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Sacagawea Dollar Coin Unveiling
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton



The White House
May 4, 1999

It is a pleasure to have all of you here today for this historic occasion. I would like to extend a special word of thanks to the American Indian and Alaskan Native tribal leaders from across our great nation who have traveled great distances to be with us today.

I also want to welcome our distinguished members of Congress. And I would like the members of Congress to please stand so that we can show our appreciation of them. (Applause.)

I also want to recognize Treasury Secretary [Robert] Rubin; the director of the United States Mint, Philip Diehl; and today's keynote speaker and a friend to so many here today, LaDonna Harris. (Applause.)

Appreciation, as well, to Kevin Gover and Lynn Cutler for their tireless work in placing the issues that are important to our American Indian and Alaskan Native Americans at the forefront of today's national agenda. (Applause.)

I want to thank Zelda [Tillman] for that beautiful Shoshone prayer. I also want to thank the drummers and the dancers who have reminded us again of the enduring power of Native American culture to stir our imaginations and touch our hearts. And I want to pay tribute to the Color Guard of Vietnam Era Veterans whose presence here reminds us that Native Americans have one of the most distinguished armed services records in our entire society. (Applause.) We are deeply grateful for the many sacrifices and contributions that they and so many of you have made in defending America's freedoms.

Today we come from every corner of our country, from a rich diversity of backgrounds, to honor a common past and to imagine together a common future. We pay particular tribute today to Indian women whose cultural and spiritual contributions have enriched our lives and whose leadership have helped to change the course of history.

Almost 200 years ago, President Thomas Jefferson would meet with Meriwether Lewis here at the White House—often late into the night—to plan the great exploration of America's western frontier. But at the time they were talking and planning, neither man could have known that a young Shoshone woman would play a pivotal role in that historic endeavor.

When Sacagawea joined the Lewis and Clark expedition, she was only 15 years old, and she was pregnant with her first child. She would be the only woman, the only Indian, the only young person on that trip. Yet even as she cared for her baby, she demonstrated remarkable

courage and ingenuity, serving the expedition as an invaluable interpreter and guide. Her knowledge of edible and medicinal plants also contributed greatly to the physical health of the party. The tremendous respect and admiration she evoked over the course of the journey is evident throughout Clark's journals—journals which she saved from destruction when one of their adventures on a river ended in the boat capsizing. According to Captain Clark, her very presence in the party of men represented a token of peace for all who approached.

Sacagawea played an unforgettable role in the history of our nation. I am pleased that just recently the North Dakota Legislative Assembly has voted unanimously to place a statue of Sacagawea in the Great Hall of the United States Capitol where she will join almost 100 other leaders revered and honored by the people of this nation. (Applause.) Today we celebrate the decision to honor this remarkable Shoshone woman in another unique way—by placing her image on the first U.S. dollar coin of the new millennium. With this unveiling we celebrate not only the extraordinary contributions that American Indian and Alaskan Native women have made to our country over hundreds of years, but we also acknowledge the even greater role they will play in our future.

I want to congratulate and thank Secretary Rubin and the U.S. Mint for its landmark decision to set the tone and the very spirit of this new century with this moving image. Every day this coin will serve to remind us that we are a nation of many peoples and cultures joined together by a shared vision of freedom, justice, and respect.

And I want to thank the two artists who designed this beautiful coin for all of us—Glenna Goodacre and Tom Rogers. We are indebted to Secretary Rubin and Phil Diehl as well for creating the most inclusive coin selection process in the Mint's history, with its close consultation with the tribes and unparalleled public outreach. Literally thousands of Americans, from all walks of life and from communities nationwide, were involved over the past year to bring us the beautiful design we will unveil today. And many have expressed their pride in the final choice. One letter reads, for example, "As a woman, a mother, and a Native American, I am pleased that we are going into the year 2000 showing respect for the multiple roles women have been carrying out since the beginning of time."

I am also very pleased that we have with us today the 2nd graders from Spring Ridge Elementary School in Pennsylvania who voted in favor of the design, as well as students from Kelley Elementary from the Grand Tetons in Wyoming who wrote to Congress encouraging the Sacagawea coin. I'm also very, very pleased that this event is being cybercast so that young people in classrooms around the country can participate via the computer and the Internet.

Today as we honor and remember the life and contributions of Sacagawea, we pay tribute as well to other Native American women who have carried on her role as pathmakers and breakers—the artists and doctors, the educators and businesswomen, the tribal leaders who have enriched our lives and nation and upon whose shoulders we stand today. Leaders like Wilma Mankiller, who could not be with us but who we honor as the first Cherokee woman to be elected principal chief of her nation. I know we all join together to wish her a speedy recovery.

We recognize other leaders among us: Hattie Kauffman, the first Native American network news reporter; Luci Tapahonso, an internationally renowned writer and educator of the Navajo nation; Suzan Shown Harjo, a poet and curator who has helped Indians recover some of their most sacred lands and protect their ancient cultures; and LaDonna Harris, who has been such an inspiration for peace-loving people everywhere.

Last summer, I was privileged to experience the accumulated wisdom of generations of Native American women when I met with eight Iroquois clan mothers in upstate New York. They spoke to me about some of the lessons they pass down to their children and their grandchildren—that we must walk softly on the Earth, and that every decision we make, and every action we take, must be judged not only on its impact on us today, but on the impact it will make on the next seven generations.

This belief in the importance of giving gifts to the future can be seen in the traditional reverence for the land, and the close-knit family and tribal ties and the understanding that diverse peoples can come together to build one nation and yet protect the individual rights of all. And these are not just the values of Native Americans. They are deeply ingrained in the American spirit as well.

In two weeks I will have another opportunity to explore the extraordinary culture and heritage of Native Americans when I travel to the beautiful Southwest. I will visit the ancient cliff dwellings of the Ancestral Puebloans, such as those at Mesa Verde, as well as living communities like Acoma. And I will see some of you again, including members of the All-Indian Pueblo Council. This trip is part of the White House Millennium Council's Save America's Treasures program, which is helping to preserve the sites and artifacts and cultural and artistic heritage that tell the story of America.

Yet even as we celebrate the historic and ongoing contributions of Indians to the development of America, we have to recognize that we have not always lived up to our own legal and moral obligations. While some in Indian country have made remarkable progress, far too many remain stranded in a cycle of poverty—their dreams further diminished by poor health, inadequate employment opportunities, and dilapidated schools. I'm very proud of my husband's commitment to preserving and strengthening the sovereignty of Native American tribes. He and all of us in the Administration are also deeply committed to enhancing tribal economic development, investing in tribal schools, and enhancing the well-being of families.

At last year's first-ever White House Conference on Economic Development in Indian Country, the President announced several important initiatives to boost economic development and create much-needed jobs. The President's fiscal year 2000 budget request includes a "new markets" initiative that, through tax incentives and expanded access to capital, could have a dramatic impact on the quality of life in Indian country in the years ahead. The President is also seeking to expand health care coverage for Native American children and to end the unacceptable health disparities that so unfairly penalize poor and minority citizens, particularly women and

children. (Applause.)

But probably our greatest challenge—and surely the most meaningful and lasting contribution we can make to the next generation—is to strengthen the educational opportunities available for Native American children. I would like to thank the many leaders here today who are working to ensure that Native American children get the education and the skills they need to thrive in this new century. Leaders like Dr. Janine Pease-Pretty On Top, who became the first woman of Crow descent to earn her doctorate and who has worked tirelessly since then to open up the same doors of opportunity to others who would follow. (Applause.)

The President took on an important step last year when he issued an executive order directing federal agencies to improve Native American achievements in math and reading, to raise high school graduation rates, and to increase the number of Native Americans who attend college. This year's fiscal year 2000 budget takes another step forward, calling for the recruitment of 1000 new teachers for areas with high concentrations of American Indian and Alaskan Native students. The budget also calls for dramatic increases in construction funding for BIA schools and a new bond initiative to leverage private resources for BIA-funded schools. But we must do more.

So it is with great pleasure that I announce new legislation which will be shortly forwarded to Congress to further enhance education for Indian children. This legislation creates the American Indian Education Foundation, which will be a non-profit entity authorized to accept and administer private funding to enhance educational opportunities for Native students from early childhood through high school. Foundation funds can be used to support teacher development and family literacy programs, to help create "best practices," and to develop cultural programs for use in the schools.

I want to thank all of the Congressional sponsors of this important piece of legislation who are with us today: Senators Inouye, Dorgan and Conrad; and Representatives Kennedy, Kildee, Kolbe, Pomeroy and Udall. You have truly given a gift to the future.

You know, there are many members of Congress who have been strong supporters of the needs of people in Indian country. But I want to single out one man who has been the conscience and the voice for so many. I'd like to ask him to stand—Senator Daniel Inouye. (Applause.)

Today as we honor the past with this coin of Sacagawea and her baby, let us commit ourselves to a future where all children have the opportunity to be healthy, safe, and cared for. Where all children have the opportunity to receive the quality education they need. And as we build that common future, let's heed the words of the great Iroquois oath of the peacemaker: "You shall look and listen to the welfare of the whole people; and have always in view not only the present, but the coming generations of the unborn, of the future nation." That is our obligation and, I hope, our commitment.

It is now my great honor to introduce a Native American leader who has lent her

remarkable talent to the cause of peace and to the delivery of justice. A leading citizen of the Comanche Nation and a passionate voice for Native American rights, she has devoted her life to civil rights, the women's movement, and world peace. Please join me in welcoming LaDonna Harris. (Applause.)

[HARRIS SPEAKS.]

Thank you, LaDonna. It is now my pleasure to introduce the man who has many mothers—Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Kevin Gover. He is an enrolled member of the Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, and has been instrumental in developing a greater understanding—within the Administration and across the country—about the challenges facing Native Americans today. We applaud his commitment to tribal sovereignty and his strong advocacy for increased attention to the needs of young people in Indian country. Please welcome Assistant Secretary Kevin Gover. (Applause.)

[GOVER SPEAKS.]

Thank you very much, Kevin. Now I would like to introduce the person who shepherded this whole process, and has not only made a contribution to our understanding of our past by this coin, but has contributed so much to the Administration and to our country in so many ways. And that is Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin. After his remarks, he will introduce Glenna Goodacre and Tom Rogers—the two artists—and U.S. Treasurer MaryEllen Withrow, who will join Secretary Rubin and Philip Diehl and myself in unveiling our new millennium coin.

I would like to invite to join us one additional person who has no idea I'm going to do this to her. But I would like, when the others come up to the stage, to ask Tahnee Rose Robinson, a young Shoshone woman, to come up. Because I think it would be a very fitting moment for us to be looking at the future while we honor the past.

So with that, please join me in welcoming Secretary Rubin. (Applause.)

[RUBIN SPEAKS AND UNVEILS COIN.]

It is my pleasure now to invite Joanne Shenandoah to close this memorable event with a song. A member of the Iroquois confederacy and one of America's foremost Native American recording artists, Joanne has transformed audiences around the world with the beauty and power of her Native American musical traditions. Together with her sister Diane and her daughter Leah, she will sing for us a song she has written in honor of Sacagawea—and as a tribute to all women who sustain life and serve as caretakers of our precious planet.

[SHENANDOAH SINGS.]

Thank you, Joanne, for that beautiful song. And I want to thank all of you for coming to the White House to this historic celebration. Now will you please rise as the flags are removed

from the Pavilion by the Vietnam Era Veterans Inter-Tribal Association? The Eyabay Drum Group will sing a traveling song to wish you well on your journey. But before you leave, I would like to invite all of you to visit the White House—the People’s House. But first, I’d like to invite the elected tribal leaders to join me at the South Portico for a group photograph. Again, I wish every one of you a safe trip, and may God bless you all.

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK
MESA VERDE, COLORADO
MAY 22, 1999

Thank you, Director Stanton for those kind words and the Honorary Ranger Award. [some personal experience with rangers or wanting to be a ranger?] I want to thank Larry Weise (Wees), Superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park, and his hardworking staff for welcoming all of us here today. Thank you for helping everyone get here by lifting the entrance fee for the day. I'm sure we'd all like to give you a round of applause for that.

It has been my pleasure today to get to know Peter Pino (Peen yo) a good friend of Mesa Verde National Park and a good friend to many of you. I thank you for opening up our program in the spirit of your ancestors. I have had many occasions to thank Dick Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Trust has been a terrific partner in the effort to *Save America's Treasures* and I look forward to continuing to work with him.

My thanks go out also to the many performers here today: the Cortez-Montezuma High School Band (Director Gary Hall); the Aneth Utah Navajo Dancers (children and parent troupes); the Zuni Pueblo Dancers and the Bala Sinem Choir from Ft. Lewis College (Director Hubert Williams) (they may do a number during the program as well).

I want to recognize Chairman Ernest House of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and thank you for your support. Lastly, I want to recognize Roy Lane, Chief of Police of the City of Cortez and to extend to you and the rest of your force my sympathy for the loss of your colleague Officer Dale Claxton in the line of duty just one year ago (May 26).

So pleased to be here in Colorado, and in this beautiful, sacred place. Writer John Gunther once wrote of this area: "Little in the world can compare. The vistas stretch the eyes; enlighten the heart; and make the spirit humble." That is surely true for me today.

As I look up at these historic dwellings, I try to imagine what it must have been like to the first non-Native Americans to discover this place. Imagine a

December blizzard two cowboys struggling to follow trail in driving snow..... searching for lost cattle. They abandon their horses, and come to the edge of a cliff. And they see such an unexpected sight – a cliff dwelling nestled into a cave high on the opposite wall. I’ve heard they half climbed, half fell down the cliff before they scrambling over fallen masonry to explore a deep natural alcove that conceals more than 100 rooms. That’s how Richard Wetherill and his brother and law stumbled upon this place over a century ago.

What they thought they saw on that wintry day was an extinct culture. And surely, the Ancestral Puebloans had abandoned these cliff dwellings over 500 years ago. Yet today, we know this civilization is far from erased from the land. It continued to grow and flourish – becoming the way of life enjoyed by today’s Puebloan people across the southwest.

Just yesterday, I visited the Pueblo of Acoma, where some still live in their ancient dwellings on top of a beautiful mesa in New Mexico. They have kept their culture very much alive – in their traditional dances; in their beautiful pottery; in the oral tradition of myths and legends that they pass down , generation to generation. We know that 24 native American tribes in the southwest today have an ancestral affiliation with the sites here at Mesa Verde, and still feel their ancestors spirits among the dwelling both here in the park and on the other lands throughout this impressive region of the country.

My trip to Acoma is part of my “Save America’s Treasures tour” that I began on Wednesday, when I walked around the rim of one of America’s greatest natural treasures – the Grand Canyon. [talk about trip highlights.]

The theme of our millennium is “Honor the Past; Imagine the future.” And that is why we are here today. To pay tribute to a remarkable ancient culture that is so much a part of America’s story -- – and to help make sure it is preserved for future generations – so that they too can learn from and be humbled by its beauty.

Willa Cather helped articulate for all of us why we feel so moved here. Her fictional character [in her book “The Professor’s House] experiences the rediscovering of cliff palace; “ a little city of stone, asleep Looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity.”

And in this quiet and calmness – perhaps we can imagine for a moment women bending over grinding stones, turning corn into flour; others may be weaving on crude looms; or watching their children play ball in the open courtyards; while the men tend their fields or hunt for game. They had to climb down sheer cliff face using only toeholds carved in rock, with an occasional ladder for assistance. Had to carry all construction materials to build the town; then carry all their food; water; tools and household items into the dwellings by same route. From high up, mothers could watch their children; work on home crafts; or gaze out on beautiful view from a lofty perch.

Today, we are surrounded by the highest concentration of pre-Columbian cliff dwellings in world. Here -- a rich and complex culture thrived – tracing its roots back 10,000 years ago – when hunters used these caves for temporary shelters after their migration from Asia to Alaska by way of Aleutian Islands. A community thrived here – farming, weaving, baking, and creating beautiful pottery – for hundreds of years.

Today ? I was shown into the cool darkness of a kiva – or sacred place; a tiny hole in floor, the sipapu, represents mythical opening through which man arrived on earth; kivas sacred places normally accessible only to Pueblo Indians;

I've heard/seen? The traces of fingerprints of the workers who helped build these walls – leaving their mark for future generations.

THE BEAUTY AND UNIQUENESS OF THIS PLACE HAS INSPIRED A LONG HISTORY OF PRESERVATION

The campaign to save these historic treasures began with Virginia McClurg – a reporter turned conservationist who explored the cliff dwellings in the 1880s, and then devoted much of her life since then in a continuous political campaign to inform the American public and members of Congress to preserve Mesa Verde. She and Lucy Peabody persuaded the Colorado Federation of women's clubs to accept the project of creating a park for Mesa Verda [Charter initiation fee was \$2 – yearly subscription was \$2. They helped organize rummage sales; and asked 10 cents from everyone she met. And gained the support of members of Congress.

The federal government became involved in the preservation of Mesa Verde in 1906 – when President Theodore Roosevelt established it as a park. It was the

first park dedicated to the works of people ever created in the United States – [national park system not yet in existence] the first national park to establish museum and the first to provide regular interpretive services; guided tours; campfire programs.

This place is seen as a gift to the world. In 1978 – it was designated as World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO.

Today, we have with us a very special group of preservationists: third graders from Foothills Elementary School in Boulder, Colorado. For the past 3 years, they've have raised money by doing extra chores and selling the "Adopt a ruin" calendars they made themselves. They've raised \$2,750 which will go to assess and protect the sites just discovered after recent fire. The teacher who developed this project tells her students they are "having a hand in history" and she is right. I want to recognize that teacher and give HER a hand for the many extra hours she has put into this project. Could Marcy Lockhard, and her students please stand?

I want to read what one of her students wrote about why she's worked so hard to raise money for Mesa Verde. Julia writes: "I think Adopt a Ruin is a good idea because in forty years my kids will probably want to see the ruins, so I want to save the ruins. So far, I have raised \$15. I feel very special accomplishing our goal because it will mean so much to me to have my kids get the experience. I think the best part of this is when I grow up, I think it will be great to see the expression on my kids faces." I've read a lot of statements over the years about why we need to preserve our cultural and historic treasures. And I can't think of a better explanation than the one Julia has just given us.

I also want to acknowledge the preservation work of another very special group. The Stabilization crew at Mesa Verde is made of Navajo masons – who are using their years of experience to work on these ancestral Puebloan sites. They are helping to preserve not only their own rich heritage – but the heritage of all Americans. And we are grateful to them as well.

Virginia McClurg wrote that “soon it will be too late to guard these monuments.” And she spoke about the “noble work” that we all must do to be custodians of this sacred place. We’ve seen the tradition of preservation that she inspired more than a century ago. And today, I’m proud to say that more have joined her enduring crusade.

Today, I am very pleased to re-iterate what I just announced in Washington as we began our tour on May 19th: that the National Trust for Historic Preservation, through Save America’s Treasures Program, has raised \$1.7 million in private funds to save the ancient cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde National Park. [\$1 million from Sandra Wagenfeld and Fran Goldstein; \$250,000 from the Travel Foundation/Tauck Tours; \$250,000; \$250,000 Mobil Oil; \$150,000 American Express. I also announced that \$1.4 million in federal support for Mesa Verde - made possible through Save America’s Treasures grants.

I’m pleased as well that I was able to announce a federal grant to the Anasazi Heritage Center -- which will support preservation of an estimated 80,000 ancestral puebloan sites throughout the southwest – including support for engaging interested Native Americans in the preservation process.

REFLECTS A GREAT TRADITION OF PRESERVATION AMONG AMERICANS OF ALL AGES;

There is a great tradition of preservation among Americans of all ages who care about protecting the places where our many different predecessors walked and worked and lived. Last summer on the first tour to “Save America’s Treasures” in the northeast, I visited the first public preservation site in our country which was established by the state of New York in 1850 to protect one of George Washington’s Revolutionary War headquarters in Newburgh. The 150th anniversary of public commitment to preservation, therefore, will come in the year 2000. It is appropriate to make an extra effort to *Save America’s Treasures* at this special time in history.

I just heard a wonderful story about a Park Ranger here – John Bruce. As he was leaving one of the sites here, he gathered the young people around him. He asked them to cup their hands, and to hold the beauty of the Anasazi people. And then he asked them to go through life, preserving such areas and building things of

beauty. I can't think of a better way of honoring the glorious place we stand in today. And I hope we can all carry out that simple mission, and pass it down to the next generation – as the cliff dwellers here would do.

Thank you.