

Bernie Sanders Calls for Native American Justice in Arizona

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At a packed rally in Flagstaff, Arizona, Bernie Sanders delivered a passionate speech calling for rights to be restored to Native Americans and indigenous peoples across America.

Sanders spoke to several thousand supporters gathered outside of Flagstaff, in the heart of Navajo Country. According to the Associated Press, [Sanders deviated from his traditional stump speech](#) — in which he normally calls for tuition-free college, universal health care as a human right, and a \$15 an hour minimum wage — to specifically address centuries of injustices the U.S. government has perpetrated upon Native Americans.

“From the first day that settlers came to this country, the Native American people have been lied to, they have been cheated, and negotiated treaties have been broken,” Sanders said. “We owe the Native American people so, so much.”

Sanders thanked Native American populations for preserving their culture and heritage, and outlined the oppressive policies and broken promises indigenous communities have endured for hundreds of years.

“All too often, Native Americans have not been heard on issues that impact their communities. They have been told what to do. They have not been involved in the process,” Sanders said to cheers.

“The United States has the duty to guarantee equal opportunity and justice for all citizens, including our first Native Americans. And let us be honest and acknowledge that we are not doing that today,” he continued.

In true Bernie Sanders fashion, the Vermont senator let loose with a flurry of statistics detailing how much tribal nations have suffered at the hands of the U.S. government.

“Today in America, one in four Native Americans are living in poverty, and the high school graduation rate is 67 percent, the lowest of any racial demographic group. The second leading cause of death for Native Americans between 15 and 24 is suicide. And that speaks to incredible despair.

One in three Native American women will be raped in her lifetime. Most of the offenders are non-Native. Most of the programs dedicated to the tribal nations are underfunded. That has led to inadequate housing, inadequate health care, inadequate education, and insufficient law enforcement.

Today, Native Americans have a lower life expectancy and higher rates of uninsured than the population at large, and even those who have health coverage have difficulty accessing the healthcare that they need.”

Sanders promised to right those wrongs if elected president. Given his recent U.S. Senate bill — the [Save Flat Oak Act](#), which would return sacred Native American land previously sold to a mining company back to its rightful owners — Sanders has every intention of delivering on his campaign promise.

“The sacred places of our Native American communities cannot and must not be sacrificed for the profits of mining interests,” Sanders said to raucous applause.

Watch full video of Sanders’ speech here:

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