

Former SD US Attorney Visits Lower Brule Chairman

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BY JIM KENT



Lower Brule Sioux Tribe's logo

Credit Courtesy Lower Brule Sioux Tribe

While the current Lower Brule Sioux tribal leadership continues to face opposition from some tribal council members and tribal employees, the arrival of the former South Dakota United States Attorney on the reservation to discuss the tribe's administrative issues raised concern with the acting-tribal chairman.

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2:02

Comments by Acting Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Chairman Kevin Wright and former South Dakota U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson.

When Kevin Wright stepped up from the position of Lower Brule Sioux Vice-Chairman to Chairman after Mike Jandreau's death, Wright's goal was to lead an administration that was free of cronyism and corruption.

Kevin Wright says he's attempting to move the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe forward while under the shadow of a federal investigation, but he isn't being given access to the tribe's financial records.



Acting Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Chairman Kevin Wright.
Credit Courtesy Kevin Wright

Amid these difficulties, and after dismissing three attorneys who worked for the tribe under Jandreau, Kevin Wright was puzzled after receiving a phone call from the former U.S. Attorney.

“And he left a message saying that he was very interested in Lower Brule and what’s going on down there...and would like to talk,” Wright recalls.

Wright says he agreed to a meeting on the advice of the tribe’s new attorney, but was surprised by the conversation with Brendan Johnson.

“Then he proceeded to say that...’Here’s what I think they’re gonna do,” explains Wright. “ You know they’re gonna’ take you to court.’ He wasn’t really specifying who. He just said ‘they’. And I’m assuming that they are the other side. Meaning the other council and the ex-tribal attorneys.”

Wright adds that Johnson offered to consult the former tribal attorneys to see what it would take for them and the opposing

tribal council members to recognize Kevin Wright as Tribal Chairman.



Former South Dakota U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson.

Credit Courtesy Robins Kaplan LLP

Kevin Wright says he’s puzzled why the former South Dakota U.S. Attorney would be working with individuals who may be implicated in a federal investigation.

Brendan Johnson asserts he was asked by tribal members on both sides of the issue to see if he could help.

“I don’t represent anyone in this dispute,” Johnson counters. “And, in fact, when I went to Lower Brule, it wasn’t to seek legal representation. It wasn’t to tell anyone what they should do. It was really simply to say that these divisions within the tribe need to be healed.”

Johnson notes he isn’t working for anyone and was invited by Kevin Wright to the Lower Brule Sioux Reservation.

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14:45

Telephone interview by SDPB's Jim Kent with Acting Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Chairman Kevin Wright on April 24, 2015 re: meeting with Former South Dakota U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson on April 23, 2015 in Wright's office at the LBST administration building with LBST council representatives Sonny Ziegler and Desiree LaRoche - and two unidentified LBST members - in attendance.

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11:37

Telephone interview #1 by SDPB's Jim Kent with Former South Dakota U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson on April 24, 2015 re: meeting on April 23, 2015 in Acting Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Chairman Kevin Wright's office at the LBST administration building with Wright and LBST council representatives Sonny Ziegler and Desiree LaRoche - and two unidentified LBST members – in attendance.

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2:47

Telephone interview #2 (additional remarks) by SDPB's Jim Kent with Former South Dakota U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson on April 24, 2015 re: meeting on April 23, 2015 in Acting Lower Brule Sioux Tribal Chairman Kevin Wright's office at the LBST administration building with Wright and LBST council representatives Sonny Ziegler and Desiree LaRoche - and two unidentified LBST members – in attendance.