



# Epstein investigation reveals possible illegal hobby in South Dakota

By Beth Warden

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (Dakota News Now) - While the Department of Justice released Epstein files, certain South Dakotans are asking about local connections.

The alleged sexual assaults and trafficking are grabbing headlines, but there are other questionable activities: one of the alleged hobbies of Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell highlights a problem that private landowners and reservations in the state are facing today.

In the Epstein files, testimony about one thing can lead to other questions. An email from the Department of Justice indicates that Epstein's longtime companion, Ghislaine Maxwell, emailed him, recalling fossil-hunting in North Dakota.

Later, in Maxwell's interview with the DOJ, the transcript describes being on a trip with Bobby Kennedy and Epstein. She said they went "dinosaur bone hunting in the Dakotas."

The exact location and even the timing of these endeavors are blurry. What is known from talking to Crow Creek

Tribal Chairman Peter Lengkeek is that illegal digging for graves, artifacts, and fossils is a systemic problem.

"It's quite common to go to the reservations and dig up Indians and take their things. We're trying to protect it, and people are trying to rob it, you know? Constantly," Lengkeek said.

There's one location specifically targeted on the reservation.

"We call the boneyard. But it's actually a mass grave where 1,500 Indians were put into, were killed, and buried there along the river. It's actually a national

historic site. It's the Arikara burial ground," Lengkeek explained.

The marks in the soil show what was done in secret.

"See tracks come in, especially in the wintertime when a river freezes. They come up from Chamberlain on 4 wheelers along the riverbank and go there and dig. I just made a report two weeks ago to the Corps of Engineers. 'Hey, somebody's down there digging,'" Lengkeek explained.

The tribe recently reclaimed its sacred items from someone else. They had been

kept in Kansas.

"And there was a guy down there who frequented South Dakota and frequented my area. And he had over 5,000 items in his collection. And he's the only one that we found out. What about all the others we don't know of?" Lengkeek said. "All I can do is pray for their safety because some of those things they're touching are very sacred and can turn out bad for them."

Illegal digging can bring fines and even jail time. While some may call digging a sport, to many it's sacred.

# Charges dropped against Nick Tilsen in law enforcement assault case

By Amelia Schafer  
ICT

RAPID CITY, South Dakota – The Pennington County State's Attorney's office has dropped all charges against NDN Collective founder Nick Tilsen.

Tilsen, Oglala Lakota, was charged with aggravated assault against a law enforcement officer, obstruction of a law enforcement officer and later simple assault on

an officer, all stemming from a 2022 cop watch in downtown Rapid City, South Dakota.

Tilsen faced up to 26 years in prison.

A late-January trial in Rapid City resulted in a mistrial after a 12-person jury could not come to a unanimous verdict. The State's Attorney's Office declined to respond to what the jury's hung vote result was. The dismissal announcement came 46 days after the original trial.

"The decision to dismiss this case was made after careful review and thoughtful consideration," said Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel in a March 16 statement. "Our office prosecuted this case based on the evidence and the law, and we remain confident that the charges were appropriate to bring."

In the statement, a state's attorney's office representative said the decision followed a careful review of evidence and the overall

case, after which the state decided pursuing a retrial would not "be the most effective use of limited prosecutorial and court resources."

"My freedom wasn't granted by a judge, a jury, or the settler colonial court system," Tilsen said in a press release on March 16. "My freedom was won by the people, the movement, and the ancestors. We organized, prayed, wrote, called, and fought these politically motivated charges with integrity, deep principles, and strong

beliefs."

However, Roetzel said the decision to drop charges was not driven by public pressure or commentary, but rather by evidence, the law and an obligation to exercise "sound judgement."

Tilsen said the charges were politically motivated, having been filed over a year after the alleged assault and immediately after the NDN Collective announced a Fourth of July protest in 2023.

"The Pennington County State's Attorney's office fought tooth and nail to put me in prison because they are afraid of the power we are building," Tilsen said in the release. "They're afraid because we aren't just speaking truth to power – we are successfully building new solutions, exercising our rights, and changing the state's violent systems that have oppressed Indigenous people for hundreds of years."

# Facing an Uncomfortable Truth The Forced Sterilization of Native Women

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Last year, in preparation for the United States' 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14253. The order directs federal agencies to remove what the administration calls "disparaging" or "divisive" signs, plaques, and markers from federal lands, including national parks and public monuments.

The order has also been used to initiate an audit of exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution to ensure that what officials describe as "negative" portrayals of American history are removed.

In practice, this effort amounts to an attempt to reshape the nation's historical narrative — highlighting triumphs while downplaying or ignoring painful truths such as genocide, land theft and broken treaties.

When it comes to American Indians and Alaska Natives, America carries many uncomfortable truths — including the history of

Indian boarding schools, where generations of Native children endured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. So severe were these experiences that longtime Native American activist Leonard Peltier (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) recently said his time in boarding school was worse than his nearly five decades of incarceration in federal prisons.

Another uncomfortable truth is the record of U.S. government practices from 1907 through the late 20th century that allowed some tens of thousands of Native women to be subjected to procedures that left them unable to bear children — often without their free, prior and informed consent.

Native News Online's Senior Health Reporter Elyse Wild wrote about this uncomfortable truth this past week.

Wild wrote about Dr. Connie Redbird Pinkerton-Uri (Choc-taw/Cherokee), a Native physician who discovered an alarming number of hysterectomies performed on Native women at Indian Health Service facilities. In

her own independent investigation, she reported as many as one in four Native American women had been sterilized without consent between 1960 and 1978.

Pinkerton-Uri later left clinical practice and earned a law degree, becoming one of the first Native American women trained in both medicine and law.

With expertise in both fields, she spoke to newspapers, medical associations, and legal groups, boldly declaring that the U.S. government was "using the vehicle of healthcare as a tool of genocide."

In 1975, Dr. Pinkerton-Uri persuaded U.S. Sen. James Abourezk (D-S.D.) to request a federal investigation by the Government Accountability Office, then known as the General Accounting Office.

The GAO's review confirmed that the Indian Health Service had sterilized a significant number of Native American women. The study examined sterilization practices in four of IHS's 12 service areas over a four-year period from

1973 to 1976 and found that 3,406 Native women had been sterilized — including 3,001 of childbearing age.

Wild also wrote about two women whose work led to New Mexico lawmakers last month passing a measure directing the state's Indian Affairs Department and the Commission on the Status of Women to investigate the history, scope and ongoing impacts of forced and coerced sterilizations of women of color by the IHS and other health care providers.

The agencies are expected to submit their findings to the governor by the end of 2027.

The history of forced sterilization of Native American women is messy and painful, but it should not be buried.

Understanding this history is essential.

There are good reasons why the truth is important.

First, it honors the women whose bodies, lives, and futures were violated. For decades, they

were silenced, disbelieved, and blamed. Recognizing their suffering is a necessary act of respect and justice. It gives survivors the language to name what was done to them and the chance to reclaim their narratives.

Second, knowing the truth exposes the systems that enabled such abuse. The IHS, federal policies and medical institutions all played a role in allowing these violations to occur. Learning about these failures reminds us that unchecked power — disguised as "care" — can lead to systemic harm.

Third, confronting the past prevents its repetition. History teaches that when governments ignore accountability, vulnerable communities suffer. By documenting forced sterilizations and other abuses, the country strengthens the principles of informed consent, human rights and ethical health care — values every American should defend.

Finally, acknowledging these uncomfortable truths strengthens our democracy. A nation that cele-

brates liberty cannot erase the injustices committed against its First Peoples. Truth is not optional; it is the foundation for justice, healing, and a future where history is neither sanitized nor forgotten.

This is why measures like New Mexico's investigation matter — they represent small but meaningful steps toward accountability, and the country should pay attention.

Americans can still be proud this Fourth of July while confronting and understanding the ugly history of how Native Americans were treated. Pride in our country doesn't require blind worship. It grows from a commitment to democratic ideals and from people willing to make the nation live up to them — even while acknowledging its failures.

Thayék gde nwendëmen — We are all related.

## Request for Bids

### BELCOURT SCHOOL BUS GARAGE & HIGH SCHOOL PAVING Belcourt, North Dakota

#### NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

The Belcourt School District #7 will receive bids on April 10, 2026 for the construction of the **BELCOURT SCHOOL BUS GARAGE & HIGH SCHOOL PAVING**. Bids shall be received at Belcourt School District #7, Attn: Duane Poitra, Business Manager 1207 William Hardesty St. Belcourt, ND 58316 until Friday, April 10, 2026 at 1:00 PM. Central Time at which time qualified submittals will be publicly opened and read.

Major items include 12" Subgrade Preparation 3,800 SF (Bus Garage) & 1,800 SF (High School), 6" Class V Gravel 1,270 TON (Bus Garage) & 575 TONS (High School), 5" Asphalt Pavement FAA 43 (Base Bid) 1,060 TONS (Bus Garage) & 500 TONS (High School), 6" Concrete Alt #1 15,200 SF (High School), Seeding and Mulching 1 LSUM and related items.

Single Prime Bids submitted must be accompanied by a Bond payable to Belcourt School District #7 in the amount equal to five percent (5%) of the bid. This is to serve as a guarantee that the bidder will enter into a Contract for the performance of such work if the Contract is awarded to him. Only bids, which are accompanied by such bond with associated proof of surety, will be considered.

All bids will be made on the basis of cash payment for such work. After bid opening the Owner will return the bid security of all except the lowest responsible bidders. When the Contract is awarded, the remaining unsuccessful bidder's bond will be returned. The Owner reserves the right to reject any or all bids, and further reserves the right to award the Contract in the best interests of the Owner. The Owner reserves the right to hold the low bids for a period of thirty (30) days after the date of the bid opening.

Each Contractor shall comply with TERO Regulations represented in the specifications for the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation. Prime bidding contractors shall include an identified 3% Fee based upon their contract quote. Belcourt School District #7 expects all Contractors to utilize to the greatest extent feasible, Certified Minority Contractors, subcontractors, and vendors in good standing with the North Dakota Minority Contractors Association. Contractors will be responsible for an EPA fee in the amount of 1% of their contract quote.

Plans and specifications will be available at the following recognized Builders Exchanges for examination: Bismarck-Mandan Exchange, Construction Plans of Bismarck, Minot, Grand Forks, and Fargo all of North Dakota. Construction Industry Center of South Dakota. Minneapolis, St. Paul, Reed Construction Data and McGraw-Hill Dodge Planroom; all of Minnesota.

The documents may further be reviewed in the office of the Owner or Architect, Jiran Architects & Planners, P.C. Bidding Contractors having the proper class of North Dakota Contractor's License may obtain digital copies of the documents by contracting Jeff Welch at 701-258-7771 jeff@jiranpc.com at no charge. Any Prime Contractor wishing to bid on this project shall notify the Architect and supply complete contact information to ensure that all bidders are receiving the most current bidding information.

Any bid not prepared and submitted in accordance with the provisions hereof, shall be considered non-responsive. The Owner may waive any formalities, and retains the rights to reject any or all bids.

END OF NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS

# OH NO!

## Is that really happening?

Read the public notices in our newspaper or on our website to learn more about:

- Government meetings, bids & contracts
- Elections/Polling places, initiative petitions
- Foreclosures
- Tax assessments/proposals
- Unclaimed property
- School Board issues



Public notices, the key to your community.