



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
P.O. Box 150, Nespelem, WA 99155

(509) 634-2200
FAX: (509) 634-4116



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Roger Ailes
Fox News Channel
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036
PH: (212) 301-3000
FAX: (212) 301-4229

SENT BY FACSIMILE AND REGULAR MAIL

Dear Mr. Ailes,

John Stossel's remarks about American Indians on a recent segment of "Fox and Friends" would be merely ludicrous, and undeserving of a response, were they not expressed before a nationwide or even international audience. That Fox News has allowed such irresponsible and false statements to be made by one of its spokesmen does more than spotlight Stossel's lack of basic knowledge and understanding of US history, federal policy, and the current status of Indian Tribes in this country--it again calls into question the integrity of Fox News as a whole.

Although mainstream news networks have too often refrained from criticizing Fox News when its commentators utter outrageous statements, spread blatant lies, and shamelessly pander to racists and other extremists, rebroadcasts of Fox program clips have made their way onto other media and reveal clearly that Fox is often indifferent, if not hostile, to truth. The rantings of your commentators may raise ratings and advertising revenue, but they continue to lower the level of public discourse and encourage knee-jerk reactions to complex and important issues. Mr. Stossel's question, "Why do we need a Bureau of Indian Affairs?" and his subsequent comments that the US government has so generously "helped" American Indians is but the latest example of Fox's shock-jock, truth-be-damned strategy for attracting viewers. We have seen the likes of this before from your programming. As the person in charge, you are ultimately responsible for the airing of reckless comments such as Mr. Stossel's and other baseless attacks by your commentators and "experts." Perhaps you are familiar with the anguished question put to Senator Joseph McCarthy during one of his infamous character-assassination hearings, a question meant to stop McCarthy from ripping into yet another terrified witness: *Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?*

I am sure you have received letters from American Indians throughout the country, providing you with the historical and current facts about Indians, and I can only hope that you will take the time to read them and reflect upon the truth of the American Indian experience. The facts are

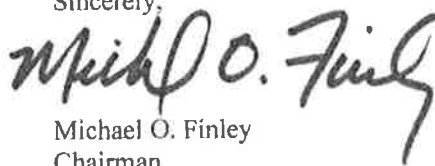
indisputable: American Indians were massacred, their lands and natural resources taken and the survivors rounded up and put on reservations, deprived of any real chance to continue to be self-sufficient and independent. Indians were blamed for being impoverished, ill-educated, and in poor health, when these were the absolutely predictable and unavoidable results of various federal "Indian policies."

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, originally part of the War Department when its mission was to subdue or eliminate Tribes, initially attempted to force Indians to assimilate by whatever means possible. By no stretch of the imagination could its services be considered generous. Reservations were essentially refugee camps managed by a suspicious and intolerant bureaucracy. The BIA's failure to exercise even minimal care in its management of Indian trust lands and our other natural resources has only partially been brought to light by the Eloise Cobell class action lawsuit, recently settled by the US government for billions dollars, a fraction of the amount the BIA actually "lost" over more than a century of its mismanagement of Indian assets.

History, they say, is written by the conqueror, but the historical facts surrounding what really happened to Indians over the past 400-plus years have slowly come to light. Please make note of this basic truth: the federal government has never given Indians anything. Its paltry payments for vast and rich millions of acres of land "purchased" through treaties, its substandard health care and education programs for Indians, promised by treaties and other agreements in exchange for Indian territory, its negligent management and even theft of our resources and money through the BIA, make Stossel's remarks not just careless, or wrong, but cruel.

I have a very serious suggestion for you as a way to respond to the indefensible comments made by John Stossel. Do not fire the man. Instead, provide for him what probably should be provided to a number of your "experts" who get it wrong: an education. Enroll Mr. Stossel at a reputable university in a class on American Indian history. Require that he not only attend classes, but pass the course. Then, send him to live on an Indian reservation, full time, for at least a month. We would be happy to have Mr. Stossel see how life is lived on the rez, and what "benefits" Indians receive from the federal government. Perhaps, with some basic education and a little real-life experience in the matters of which he speaks, he will have gained perspective, understanding, and will come back to tell the truth. Fox News could use more of that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O. Finley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "M" and "F".

Michael O. Finley
Chairman