

## **Bear Butte Land Trust Fund Started**

by Charmaine White Face After years of concern, a Bear Butte Land Trust Fund was opened at Wells Fargo Bank by a volunteer group, Defenders of the Black Hills, Inc.

Three years ago, the idea for a land trust fund was brought to the organization at one of their regular meetings. The idea was triggered by the encroaching development upon the sacred mountain, Bear Butte. People from more than 60 Native American Tribes from the North American continent travel to Bear Butte on a yearly basis to conduct prayer ceremonies. The encroaching development is begin to disturb the peace and quiet that is necessary for the ceremonies.

A land trust fund was seen as the only permanent solution to stopping the selling of land surrounding the small sacred mountain. The organization was able to stop the building of an outdoor shooting range that was planned for four miles north of the Butte. The businessmen planning the venture had illegally received federal funds slated for use by low and middle-income people which was uncovered in a lawsuit filed by Defenders and seven Native American tribes. But now, a private operator is planning on building a biker bar and outdoor concert arena just one and a half miles from the base of the mountain.

Since many people want to help protect the land surrounding Bear Butte, the organization decided that opening a land trust fund would allow everyone the opportunity to do fund raising events and contribute to the fund.

Defenders plan on keeping any land that they are able to purchase in a natural state to insure the sacredness of Bear Butte is not disturbed.

The organization recently received their designation as a tax-exempt non-profit organization capable of receiving gifts and donations. They work on environmental and sacred site issues in the Midwest with no paid staff.

Donations to the Bear Butte Land Trust Fund may be sent to Defenders of the Black Hills Inc., Bear Butte Land Trust Fund, Wells Fargo Bank, 825 St. Joseph St., Rapid City, SD 57701. Bank transfers are also available by contacting any Wells Fargo Bank.

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