

# Long-Time Pine Ridge Reservation Pediatrician Investigated for Child Sexual Abuse

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12/8/2016

## Hospital Staffers Say Federal Administrators Ignored Accusations and Evidence Against Dr. Stanley Patrick Weber for Years

*(Author's Note: Because of the sensitive nature of the case and fear of workplace reprisals, many sources insisted upon anonymity. This article was fact-checked by an experienced, third-party fact checker who spoke with sources and confirmed information with multiple people whenever possible. Investigative reporter [Laura Brickman](#) contributed reporting to this story.)*

### Pine Ridge Indian Health Services Hospital

The Oglala Sioux Tribe of Pine Ridge, South Dakota, has referred an investigation into possible child sexual assault committed by a long-time Indian Health Service (IHS) doctor to federal law enforcement agencies, according to the tribe's attorney general, Tatewin Means.

The referral comes after more than a decade of accusations and complaints to both hospital administrators and federal investigators about the doctor, Stanley Patrick Weber, the former acting clinical director of IHS's Pine

Ridge Hospital. The accusations were well known in the community, with many parents refusing to let Weber see their sons or demanding to be in the exam room with the doctor.

The investigation is part of what many say is a pattern of physical and sexual abuse by hospital employees in Pine Ridge and administrative neglect and cover-ups by the federally-run IHS, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Pine Ridge is the largest reservation in IHS's Great Plains Region. A 2010 Senate investigation found the region to be in a "[chronic state of crisis](#)" that endangered patients. Pine Ridge was one of three area hospitals recently forced to outsource emergency room functions to a staffing company amid threats of losing Medicare and Medicaid funding for dangerous deficiencies, including one ER—on the nearby Rosebud Reservation—where staff [hand-washed surgical instruments](#) for 6 months after a sanitizer broke. People born in Pine Ridge have some of the lowest life expectancies in the world—around [50 years on average](#), about [10 years less than Haitians](#), who have the shortest lives in the Western Hemisphere.

Because Dr. Weber is not Native American, tribal prosecutors are unable to bring charges against him, said tribal attorney general Means, and the tribe must rely on federal partners to take the case to court.



Tribal Attorney General Tatewin Means, shown here being sworn in as deputy State's Attorney for Oglala Lakota County, South Dakota, in 2015

"When I was first appointed as attorney general [in 2012], a community member came to me with this issue and asked for me to look into it," said Means. "My initial investigation was brief because I did consult with federal partners, and it seemed like it had been dismissed, that there was nothing to the allegations, based on what those federal partners said."

But Means let a prosecutor on her staff, Elaine Yellow Horse, continue the investigation. Sexual assault is [a serious problem](#) on the Pine Ridge Reservation, stemming from a legacy of federally-funded boarding and day schools where physical and sexual abuse of Native students by non-Native teachers and staffers was common. The history of abuse is believed to be a major contributor to Pine Ridge's extremely high suicide rates, but IHS staffers say the institution's culture of silence—and firings and reprisals for speaking out—make it very difficult to share information with investigators or even to follow mandatory reporter laws that require hospital staffers to report possible child abuse to tribal law enforcement.



Yellow Horse used her deep connections in the community though, says attorney general Means, pursuing the case for months and steadily accumulating more information indicating a pattern of sexual abuse and manipulation by Dr. Weber. She eventually identified and located a possible victim of Dr. Weber's in the spring of 2015, and Means' office quickly referred the case to federal investigators and the US Attorney's office.

After that, the case seemed to go dormant for a year until this past spring, when Dr. Weber unexpectedly resigned from his job. After Weber's resignation (and after repeated inquiries and a Freedom of Information Act filing from me and my research assistant, reporter Laura Brickman, in July of 2016) federal investigators renewed their inquiries with hospital staffers and community members, though it is unclear if the investigation will ever lead to any charges.

The US Attorney's office of South Dakota declined to comment on the case. The FBI referred all questions to the Office of the Inspector General, which handles investigations for the Department of Health and Human Services, which also declined to comment.

### **A History of Accusations and Administrative Inaction**

A long-time pediatrician at the Pine Ridge IHS hospital, Dr. Stanley Patrick Weber spent much of his career dogged by repeated accusations and complaints of inappropriate behavior with young male patients, including at least one suspension and internal IHS investigation that occurred in 2009, according to numerous hospital staffers.

The suspension and investigation followed a severe assault that Dr. Weber suffered at his home on hospital grounds. According to tribal law enforcement officials who handled the case, Weber identified one of his alleged assailants and they arrested the young man, who told investigators that the altercation stemmed from a sexual relationship with the doctor. After that, tribal investigators say, the case was hushed up and no charges were ever filed (according to arrest records, the alleged assailant/possible victim was arrested for possession of alcohol, which is illegal on the Pine Ridge Reservation, but not charged with any further crimes). A recent records check found that any files related to the case were lost or destroyed. After the assault, numerous IHS employees say, IHS did suspend and investigate Weber, but he was quickly reinstated and actually promoted to acting clinical director of the hospital. A year later he [let his medical license expire](#), but continued to see "special patients" as one hospital staffer put it, who came to the hospital and requested to see him, and frequently had young boys visiting his house at all hours—to do odd jobs and work in his garden, he told neighbors.

In response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with IHS this July though, IHS itself claims that there were never any suspension, complaints, or charges of misconduct against Weber. But this contradicts statements from numerous staffers. One pediatric colleague of Dr. Weber's gave hospital administrators documentation showing Weber was ordering a very large number of STD tests for young male patients, but very few for females. Another hospital staffer complained of Weber acting inappropriately with young male patients, bringing in video game systems and staying up late at night to play with them alone in their hospital rooms, even getting into the bed next to them.

Hospital staffers say that the Weber case is symptomatic of a culture of physical and sexual abuse committed by some doctors, administrative tolerance of that abuse, and retribution against whistleblowers. Shortly after Weber was taken off suspension and promoted to acting clinical director, the pediatric colleague who had raised suspicions with hospital administrators was transferred out of Pine Ridge to another state, a move many staffers saw as retribution for rocking the boat.

There have also been accusations that the Great Plains office has a tendency to "lose" the paperwork related to staff and patient complaints, to not report disciplinary measures to medical licensing boards, to not follow mandatory reporter laws, and to shuffle doctors from one hospital to another when accusations are leveled against them.

IHS's response to a July, 2016 FOIA request lends some credence to the claims. The FOIA request asked for a full list of complaints against, or instances of misconduct by, eight current and former IHS employees. Along with Dr. Weber, that list included:

— Ronald Dean Keats. An administrator in the IHS's Great Plains regional headquarters in Aberdeen, South Dakota, who oversaw Dr. Weber and the Pine Ridge hospital, Keats was [sentenced to prison in 2012](#) after he left a CD containing child pornography in the elevator of the federal office building where he worked. Keats was Weber's administrative liaison officer when Weber was suspended, investigated and promoted. Keats has since been released, and is now [a registered sex offender](#) living in Aberdeen.

— Dr. Frankie Delgado Canas. After repeated accusations of sexual harassment and attempted assault in Pine Ridge, Canas was transferred to the IHS hospital on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, a few hours away from Pine Ridge. While working there in 2011, Canas was indicted by the Department of Justice for multiple counts of abusive sexual contact committed against two nurses. He eventually plead the case down to a charge of disorderly conduct, maintained his medical license, and is [currently a physician](#) with the VA in Rapid City, South Dakota.

— Dr. Muhammad K. Ahsan. In 2005, [Ahsan was sued](#), and eventually settled out of court, for sexual assault against a patient he saw at the Pine Ridge IHS hospital.

Yet in its response to the FOIA, IHS claimed that none of these doctors had complaints or disciplinary actions against them, writing that "The Great Plains Area Human Resources office searched their files and no records responsive to your request exist." When asked how people who had plead guilty to workplace crimes in federal court could have no complaints or internal disciplinary records, IHS did not respond.

Any victims or those with any information concerning the above doctors, or any other abusive behavior occurring at IHS, are encouraged to contact the author at (508)333-5763, [on Facebook](#), or at [joe.flood@gmail.com](mailto:joe.flood@gmail.com). All sources will remain confidential.

Tatewin Means and the Oglala Sioux Tribe's Attorney General's office can be reached at (605)867-2095.