

Hospital, IHS at odds over ER bills

MARTIN, S.D. (AP) – The director of a hospital in Martin warned it will have to close if the Indian Health Service doesn't pay at least some of the nearly \$1 million in emergency room bills for American Indians who choose the community hospital over an IHS hospital.

George Minder, chief executive officer for Bennett County Hospital and Nursing Home, said he has asked the Aberdeen Area IHS to pay at least \$425,000 in past due bills, or about half of what he says is owed by the IHS since 2009 for care for residents of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwest South Dakota.

"If we don't get Indian

Health Service reimbursements, this facility will close," Minder said. "We'll try to keep the nursing home open, but the hospital will close."

Minder, who took over as hospital CEO in October 2010, said the situation went unaddressed for years but the money is needed to help meet a \$135,000 bi-weekly payroll.

The director of the Aberdeen Area IHS, Charlene Red Thunder, said her agency is not responsible for those bills because they do not meet IHS guidelines to pay only for priority emergency care at non-IHS facilities.

Minder said the hospital is required under federal law to treat anyone who seeks emer-

gency care and sees about 200 emergency room patients each month. He estimated at least 80 percent of them qualify for medical care from IHS.

When billed for those visits, IHS's practice has been to deny all but Priority I care claims under a policy of paying for emergency room charges at non-IHS facilities only for those typically defined as "threatening to life, limb or senses." In denying other claims, the IHS said those patients could have sought care at the IHS hospital at Pine Ridge.

Minder said many residents of the reservation live closer to Martin than they do to Pine Ridge and some don't have

transportation to Pine Ridge, which is about 50 miles away.

In a prepared statement to the Journal, Red Thunder said IHS must ration its contract health service funds, which are used to pay for referrals or private sector medical care.

"If a patient goes to an outside provider without having a referral that is authorized and approved for payment by the CHS (contract health service) program, the patient is responsible for payment for those services and IHS is not liable," she said. "By law, IHS is the payer of last resort, so patients and outside providers must use alternate resources first."

Cherokee Nation buying Nowata engineering firm

CATOOSA, Okla. (AP) – Cherokee Nation Businesses says it will buy a Nowata-based engineering and manufacturing company with plans to double the company's workforce during the next three years.

Cherokee Chief Chad Smith says the purchase of Disan Engineering Corp. will help the American Indian tribe create jobs for its citizens. The company now employs 35 people and tribal officials say hiring for the new positions will start

once the sale has been completed.

Disan designs and manufactures electronic and mechanical equipment for the Federal Aviation Administration and the Department of Defense. It's been in business since 1968.

The Cherokee Nation has long had defense manufacturing contracts. David Stewart, the CEO of Cherokee Nation Businesses, says the acquisition of Disan gives the tribe a key engineering component it had lacked.

Negotiators hope to save crafter's space

SITKA, Alaska (AP) – More than two dozen protesters gathered outside the visitor center at Sitka National Historical Park last Thursday afternoon to challenge the National Park Service's recent decision to shutter the Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center.

Led by Gerry Hope and Isabella Brady, the respective presidents of the local Alaska Native Brotherhood and Alaska Native Sisterhood camps, members of the local Tlingit community and others called on the Park Service to reinstate the cultural center, which has housed Native carvers, artists and other cultural exhibits for more than 40 years.

The Cultural Center was founded in 1969 through an agreement between the National Park Service and ANB and ANS. Both of the Native organizations adopted resolutions last week that challenge the Park

Service's decision to cancel the agreement under which Native craftsmen and artists demonstrate traditional techniques in a wing of the park's visitors center.

The protesters called the Cultural Center a vital community resource and said the decision to close it down with just 10 days' notice was disrespectful, and lacked an adequate public process.

But there were indications that a deal was in the works to reinstate the Cultural Center, with Sitka Tribe of Alaska taking part in preliminary discussions with SNHP on a new agreement and examining the possibility of providing administrative support for the facility.

Cultural Center board president Gary Lang said the Park Service had agreed to let the center stay open temporarily while talks about its future management continue.



Duran Bobb/Spilyay Tymoo

Students from Madras Dance Arts Unlimited (20 from Warm Springs) held their ballet recital at Prineville High School on June 17 and 18.

Assistant teacher Sunmiel Minnick said the classes are a great way for parents to be involved. "They even help with their child's attire."

Classes begin in September and continue until the recital in June.

Jobs issue at center of Cherokee chief campaign

CLAREMORE, Okla. (AP) – How many jobs are being produced by the Cherokee Nation and who holds those positions has become a central issue in the campaign to see who will lead Oklahoma's largest American Indian tribe for the next four years.

The contentious campaign will end Saturday, when voters decide whether to keep 12-year incumbent Chad Smith as the tribe's principal chief or elevate

longtime tribal councilman and Tablequah businessman Bill John Baker to that position.

Smith touts the creation of more than 5,000 "stable jobs" during his tenure and says almost 60 percent of those have gone to Cherokees and about 10 percent have gone to members of other tribes.

Baker disputes those numbers and says the tribe needs to ensure Cherokees who want to work can find a job.

Crow ceremony links disparate cultures in Wyo.

POWELL, Wyo. (AP) – Native culture says Heart Mountain contains an energy, and members of the Crow Tribe tapped into that energy recently at the mountain to engage the 30 or so people present at a Crow Pipe Ceremony.

Crow tribal elder Grant Bulltail presented the ceremony.

While people may have dissimilar convictions of what is

spiritual, religious or sacred, a link was nonetheless established between people of diverse cultures.

Mary Keller said the Crow people and what she refers to as the "settler culture," came together June 11. Keller teaches history of religions at the University of Wyoming's Northwest Regional Center in Cody.

Meetings focus on Navajo water rights

FARMINGTON, N.M. (AP) – A proposed project that would divert hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water from the San Juan River is the focus of a series of public meetings in northwestern New Mexico.

The first meeting on the Navajo water rights settlement was scheduled for Wednesday evening in Shiprock. More meetings were planned over the next several days in Aztec, Farmington and Bloomfield.

The settlement quantifies the Navajo Nation's rights to water from the lower Colorado River

basin in Arizona and settles claims made by the Hopi Tribe. As part of the settlement, Indian communities would have access to new pipelines carrying more than 600,000 acre-feet of water each year.

New Mexico State Engineer John D'Antonio said the project avoids expensive litigation, protects non-Navajo agricultural rights, prohibits the Navajo Nation from selling water out of state and will create jobs while the infrastructure is being built.

However, the San Juan

County Agricultural Water Users Association is opposed to the settlement in its current form.

"We believe it will do irreparable harm to the basin," association president Mike Sullivan said.

The group's attorney, Victor Marshall of Albuquerque, questioned whether the state engineer would be able to stop the Navajo Nation from selling water to other states and if the river could support water users off the reservation after diverting so much water to other communities.

Swinomish tribal leader passes

LA CONNER, Wash. (AP) – Swinomish tribal Chairman Robert Joe Sr., has passed away.

The 73-year-old, also known as Wa-Walton, died on

Wednesday, June 22, his sleep. He suffered complications from diabetes.

Joe served on the Swinomish Indian Senate for 26 years from 1976 to 2000, with 18 of those

years as chairman.

He was known as a spiritual man and an influential leader who advanced commercial development.

Remains found in Oak Harbor

OAK HARBOR, Wash. (AP) – The finding of three sets of American Indian remains in Oak Harbor is delaying a \$7 million construction project while tribes, the city and the state decide how to move forward.

But the state's Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation says the delay

could have been avoided if the city had followed their suggestion to employ an archaeologist.

The construction site sits near a known archaeological site. The skeletons could be hundreds of years old.

The Herald of Everett reports that construction has been stopped for two days after the

remains were discovered on June 16, but city officials can't say how long the delay will be. The project is meant to make Oak Harbor more pedestrian-friendly to attract more foot traffic. Mayor Jim Slowik says he has asked for a review of why the recommendation was not followed.

US attorney in ND wants to tackle Indian crime

FARGO, N.D. (AP) – The U.S. attorney for North Dakota has unveiled his strategy to try to improve the safety of the state's tribal communities by cracking down on violent crime, though he acknowledges that the effort could take years to have an impact.

"The statistics involving violence on (American Indian) reservations are unacceptable," Timothy Purdon said Wednesday during announcements in Fargo and Bismarck following months of talks with tribal leaders "Native Americans in North

Dakota, and the rest of the country, are not going to be able to overcome decades of isolation and poverty until they first feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods."

Purdon said he wants to use both vigorous prosecution and prevention initiatives such as school outreach programs to address high rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, drug trafficking and assaults. The U.S. attorney's office has jurisdiction over serious crimes on reservations, and Purdon's strategy emphasizes even greater in-

volvement. An assistant U.S. attorney is being assigned to deal with each of the state's four reservations, he said in stories published by The Forum and The Bismarck Tribune.

"This will not solve all of our public safety challenges in tribal communities. Rather, our hope is that the strategy is the first step," he said. "I do not think this is going to be easy. I do not think these challenges will be solved by simple solutions. It's going to take many years. . . But just because this is hard, doesn't mean we shouldn't try."



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