

## FEMA asks tribe for clean-up help

BROWNING, Mont. (AP) — Cleanup from Hurricane Katrina is expected to provide temporary jobs for hundreds of members of the Blackfeet tribe.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has asked the tribe to train some 500 workers to help with cleanup efforts in the hurricane devastated Gulf Coast.

The jobs will pay \$18 an hour and last for three months, said George Kipp, director of the Blackfeet Manpower Program.

Tribal agencies and officials are scrambling to identify potential workers and help them meet a number of federal eligibility requirements, including helping some of them establish bank accounts.

The work will be significant on the reservation, where the unemployment rate remains high, Kipp said.

"This is major," he added. The workers "will be able to have a good holiday season."

"They'll be able to buy school clothes, have a good Christmas, maybe buy a new vehicle and pay off some bills," Kipp said.

### Tribes donate buffalo meat

DALLAS (AP) — It took a bit longer than expected, but Montana's Gros Ventre and Assiniboine tribes have found some thankful recipients of more than 5,000 pounds of donated bison meat.

After initially having trouble finding an organization to accept the donation for victims of Hurricane Katrina, the meat was being shipped Monday to victims who were relocated to Dallas.

The bison burgers and

steaks were shipped from the tribally owned Little Rockies Meat Packing Co. last week, scheduled to arrive in Terrell Monday night to be distributed to about 400 evacuees.

Leaders of the tribes from the Fort Belknap reservation wanted to help victims of the hurricane that struck the Gulf Coast: "But we are a very poor reservation," Gros Ventre tribal member Janice Hawley said. "All we had to share was our buffalo herd."

individual checking or savings accounts, which FEMA requires.

"Most of these people have no accounts or anything, so the bank is going to help set up accounts," tribal Treasurer Joe Gervais said.

The Blackfeet Tribal Court also was open late Friday to run required background checks on applicants, and the tribal council agreed to provide collateral for a \$500 loan to each tribal

member who participates. FEMA requires workers to have enough money for a week's living expenses.

The loans will be made through the Native American Bank in Browning and deposited directly into the workers' accounts.

The council also is providing a van to haul potential workers to Cut Bank to take the driver's license test.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has agreed to provide workers access to credit cards, which is another FEMA requirement. The BIA also will furnish staff members to travel with each worker group and help them get established.

FEMA will provide air transportation, meals and lodging for the workers. The first 50 could depart as soon as Sunday.

Last year, the tribe sent several dozen workers to Florida to help with hurricane cleanup there. About 30 tribal members made the 2,300-mile trip to New Orleans by van last month to take cleanup jobs with a private contractor.

## After 150 years, government returns land to Oregon tribes

CHARLESTON, Ore. (AP) — After 150 years, the U.S. government has returned a piece of land near here to the tribes who used to own it.

The 43 acres comprise the former Coos Head Air National Guard Station, which was returned last week to the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw.

"For 150 years that land has been occupied by the U.S. government," said tribal Administrator Francis W. Somday II. "And finally after 150 years it has been returned to its rightful owners."

"This has been a sacred piece of land to the tribe forever," said Tribal Council Chairman Ron Brainard.

The property, just west of Charleston near Bastendorff Beach, has 13 buildings. It had been used by various branches of the U.S. military since 1884. It was closed in 1996. Since then, a chain-link fence has safeguarded empty dormitories, dining halls, storage areas and other vacant buildings.

Last Thursday marked a changing of the gatekeepers. "They took their locks off it yesterday and we put our locks on it," Brainard said.

The tribes intend to transform the property into a new seat of government, central-

izing the tribes' court, police, administrative, health and education programs.

The parcel had been declared federal excess. But the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs missed a deadline in the application process, opening a hole for others to bid on it.

The tribes sued and were granted an extension, eventually winning the right to the property.

While acquiring the land is a victory, the tribes aren't done.

They also want the return of 67,000 acres of forest at Gregory Point, including the Cape Arago Lighthouse. The property was an ancestral ceremonial ground.

The tribes also want the return of 67,000 acres of forest in the Siuslaw National Forest.

"We signed over 1.6 million acres for goods and services and we have yet to be paid because the treaty was never ratified," Brainard said.

According to Somday, the treaty of 1855 called for the federal government to receive vast tracts of land from the Indians in exchange for goods, services and promises of other lands.

Instead, Somday said, the treaty was lost, and the government marched tribal members to Siletz where they spent the next 19 years.

## Leaders say teaching Tlingit critical to its survival

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Teachers, legislators, students and elders gathered at the Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall recently to discuss education issues for Native students. Native elders took turns telling stories and discussing the future of Native cultures in Alaska in front of a full house dining on traditional Native cuisine.

Tony Strong, a Juneau lawyer who helped organize the event, said it is important to listen to the guidance of the elders while the chance remains.

"The elderly people here are wanting to give their experience and their wisdom and their ideas," he said. "It will come out in various ways. Some people will express frustration, some people will express a lot of love and affection, and some people will have very technical ideas."

Master of ceremonies Lance Twitchell, 30, said it is important to foster strong relationships between Natives and non-Natives to strengthen the education system in Alaska.

"I think education is a real key to not only teach new habits to all of our children, but also to find ways to incorporate our culture and traditions into the school system so that our kids have a better sense of who they are," he said.

Twitchell, a Raven of the Lukaax\_adi from the Chilkoot area, said Native languages were a major focus of the event. He said the Tlingit language is in a critical situation and needs some public attention.

"It's probably the single biggest thing that can happen over the next 10, 20 years because it's make it or break it with the language at this point," Twitchell said.

## Cherokees begin membership audit to cull non-Indians

CHEROKEE, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina's Cherokee Indians, flush with cash from a successful casino and hotel business on tribal land, will spend \$800,000 to make sure each enrolled member is entitled to claim a piece of the profits.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has hired outside auditors to review birth and death certificates and other documents to separate legitimate members from gold-diggers. DNA testing is not required, but may be an option for people forced to prove Cherokee parentage, tribal enrollment office manager Nancy Maney said.

At stake health care, housing, employment and education that accompany tribal membership. This year, each of the tribe's 13,400 members also will re-

ceive about \$6,000 in dividends from the tribe-owned Harrah's Cherokee Casino.

An auditing team from the Falmouth Institute, a Fairfax, Va., consulting company to American Indian tribes, arrived in Cherokee late last month to begin work.

Nearly 700 new members joined the Eastern Band in 1995, the first year members received dividend checks from a small casino, Maney said. That was up from 303 new members in 1994.

Rumors of interlopers on the tribal membership roll have lingered for years. But terminating membership in the Eastern Band Cherokee is rare, with only seven in nearly a decade.

Tribe members voted in favor of the membership audit in a 2002 referendum that was

approved 57 percent to 43 percent.

Steve Teesateskie, 42, said clearing the rolls of families with dubious Cherokee lineage will help keep the tribe financially strong.

"If people come off of the roll ... the funds that they have been getting will go back to the tribe," he said. "That money will go back to the tribe for services like the hospital, housing, education and senior services."

Current requirements for membership in the Eastern Band include having at least one Cherokee great-great-grandparent and a connection to a 1924 federal roster of the tribe that makes its home in North Carolina's Smoky Mountains.

At one time, enrollment in the tribe required living on tribal land or having a parent who did.

## Protesters block Denver Columbus parade route, leave before marchers pass

DENVER (AP) — As drums and chants echoed in the background, demonstrators briefly staged a mock death scene in the street Saturday before a Columbus Day Parade passed by.

About 15 people laid down in an intersection before the parade was in view. Other protesters covered them with blankets and carried them away just before police moved in to make arrests.

Police were out in force for the Denver parade, which has a troubled history of arrests and confrontations between supporters and detractors of Christopher Columbus.

Protesters have called him a slave trader who touched off centuries of genocide and oppression against native people. Parade supporters say he was a brave explorer who opened a new world. Colorado is credited with being the first to make Columbus Day a state holiday.

Police said there was no violence and no one was arrested Saturday. Police spokeswoman Virginia Lopez declined to say

how many police were along the parade route but said the number was "adequate." At least 150 officers were visible at the intersection where the demonstration took place, including Chief Gerry Whitman.

Some protesters spilled red liquid to signify blood. Others held banners reading "Genocide," "Columbush" and "1492."

University of Colorado Professor Ward Churchill, who caused a nationwide uproar when he likened some Sept. 11 victims to Nazis, was standing along the parade route. He said earlier in the week he wouldn't participate in the protest as he has in the past because he didn't want to be a distraction.

Churchill declined comment Saturday. He was accompanied by a man wearing a jacket identifying him as an American Indian Movement security guard, who turned away reporters.

Churchill was among about 240 people arrested last year for disrupting the parade. He and other protest leaders were acquitted and the charges against the rest were dismissed.

## Claims Settlement Act marks 25th anniversary

INDIAN ISLAND, Maine (AP) — Monday marked the 25th anniversary of the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, a unique agreement that marked a new chapter for the state's Indian tribes.

On Oct. 10, 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed the act into law that resulted in the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribes each receiving \$26.8 million to buy more than 300,000

total acres of land, putting them among the state's largest landowners.

The Houlton Band of Maliseets, a smaller tribe in Aroostook County, received \$900,000 to acquire land.

The settlement also included an additional \$13.5 million each for the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy tribes, to be held in federal trust accounts.

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