



RESOURCE BOX

Parents/Caregivers

Youth/Teenagers

REAL STORIES

View stories of Wyoming Addicts



Wyoming
Department
of Health

Commit to your health.

METH

[Wyoming Treatment Providers](#) | [Prevention Resources](#) | [Meth-Related Resources](#)

Drug Busts & Seizures Judge's behavior concerned colleague

By BRODIE FARQUHAR
Casper Star-Tribune correspondent
Thursday, June 02, 2005

LANDER -- Tribal Judge Lynda Munnell-Noah, arrested Friday in what officials called a major drug bust, has long been part of the Wind River Indian Reservation's law and order system, both as a tribal prosecutor and as a tribal judge.

Her boss, Chief Judge John St. Clair, was reluctant to talk about the case in a Wednesday telephone interview, noting the presumption of innocence before trial.

"I think it is premature to speculate until all the facts are known," he said. "I certainly wasn't aware of any illegal activities."

St. Clair said he has written to the Shoshone and Arapaho Joint Business Council and asked for a meeting to determine Munnell-Noah's status. St. Clair said he has a recommendation for the reservation leaders, but would not say what it was.

"I'm afraid this (case) is going to undermine the credibility of the court and of the tribes," he said.

Munnell-Noah was appointed by the Northern Arapahoe Business Council, while St. Clair was appointed by the Eastern Shoshone Business Council. The tribal court system also has Judge Richard Ferris Sr., appointed by the Shoshone tribe, and part-time Judge Hugh Ridgley, appointed by the Arapaho tribe.

St. Clair said Munnell-Noah was a tribal judge in 1980, before he was appointed to the court. He said she served as the prosecutor on the reservation from 1984 to 1990, then retired. Munnell-Noah was reappointed as tribal judge in 2002, St. Clair said.

St. Clair said he was concerned about his colleague's health and her conduct in court in recent months.

"She was constantly going to the doctor for pain in her neck and arm," which he saw as a legal, legitimate use of prescription medicine, he said.

More troublesome to St. Clair was Munnell-Noah's behavior in court, where she was beginning to impose grossly disproportionate sentences, both too light and too harsh, he said.

St. Clair said he was deeply troubled when two of Munnell-Noah's relatives were brought into her court -- an obvious conflict of interest.

U.S. Attorney Matt Mead said Munnell-Noah presided over a case involving her nephew, Darrell "Buddy" Goodman, 38, who also was arrested Friday and charged with conspiracy.

"We did have an occasion where we know that she had ruled on two people in her court that she knew, or at least should have known, were also involved in this organization," Mead said. "Looking at what happened, it looked like to us it was nothing more than a slap on the wrist."

BE FREE OF SUBSTANCE :: BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

Department of Health
Substance Abuse Division

St. Clair said he was also troubled by Munnell-Noah's harsh sentencing of people found guilty under the reservation's "open container" law, which is an attempt to crack down on drunken driving. Under that law, everyone in a car that has even a single open container of beer or other alcoholic drink can be charged. Munnell-Noah threw the book at everyone, St. Clair said.

"It was out of proportion," he said.

Munnell-Noah, 57, is specifically charged with conspiracy to deal prescription pills, dealing prescription pills, using a phone to facilitate a felony drug offense, and threatening to assault and kill a federal law enforcement officer as an act of retaliation. She was being held by authorities with other defendants pending expected court appearances this week.

Law enforcement officials regard Munnell-Noah as one of four key leaders in a family-dominated drug ring. At the center of the alleged operation were John and Donna Goodman, their daughter Brenda Goodman, and Donna Goodman's sister -- Munnell-Noah, according to federal officials. Authorities said the family brought methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana in from Mexico and also sold prescription drugs, some of which were thought to have come from the reservation's Indian Health Services clinic.

In addition to Friday's 19 arrests, officials seized a half ounce of methamphetamine, a quarter pound of marijuana, more than 2,400 prescription pills, and six weapons, including an SKS assault rifle, three handguns and two other rifles, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Cathy Keene, executive director of the reservation's Indian Health Services program, was reportedly meeting Wednesday afternoon with the Northern Arapaho Business Council.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

[Go Back](#)