

N. Nevada Indians talk about attack by skinheads

By Valerie Taliman, Indian Country

Johnny and Lisa Bonta, a Native family from the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, became the latest victims of a hate crime on May 24 when they were attacked at a gas station along I-80 in Fernley, a border town between the Fallon and Pyramid Lake Indian reservations.

“I was pumping gas at Quick Stop on our way to Reno to look for another job when these skinheads in a blue car drove by real slow and checked us out. The driver jumped out with a baseball bat, and I asked them ‘why you holding a bat?’” said Bonta. “He said ‘let’s do this’ and tried to pick a fight. I don’t know how to explain what happened—we didn’t do anything to them.”

Bonta, a Paiute member of the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, tried to avoid the confrontation by telling them he didn’t want to fight. He got back in the car, with his son-in-law Shane Murray at the wheel, and they quickly drove away with the carload of skinheads in close pursuit.

As they approached the freeway ramp, they were cut off as the blue car swerved in front of them, then slammed on the brakes, causing Murray to crash into it. Murray said he recognized one of the attackers as Jacob Cassell, a former classmate and son of retired Lyon County Sheriff officer Jim Cassell.

“They all jumped out of the car with baseball bats, knives and a crowbar, and we knew they were going to hurt us,” said Lisa Bonta, in an interview from Washoe Medical Center, where she was in treatment for seizures she suffers.

Read the whole story