

## Tribes unite on Katrina relief

ATMORE, Ala. (AP) — American Indians are offering storm assistance to tribes in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, but most Native communities are inland and appeared to escape the worst of Hurricane Katrina's winds and water.

Two families who evacuated homes in Louisiana have resettled in housing provided by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in southwest Alabama, and police from tribes as far as Arizona are helping assess damage on reservations.

Nedra Darling of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

said Friday all of the tribal communities in the hurricane zone suffered wind damage. But the Bogue Homa community, the southernmost of the Mississippi Choctaws' eight communities, appeared to be the hardest hit.

"They have roof damage and minor flooding in homes," she said. "They were the closest to impact."

Some of the Mississippi Choctaw communities are still without power, she said.

Choctaw spokeswoman Chassidy Wilson said the tribe is still distributing supplies including food, but a shelter for storm victims already has closed.

"Many of our tribal employ-

ees were getting back to their normal work routine," Wilson said. "They've done a remarkable job in getting what the storm victims needed."

The Chitimacha Nation at Charenton, La., escaped major damage from Katrina, according to its Web site. The tribe, with a reported 400 members who lived in New Orleans, said it is housing people from the flooded-out city.

"Some have been able to get back to the city to check on their property and some have not. Some already know there's nothing left standing to go back to," the tribe said in a statement.

The Tunica-Biloxi in Slidell, La., didn't suffer any damage from Katrina, but is housing eight tribal families from New Orleans, according to Pat Foster, administrative assistant to tribal chairman Earl Barbry.

About 560 tribal members from across the country were among 775 firefighters dispatched to help with the Katrina cleanup by the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

"They have a lot of skill in debris removal," Darling said. "They're going to be absolutely essential."

## Colombian town goes Native, reaps rewards

ATANQUEZ, Colombia (AP) — Saul Martinez is on his cell phone to a friend, doing his best to speak a dying language. But after a few halting phrases, he has to give up and switch to Spanish.

Martinez is trying to speak Kankuamo, the ancient language of his Indian tribe, and do his bit for a broader Kankuamo revival that has as much to do with nostalgia as with taxpayers' pesos.

By returning to their roots, Colombian tribes are cashing in on hefty government aid to preserve indigenous culture. And for this impoverished farming town in the Kankuamo reservation 420 miles (680 kilometers) north of the capital, Bogota, every little bit helps.

"The reason for this process is the most pragmatic of all: survival," says Jaime Arias, chief of the 12,000-strong Kankuamo tribe.

The Kankuamos, Koguis, Arhuacos and Uiwis all live by the world's tallest coastal mountain range, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. But while three of the tribes dwell high in these remote snow-peaked mountains, the Kankuamos have always lived lower down and were so exposed to outside influences that by 1900 anthropologists began referring to them as a mixed-race tribe.

Their Corpus Christi festival in late May reflects this fusion — Indian grass skirts and chicken feathers, African drums, and dancers being led through the streets by the town's Catholic priest. In 1991, a new constitution granted land rights and aid packages to indigenous peoples, and the Kankuamos set about qualifying for the aid by dressing in tribal garb, reviving their language and taking up the chewing of coca leaves, a tribal custom dating back 5,000 years.

## Judge orders return of ancient artifacts

HONOLULU (AP) — A federal judge has issued a written order giving a Native Hawaiian group until Sept. 23 to return to Bishop Museum 83 ancient Hawaiian artifacts buried in a Big Island cave.

Chief U.S. District Judge David Ezra's 22-page court order Wednesday saying the group Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawaii Nei must return the artifacts to the state's largest museum. The order formalizes Ezra's Sept. 2 verbal order.

The burial objects were removed from the Big Island's

Kawaihai Caves in 1905 and given to the museum, which then lent the items to Hui Malama on Feb. 26, 2000.

Hui Malama said it reburied the artifacts at the cave to comply with their ancestors' wishes. A lawyer for the group said he would seek an appeal by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

Ezra said the items face "serious risk of irreparable harm" and that they could be stolen. He also questioned the circumstances under which Hui Malama obtained the items

from the museum.

But Alan Murakami, a lawyer for the Native Hawaiian Legal Corp., which represents the group, said Ezra's decision conflicts with "the very core" of Hui Malama's religious and spiritual beliefs protected by the First Amendment.

"We will have to sit down and pray and come up with a decision," Hui Malama president Charles Kauluwehi Maxwell said about whether the group would comply with the order.

The order originated from a federal lawsuit against Hui

Malama filed last month by Na Lei Alii Kawanakoa and Royal Hawaiian Academy of Traditional Arts — two Native Hawaiian groups claiming the funerary artifacts known as the Forbes Caves Collection.

Ezra wrote "that the interests of justice and the public would best be served by bringing the items back to a secure location at the Bishop Museum" while 14 federally recognized Native Hawaiian claimants decided the item's fate through federal legal procedures.

## Mediator says he's done with land claim talks

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (AP) — Like his predecessor, mediator John Tabner has reached the same conclusion — that there is no chance to negotiate a resolution to the 35-year-old Oneida Indian land claim.

"I think it's going to have to be resolved by litigation. That's all there is to it," Tabner told

The Post-Standard of Syracuse in Friday's edition.

Tabner has told more than a dozen attorneys involved in the land claim that he will not be seeking another extension when his latest term expires Thursday.

He was first appointed in May 2002 by U.S. District Judge Lawrence Kahn, who has ex-

tended his term seven times previously.

"After review of the position papers of all parties, it is obvious that little or no progress has been made," Tabner wrote to the lawyers involved. "(T)he position of the parties are so different that a settlement at this time, and probably at any time

in the near future, is not possible."

Tabner, an Albany attorney, was the second mediator assigned to the land claim. Ronald Riccio, a former dean of the Seton Hall Law School in New Jersey, spent about 17 months on the case but couldn't come up with a settlement.

## Tribe uses traditional ways to address modern problems

ETHETE, Wyo. (AP) — Two lines of women sit facing each other, hidden from the afternoon sun under a tent canopy behind the Wind River Tribal College.

The hands of four of the women swing back and forth in time with beating drums, fists closed. Each woman hides a small stick on one of her hands. It is up to a player from the opposing team to guess where the sticks are hidden, earning points for her team in a traditional Arapaho hand game called koxouhtii.

About 100 yards away, under another canopy, Arapaho adults step in a circle as drums echo off the stone of the old mission building nearby. They are learning traditional social dances, or nii'eihii ho'eii.

The games and social dances are not everyday activities for the Arapaho people living on the Wind River Indian Reservation, but they once were. Traditions as simple as games and dances, as integral as the Arapaho language and religion, have fallen by the wayside in recent decades. Some tribal leaders, however, are working to return such knowledge to their people.

Last month, the college hosted a three-day immersion language camp for adults, teaching not only language, but also elements of religion and culture.

"We teach on the protocol of the religion, the history of the tribe, wellness and health the way it used to be compared to

now," said Eugene Ridgely, bilingual education coordinator for the college. "This afternoon, we get into traditional games, then some social dancing."

Most participants won't walk away with more than a few words of Arapaho. But more important, some will gain a spark of interest in their culture, perhaps taking advantage of language classes offered at the college or of other cultural renewal activities sponsored on the reservation.

The quest is about more than protecting a dying language and culture. It's about turning to the ways of the past to correct some of the modern challenges facing the Arapaho people.

"If we had retained the language like we should have, the family structure would still be strong," said Zona Moss, Ridgely's secretary. "It lies within the language, within the culture."

Ardeline Spotted Elk, a great-grandmother who has spent her life on the reservation, spent the three days teaching about kinship, or neito'eino', traditions in the tribe. Weeks earlier, she shared her own memories of growing up and of how the world has changed in her lifetime.

"We lived in real old cabins, with dirt roofs and floors. We had to get water from the river. We had kerosene lamps. Everything was gravel," she recalled. "We learned Arapaho. We never spoke English until we went to school at St. Michael's (Mission).

*On the reservation, people are looking to different kinds of solutions: those from the past.*

"It was a real nice, real enjoyable life. We just enjoyed our lives. There was no alcohol, no drugs; we just lived a real peaceful life. The way it is now is a real terrible life."

Not everyone on the reservation agrees that life has changed so negatively, but some differences are indisputable, even if it's hard to pinpoint just how extreme the reservation's social and economic problems are.

The Wind River Indian Reservation makes up a big piece of Wyoming's Fremont County, though most of the county's population is white. Fremont County consistently has the highest unemployment rate in Wyoming, and unemployment is even higher among American Indian workers, according to the 2000 Census.

Kathy Vann, who heads the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office in Ethete, said many men lacked the education necessary to get the few high-paying jobs on the reservation. Most are forced to choose between travel-intensive work in the region's oil fields or staying home with their families.

"I find that a lot of mothers work, and fathers, it's harder for me to find jobs than for women because there aren't that many jobs," she said. "Men have to go to the biggest employer, the oil fields, where they work seven-on, seven-off."

Even with some men working the oil rigs and making good money, families in Fremont County tend to bring home considerably less income than those in other parts of the state, making poverty a stark reality for reservation families.

Many families turn to grandparents for help; American Indian grandparents are more likely than any other demographic group to live in the same households with their grandchildren.

In Vann's family, for example, her ironworker sons gave up traveling throughout the West for work, and one's family moved in with her.

"My (surrogate son) moved out of his mother's house and couldn't make it financially, so he moved back in, along with his wife and three kids," she said.

"My sons got tired of living in hotels. I don't know if they thought about getting their own place. They probably did, but didn't see why," she said with a laugh.

A shortage of housing on the reservation has left some families on waiting lists for generations.

Vann said she believed some children were being raised by

their grandparents because of rampant teen pregnancy and a culture of drug and alcohol abuse by parents. Residents of the reservation say alcoholism remains a chronic problem, and methamphetamine use is on the rise.

"Meth around here is getting crazy," said Margo Williams, who, with her husband Brian, is raising seven children in a blended family.

But while the numbers are somewhat worse on the reservation, many Arapaho people said the problems aren't limited to the reservation.

"I don't know if it has anything to do with the situation on the reservation," Vann said. "I think, statewide, a lot of communities are like that. It reflects what's going on in Wyoming."

The difference is that, in a community as small and tight-knit as the reservation, such issues hit every home.

And, on the reservation, people are looking to different kinds of solutions: those from the past.

The Wind River Indian Reservation has several programs to combat its social troubles, including the Indian Health Service Center, Bureau of Indian Affairs Social Services and an Intergenerational Family Resource Help Center.

Schools work with these agencies to provide services for children, and Arapaho language is part of the curriculum at

Wyoming Indian elementary, junior high and high schools, though tribal elder William "Icky-John" C'Hair said it's given too little time in the school day. He wants to see a new immersion preschool program grow, introducing the language to 3- and 4-year-olds, whose linguistic abilities are the most ripe, and following them through their academic careers.

This fall, Arapaho Charter High School will open near the town of Arapahoe.

Designed to combat high dropout rates among reservation students, the school will focus on Arapaho language, culture and values and will use more hands-on and individual teaching styles to keep teens interested in education.

The Arapaho Council of Elders also works to educate tribal members about traditional skills, from radio personality Big Joe's daily Arapaho language lessons to subsidized courses in language and nearly lost skills such as meat cutting.

It's not just about history or identity, C'Hair said. He said the Arapaho language and culture provide a lifestyle guide that can help stem the tide of social challenges.

"We believe, we firmly do believe, that the language was a gift from our Creator. As such, it is sacred to us," C'Hair said. "Without it, we cannot exist in the manner the Creator intended for us."

## Ex-astronaut Herrington joins commercial space flight company

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Former astronaut John Herrington, a member of the Chickasaw Nation who was born in Wetumka, has been hired by Rocketplane Limited Inc., the Oklahoma company which hopes to offer commercial space travel. Herrington, who flew aboard Space Shuttle Endeavour, was named a vice president and director of flight systems for Rocketplane.

He will be the pilot on the first test flight of Rocketplane XP, which is scheduled for October 2006, and will fly the commercial spaceflights that are expected to begin in 2007.

The company will use the runway at Burns Flat near Clinton in western Oklahoma for landings and takeoffs.

Herrington, 56, has retired from the U.S. Navy and from NASA, where he has been assigned since 1996.

"He's the perfect choice at the perfect time," said David Urie, vice president and program manager for Rocketplane. "He worked as a test pilot in his Navy service and has been an engineering test pilot."

"When we learned of his intention to retire and go into private industry, the timing was absolutely perfect for us."

Herrington was the first American Indian to fly in space when he was a mission specialist on Endeavour in 2002.