cheyenne River Sioux, National Indian Gaming Association** — Director of the Public Relations and Seminar Institute, Kingman is a doctoral candidate in adult education.

**Donald Malnourie, Arikara, White Shield, No. Dakota** — A member of the Arikara Scouts Society, Malnourie is a descendant of Arikara scouts with Custer at the Little Bighorn.

**Linda Pease, Crow, Educator and Artist** — An alternate juror, Pease lives on the Crow Reservation near the battlefield. She formerly was education curator at the Heard Museum in Phoenix.

\* **Richard K. Pohl, Montana State University** — As Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, Pohl has worked extensively with native and indigenous materials and Montana's landscape.

\* **Kevin Red Star, Crow, Artist** — Red Star has studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts, the San Francisco Art Institute and Montana State University. His work is internationally known.

\* **Carol Redcherries, Northern Cheyenne** — Chief Justice of the Northern Cheyenne Appellate Court, Redcherries is active in Lame Deer, Montana, and is an Army and Air Force veteran.

\* **Dennis Sun Rhodes, Northern Arapaho, Architect** — The principal of AmerINDIAN Architecture in St. Paul, Minn., Sun Rhodes has strong ties to the Wind River Reservation of Wyoming.

**Chauncey F. Whitright 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sioux, Wolf Point, Mont.** — Chairman of the Strong Heart Society, Whitright was a member of the first National Park Service work group appointed in 1989.

♦ committee chairman \* jury committee members



*Chief Gall*



## A National Fund-raising Campaign for the Indian Memorial

The National Park Foundation, the official non-profit partner of the National Park Service, is heading a national campaign to raise funds to build the Memorial. Construction will not begin until the fund-raising is complete.

“The Foundation is honored to have this opportunity,” Foundation President Jim Maddy said in March, 1997, “to help raise funds necessary for constructing the memorial.” Maddy announced the campaign at a ceremony attended by the public, the Memorial Advisory Committee and members of tribes involved in the battle.

“This memorial’s long overdue,” Maddy said. “The public’s keenly interested.” Contributions sent to the National Park Foundation are tax deductible.



**“If this memorial is to serve its purpose, it must not only be a tribute to the dead; it must contain a message for the living...  
*power through unity....”***

*--Enos Poor Bear  
Oglala Lakota Elder*



*Indian descendants of battle participants helped form the vision for the Indian Memorial. Elders Enos Poor Bear (Oglala Lakota, above) and Austin Two Moons (Northern Cheyenne, left) offered wisdom, guidance and prayers toward the process.*



*50th Anniversary photo of the participants of the Battle of Little Bighorn, June 25, 1926  
photo by G.J. McMurry .*