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Gov. Hickenlooper apologizes to descendants of Sand Creek Massacre

By Elizabeth Hernandez, *The Denver Post*

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Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe members sat on the Colorado Capitol steps Wednesday morning, December 3, 2014 as part of a memorial for the victims of the Sand Creek Massacre. (*Andy Cross, The Denver Post*)



Gov. John Hickenlooper, center right, greets Northern Cheyenne tribal leader Otto Braidedhair, after speaking to members and supporters of the Arapaho and Cheyenne Native American tribes at a gathering marking the 150th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre, on the steps of the state Capitol in Denver, Wednesday Dec. 3, 2014. (*Brennan Linsley, Associated Press*)

- **Nov 30:**

Tears fell and heads bowed Wednesday as Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe members sat on the steps of the Capitol, listening as Gov. John Hickenlooper apologized for the atrocities of the Sand Creek Massacre.

On Nov. 29, 1864, the Colorado Territorial militia invaded a Cheyenne and Arapaho village on the Eastern Plains, killing more than 160 people — most of them women and children.

"We should not be afraid to criticize and condemn that which is inexcusable. ... On behalf of the state of Colorado, I want to apologize," Hickenlooper said to tribe members at the 150th anniversary event. "We will not run from this history."

According to the governor's office, Hickenlooper is the first Colorado governor to offer an apology for the massacre.

For the 16th year in a row, tribe members and others have embarked on a 180-mile spiritual healing run from the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic site, which is 23 miles east of Eads, to the Capitol.

Margaret Montaño, a ceremony observer of Navajo descent, said the run symbolizes the atrocities done to indigenous people across the continent.

"The run is a cleansing to the road. It is a healing process," she said.

Runners dressed in athletic clothes surrounded the lectern where city officials and tribal leaders in traditional dress addressed the crowd.

Miranda Cometsevah, who is of Cheyenne and Arapaho descent, started running Sunday morning. She said the days were cold and sometimes hard, but faith kept her moving.

"I just had to think my ancestors did this, so I can do this," said Cometsevah, a resident of Oklahoma. "My ancestors would run for their lives, and I didn't have to do that."

She said that when she grew weary, she'd pray.

Jay Grimm, a Navajo man who works for Denver Public Schools, and about 20 American Indian students from around the city joined runners for their homestretch Wednesday.

"This event," Grimm said, "just sheds light on a part of Colorado's history a lot of people just don't know."
