

After helping wild horses in the Teddy Roosevelt National Park with his brother, Harry Riverbottom of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians became a full fledged wild horse advocate.

"The connection [between horse and man] is a powerful connection," Riverbottom said. "It's a real thing. When you tune in to them, they really tune into you."

Two days after President Barack Obama's first inauguration, Riverbottom attended a meeting in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) federal office to discuss the roundup of 35,000 wild horses within 10 Western states that were being held in holding tents. The next policy was to slaughter them, according to Riverbottom.

"I asked how many wild horses there were estimated to be. They said 30,000. I asked how many cows there were. They said millions," Riverbottom said.

Though the BLM offered the figure of 30,000 wild horses, Riverbottom suspects the number to be much lower in actuality. There are no official figures or counts of wild horses, however.

"They're really influenced by the megabucks cattle ranchers," Riverbottom said.

At the meeting, he established a friendly dialogue with the BLM employees, which is unusual as far as interactions with the BLM go, according to Riverbottom.

The meeting concluded with a success for Riverbottom and the plight for wild horses.

"I made them laugh and I made them cry and I talked them out of slaughtering 35,000 horses," Riverbottom said. "But you have to keep after them. I'm gonna keep trying. I'm gonna wake them up."

Along with many other wild horse advocates, he believes in the powerful effect that interacting with horses in the wild can have on people, thus encouraging people to take rides led by experts out to see them in their natural habitat.

"I'm a horseman inspirer," Riverbottom said. "I'm trying to inspire people to want horses again. The best thing to do is to get a horse and have so much fun on it that everybody else wants to too. We've moved away from that powerful connection that lets us fly across the earth on the back of a horse."