

Protesters contest REA flag-raising

By Lisa Gibson
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — About 40 protesters stood across the street from the main entrance to Ralph Engelstad Arena on Sunday evening as fans poured in, some responding to the words on the signs as they passed. The protesters were demonstrating their distaste with the Standing Rock and Spirit Lake tribal flags being displayed in the arena. Inside, though, 11 representatives from both tribes spoke to the crowd about the honor of having their flags displayed. They were the distinguished guests and speakers at the tribal flag ceremony before the hockey game between UND and the University of Manitoba. The two flags are hung on the north side of the arena.

The distinguished guests, many wearing headdresses and other Native American garb, stood on a red carpet and spoke of respect, honor and pride from behind a UND Fighting Sioux podium. They got a standing ovation and enthusiastic cheers from the large crowd.

She added that it's a privilege to have the flags displayed. John Chaske, of the Spirit Lake tribe, said UND's athletes demonstrate the Sioux warrior spirit.

The Ralph Engelstad Arena is not operated by UND and the university is not involved in the displaying of the tribal flags.

Those standing out in the rain, though, felt differently.

"I came out here to be with this group of people," said Karen GreyEyes, a Spirit Lake elder, as she gestured to her fellow protesters from under her umbrella. "I have not yet been in the Ralph Engelstad Arena. I refuse."

One man held a sign that read "REA MONEY EQUALS IGNORANCE." He pointed to it and said, "That's what this is all about."

Other signs read, "Stop Exploiting Natives," "Time for Change" and "Honor Means Understanding."

"We're trying to make a statement about the conduct of the REA," said protester and UND staff member Judy Rieke. "Every time they do something like this, it hurts the students."

Sisters Elizabeth and Chelsey Luger, 22 and 20 respectively, held a banner between them read, "Support UND Teams, Change the Name." A motorist driving by yelled, "Change the name? Change yourself. (Expletive) you!"

The two are from Grand Forks, but Chelsey is a student at Dartmouth College, while Elizabeth is a UND student. They were protesting with B.R.I.D.G.E.S. (Building Roads Into Diverse Groups Empowering Students), a student organization at UND that opposes the nickname and logo.

"Liz and I have always been against the Fighting Sioux name and logo," Chelsey said. "As native people growing up in Grand Forks, we've always dealt with the issue."

"You go, girls!" a passerby yelled, one of many who honked or yelled in support of the peaceful protest.

Chelsey is worried for young American Indians growing up in Grand Forks now, she said.

"It's clear that that level of respect is not there in this community," she said.

GreyEyes acknowledged that many of her people were inside the arena for the game and ceremony, in support of the name, logo and flags.

"I have a tendency to believe most people are supportive of what we're doing," said Michael Eshkibok, protester and doctoral student in UND's School of Communication. "People have good hearts."

Campus, district discuss joint learning partnership

By Matthew Ryno
Baraboo News-Republic

BARABOO, Wis. — A Ho-Chunk tribe member and language teacher at the Wellness Center, Georgia Lonetree, said one of her greatest inspirations to pursue a degree came from seeing professional American Indian teachers at a meeting she attended.

She went on to get her master's degree, and went to Northern Arizona University, where she helped other American Indian students through college. But in pursuit of her career, she never forgot what her father told her.

"It might be you'll go elsewhere, but I want to tell you, don't ever forget where you come from," she said he told her. "You come from a good family, good teachings, and when you get your education I want you to come back and work with your people."

The inspiration Lonetree talks about, her education, the roots of her tribe, and the Ho-Chunk language, is all what Forest Funmaker, the Ho-Chunk Nation's education director, wants to transfer into the next generation of his tribe.

He is looking locally and statewide for support and appears to be receiving a positive response.

Together with the Baraboo School District and about 40 to 60 language apprentices and nearby colleges, he hopes to create more American Indian teachers to teaching general classes at local schools or a college. Ideally, this could be done in the native Ho-Chunk language, he said.

Conceptually, Funmaker said a plan

is being drafted so a student can go to University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County for two years, then work with an instructor from UW-Platteville for a year, and get on-the-job experience at the Baraboo School District for another year in some capacity - perhaps as a language instructor.

A local student then could become a licensed teacher in Wisconsin after four years. And hopefully, after developing strong local ties, those teachers will be more likely to stay in the area and inspire other students, Funmaker said.

For school districts with a certified Ho-Chunk language instructor already in place like in Wisconsin Dells, or in districts interested in having one like in Baraboo, the state Department of Public Instruction may soon provide financial support through grants to pay for language instruction or curriculum.

If the DPI proposal is approved by Gov. Jim Doyle, school districts would be able to apply for competitive grants, and a Ho-Chunk language instructor could receive a salary and classroom credit toward a four-year degree if Baraboo's partnership between the college and school district works out.

UW-B/SC Dean Thomas Pleger noted that the local program is still in the infancy, though he said it is a sign of an already strong partnership with the Ho-Chunk Nation. He also was unsure if the DPI program could link to the local initiative, but he was hopeful.

Pleger plans to meet with represen-

tatives from UW-Platteville this month to discuss their role in the initiative.

Baraboo Interim Superintendent Crystal Ritzenthaler noted that UW-Platteville may have to provide a travelling instructor, which could be a financial strain for the university.

However, Ritzenthaler said she liked the idea and wanted to continue to work toward the partnership with the Ho-Chunk Nation and local schools.

That partnership could provide the manpower needed to restart the district's now-defunct Title 7 program and offer federally funded initiatives focused on educating American Indians — or other students about American Indians.

The cooperative plan appears to be a good idea to Guy Wolf, an American Indian academic at UW-La Crosse. He said local tribes have worked with his university for about 15 years, and a strong coalition of school districts, colleges and tribes has been the core of its success.

"A lot of coalition-building has to do with developing a cadre of teachers committed, who are interested and want to participate," Wolf said. "I have to admit it took a long time here, but I think there are quite a few people are interested now."

He said because many students go through a four-year program in college, and many already have been exposed to American Indian programming in the area - many former students are staying in the area to continue what has been started. That was one reason he liked the concept of what UW-Baraboo/Sauk County was

involved in.

"We've been challenging students to work in the community and we're going to their schools, where they're teaching now, and we help our former students out," Wolf said.

Lance Tallmadge, Native American student services coordinator at Wisconsin Dells High School, said he was excited about what Baraboo was working on. He knew special services were needed for all the American Indian students in the area.

He said Baraboo had about 80 to 100 American Indian students, and Wisconsin Dells has about 150.

Tallmadge thought ideas like linking language classes together were possible discussion points if a coalition of school districts does develop in the area - though he admitted he has not heard talk about a coalition recently.

Lonetree heard a description of a program and said she liked what is going on. In many ways, she said seeing American Indians as role models helped her, and she hoped she had the same influence on students. Funmaker agreed that having a role model in the classroom students could relate to was essential.

"It's not like we're trying to say a non-native teacher wouldn't be as effective," Funmaker said, "but what we find is after years of trying to integrate someone new into our community, they don't stay. Or they get so turned off by the comments of our grassroots people, who have a defensive coping strategy to say something to the outside academic who comes into the community."

Ex-tribal officer guilty in sex for freedom case

PHOENIX (AP) — A former Fort Mohave tribal police officer faces up to nine years in prison after pleading guilty to charges stemming from demands for sex that he made to a woman he arrested.

Michael Phelps admitted in a plea agreement filed in U.S. District Court in Phoenix that he arrested the victim for a driving offense and threatened to jail her unless she had sex with him. He released her after she complied.

The 36-year-old resident of Needles, Calif. pleaded guilty to a civil rights violation and to lying to FBI agents who investigated after the woman complained.

A U.S. Justice Department spokeswoman said the incident happened in November 2005 and Phelps was interviewed by the FBI nearly two years later. The charges were filed on Thursday when Phelps entered the plea.

The Fort Mohave Indian Reservation straddles the Colorado River in Arizona, Nevada and California.

Phelps will be sentenced on Dec. 15.



Gordon M. Grant/New York Times

A smoke shop sign at the Poospatuck Indian reservation in Mastic, N.Y., in September 2008. Civil suits filed by New York City claim that cigarettes delivered to stores on tribal land, like the Poospatuck Indian reservation, are illegally sold tax-free to non-Indian buyers. In New York City, where state and city excise taxes total \$4.25 a pack, often pushing the retail price above \$9, tax-free cigarettes from the reservations fuel a particularly active underground tobacco economy, law enforcement officials say. Combined, the city and state are losing more than \$1 billion a year in tax revenue as a result of bootleg cigarettes distributed through New York's reservations, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's office said on Monday.

Creek Nation increases its minimum wage

By Clifton Adcock
Tulsa World

TULSA, Okla. — Many Muscogee (Creek) Nation employees got a bump in pay this week as the tribe's minimum wage was raised to \$9.25 per hour.

The increase was a major initiative of Chief A.D. Ellis, who said he had hoped that the wage would be up to \$10 by this year.

A little more than three years ago, Ellis began giving raises to executive branch employees making the tribe's minimum wage, which was about \$6 per hour at the time, he said.

About 2 1/2 years ago, the tribal council followed suit and adopted a gradual increase of the tribe's minimum wage.

On Wednesday, the tribe's minimum wage went from \$8.50 per hour to \$9.25 per hour, the final step in the gradual increase, Creek Nation

spokesman Thompson Gouge said.

"That was his (Ellis') dream, to see employees get off of commodities," he said.

Gouge said tribal employees who prove fluent in the Creek language will receive a 50-cent-per-hour raise.

The federal minimum wage is \$6.55 per hour and will rise to \$7.25 per hour on July 24.

The raise, paid for with the tribe's gaming funds, was brought about to help struggling employees not only financially but also to give them a sense of pride, Ellis said.

"I kept seeing our people work 40 hours a week and having to go get commodities," he said. "They need to be getting a living wage."

Bumping up the tribe's minimum wage wasn't easy, he said.

Budgets had to be modi-

fied, pay scales changed and other higher-tier employees who would be surpassed in salary by the change also had to be given a raise, but in the end, it was worth it, Ellis said.

"It's really been a delicate affair to get everyone in there," he said. "They can provide for their families better and take care of their kids better (than the tribe). If they work 40 hours, we ought be able pay decent wage."

In all, about 160 employees, including maintenance workers, janitors, groundskeepers and child-care workers, are affected by the raise in pay.

The increase should set an example for other tribes, as well as the state and federal government, to follow, Ellis said.

"It's a matter of taking care of your own people," he said. "We're proud of that."

Tribe appeals labor boards decision

By Michael Gannon
Norwich Bulletin

MASHANTUCKET, Conn. — The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation has appealed Tuesday's ruling by the National Labor Relations Board ordering it to negotiate with its dealers through the United Auto Workers union.

The NLRB ruled that the tribe was failing to negotiate in good faith with dealers at Foxwoods Resort Casino, who have voted to organize under the UAW.

Washington attorney Keith Harper, representing the tribe, said it filed its appeal Thursday with the U.S. Second Circuit Court.

"The fact that they are a sovereign nation is part of it," Harper said. "... The tribe wants to emphasize that this is not an issue of whether or not they have a right to form a union. Tribal laws already ensure that for workers within the community, and there is a clear way of going about that that is already enforced by tribal institutions."

Jackson King, the tribe's general counsel, said the ruling flies in the face of established federal practice.

"There is well-settled federal policy to promote tribal institution building," King said in a statement released Friday. "Yet when this tribe takes the initiative at great costs to build those institutions over decades, you get federal bureaucrats that want to undermine those very institutions by imposing ill-fitting one-size-fits-all Washington solutions."

Steve Peloso, a Foxwoods dealer for 16 years, said they were disappointed but not surprised.

"We believe our rights will be upheld by the courts," he said. "Given the economy, now is not the time to get bogged down in legal arguments about what laws apply."

"We should be focusing on how we can work together in a way that will benefit the company, the workers and the community."

The best way to do that is to sit down with the dealers and negotiate a fair contract."