

Reed dismissed from Crownpoint High principal job

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 25 March 2016 04:09



Racist rants got him the axe

Gallup McKinley County Schools Superintendent Frank Chiapetti said in a telephone interview March 23 that Crownpoint High School Principal J.D. Reed was “no longer employed” at Crownpoint High.

Chiapetti did not say Reed was fired or terminated and didn’t use the word resign. No further information was available as of Wednesday as far as what type of severance package, if any, Reed received.

Reed, a first-year employee who was hired from a previous job in California, was recorded

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making racist comments about Native Americans, even calling into question the sexuality of a couple of Navajo school board members. Reed is white and the people he targeted in the comments were Native American.

The recording eventually found its way on the Internet and onto the pages of Facebook and Twitter. It appears that he was recorded during a staff meeting of sorts and he was conversing with at least one unidentified man and woman.

“You can’t have gay Navajos around here ... half of the guys on the school board are gay and they all happen to be Navajo.” Reed says to an unidentified female in one segment during the recording. “I didn’t want to deal with the ‘inbred jeds’ down there,” Reed said to what sounds like the same female in another part of the conversation about the possibility of going to work in Ramah.

“I was disturbed by the comments when I heard them,” school board member Lynn Huenemann said. “They were wrongful and unprofessional.”

He said he was aware of the comments that were made by Reed the Friday before the Board of Education meeting in Church Rock March 21.

In another segment of the tape, Reed tells the unidentified woman about school board member Priscilla Manuelito, saying to those in the meeting that Manuelito, who is Navajo, believes that if you’re white, “unofficially you’re the wrong color. You’re not Navajo.”

He added, “If you’re not white, you have a political agenda.”

He called out Kevin Mitchell, Titus Nez, and Manuelito as being Navajo board members, then went on a tirade about a lengthy “Navajo Shoe Game” where Nez was present.

Manuelito fired back at Reed on her campaign Facebook page.

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“I was appalled by the discriminating comments made on a recording that has been shared on the internet,” she stated. “As a Board Members we entrust and believe that our Superintendent will hire leaders that are compassionate, trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring and have citizenship (respect authority). I was offended as a Native Woman, mother, leader, advocate for children by the prejudice remarks that were made! I am sad to say that this is not the only incident of racial or discriminating comments that have been made against our School Board Members.”

Chiapetti said nobody would be appointed as acting principal or as a replacement at Crownpoint High. That would not be dealt with until next week, he said. Gallup-McKinley schools are on spring break until March 28.

The School Board met at Catherine Miller Elementary School in Church Rock and those attending took the public comment portion of the meeting very seriously.

Sonlatsa Jim-Martin carried signs that read, “Equal Treatment” and Stop Discrimination.”

Charles Long, a former McKinley County Treasurer, ripped Chiapetti for bringing in outsiders like Reed – as opposed to hiring qualified principal candidates who already reside in the area.

“They aren’t teaching our kids to learn,” Long said.

Eleanor Rogers told the members of the school board that she worried that a prom date hasn’t been set, bearing in mind that there are two months of school left. About the Reed matter, Rogers quipped that should the board end up looking for a Native American to fill Reed’s job that she “has a master’s degree and would be interested.”

Chiapetti said on the whole, the school district found out about the posted recording at some point Friday. He said Reed was immediately placed on administrative leave pending further investigation of the matter. That resulted in Reed’s release just days later.

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“The comments were unacceptable,” Chiapetti said.

To listen to the full audio, visit: <https://soundcloud.com/user-884401674>

Tom Hartsock and Babette Herrmann contributed to this report.

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Sun Correspondent