More than a year after Lime Village tribal officials alerted authorities to the alleged embezzlement of $43,000, law enforcement and federal officials have yet to investigate the case.

The Lime Village Tribal Council has charged two former leaders with embezzling the money in dozens of checks written to pay for personal expenses such as credit card bills and airfare. Former tribal president Joe Bobby and his wife, former tribal administrator Anna Bobby, have not complied with a request to pay the money back to the tribe.

While not familiar with the specifics of the Lime Village case, Bureau of Indian Affairs regional director Niles Cesar confirmed that his agency is responsible for investigating allegations of misused BIA money.

“It’s us. The misappropriation of federal funds would fall under us,” he said. “We have investigators going on right now.”

But the Lime Village allegations remain unexamined, and senior agency officials said they hadn’t heard of the complaints. The Tundra Drums originally reported on March 6 that the case remained in limbo.

After learning of the allegations, a BIA superintendent named Gene Virden said his office would look at the case.

“I guess we better take a look at it,” Virden said.

Contacted later, a BIA grants manager responsible for the Lime Village grant, Dolores Ayote, said she is aware of the situation.

In a conference call, Ayote told a supervisor BIA has yet to address Lime Village case.

The Beat of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta

Vol. 36, No. 6 • Bethel, Alaska • www.thetundradrums.com • $1.00 • April 17, 2008

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Kuskokwim Campus will offer a summer ethnobotany field course from Nash Harbor on Nunivak Island. The course is part of a new program under development at the campus.

Kuskokwim campus offers summer field course

DUSTIN SOLBERG
solberg@alaskanewspapers.com

A new summer college offering in ethnobotany begins this summer in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

The summer field course at Nash Harbor on Nunivak Island is part of a new ethnobotany initiative at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Kuskokwim Campus in Bethel.

UAF botanist Rose Meier, who’s leading the program’s development, said teaching science through the discipline of ethnobotany is an approach approved by a board of advisors from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

“The Bethel campus said we would like something in ethnobotany because that’s something that’s very important to our communities,” she said.

As an interdisciplinary field, ethnobotany draws on botany and anthropology.

The summer course is taught by two instructors, including a grad student and the recently hired Kevin Jenugan, a Ph.D. ethnobotanist who recently completed studies at the University of Georgia and has conducted research in the tropics of South America.

Local elders are also expected to assist.

The July 7-25 field course is not the first offering of the budding program. Last fall, a distance-delivered seminar class attracted 19 students.

Another 200-level course, ethical wildcrafting, is offered at the Kuskokwim Campus.

The summer ethnobotany course is designed for 12 students, and tuition and transportation for those selected among the applicants for the course will be paid with a federal grant.

“We have money right now to jump-start this program, so it’s a sweet deal for the students,” she said.

The members of the eight-person advisory council are Ann Garzabaki, ethnobotanist working with Fort McKay Gwich’in; Craig Gerlich, UAF anthropologist working on Alaska food systems; Pat Holloway, director, Georgeson Botanical Gardens; Steff Jickett-Bond, herbarium curator, UA Museum; Mary Pete, Kuskokwim Campus director; Betty Rogers, St. Paul Island science teacher; Gloria Simoes, Bethel entrepreneur; and Charles Walsh, Alaska Herb Tea Co.

Summer ethnobotany set for Nunivak Island

DUSTIN SOLBERG
solberg@alaskanewspapers.com

Young veterans bolster American Legion membership

Bethel VFW still searching for new members

DUSTIN SOLBERG
solberg@alaskanewspapers.com

Even as veterans’ organizations have lost members nationally, a fledgling post in Bethel is growing so quickly that it leads the statewide organization in new members for 2008. Bethel’s George H. Holman Jr. American Legion Post 10 has grown to 58 members since it resurrected the long-dead organization 3-1/2 years ago.

The post’s commander, Sam Shields, says he understands the national veterans’ organization may seem outdated to today’s 20-something veterans. The ranks of the organization’s veteran members are still comprised mostly of veterans who reached through boot camp before many Persian Gulf era veterans were even born.

Yet Bethel’s American Legion post has plans for teleconference meetings for its far-flung Delta membership, initiated a banquet for returning soldiers and developed a new veteran’s cemetery.

“We’re veterans helping veterans. We need to seek those soldiers out,” said Shields, a retired boot camp drill sergeant. “You have to let them in whether you like their music or not. They’re veterans.”

The Bethel American Legion post meets once a month in a conference room in the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge headquarters, and fewer than a dozen attend its monthly meetings. But the group proceeds with its plans for the gaming license that will allow it to enter Bethel’s competitive nonprofit rippies market. It hopes to soon have a home of its own, in a rented room at the city-owned Log Cabin.

Yet as Bethel’s American Legion grows, the local Veterans of Foreign Wars seems to be succumbing to the same forces that have posts nationwide desperate for new members.

American Legion draws its members from veterans who served in wartime, and Veterans of Foreign Wars members have served in a war zone. The VFW operates a club in Bethel with widescreen television, pool tables, a sauna and a jukebox with songs from an earlier era.

Bethel VFW post commander Buck Bukowski said these long-time perks don’t attract young veterans anymore — the post has just two or three recent sign-ons. Both organizations still help veterans navigate the sometimes byzantine bureaucracies designed to help them.

Like any number of clubs and fraternal organizations, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is losing membership. He blames this on the glaring differences between generations of veterans.

“It’s another generation. It’s not going to hang around the VFW for the weekend. It’s a space-age and computer generation, where, in the older days, ‘Let’s go down to the VFW for an evening. It’s just more difficult to get the young crowd in. The young crowd wants to do young crowd stuff,’ he said.

Yet while many VFW posts operate taverns that become social hubs, that’s not an option in damp Bethel, where alcohol is not sold legally.

“We don’t even have that to entice them in,” he said.

Many of the region’s veterans live outside of Bethel, in five dozen villages spread across this vast stretch of Southwest Alaska.

“It’s pretty tough to offer benefits to somebody that lives 150 miles from the nearest VFW post,” he said.

Bethel, in five dozen villages spread across this vast stretch of Southwest Alaska.

“We don’t even have that to entice them in,” he said.

Many of the region’s veterans live outside of Bethel, in five dozen villages spread across this vast stretch of Southwest Alaska.

“It’s pretty tough to offer benefits to somebody that lives 150 miles from the nearest VFW post,” he said.

Many of the region’s veterans live outside of Bethel, in five dozen villages spread across this vast stretch of Southwest Alaska.

“It’s pretty tough to offer benefits to somebody that lives 150 miles from the nearest VFW post,” he said.

Many of the region’s veterans live outside of Bethel, in five dozen villages spread across this vast stretch of Southwest Alaska.

“It’s pretty tough to offer benefits to somebody that lives 150 miles from the nearest VFW post,” he said.

Many of the region’s veterans live outside of Bethel, in five dozen villages spread across this vast stretch of Southwest Alaska.