

NO. DAKOTA DR. REINSTATED; HHS INQUIRY MOOT

After a doctor blew the whistle on rampant child sexual abuse at the Spirit Lake Indian Reservation in North Dakota, he was punished by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for doing so. We immediately intervened by calling for an investigation. The next day the physician was reinstated.

The whistle-blower, Dr. Michael R. Tilus, director of behavioral health at the Health Care Center on the reservation, tried in vain for five years to get HHS to do something about this issue. After he blew the whistle, he was reprimanded, reassigned, barred from promotion, and threatened with the loss of his professional license.

We contacted three senatorial offices about this matter, noting that there was no outcry from those who have been quick to condemn the Catholic Church. Justice was swiftly delivered. Here is a list of the conditions:

- a 2-month-old baby girl died in July 2012 after tribal officials received warnings of child abuse
- last year a 9-year-old girl and her 6-year-old brother were found dead, raped and sodomized inside their father's home
- foster children have been sent to homes where registered sex offenders live
- the tribe hired a convicted felon as a child case worker
- a teenage girl who was sexually abused was placed in a tribal home where she was then raped
- a one-year-old child covered with 100 wood ticks was discovered by a social worker yet was not taken to a

hospital

- foster children have been illegally removed from homes and then assigned to new ones without conducting a safety check
- mandated background checks are not made by the tribe before placing foster children in new homes
- monthly visits by the tribe to check on children in foster care are not being made
- American Indians are 9 percent of North Dakota's population but Indian children constitute nearly 30 percent of the state's child abuse victims

After the doctor was reinstated, Bill Donohue sought to uncover what disciplinary measures, if any, were taken against the HHS official who called for his punishment. He wrote a letter to Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, director of the Indian Health Service, copying Senator John Barrasso; he is the vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Donohue said he wants to know whether Dr. Candelaria Martin, the official who initially sought to punish Dr. Tilus, has been reprimanded. We are awaiting a response.