

New generation of Southern Ute leaders

IGNACIO, Colo. (AP) — Politics, it would seem, is in the blood of new Southern Ute Tribal Chairman Matthew J. Box.

His grandfather, Eddie Box Sr., served about 15 years on the Tribal Council and his great-uncle Leonard Burch, whose name graces the administration building where Box's spacious corner office can be found, was chairman for more than 20 years. Other relatives also were on the council.

But Box said entering politics never entered his mind until fairly recently, when he was struggling to build an excavation business to support his young family.

The challenges he met trying to get contracts on his own reservation got him to thinking about the changes he could make from within the system. In his 30s, he ran and, after an unsuccessful bid, was elected to the

Tribal Council.

Now, at 40, he heads the government of a tribe with billions in investments and more employees than members. What's more, the reservation sits atop one of the most prolific natural gas-producing basins in the country.

A young chairman, he will lead with a Tribal Council that also has grown younger with recent elections. At his swearing-in ceremony last month, many praised the change as a stepping up to leadership of the next generation.

As Box settles into the nitty-gritty of governance, his mind turns to the tutelage he received at the knee of his grandfather Box, who ran the tribe's Bear and Sun dances for nearly 40 years.

"The whole concept of tribe will always be the same, and that is everybody needs to make it," he said. "Everybody needs to

make it across the river. Everybody needs to make it over the hill."

Here are answers to some of the questions put to him about the challenges ahead: What does having a younger Tribal Council and chairman mean for government? Box said that in the past the council often would deliberate for long periods about each decision. The slow-moving process was to ensure everyone had an opportunity to weigh in and all sides were considered. But that approach had its limitations.

"That doesn't work with the pace of Wall Street," he said.

While he sees the younger leaders moving more quickly and decisively, he said they will have to be careful not to lose the accountability of the older ways.

"We don't want to ever become arrogant or inconsiderate of where we came from," he said.

With production having peaked on many of La Plata County's coal-bed methane wells, how is the tribe coping with an eventual decline in gas production?

"The councils before us addressed it," he said.

This was done by diversifying the tribe's investments to include energy development elsewhere, along with real estate and other endeavors.

But matching the revenue generated from its gas would be difficult, so the tribe has tempered harvesting that resource to prolong the payoff.

"We've really only attacked one area," he said, referring to the west side of the reservation.

He said the east side is relatively untapped.

"Our council has protected it, this council has protected it, for future generations, should they have to develop it," he said.

Crow Tribal Chairman Carl Venne passes away

HARDIN, Mont. (AP) — Crow Tribal Chairman Carl Venne, praised by President Barack Obama as a leader who engaged in a "fervent quest for a better life for his people," has died. He was 62.

Venne was found dead Sunday in his sister's home, according to the Big Horn County Sheriff's Office. He apparently died in his sleep of natural causes, the office said in a statement.

"I was honored to have worked with Chairman Venne, a strong tribal leader, who implored us to uphold treaties and honor Native ancestors," Obama said in a statement released by the White House.

Venne greeted Obama last summer during a campaign stop in Crow Agency. The Crow adopted Obama as a member of the Black Eagle family. Last month, Obama watched Venne lead Crow horsemen during the inaugural parade in Washington.

Venne, a Vietnam veteran and former counselor at Little Big Horn Community College, became tribal chairman in 2002. The Crow Tribe has about 11,000 members.

Throughout his chairmanship, he supported programs against use of methamphetamine and encouraged a healthy way of life on the reservation.

He was instrumental in the U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee's selection of Crow Agency as the place for a 2007 hearing on Indian health care.

Activist Robideau dies at 61

(AP) — Robert Robideau, American Indian activist who was acquitted of killing two FBI agents in a 1975 shootout in South Dakota, has died. He was 61.

Robideau had been living in Barcelona, Spain, where authorities said that his death may have been related to seizures caused by shrapnel left in his head from an accidental explosion.

Robideau, a Portland native, was the cousin of Leonard Peltier and a member of the American Indian Movement who had occupied the reservation town of Wounded Knee, S.D., for 71

days in 1973, two years before the shootout.

His son, Michael, said that Robideau attended Roosevelt High School and received a degree in cultural anthropology from Portland State University.

Robideau left for South Dakota in the early 1970s with several family members, including Peltier, to join AIM and its protests against poverty and corruption on tribal reservations.

In June 1975, two FBI agents followed a man wanted in the theft of a pair of cowboy boots onto the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The agents soon came under heavy rifle fire and were killed.

The FBI identified Peltier as a suspect in the shooting and placed him on their most wanted list.

Months later, Robideau was driving Peltier's station wagon through Kansas with other AIM members when ammunition in the car accidentally exploded.

Robideau, who was seriously injured, was arrested and tried for the FBI agent killings, but was acquitted.

Peltier was arrested by Oregon State Police troopers while driving through Oregon and later convicted of the FBI shootings. He is serving two life sentences.

Geronimo's kin sue over remains

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Geronimo's descendants have sued Skull and Bones—the secret society at Yale University linked to presidents and other powerful figures—claiming its members stole the remains of the legendary Apache leader decades ago and have kept them ever since.

The federal lawsuit filed in Washington on last week—the 100th anniversary of

Geronimo's death—also names the university and the federal government.

Geronimo's great-grandson Harlyn Geronimo said his family believes Skull and Bones members took some of the remains in 1918 from a burial plot in Fort Sill, Okla., to keep in its New Haven clubhouse, a crypt. The alleged graverobbing is a longstanding legend that gained some validity in recent years

with the discovery of a letter from a club member that described the theft. "I believe strongly from my heart that his spirit was never released," Harlyn Geronimo said.

Both Presidents Bush, Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry and many others in powerful government and industry positions are members of the society, which is not affiliated with the university.

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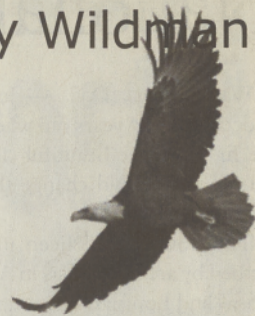
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