



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**Wednesday, April 12, 2006**  
**PRESS CONTACT:**  
**Stella Richardson (415) 621-2493**

## **ACLU Seeks Information about Alleged Racial Harassment of Native American Children in Small Rural Town**

### **Public Records Act Request filed with Bishop Elementary School District and Police**

**BISHOP** - The ACLU of Northern California and California Indian Legal Services (CILS) are seeking information about alleged police harassment and unfair school disciplining of Native American children in the small eastern town of Bishop, California. Bishop, with a population of approximately 5000, is home to nearly 1600 members of the Bishop Paiute Tribe.

For several months, the ACLU and CILS have been investigating allegations of police abuse and intimidation of Native American children, some as young as 12, and harsh school disciplining of Native American students. Of particular concern is that so many local resources are being focused against Native American youth, when far more serious problems exist in Bishop. Only last year, the KKK made threats to the local Native American community of killing and raping Native American girls. The FBI was called in, and is conducting an ongoing investigation of the threats against the Bishop Paiute Tribe.

“We have been receiving reports of racial harassment and out-of-control school disciplining of Native American children in Bishop for several months now,” said Delia Sharpe, advocate with California Indian Legal Services. “We want to get to the bottom of this, and that is why we filed the Public Records Act requests with the Bishop Union Elementary School District and the Bishop Police Department. We hope they will cooperate.”

Police have repeatedly detained, harassed, and threatened young Native Americans. “We have received reports of the authorities targeting a Native American boy in the eighth grade for a violation of the school’s dress code, leading to his arrest and injuries after being thrown down on the ground by police,” said Jory Steele, attorney with the ACLU of Northern California. “We are talking about 12- and 13-year-old children who are being repeatedly threatened by the local police. These are kids are being treated like criminals simply because of their race. We believe there is something gravely wrong in Bishop.”

The ACLU and CILS are seeking information about policies and procedures related to the student’s interactions with the police, documents referring to incidents in which the students were questioned, photographed, searched, cited/ticketed, arrested, or subject to use of force by the police.

The Bishop School District and the Bishop Police have ten days to respond. The PRA requests were filed on April 11.

**For copies of the requests, visit [www.aclunc.org](http://www.aclunc.org)  
And for more information visit [www.calindian.org](http://www.calindian.org)**

###