



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Interior Department's Acting Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, John Fritz, ruled today that the attempted removal June 2 of eight members of the business committee of the Wisconsin Winnebago Indian Tribe would not be recognized because procedures required by the tribe's constitution had not been followed.

"We decline to recognize the attempted June 2 removal," Fritz said, "but will recognize the results of a special general council removal hearing conducted in accordance with Wisconsin Winnebago law."

Fritz added that he was sending Fred Ragsdale, a Chemehuevi Indian from the law school faculty at the University of New Mexico, as a special representative from the Department to work with responsible members of the tribe for the conduct of a special general council meeting. Ragsdale has successfully helped other tribal groups resolve internal governmental problems.

In a letter to the attorney of the Winnebago factional leaders, Fritz said that Ragsdale's efforts would be aimed at helping them achieve mutually agreeable solutions to tribal problems.

Fritz identified three problems to be resolved:

1. Correctly conducting a general council to consider the removal charges in accordance with the tribal constitution;
2. Establishing a suitable body for the management of the tribe's bingo operation, including appropriate accounting and oversight controls; and
3. Revising and clarifying the tribal constitution.

Fritz concluded his letter to the tribal representatives by saying that he expected the general council hearing to be called quickly. He said the Department, if necessary, would call the hearing under Section 3 of Article VII of the tribal constitution.

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<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/ouster-tribal-officials-not-approved-winnebagos-must-hold-general>