

NATIVE NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

American Indian Activist Peltier Files New Request to Reduce Murder

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — American Indian activist Leonard Peltier has filed a request to reduce his murder sentence so that the two life terms run concurrently, rather than consecutively, and give him an earlier chance at parole.

Peltier claims he never had the chance to argue that his sentences should be based on the theory he, at most, aided others in the killings of two FBI agents in 1975, or that he acted in self-defense.

Interim U.S. Attorney Lynn Crooks

Peltier was sentenced in 1977.

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said the government would file its formal response soon but declined to comment on the request, which was filed November 1.

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duce his sentence, have been denied.

Peltier is being held in the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas and is up for parole in 2008.

Changing his sentence could get him an immediate date because he has

served the minimum time required if the terms ran together, rather than back-to-back, said Peltier's lawyer, Eric Seitz.

Three other men were charged with killing the agents in a shootout on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Two suspects were acquitted in 1976 and the third was freed for lack of evidence.

Peltier's defenders say he was wrongly convicted and that the government withheld information. Amnesty International calls him a political prisoner.

Norton Asks Bureau of Indian Affairs to Review Chinook's Federal Status

PORTLAND, OR. (AP) — Less than a year after getting federal recognition, the American Indian Tribe that welcomed the Lewis and Clark expedition to the mouth of the Columbia River is in danger of having its status stripped.

Interior Secretary Gale Norton told the Bureau of Indian Affairs to review the Chinook Indian Tribe's federal recognition.

Norton's decision sends the issue back to an agency staff that earlier rejected the Chinook's attempt at recognition, said Dennis Whittlesey, a lawyer representing the southwest Washington Tribe.

"It's clear the policy people, the political appointees in the Bush administration, have abrogated their responsibility and are not involved in the decision-making process," said Whittlesey.

"It's clear the staff is now making decisions on Indian matters."

Kevin Gover, outgoing U.S. Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs in the Clinton administration, made it his last official act to re-establish the Chinook Tribal status on January 3, overturning his staff's recommendation to deny Tribal status.

The action made the Chinook the 562nd Tribe to be recognized and allowed the Tribe to seek land for a reservation, as well as get more federal money to run its government.

The last-minute decision drew criticism, especially after Gover went to work as a lawyer-lobbyist for Tribes.

The Boston Globe reported in August that Gover became the co-beneficiary of a \$50,000 trust, along with the husband of one of the Chinook's earliest

advocates. Gover and the Tribe denied any improper conduct.

The Chinook signed a treaty in 1851, but Congress never ratified it. An 1855 treaty would have moved the Chinook from their homeland to a coastal reservation shared with the Quinault, their historic enemies. Chinook Tribal leaders refused to sign the agreement.

The Quinault Indian Nation, which stands to lose both membership and land if the Chinook become a recognized Tribe, appealed Gover's ruling on April 6 to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals. The Quinault contend that the Chinook ceased to exist as a Tribe and that Gover failed to recognize as much when he granted the Chinook recognition.

The appeals board affirmed part of

Gover's ruling but referred nine questions to Norton.

Norton asked Neal McCaleb, the new Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, to reconsider eight of those questions.

McCaleb has 120 days to make a decision. If he reverses Tribal recognition, the Chinook could appeal to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals.

Gary Johnson, the Chinook Tribal Chairman, said Norton's decision also brings into question how much the Chinook will be involved in the bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark expedition that begins in 2003.

Chinook Tribal members gave the Lewis and Clark expedition food and valuable information as the explorers spent the winter of 1804-05 near the mouth of the Columbia.

First Tribal Utility in Northwest Begins Operation in Canyonville, Oregon

CANYONVILLE, OR. (AP) — The massive electric sign that rises above Interstate 5 to invite travelers to the Seven Feathers Hotel and Casino is now drawing its power from the first Tribal electric utility in the Pacific Northwest.

The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe also keeps the video poker machines humming, the hotel lights burning and the restaurant cooking with about 2.5 megawatts of electricity from the Bonneville Power Administration — also enough for about 2,500 homes.

"There have been a few Tribes nationwide that have entered into utility operations, but none like this one," said Ron Doan, General Manager of the Umpqua Indian Utility Cooperative.

Other utilities affiliated with Northwest Indians actually are owned by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs or others, according to the BPA.

Doan said the Tribe has no plans for its utility to produce any of its own power, although it may be considered if

power rates climb for the long term.

But the cost of power was not the driving force behind an independent, Tribal-owned utility, said Tribal chairwoman Sue Shaffer.

"The more we can depend on ourselves, the better off we are, just like any individuals," she said.

Doan, who worked for Pacific Power for 32 years, helped launch the Tribal utility, which has contracted Douglas Electric Cooperative to perform operations and maintenance work when needed.

The Tribe became interested in setting up its own utility three years ago, when the BPA administrator defined Tribes as public bodies eligible to buy electricity directly from the federal agency.

The Cow Creek Tribe was among the first to sign up as preference customers, meaning they are given the same rates and priority, as any publicly owned utility, said Sonya Tetnowski, the BPA Account Executive that deals

with the Umpqua Indian Utility Cooperative.

The Tribal power contract with the BPA can be renegotiated after five to 10 years. The final hurdle in launching the Tribal cooperative was convincing Pacific Power, which previously provided power to the Seven Feathers' facilities, to turn over its underground power lines and other distribution equipment on the property.

The Tribe ended up using its power of condemnation, similar to those given any other local government, to force Pacific Power to sell its equipment and lines.

Pacific Power generally is not interested in turning over parts of its territory to other utilities or selling its systems, but company officials did not want to fight with the Tribe, said Shannon Shoul, spokeswoman for PacifiCorp, the ScottishPower division that also owns Pacific Power.

"The reason we went into speaking

with the Tribe about an agreement ... is we understand and respect the Tribes right to sovereignty and conversely they understand our responsibility to our customers and shareholders," said Shoul.

Shaffer said the new utility is just part of a Tribal push to diversify its business interests. In addition to the Seven Feathers hotel, casino and travel center, the Tribes' properties and businesses include two Canyonville motels, the K Bar Ranch near Round Prairie, Umpqua Indian Foods and a majority interest in Rio Communications, which owns Rosenet and provides other telecommunications services.

"Were really in a strong development stage," Shaffer said. "We want to branch out and diversify in jobs, not only for ourselves, but for others. That's really a big mission of the Tribe."

Shoshone-Bannocks Refuse Host Tribe Status in Winter Games, Cite Lack of Respect

FORT HALL, ID. (AP) — The Shoshone-Bannocks say they will not play the part of host Tribe in the 2002 Winter Games.

Former Shoshone-Bannock Olympic Committee Director Garth Towersap said they were an important element in Salt Lake City getting the Olympics, but they were not shown respect.

"They felt they were not being treated the way they should be treated," he said.

The Shoshone-Bannocks were named

host by the Native American 2002 Foundation, which works with the Salt Lake Organizing Committee on the Indian role in the event. But they were not so designated by the Olympic Committee.

That panel recently wrote a letter to that effect to Tribal Council Chairman Blaine Edmo.

Towersap's committee had planned a Reunion of Nations, where Tribes come together to share their cultures and to discuss ways they can work together.

The Suquamish Tribe intended to paddle canoes from the West Coast to eastern Idaho. Towersap said he hoped the venture would raise awareness for salmon restoration.

Towersap said he thought Indian Tribes played a big role in Salt Lake City being chosen as the site. In the city's application package, Indian art was used to showcase the unique character of the West.

"It brought back images of Calgary," he said. "I believe they have lost their

Indian focus."

Towersap's committee had worked with the Native American 2002 Foundation on Indian involvement in the games and made a \$15,000 donation to the organization in 1999.

Last year, a crew from the International Sports Broadcasting Company came to the Fort Hall Indian Reservation to film aspects of Shoshone-Bannock culture. The 30-second film clips will still be shown during the Olympics, said Towersap.