

Officials looking for American Indian foster homes

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Burleigh and Morton counties have just one licensed American Indian foster home even though nearly 70 Indian children need foster care each year, say organizers of an effort to find more Indian foster homes.

Two public forums are planned next month to discuss the details of being a foster parent.

The licensed American Indian foster home in Burleigh and Morton counties belongs to Dakota and Casey Goodhouse. They have two children of their own and are taking a break from foster care because of Casey

Goodhouse's pregnancy. Mike Mabin, the owner of Agency MABU, the Bismarck marketing firm helping with the foster care search, said being placed with an American Indian family can give Indian youngsters more comfort and security.

"Already they're going through a lot of stress and turmoil in going into another home," said Mabin, who is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

Mabin said little things can make daily life less jarring for the children, such as having foster parents who look similar to them.

Burleigh County is part of a project started by the state Human Services Department more than a year ago to try to find Indian foster families.

Mabin's marketing firm was given the task of conducting research and organizing the project. A task force was formed, and Mabin set a goal of finding six new foster families.

United Tribes Technical College and American-Indian owned businesses have been helping to get the word out.

Barb Stegmiller, a task force member and social worker for Burleigh County Social Services, said it usually takes about a year

before a family can make the final decision to become a foster home. She hopes people come forward in the next year.

Mabin said research indicates that American Indian leaders need to help spread the message so people understand that "this is a need in Indian Country."

He said people may shy away from attempting to become a licensed foster home after finding out it means many hours of training, a home study, a background check and other requirements. "It takes a very unique person at the right time in life to be able to step forward at that level," Mabin said.

Iowa allows state courts to honor Meskwaki rulings

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — Gov. Chet Culver has signed into law a bill allowing Iowa courts to honor and enforce Meskwaki Tribal Court civil rulings, despite the objections of many Meskwakis. State courts will now recognize and enforce tribal court judgments filed in a state court, unless a timely objection is filed.

But several Meskwakis are concerned about the bill. Former Tribal Council member Ray Young Bear believes that it could subject sacred tribal lands to legal claims and court judgments. He also said the Tribal Council made the bill a legislative priority without first detailing its likely impact to tribe members.

Tribal member Leodean Peters said the new law will diminish tribal sovereignty by giving the state undue influence on the Meskwaki Settlement, which is located in eastern Iowa. Peters said that the Meskwaki people are intelligent enough not to let this pass without some resistance to the logic behind this deception.

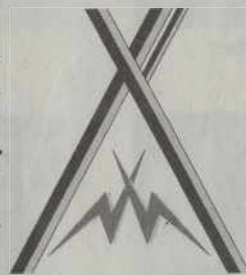
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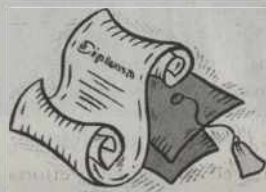
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