Indian Country Today

Prairie Edge statue puts history in true perspective

The bronze statue in front of the Prairie Edge store on Main St. in Rapid City was done by an artist from Santa Fe, N. M. named Glenna Goodacre, a non-Indian woman who did the recently unveiled Vietnam Women's Memorial located in Washington, D. C. next to the Wall.

The 9-feet-9-inch statue is that of an Indian warrior in quiet reflection. The startling revelation happens when one walks behind the statue and finds his hands are tied behind his back.

An elderly Indian man looked at the statue Saturday, studied it for awhile, and then walked across the street where he sat down on one of the benches there. He continued looking at the statue until tears flowed down his face.

This is the impact the statue had on several Indian men we talked to. The significance of the tied hands conveys the feelings that when the Indian was placed on reservations his hands were tied so that he had a difficult time surviving in the old ways.

It captures the sorrow and the pain of the confinement.

The inscription, both in Lakota and English reads, "The Sioux and the Plains Indians were moved from their homelands and placed on reservations. Though their hands are tied, the dream of their homeland remains." Anyone born and raised on an Indian reservation can identify with that comment.

The statue stands in front of the new 25,000-square-foot American Indian arts and crafts retail store and gallery. Several Indian artists and artisans work in the store.

Spokesperson Dale Jahr said the store has the largest collection of glass beads, the original Italian beads brought over by the white traders more than 200 years ago.

Ray Hillenbrand, the owner of Prairie Edge, has been a strong supporter of Indian art. He is well respected by those Indian artists and craftsmen working at Prairie Edge. Many of them have been able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps while in his employ. Congratulations on the new store, Ray.