

## Tribe, company revise lopsided coal swap

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Backers of a proposed coal swap involving a Montana Indian tribe say they have reduced the amount of fuel the government would turn over to a Texas company as part of the exchange, after federal officials criticized the arrangement as lopsided.

Legislation from Montana's congressional delegation originally called for Houston-based Great Northern Properties to gain control over about 150 million tons of publicly owned, recoverable coal in the deal, from locations in central and southeastern Montana.

In turn, the company would have transferred 110 million tons of coal it controls on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation to the impoverished tribe.

But the company and tribe now say they have revised the terms so that both sides would receive 110 million tons.

"We're now more on a level playing field," said Tracey Robinson, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council.

The three-way exchange is meant to address a longstanding grievance over an expansion of the tribe's southeastern Montana reservation in 1900. The expansion left the underlying coal reserves in private hands, a result that has been described as a mis-

take on the part of federal officials at the time.

Great Northern Properties acquired the rights to that coal from previous owner Great Northern Railroad in 1992.

Officials with the federal Bureau of Land Management still are analyzing the revised terms and have not determined if the deal is an even exchange.

Even if the volumes are identical, that does not necessarily mean the coal is of equal market value because of differences in quality and mining costs. Also, the federal government stands to lose tens of millions of dollars in potential royalties — possibly a tough sell given the rising angst on Capitol Hill over the massive federal deficit.

But backers say the exchange is the right thing to do, and that the new terms should make the deal more palatable by addressing directly concerns that Great Northern Properties would reap the greatest benefit.

Robinson said the tribe's primary interest is "to ensure that our land is intact and stays whole."

"The government made this error. We're asking the government to fix it," he added.

The original arrangement ran into criticism from Interior Department officials and Rep. Edward Markey of Massachusetts, ranking Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee. They said they supported the tribe's goals but were concerned with whether the deal was equitable.

Jamie Connell, BLM director

for Montana and the Dakotas, indicated the revisions to the deal were encouraging: "If the numbers are getting closer, that's a good thing," she said.

A spokesman for the Interior Department, which oversees the BLM, declined comment.

Great Northern president Chuck Kerr said the focus on the benefits to his company had clouded perceptions of a deal primarily meant to help the tribe.

The deal is supported by mining company Signal Peak Energy, which hopes to extract some of the coal that Great Northern would receive near Signal Peak's Bull Mountain mine near Roundup.

Another revision to the deal would prohibit surface mining on the Bull Mountain tracts, a scenario that has raised concerns among local landowners, said tribal attorney Steve Chestnut. Still in the deal is a provision for the tribe to receive 40 percent of royalties on future sales of the coal acquired by Great Northern.

As for the coal the Northern Cheyenne would receive, tribal officials said no decisions have been made on whether it will be developed.

There are no mines on the reservation. Despite an unemployment rate topping 60 percent the Northern Cheyenne historically have opposed natural resource extraction.

But development pressures have increased since the nearby Otter Creek coal reserves were leased last year to mining giant Arch Coal Inc. by the Montana

Land Board. Great Northern also has leased tracts at Otter Creek to Arch, and the St. Louis coal company has partnered with BNSF Railway Co. on a proposed rail line that could be used to ship the coal to Midwestern or Asian markets.

Northern Cheyenne Tribal President Leroy Spang is a former coal industry worker who advocates mining as a means to generate jobs and inject new revenues into the tribe's coffers. He said he intends to negotiate future leases with companies interested in mining the reservation's coal, but that no agreements would be finalized until members of the tribe vote on it through a referendum.

Chestnut said meetings with one mining company have been scheduled for the near future. He would not offer specifics.

"It doesn't mean they're going to develop, but we're trying to do it the right way," he said.

On Wednesday, the BLM announced that 35 million tons of coal that would go to Great Northern under the deal will be subject to a public lease auction on Nov. 16. If those leases at Bull Mountain are sold before Congress acts on the pending legislation, it could complicate the exchange but not preclude it, according to BLM officials.

## Navajo Nation, NM get millions for electric buses

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The Navajo Nation and the state of New Mexico have been awarded nearly \$7 million dollars for new buses and other rural transit projects.

U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman said the Navajo Nation will get \$5 million from the Department of Transportation to replace old buses in its fleet with electric buses.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation, meanwhile, will receive \$1.75 million for new vehicles and equipment for rural transit agencies across the state.

Bingaman says the grants will help maintain essential transit initiatives at a time when funding is tight.

## Skull at Lake Georgetown could be prehistoric

GEORGETOWN, Texas (AP) — A skull found at the edge of Lake Georgetown has drawn the attention of anthropologists at Texas State University over its age.

Assistant professor Kate Spradley says the skull, apparently of a Native American man, could be from hundreds to thousands of years old. Spradley said the skull is likely prehistoric because of certain features, including three molars that are worn down, possibly due

to a gritty diet. The Texas drought has led to lower lake levels.

The Austin American-Statesman reports some people who were fishing discovered the skull early last week near Russell Park. Spradley says the skull is well preserved and she thinks it was embedded in the bank of the lake.

TSU experts were contacted as police sought to rule out foul play.

## Grant to address teen pregnancy

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The University of South Dakota and the nonprofit Sanford Research have been awarded a \$1.5 million grant to address teen pregnancy rates among American Indians.

Teen pregnancy rates among

Native Americans are four times higher than those for the rest of the state's population.

The grant from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities will be used to research the reasons why and develop a prevention program.

## Kenai museum filled with personal treasures

KENAI, Alaska (AP) — Mary Lou Bottorff's museum is alive.

Unlike other museums, the items in Bottorff's collection aren't untouchable and locked up tight under glass in a sterile environment.

The items breathe and live out in the open, on counters, on shelves and in places where one can get closer to its history and meaning.

The arraignment is in no particular order, except in Bottorff's mind.

But nothing is unfamiliar to the 71-year-old Inupiaq Alaska Native. It's a shop of memories — a collection of personal and family history proudly displayed.

"Everything has a story," she said standing near the doorway of the museum located at mile 14.5 of Kalifornsky Beach Road.

"I can tell you where I got the piece, who gave it to me,

how much I paid for it," she said. "I just have everything here in my mind."

Bottorff started the museum about five years back and moved it to the K-Beach area about three years ago. After retiring from her post as director of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe's housing program, she said she had a simple reason for pulling the items from her crawl space, dusting them off and opening her doors to strangers.

"I wanted to do something to keep busy," she said. "I don't spend too much time here, only when I get a call."

Many of the items on display at the museum were either made or worn by Bottorff or a family member or purchased and passed down through the years taking on a highly personal significance.

"I see it as all kinds of good stuff when I walk in here," she said.



The Wasqu Dance Group perform at the opening of the Museum at Warm Springs Tribal Member Art Show.

## Hopis sue over groundwater

TUBA CITY, Ariz. (AP) — The Hopi Tribe has sued the federal government over its management of an open dump in Tuba City.

The lawsuit filed last week in tribal court alleges that the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs failed to ensure that waste at the 30-acre site did not contaminate the land or groundwater. The BIA operated the dump for nearly 50 years before it was closed in 1997, and part of it was cov-

ered up and fenced off.

BIA spokeswoman Nedra Darling said Tuesday that the agency does not comment on pending litigation.

The lawsuit seeks enforcement of an order the tribe issued to the BIA in August demanding that the federal agency take immediate action to halt the spread of contamination.

The dump is on Hopi and Navajo land.

## AIM member suspected, not charged in killing dies

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — An 87-year-old woman suspected of being involved but never charged in the 1975 killing of a fellow American Indian Movement activist in South Dakota has died in a western Nebraska nursing home, a funeral home said last week.

Theda Clarke, an Oglala Sioux Tribe member, had been suffering from the effects of a stroke, dementia, diabetes and other ailments, according to court records. She passed away Oct. 8, according to the Sioux Funeral Home.

Prosecutors said Clarke repeatedly refused to cooperate as they investigated the death of 30-year-old Annie Mae Picou Aquash, who was fatally shot and left in a ravine on western South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The case tainted the legacy of the American Indian Movement, and it was nearly three decades before criminal charges were filed.

Investigators alleged that Clarke, John Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud drove Aquash in Clarke's Ford Pinto from Denver to Rapid City, where Aquash was held against her will and questioned about whether she

was a government informant.

In December, Clarke was ruled competent to testify in Graham's murder trial and briefly spoke about her background when jurors weren't in the courtroom. But she exercised her Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate herself in front of the jury and refused immunity, prosecutors said.

Graham, the accused gunman, was convicted of murder, while Looking Cloud was convicted in 2004. Both are serving prison sentences. Clarke refused to talk about the case with an Associated Press reporter in February 2003, two months be-

fore Looking Cloud was arrested.

Clarke graduated from St. Francis Indian School in the early 1940s, then began a nursing career at St. Mary's School for Nursing in Kansas City. She later worked on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

She is survived by a son, Edward 'Chip' Clarke, of Gillette, Wyo.; a brother, John Nelson of Portland, Ore.; and two sisters, Norma Williams of Denver and Vivian Locust of Pine Ridge. Her family members couldn't immediately be reached.

### Memorial and Stone Setting

Saturday, October 22, 2011 ~ 8:30 a.m.

Simnasho, Oregon

Laritta Maeann Greene

Now Ish Tunmi



8:30 a.m. ~ Stone Unveiling at the Simnasho Cemetery

Washut, Rejoicing, Giveaway & Dinner Immediately Following the Stone Setting At the Simnasho Longhouse