

Natives host rally supporting Obama

By Rebecca George
Fairbank Daily News-Miner

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — Local members of the Alaska Native community rallied on behalf of U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama on Tuesday afternoon on Troth Yetta, the wild potato hill next to the Reichardt Building at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The group discussed Obama’s positions for stronger Alaska Native communities, touting a plan that addresses the unique concerns of Alaska Natives and Interior Alaskans. Those points included Obama’s proposed emergency energy rebate, which will prioritize the construction of the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline.

“Skyrocketing energy prices are causing an energy crisis in Alaska, especially in rural areas,” said Kathy Mayo, a community organizer in Fairbanks. “He knows that this is a matter of life and death among many Alaska Native peoples.”

Daisy Stevens delivered her endorsement of the Democratic candidate in Gwich’in, her native tongue.

“This is the first time I can remember that a presidential candidate has acknowledged the needs of Alaskans, and on behalf of the Native community, I fully support him,” she said.

Her reasons for supporting him include the need for affordable energy, universal health care and the need for government support and protection of subsistence lifestyles.

Sharon McConnell spoke about the need to reform the No Child Left Behind Act to address the specific learning and cultural styles of Alaska Natives and to give the Alaska education system the flexibility to integrate Native languages and culture into the school program.

“Education is key to improving the lives of the Alaska Native community, but the No Child Left Behind Act has significant flaws,” she said.

McConnell also addressed the need for an increase in funding for Head Start programs and preschool availability for Alaska Natives.

Shirley Lee, a childhood friend of McConnell, also spoke in support of Obama.

“Politics affect our lives more than anywhere else in the country,” Lee said.

Lee noted the brisk Arctic wind blowing across the field as she spoke, saying it was a sure sign that a cold winter is on its way.

“This wind of change is blowing across the nation, and Sen. Obama’s vision is the only one that can improve our lives,” she said.

N.D. Democrats ready for Denver convention

By Jill Schramm
Minot Daily News

BISMARCK, N.D. — North Dakota Democrats won’t be leaving carbon footprints when they travel to their national convention in Denver next week.

North Dakota completed the Democratic National Convention’s Green Delegate Challenge by offsetting 100 percent of the trip’s greenhouse gas production through carbon credits purchased from the City of Fargo.

Chad Oban and Carmen Miller of Bismarck bought the credits for the 25 members of the delegation. Fargo retired 220,460 pounds of carbon offset credits that came from destroying methane at its landfill. The credits will more than equal each delegate’s carbon footprint for the trip.

North Dakota is among nine other state and territorial delegations with all members of their delegation participating in the challenge.

DNCC is offering special rewards for the delegation or delegations that demonstrate the highest level of commitment to offsetting their carbon footprint. These delegations also will be recognized in their seating section on the floor of the convention.

Jon Erickson of Minot plans to people-watch in his first time at a Democratic National Convention.

Erickson, who has twice heard presidential candidate

Barack Obama speak, said the most fun has been watching the audience. Going into the convention next week as one of North Dakota’s delegates, Erickson looks forward hearing Obama speak again.

“It should be fun. I think again I am just going to turn around and look at all the people,” he said.

The Democratic National Convention runs from Aug. 25-28 in Denver, while the Republican National Convention is set for Sept. 1 to 4 in Minneapolis.

Rep. Jon Nelson, R-Rugby, will be attending the Minneapolis event as an alternate delegate. He sought a spot in the state’s delegation earlier in the year as a John McCain supporter at a time when there was a slate of potential candidates. His favorite now is the presumptive nominee, which only adds to his enthusiasm for the convention.

“I am looking forward to it,” said Nelson, who as a convention first-timer just wants to soak up the experience.

Connie Nicholas of Cando, North Dakota’s Republican national committeewoman, is a veteran of such events and expects this year’s convention to be much like those of the past.

Nicholas, originally a Rudy Giuliani supporter, said she’s been surprised but pleased to see McCain’s campaign make a comeback after nearly running out of money a year ago.

Nicholas has been preparing for the convention by helping to set the state delegation’s convention schedule and arrange guest passes for non-delegates who want to attend. The proximity of the convention has sparked more than the usual interest from North Dakota Republicans.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for people that have been long-time supporters, volunteers, donors to actually get to a national convention,” she said. “We are trying to accommodate people as best we can.”

Speeches by McCain and President Bush will highlight the event.

Nicholas is running for Republican National Committee secretary, which would make her assistant secretary of the convention and put her on stage to share the roll call responsibilities.

Her daughter-in-law, Lana Nicholas of Cando, also is one of North Dakota’s 23 alternate delegates who will be attending. North Dakota Republicans will send 26 delegates to their national convention, while Democrats will send 21 delegates and four alternates.

Jennie Pinkerton of Minot will be attending the Democratic convention as an alternate pledged to Hillary Clinton. She was selected before Clinton withdrew.

A secondary math teacher, Pinkerton will be starting her first teaching job just before the convention. She expects to

miss the first few days of school but considers the chance to be part of a historical event to be worth the sacrifice.

Pinkerton remembers her first trip to a state convention four years ago as a senior in high school and how impressed and amazed she was at the festive atmosphere and the production.

“I was just blown away. There was just so much excitement,” she said. “I am kind of assuming that the national convention will have that same thrill and excitement.”

Hillary Clinton, a former presidential candidate, speaks Tuesday and former president Bill Clinton speaks Wednesday. Obama will address the crowd Thursday.

For James Maxson of Minot, the highlight will be “seeing lots of what I would call old friends and acquaintances that I have met over the years, both at the state level and the national level. There’s certainly a camaraderie.”

Maxson, a delegate and North Dakota’s Democratic national committeeman, will be attending his third national convention.

Because of Denver’s proximity and the lower expense of attending compared to some previous venues, more North Dakotans are showing an interest in attending as non-delegates, Maxson said.

“I am going to be very generous in letting other people use my floor pass on the dates

prior to Thursday because there are a number of people who would like to get down on the convention floor,” he said. “By giving them my pass, I will give them what may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Erickson has been trying to snare Democratic convention tickets for his sisters from Denver and Oregon so they can join him at the event. He also expects to be busy with agricultural issues at the convention.

Nelson joined the Obama campaign’s farm policy committee in January. He said he’s looking forward to the first face-to-face meeting of the committee after months of weekly conference calls.

Nelson originally was one of about 30 people on the committee, which since has grown as more people have gotten involved in the Obama campaign. Many have been policy specialists rather than active farmers like himself, though.

“That was the fun part of it that I could bring that point of view to it,” he said.

Erickson said he can see how the committee’s input has shaped Obama’s farm policy.

“You really felt your point of view was being listened to,” he said. “That’s one thing I really like about his campaign ... They really take the local people’s point of view. I think that’s a big difference from past presidential candidates.”

South Dakotan to sing anthem at Convention

SOUTH DAKOTA (AP) — Robert Moore of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota will sing the national anthem at the Democratic convention in Denver next week.

Moore is an elected official in the tribe and has been a volunteer organizer for presidential candidate Barack Obama.

He will sing on Wednesday, Aug. 27, the same night that former South Dakota Sen. Tom Daschle is scheduled to speak.

Several groups from Colorado and the Mountain West region will participate in that evening’s ceremonies.

Tribe opens new hotel in casino

Puget Sound Business Journal

SEATTLE — The Tulalip Tribe opened a new 12-story, 370-room, \$130 million hotel adjacent to its existing casino this past weekend.

The new hotel opened next to the tribe’s 192,000-square-foot casino in Quil Ceda Village about 30 miles north of Seattle.

“We have been eagerly awaiting this moment ... We are incredibly proud of the outcome,” said Ken Kettler, president and chief operating officer of Tulalip Resort Casino, in a statement.

The hotel features 30,000 square feet of meeting space and a 14,000-square-foot spa.

Fort Rousseau



Associated Press

A red ribbon is cut to officially open the Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park, Saturday, in Sitka, Alaska. The park includes World War II military fortifications on a string of islands connected by a causeway which was built after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. From left, are: Dale Williams, from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska Tribal Council; James King, director of the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation; state Rep. Peggy Wilson, R-Wrangell; and John Sherrod, Sitka deputy mayor.

Study finds minorities more likely to be paddled

WASHINGTON (AP) — Paddlings, swats, licks. A quarter of a million schoolchildren got them last year — and blacks, American Indians and kids with disabilities got a disproportionate share of the punishment, according to a study by a human rights group.

Even little kids can be paddled. Heather Porter, who lives in Crockett, Texas, was startled to hear her little boy, then 3, say he’d been spanked at school. Porter was never told, despite a policy at the public preschool that parents be notified.

“We were pretty ticked off, to say the least. The reason he got paddled was because he was untying his shoes and playing with the air conditioner thermostat,” Porter said. “He was being a 3-year-old.”

For the study released Wednesday, Human Rights

Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union used Education Department data to show that, while paddling has been declining, racial disparity persists. Researchers also interviewed students, parents and school personnel in Texas and Mississippi, states that account for 40 percent of the 223,190 kids who were paddled at least once in the 2006-2007 school year.

Porter could have filled out a form telling the school not to paddle her son, if only she had realized he might be paddled.

Yet many parents find that such forms are ignored, the study said.

Widespread paddling can make it unlikely that forms will be checked. A teacher interviewed by Human Rights Watch, Tiffany Bartlett, said that when she taught in the Mississippi Delta, the policy

was to lock the classroom doors when the bell rang, leaving stragglers to be paddled by an administrator patrolling the hallways. Bartlett now is a school teacher in Austin, Texas.

And even if schools make a mistake, they are unlikely to face lawsuits. In places where corporal punishment is allowed, teachers and principals generally have legal immunity from assault laws, the study said.

“One of the things we’ve seen over and over again is that parents have difficulty getting redress, if a child is paddled and severely injured, or paddled in violation of parents’ wishes,” said Alice Farmer, the study’s author.

A majority of states have outlawed it, but corporal punishment remains widespread

across the South. Behind Texas and Mississippi were Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Florida and Missouri.

African American students are more than twice as likely to be paddled. The disparity persists even in places with large black populations, the study found. Similarly, Native Americans were more than twice as likely to be paddled, the study found.

The study also found:

In states where paddling is most common, black girls were paddled more than twice as often as white girls.

• Boys are three times as likely to be paddled as girls.

• Special education kids were more likely to be paddled.

More than 100 countries worldwide have banned paddling in schools, including all

of Europe, Farmer said. “International human rights law puts a pretty strong prohibition on corporal punishment,” she said.

In rural Drew, Miss., Nickolaus Luckett still remembers the paddlings he got in fifth and seventh grades. One happened when he called a teacher by her first name, the other when a classmate said, wrongly, that he threw a spitball.

“I didn’t get any bruises, but they still hurt, and from that point on, I told myself and my parents I wasn’t going to take any more paddlings,” said Luckett, who is about to be a sophomore at the University of Mississippi.

It’s not an easy choice. In many schools, kids can avoid a paddling if they accept suspension or detention, or for younger kids, if they skip

recess. But often, a child opts for the short-term sting of the paddle.

And sometimes teachers don’t have the option of after-school detention, because there are no buses to take kids home later.

During the three years Evan Couzo taught in the Mississippi Delta, he refused to paddle kids, offering detention instead. But others teachers, parents, even kids — were accustomed to paddling.

“Just about everyone at the beginning of the year said, ‘If he or she gives you any trouble, you can paddle them. You can send them home, and I’ll paddle them. Or you can have me come out to the school, and we can both paddle them.’”

“It’s really just a part of the culture of the school environment there,” Couzo said.