

Lakotah grand jury will not be indicting

By Andrea J. Cook
Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, N.D. — Grand juries convened by the Republic of Lakotah on seven reservations in South Dakota will spend several months gathering evidence of alleged abuses against the Lakota people, according to organizer Russell Means.

The grand juries will investigate allegations of graft and corruption on the reservation, police brutality and of discrimination against the Lakota people in housing, health and education, Means said during a Monday morning news conference in Rapid City's Memorial Park.

Means said the grand juries will be small and will go from community to community, beginning on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, to hear testimony.

"This investigation is going to take a year or more to gather all the evidence to substantiate our charges of genocide against the United States of America," Means said.

Means said the grand jury will not issue indictments.

"We are a peaceful, non-confrontational republic," he said. "We don't attempt to use police power to brutalize anyone, either physically or mentally."

Means and others announced formation of the independent republic in December. The group has said its boundaries would encompass land in the Dakotas, Montana and Nebraska as outlined in the 1851 Fort Laramie treaty. The group does not have the backing of the Lakota tribes in South Dakota.

The grand juries will gather evidence that will be turned over to state and federal authorities, including Congress, Means said.

"More importantly, we're going to the international community," he said. "Even more important than that, we're going to the Web because that has been the Republic of Lakotah's strength."

Means said one hearing had been held in Chadron, Neb., and another is pending.

"We're going to be investigating the so-called border towns around the Sioux Indian reservations for racism and hatred," he said.

Statistics uncovered in Nebraska confirm there are income and education disparities for all racial groups. Incarcerations and police stops in Nebraska for Native Americans point to those disparities, he said.

With Means at the press conference were Earl Tall and Betty Janis of Manderson. The brother and sister's experiences with tribal law enforcement speak to the need for the investigation, Means said.

Tall said that he and other members of his family have been arrested and jailed on different occasions, but no charges have ever been filed against him.

Complaints filed against tribal officers have been ignored, Tall said, which is why he turned to Means for help.

After an accidental shooting at Manderson, Janis, who has rheumatoid arthritis, said tribal officers came to her home demanding to search the house for Tall's grandson. According to Janis, she was arrested and charged with assaulting an officer after she stepped between an officer and her grandson.

Tall's grandson was eventually located and spent eight days in jail before being released without any charges being filed.

"They fear retaliation from police officers and their families," she said. "They're all tied together."

There are no checks and balances of tribal government of any kind or any of the programs the federal government sponsors on the reservations, Means said.

Fruitport Board OKs casino plan

By Heather Lynn Peters
The Muskegon Chronicle

MUSKEGON, Mich. — If the venue for Monday's Fruitport Township Board meeting wasn't hot enough, the debate among board trustees and residents over a casino certainly was.

After two hours of heated discussion in an unair-conditioned room bursting with people, the board granted the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians its support for a proposed casino at the former Great Lakes Downs property.

But it didn't come easy.

In an unexpected move by the board, trustees voted 4-3 to allow the tribe to move forward with plans to develop an enormous casino and hotel at the former Great Lakes Downs property. Fruitport Township supervisor Ron Cooper, Clerk Carol Hulka and Treasurer Rose Dillon voted no, saying they wanted more information on the project before giving support.

Cooper suggested the board hold off on voting until an attorney could review the resolution, but Trustee Chris Beck urged the board to move forward. Cooper said the township would "lose leverage" in

negotiations with the tribe if the resolution was approved so quickly.

Both Cooper and Beck are running against each other in a crowded race for the supervisor's position. Cooper is running as a Democrat against two other candidates and Beck is facing off against two Republicans in next Tuesday's primary.

The two have had a contentious relationship over the years and Monday's meeting was no different.

"I don't think it's wise to go forward with this resolution. It's crazy," Cooper said before voting.

But Beck asked the board to vote Monday on the tribe's concept and -- with input from tribal leaders -- explained that the board's support doesn't automatically mean the casino will be built without any further input from township officials.

In addition to Beck, trustees voting yes on the resolution were Greg Hulka, Marjorie Nash and Paul Schultz Jr. The resolution was similar to the one that the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners last week unanimously approved supporting a Fruitport casino.

The federal Department of

Interior also must approve the pact, but getting county and local support is the first step. Next the township board will have to review a Municipal Service Agreement and that's when negotiations will begin, said Robert Memberto, director of commerce for the tribe.

Typically, MSA agreements negotiated between tribal casinos and local governments, call for 2 percent of the revenue from electronic gambling machines to be set aside for local purposes, such as infrastructure and public safety costs.

The tribe already operates the Little River Casino just north of Manistee and officials claim the Fruitport casino would bring 800 to 1,000 jobs to the community and millions of dollars.

Tribal leaders also said the proposed Fruitport casino will be "two times" as large as the Manistee casino, with a hotel on the grounds. The 23,000-square-foot Little River Casino offers 28 table games, 1,575 slots, a poker room, three restaurants and a 292-room luxury hotel. Memberto said funds generated from the slot machines account for 95 percent of the casino's annual revenue.

Tribal leaders said the casino could add \$3-\$4 million a year to the township's tax base.

It's something that excited most of the 50 residents that packed the 7 p.m. board meeting, which had to be moved from the cramped township hall on Airline Road to the uncomfortably warm auditorium at Fruitport Township Middle School. Several county leaders, including County Administrator Jack Niemiec, also attended the meeting.

Many residents participated in a "question-and-answer" portion of the meeting and most expressed support for the casino.

"Thank you for bringing jobs back into Fruitport," said one resident. "I lost my job to Mexico."

Another resident, Bill Vandervelde, also was happy to hear the tribe's plans.

"I'm very much in favor of you coming," he told tribal leaders.

A few residents said they didn't agree with the idea of having a "gaming facility" in the area in fear it would promote irresponsible gambling, among other issues.

One woman asked, "Why in the world do you have to

have a casino in every major town in Michigan?"

Memberto said history has shown crime in a community decreases when there are more jobs available, and a casino typically brings more "positive than negative." He also told the woman she can choose not to visit the establishment.

"If you don't enjoy these places, just don't go to them. It's that simple," Memberto said.

Tribal Councilor Robert Hardenburgh then told the crowd: "You know the difference between a casino and Wall Street? We call it gambling up front."

Beck asked the residents and board how anyone could question whether a "business" promising to bring hundreds of jobs to the community could be a bad thing for Fruitport.

"Industry is moving out of Muskegon County. It's jobs for this area. We should be begging them to not build somewhere else," he said.

In the end, Memberto said he was pleased to get the board's support.

"We wish there hadn't been the internal bickering, but a resolution is a resolution," he said.

N.D. governor removes Rolette County Sheriff

Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem has filed a complaint for the removal of Rolette County Sheriff Richard Turcotte.

The action follows an investigation conducted by the State Bureau of Criminal Investigation. The results of the investigation were forwarded to Rolette County State's Attorney Mary O'Donnell who, after conferring with the Rolette County Commission, asked the attorney general to handle the matter and determine what actions were warranted.

The investigation report from the Bureau of Criminal Investigation was referred to Gov. John Hoeven, who, in accordance with state law, requested the attorney general to file a complaint with the charges against Turcotte. The complaint, which was served on Turcotte late Monday, alleges misconduct, malfeasance, neglect of duty, or gross incompetence.

Governor Hoeven temporarily removed Turcotte from office pending a hearing on the complaint and has directed the county commissioners to appoint a competent individual to serve as Sheriff pending a hearing and recommendation from the hearing officer.

A hearing on the complaint is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Aug. 13 in Bismarck

Miss World-Eskimo



File Photo

Miss World Eskimo-Indian Olympics Pageant contestant Miranda Lynn Soloman waits with other contestants for her turn to speak Tuesday, at the Noel Wien Library in Fairbanks, Alaska. The contestants meet with library patrons to explain the pageant and tell something about themselves

Native church items returned

By Deborah Bulkeley
Salt Lake City Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — It's been more than two years since federal felony peyote charges were dropped against the founders of a Utah County-based Native American church.

Now, James "Flaming Eagle" Mooney, his wife, Linda Mooney, and other members of the Oklevueha Native American Church are celebrating the recent return of documents and ceremonial items that had been seized as part of the federal investigation.

James Mooney said he was particularly grateful for the return of the "Peyote Chief," which he said is a peyote button, kept in a ceramic pot, designated to guide a ceremony.

"They took it off of our altar. It's almost as if they took a chalice from a Catholic church," James

Mooney said Monday before a ceremony planned to be performed outside the Utah Federal Public Defender's Office. About a dozen people gathered for the ceremony honoring the Mooneys' defense.

However, Mooney says his legal struggle isn't yet over. Mooney is now seeking private counsel to try to gain back what he says are some 15,000 buttons of peyote, enough for 30,000 ceremonies.

The return of the peyote wasn't part of the 2006 agreement in which charges against the Mooneys were dropped, said Melodie Rydalch, spokeswoman for the U.S. Attorney's Office.

"It was illegal for him to possess it," Rydalch said. "We believe the peyote was contraband."

In the agreement, the Mooneys agreed to never possess, buy, use or distribute peyote "until they

become members of a federally recognized tribe or there is definitive clarification of the law regarding the use of peyote by court ruling or legislative action."

The U.S. Attorney's Office said in 2006 that its decision to drop the charges was independent of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that upheld the use of certain hallucinogenic plants, including peyote, for religious purposes.

But the Mooneys and their supporters see their struggle as a religious one. Mooney says peyote is a "very sacred" part of some of his religious ceremonies.

Mooney's son Jareth McCarey of Murray said Monday's event was a celebration of his parents' freedom.

"They took a long hard road to defend, not only their rights, but the rights of anyone who chooses to follow this path," McCarey said.

Health care emergency

By Kendall Jones
KTKA

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — The seats inside the Kickapoo's health center are empty. There has been a steady flow of walk-ins to the clinic, but the one doctor who serves the patients is out sick today.

"Health care here has been off-and-on because we haven't had the physicians here every day," patient Joe Williams said.

There just isn't enough money to fund the center the way it should be funded. Kansas Kickapoo Chairman Steve Cadue says the U.S. has turned its back on the treaty to provide American-Indians with health care.

"This obligation is as old as the United States," Cadue said. "They've reneged on nearly every treaty obligation that they owe the Native-American people."

Though the U.S. is legally bound to provide health care to Native-Americans, funding for programs has not kept up with the rising costs. Native-Americans have a lower life expectan-

cy than any other racial/ethnic group and higher rates of many diseases, according to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Yet many American-Indians are forced to go to facilities outside of their government funded clinics because the clinics are severely underfunded.

"It's gonna come out of that person's pocket and that goes against what the federal government promised they would do," Williams said.

Just last month, the Government Accountability Office found the Indian Health Services mismanagement has led to millions of dollars in lost or stolen property.

"We have Indian people dying, and now the Indian Health Service loses \$15 million," Cadue said. "It's a national disgrace."

So Cadue has taken his fight to a national level, speaking with senators and congressmen and women from Kansas. In August, Cadue will go to the Democratic National Convention as a Kansas Delegate to try and plead his people's case for help.