

City council  
opposes  
Indian tribe’s  
casino plans

By Jonathan Braden  
Omaha World Herald

OMAHA, Neb. — Omaha City Councilman Franklin Thompson spoke of his past Tuesday when trying to amass support against an Indian tribe’s plan to build a casino near downtown Omaha in Carter Lake.

“Gambling and alcohol destroyed my family,” said Thompson, who sponsored the resolution. “I’m 54 years old, and I’m still recuperating from it.”

After a short public hearing and brief council discussion, the council unanimously approved the resolution supporting Nebraska’s legal efforts to block the casino.

Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Iowa challenging the National Indian Gaming Commission’s ruling to allow the Ponca Tribe to pursue casino gambling on five acres in Carter Lake.

“I’m in agreement with the governor that Omaha gets no benefit,” Thompson said before the meeting, referring to Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, who opposes the casino plan.

Because the only entrance into Carter Lake is through Omaha, the City of Omaha would pay for the roads to the casino, Thompson said, but wouldn’t receive any payment from the casino. He said he also worries about the negative effects the casino could have on Omaha.

During the public hearing, Pat Loontjer, executive director of Gambling with the Good Life, noted that Nebraska citizens have voted against expanded gambling three times in the past.

“We feel it’s going to have an extremely detrimental effect,” she said.

Loontjer has said the state concluded in 2003 that problem gamblers in Nebraska represent a minimum social cost of \$212 million.

Ben Nauslar, a sociology student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said at the hearing that he believes gambling’s economic benefits far outweigh any harmful impact.

Tribe representatives were not present at Tuesday’s hearing.

Mayor Mike Fahey also opposes the casino, said the mayor’s spokesman, Joe Gudenrath.

Regardless of opposition from Nebraska, the Ponca Tribe still needs to agree on a compact with the State of Iowa to operate a gambling facility. In March, the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission decided not to accept any new casino licenses.

Carter Lake Mayor Russell Kramer could not be reached for comment.

Tribal council bans vote on nickname

Joseph Marks  
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — The Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council placed a moratorium early in May on any reservationwide referendum to gauge tribal support for UND’s Fighting Sioux nickname.

In a resolution, the council voted 7-5 to preclude any possibility of the school retaining its long controversial sports nickname, which some consider a symbol of pride and excellence on the athletic field and others call a simplistic stereotype that breeds racism and even violence.

A legal settlement the NCAA reached with UND in October requires the university to retire its nickname and the school’s Indian head logo within three years unless it can win support from the tribal councils at both Standing Rock and Spirit Lake, North Dakota’s other major Sioux reservation.

The Standing Rock council voted on a previous resolution a few weeks after the settlement was signed to reaffirm its longstanding opposition to the nickname. The council has held firm to that position since, including during a meeting between Tribal Chairman Ron His Horse Is Thunder and North Dakota University System Chancellor William Goetz.

According to the May resolution, however, several tribe members have been pushing for a referendum vote that could overturn the council’s decision, either by legal means or through political pressure.

The resolution seemingly would erase that possibility by denying funding to hold a referendum. According to language in the resolution, the tribe’s constitution would not allow a referendum to be funded by outside groups.

The resolution recites a familiar laundry list of reasons for tribal disapproval of the nickname, including the

perpetuation of Indian stereotypes and the disrespectful actions of some fans at UND sporting events.

The resolution spends by far the most ink, however, on a November party by UND’s Gamma Phi Beta sorority during which female students wore Indian maiden dresses and feather headdresses and some male students dressed only in makeshift loincloths with red paint slathered across their faces and bodies.

“The actions of those at (the) Gamma Phi Beta Sorority part(y) last November appear to be based on fundamental ignorance at best and out-and-out racism at worst,” the resolution states.

His Horse Is Thunder and tribal council member Jesse Taken Alive, who has been a leader on the nickname issue and who signed the May 8 resolution, did not return repeated Herald phone calls during the past week. A spokeswoman for Chancellor Goetz said he’s aware of discussion about such a resolu-

tion but said he would not comment because he hasn’t seen it in writing yet.

Several members of Spirit Lake’s Tribal Council spoke in support of a reservation-wide nickname referendum several months ago. But the council has not taken any action to organize a referendum so far and discussions about one have generally died down, according to a council member who asked not to be named because the member did not want to draw negative attention to the tribe.

Why a  
referendum?

The defining characteristic of the nickname debate now is a kind of amorphous uncertainty about the nickname’s future that’s persisted despite a series of seemingly final acts: the NCAA settlement in October that required tribal council approval despite the Standing Rock’s strong and stated opposition; the reaffirmation of that opposition in

November; and a statement by Goetz in February that a referendum vote would be “of little or no value” because it would not bring a final resolution to the nickname issue.

Yet the likelihood that a referendum vote supporting the nickname would not halt its retirement has evidently not dissuaded some tribe members from pushing for a referendum nor halted the council from taking action to block them.

Sam Dupris, a member of South Dakota’s Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, has spent roughly the past year advocating for the nickname at Standing Rock as a paid envoy of the Ralph Engelstad Arena.

Dupris said Tuesday he believes a referendum will take place despite the council resolution. New council members or the four members absent during the May vote could overturn the resolution, he said. Also, council members could simply bow to popular will, he said.

Crazy Horse Memorial turns 60

*Project has no end in sight*

CRAZY HORSE, S.D. (AP) — Sixty years after the first blast signaled work had begun on the world’s largest mountain carving, the project is far from finished.

The carved face of Crazy Horse has been completed and a welcome center and museum are open, but the carving of the Lakota warrior’s body, his horse, and a planned university and medical training center for American Indian students are still years away.

Ruth Ziolkowski, widow of sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski, who started the memorial on June 3, 1948, won’t predict when it will be done.

“To picture it 60 years from now, I’d like to think we had the first building, at least, for the university so that we’d actually have some students here,” she said.

“I’d like to see the museum enlarged and over at the foot of the mountain where it needs to be. I’d like to see the horse’s head finished and polishing Crazy Horse’s body and doing all of the finish work on it.”

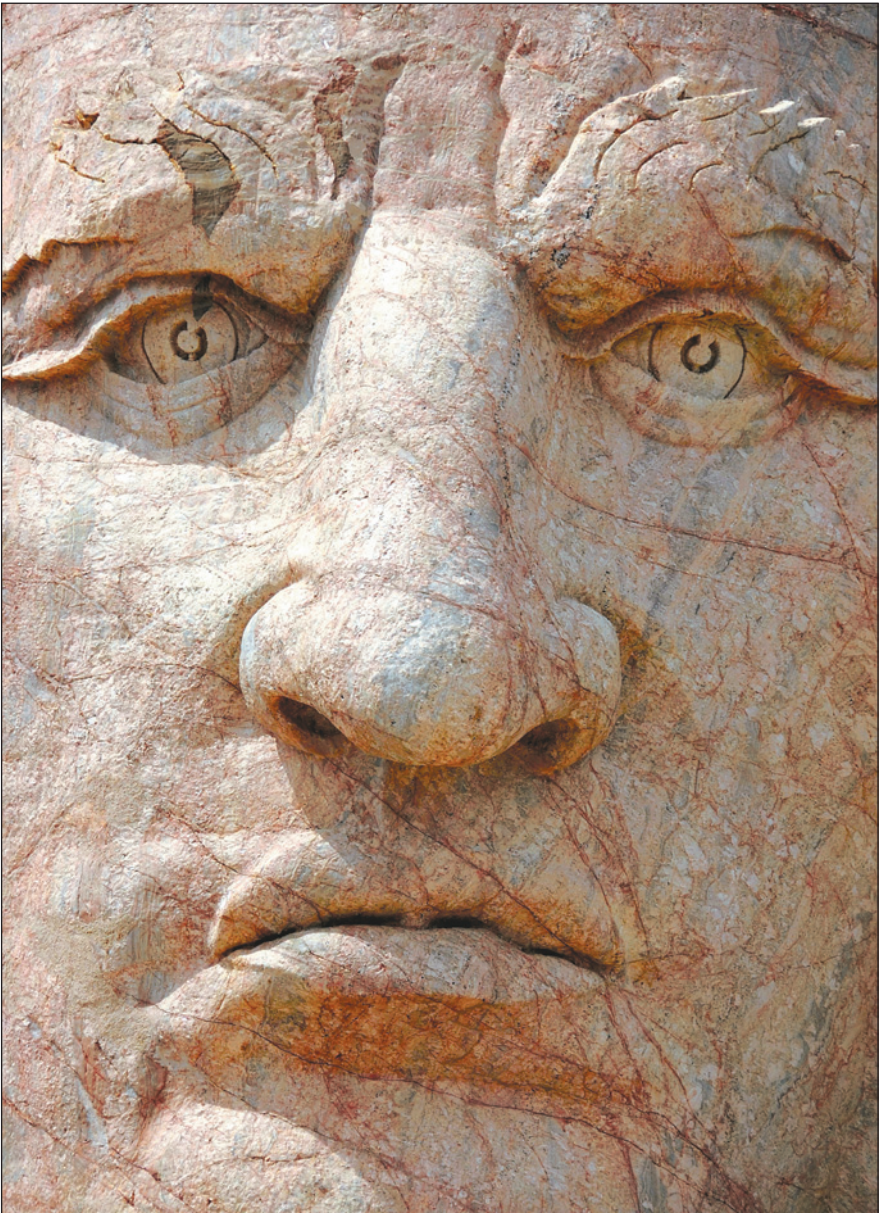
Ziolkowski took over the project when her husband died in 1982 and shifted the focus to Crazy Horse’s face, which was dedicated 10 years ago at the 50th anniversary and has helped draw more attention to the project. The sculpted head stands 87 feet high.

The invitation to undertake the carving came from Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear, who was prompted by Gutzon Borglum’s carving of nearby Mount Rushmore to seek a memorial for Indian heroes.

Crazy Horse was a famed Lakota warrior and leader who played a key role in the 1876 defeat of the U.S. Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana. He died a year later after being stabbed in Nebraska.

“What Mount Rushmore represents to Americans is what Crazy Horse represents to American Indians,” said Robert Cook, a cultural specialist at the memorial and president-elect of the National Indian Education Association.

“Crazy Horse represents the values of American Indian tribes — of bravery, respect generosity, wisdom.



Associated Press

The mountain carving at Crazy Horse, S.D., on Wednesday, shows the image of the Lakota warrior for whom the project is named.

So by being on this memorial he represents some of those struggles that he fought for a long time ago, of protecting our land base and our treaties. We’re still in those fights today.”

Seven of the Ziolkowski’s 10 children and several grandchildren work

at the memorial, which draws more than a million visitors to the southern Black Hills annually. It brings in millions of dollars every year, mainly through admission fees. The family has held to Korczak’s admonition to refuse government help and instead

rely on private enterprise.

The foundation started its first national fund drive in 2006 to raise more than \$26 million toward the mountain carving’s completion and expand cultural and educational programs at the memorial. In December, billionaire T. Denny Sanford, a Sioux Falls banker, pledged a \$5 million matching grant, the largest ever. And in April, the memorial’s scholarship fund topped \$1 million in contributions to native students.

To prepare for the first explosion in 1948, Korczak Ziolkowski used hand tools to drill the holes. Now, a team of workers uses high-tech, expensive equipment to create the larger-than-life art work.

Rich Barry, one of the engineers, said that just as the project has evolved over 60 years, so have the challenges.

“Imagine starting back in 1948 going up there with a hand drill and a hammer and starting to blast away on the mountain and finding anybody believing that you’re going to even do it,” he said.

“Now all of a sudden people have really come around. It’s very rare that someone says, ‘Aw, it’s never going to happen.’”

Now the biggest challenges lie in figuring out how to carve the other parts of the sculpture in relation to the face and contending with the natural fractures in the rock — especially on the outstretched arm, Barry said.

“We will do much like orthopedic surgeons do. We’ll pin blocks together to hold them together to meet the artistic intent,” he said.

Two blasts on the mountain will mark Tuesday’s 60th anniversary. The first will duplicate the initial 10 tons of rock blasted from the carving on June 3, 1948, and the second will be larger.

“We’re going to recreate that blast and also do one typical of the size we do now so that you can see the ‘then’ and the ‘now,’” Ruth Ziolkowski said.

On the Net:

Crazy Horse Memorial:  
<http://www.crazyhorse.org>

Union to retreat at Foxwoods

By Erica Jacobson  
Norwich Bulletin

NORWICH, Conn. — The motivation behind Monday’s decision to pull a union election request from Foxwoods Resort Casino slot technicians remains unclear, and whether another request will be made is up for debate as well.

“In real life, in actual life, they rarely come back,” John Cotter, a spokesman for the Hartford offices of the National Labor Relations Board, said of withdrawn election petitions. “The fact is very few are refiled.”

But Mark E. Sullivan, who runs the University of Connecticut’s Labor Education Center, said the yanked request to organize through the United Auto Workers

doesn’t mean the group has given up.

“Lots of times it’s just the idea that they’ve got to get their ducks in a row,” he said.

Neither the UAW nor the Mashantucket Pequot, owners of Foxwoods, would comment Tuesday about the move.

The initial request to represent the casino’s 80 to 120 slot technicians came in early April from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 99, out of Cranston, R.I. The UAW then filed a petition to organize the same group about a week later.

The issue was resolved and the UAW was granted the right to represent the slot technicians for the next two years. The UAW had shep-

herded last year’s organizing efforts by Foxwoods’ table game dealers, which led to a late November vote at which dealers voted 1,289-852 in favor of joining the union.

That vote is still tied up in appeals.

May was a rough month for union votes at Foxwoods. At the beginning of the month, the casino’s physical plant workers voted against organizing. Last week, about 40 race book workers turned down the chance to organize under the UAW. Cotter said many factors, including employee turnover, could lead to the slot technicians petition being pulled.

“It’s a rational thing for them to do,” he said. “If they don’t think they’re likely to win, they withdraw.”

Tribal voters flex political muscle

By Andrea J. Cook  
Rapid City Journal

PINE RIDGE, S.D. — Election day was a contrast of extremes throughout the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Supporters of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama staged a battle of the banners at the intersection of U.S. Highway 18, S.D. Highway 407 and B.I.A. Highway 32 in Pine Ridge, asking drivers on their way to the polls to “honk” for their favored candidate.

Obama’s camp won the sign size contest with a 32-foot banner that a campaign worker brought from California, but by late afternoon, Clinton’s camp had more loyal supporters.

Reservation residents were aware of the historical significance of the down-to-the-wire race between Clinton and Obama, said Kevin Killer of

Pine Ridge, a District 27 Democratic candidate for state representative and an Obama supporter.

By 3 p.m. Tuesday, more than 300 people had voted in Pine Ridge, an indication that voter turnout would be good, Killer said.

Democrats in Shannon County outnumber Republicans almost 9 to 1, a point that neither candidate overlooked.

Killer, 28, believes that the significance of having a national Democratic campaign unfold on the reservation is good for youths there. He said many of them know for the first time that “they can make a difference.”

“The young people are really stepping up to the plate,” agreed Francis Pumpkin Seed, from Hillary’s corner. Pumpkin Seed, of Pine Ridge, said the election had turned into a “family event.”

“We’ve had a mixture of people from young to old here today,” he said.

About 15 miles to the north, in Oglala, a steady stream of voters wandered into the Brother Denny Center to cast their ballots.

A wake next door at Our Lady of the Sioux Catholic Church probably contributed to the steady stream of voters, according to Kim Bad Heart Bull, superintendent of the Oglala election board.

By late afternoon, more than 60 of the 1,000 registered voters had voted, which was a “good turnout,” she said.

It may have helped that the Obama campaign was offering free rides to the polls. Election worker Bill Mendoza drove one van roaming between Oglala and Pine Ridge to pick up voters. He started the day at 6 a.m. distributing flyers in the area.