NATIVE NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

Bureau of Indian Affairs Apologizes for Tradition of Abuse of Indians

■ Poverty, ignorance and disease have been the product of this agency's work, BIA Official says.

SPOKANE, WA. (AP) — The head of the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) apologized recently for the agency's "legacy of racism and inhumanity" that included massacres, forced relocations and attempts to wipe out Indian languages and cultures.

"By accepting this legacy, we accept also the moral responsibility of putting things right," said Kevin Gover in an emotional speech marking the agency's 175th anniversary.

Gover, a Pawnee, said he was apologizing on behalf of the BIA, not the federal government as a whole. Still, he is the highest-ranking U.S. official ever to make such a statement regarding the treatment of American Indians.

The audience of about 300 Tribal leaders, BIA employees and federal officials stood and cheered as a teary-eyed Gover finished the speech.

> *"Never again will we seize your children, nor teach them to be ashamed of who they are. Never again."*
> *~ Kevin Gover*
> *Bureau of Indian Affairs*

"I thought it was a very heroic and historic moment," said Susan Masten, Chairwoman of the California's Yurok Tribe and President of the National Congress of American Indians. "It is important for us to begin to heal from what has been done since non-Indian contact."

Although Gover's statement did not come from the White House, President Bill Clinton's chief advisor on Indian issues, Lynn Cutler, said Gover sent her a copy of his speech and the White House did not object to it.

Gover recited a litany of wrongs the BIA inflicted on Indians since its creation as the Indian Office of the War Department. Estimates vary widely, but the agency is believed responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Indians.

"This agency participated in the ethnic cleansing that befell the Western Tribes," Gover said. "It must be acknowledged that the deliberate spreading of disease, the decimation of the mighty bison herds, the use of the poison alcohol to destroy mind and body and the cowardly killing of women and children made for tragedy on a scale so ghastly that it cannot be dismissed as merely the inevitable consequence of the clash of competing ways of life."

The misery continued after the BIA became part of the Interior Department in 1849, Gover said. Children were brutalized in BIA-run boarding schools, Indian languages and religious practices were banned and traditional Tribal governments were eliminated, he said.

"Poverty, ignorance and disease have been the products of this agency's work," said Gover.

Gover claimed that currently 90 percent of the BIA's 10,000 employees are Indian and the agency has changed into an advocate for Tribal governments.

"Never again will we attack your religions, your languages, your rituals or any of your Tribal ways," said Gover. "Never again will we seize your children, nor teach them to be ashamed of who they are. Never again."

Grand Ronde Housing Director Honored by Peers

■ Linda Layden named the Indian Housing Authority's Executive Director of the Year.

By Chris Mercier

She began with an entry-level position for the Salem Housing Authority. Now, years later, Linda Layden is the Indian Housing Authority's Executive Director of the Year.

Layden received her prestigious plaque in September at the Northwest Indian Housing Association's Annual meeting and awards banquet in Port Angeles, Washington. She has been the Executive Director of the Tribal Housing Authority since its inception in 1996, and spent the two years before that establishing the program and recruiting a staff. The award is a personal milestone, coming on the heels of her successful completion of the Elder's housing development.

LINDA LAYDEN

"I was shocked," Layden said. "And I was pleased. I really didn't expect it at all. It is nice to know that there are people who think so highly of me."

As Director of the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority, she oversees numerous projects and operations that assist Tribal members. The Home Repair Grant and the Down Payment Assistance Grant fall under her guidance, as did the Grand Meadows Manufactured Home project. But she still feels a sense of profound pride with the Elder's housing development.

"That was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had," she said. "It touched people's lives. It allowed people who have come from not-so-good situations to live out their lives in dignity."

Ultimately, the award is icing on the cake for Layden, who found her way into a career in housing by coincidence more than two decades ago. Layden received a degree from Western Oregon State College in the 1970's in criminology, but became quickly disenchanted when she found the field to be overly stressful. She then began her career with the Salem Housing Authority, and since then has worked for the Vancouver Housing Authority, the City of Albany and the City of Corvallis — dabbling in housing development and home repair. She also moved nearly everywhere she worked.

But Grand Ronde has been especially good to her.

"I just love my staff, the Tribe, the area," said Layden, who now lives in McMinnville with her husband. "Things have just been great."

And now, perfect?

"Oh, I've still got work to do..."

Congratulations Linda, from all of us at the Grand Ronde Tribe.

Tribe Fights Charges of Gambling Offenses

LINCOLN CITY, OR. (AP) — The National Indian Gaming Association has backed the Siletz Tribe in its fight against charges from the top national American Indian gambling regulatory agency that it violated federal gaming laws.

Association officials contend the National Indian Gaming Commission overstepped its authority in June when it accused the Siletz Tribal Council of misusing net gaming revenues by accepting $138,000 in gifts, dinners and show tickets at Chinook Winds, the Tribe's casino.

The commission also ordered Tribal Council members to repay the money to the casino and proposed the Tribe be fined $10,000.

A lawyer for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians appealed the federal violation notice in July, calling the allegations an intrusion into the Tribe's business decisions.

Members of the national association recently adopted a resolution defending the practice of providing complementary services, saying it is well accepted and widespread in the gaming industry.

Last month, the commission requested that a presiding official conduct a federal hearing to review the charges and proposed fine.

Recently, Siletz Tribal officials requested a Senate oversight hearing on the case. So far, neither hearing date has been set, said Craig Dorsay, Siletz Tribal attorney.

Corrections

Smoke Signals apologizes for the following errors and oversights in the last issue:

■ A community meeting was held on Sept. 29 for the use and design of the Cultural Site Area located by the pow-wow grounds. Any community or Tribal members interested in the next stage of the Cultural Area, please look in the Oct. 15 issue for further information.

■ The 5th Annual Community Health & Safety Fair will be held on FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27 from 1-4 p.m. at Grand Ronde Elementary School.

■ The Happy Birthday announcement below has been corrected.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
TO THE CHILDREN OF FREMOND & LAVERNE BEAN.

GRANDCHILDREN OF MARGARET MENARD AND THOMAS BEAN.

Ellen, Tom and Donna