

50 Cents

**SATURDAY**

March 10, 2001

.....  
**At a Glance**



**Climbing the family tree: Genealogists**

## Kempthorne meets activists

### Rally at capitol opposes 'squaw' vote

By **Graham Garner**  
Journal Writer

BOISE — After a rally on the Capitol steps seeking to eliminate the word "squaw" from Idaho place names, Native American women and other advocates crowded into Gov. Dirk Kempthorne's office Friday to request his support.

Tribal members were joined by the Women of Color Alliance,

United Vision of Idaho, the American Association of University Women and the Interfaith Alliance in their crusade to stop what one picketer called "state-sanctioned profanity."

"The voices aren't just Native American at this point," said Fort Hall resident Rose Ann Abrahamson, a Lemhi Shoshoni and lateral descendent of

Sacajawea. "You can see that the voices are becoming greater, that they are expanding."

After security officers asked the group to wait in the hall outside the governor's office, Kempthorne stepped out of a meeting to speak to the crowd.

The governor alluded to legislation passed this session on be-

See **RALLY, A5** ▶



**Ruby Bannock of Boise, a Shoshoni Bannock Indian, wipes tears from her eyes at a rally on the capitol steps.**

Idaho Press Tribune photo by Dick Selby

# Rally

► Continued from A1

half of minority groups, pointing out the issues arose a number of years before legislation could be passed.

"This week we signed a resolution in commemoration of Juneteenth for African Americans," Kempthorne said. "I believe we are going to get a minimum wage for migrant farm workers. But on all of this, it wasn't the first session."

Despite a 10-9 vote of the House State Affairs Committee to hold a bill that would have changed the name now identified as a crude term for female genitalia, the rallying group asked Kempthorne if he would support their cause.

"I ask you — with the legislative body as well as my office — to provide us historical background on the word," Kempthorne said. "I have respect for you and I ask you to respect the process."

Shoshone-Bannock tribal member Louise Dixey said she "thought it was appropriate to come to Boise and relay the message" the Native American

*"The Idaho Legislature has had the opportunity, through the privilege they hold, to begin addressing this problem. Unfortunately, Idaho has continued to show itself as a state of hate."*

— Leah Slaney, Women of Color Alliance

women still expect the name to be changed.

The group said it was pleased the governor took the time to come out and speak to the ralliers, but that it was disappointed not to receive a promise of support.

"He made the effort to come out and meet the people and that is a step toward a positive direction," Abrahamson said.

Although advocates say they do not expect Kempthorne will take any direct action to intercede on their behalf, they plan to continue asking for change in the House.

"We'll leave it up to them to reconsider, but we'll probably move forward with our own legislation next year," Dixey said.

The impromptu encounter with Kempthorne came after an hour-long rally in front of

the Statehouse, where women expressed their offense with the House State Affairs Committee and the continued use of the derogatory term.

"The Idaho Legislature has had the opportunity, through the privilege they hold, to begin addressing this problem," said Leah Slaney, a Nez Perce tribal member and vice president of the Women of Color Alliance. "Unfortunately, Idaho has continued to show itself as a state of hate."

Slaney singled out two Republican representatives who voted to hold the bill, Rep. Twila Hornbeck, Grangeville, and Dick Harwood, St. Maries, in her comments.

Hornbeck said in the committee hearing she had used the word for a long time and never found it derogatory.

Harwood compared the term to his previous use of the phrase, "Jew 'em down," which he claims was said with admiration and not spite.

"To Twila Hornbeck, even though you may have spoken this language for 60 years, it is still offensive," Slaney said. "To Rep. Harwood, I suggest he should refrain from using anti-Semitic language to justify his anti-Indian bigotry."

"This word is offensive. A lot of people up here don't seem to get that," said Lee Flinn of the Idaho Women's Network. "Make no mistake. This word is sexist and it is racist."

The advocates hope committee members who voted to hold the bill will recognize the growing support to remove the term.

"This question is not a political question," Dixey said. "It's a question of human dignity and respect."

*Graham Garner covers the Idaho Legislature and Boise for the Journal. He may be reached by phone at 239-3127 or (208) 343-1851 or e-mail at ggarner@journalnet.com.*