

Carefree to host Indian Town Hall

By Stan Bindell
For The Independent

PHOENIX — The 28th annual Arizona Indian Town Hall with the theme of “Protecting Land and Water: Quality, Quantity, Culture and Rights” will be held July 14-16 at the Carefree Resort in Carefree. The event is sponsored by the Arizona Commission on Indian Affairs and presented by the First Nations Development Institute.

Ken Poocha, executive director of ACIA, said with the incredible growth in Arizona that protecting land and water was chosen as this year’s Indian town hall topic as it is on the minds of many Arizona tribal leaders. A recent population projection study by the Maricopa Association of Governments determined that in 2005 Arizona’s population was six million. MAG estimates that by 2050 Arizona’s population will be 16 million.

Tribal leaders question how this continued growth will impact tribal communities. They also question whether this is an opportunity or a threat to the survival of Arizona’s tribes. They are thinking about what their response to this growth should be.

Poocha said this year’s Arizona Indian Town Hall will discuss these and other related issues during an intense two and one-half days forum. The discussions will include how the growth effects tribes, how tribes can be part of the planning process and use the protection of land and water in relation to the quality, quantity, rights and cultures.

The goal of this year’s town hall is to produce, based on participant input, a working policy document that can be used by tribes, local, state and federal governments as well as the community at large.

Poocha said the Arizona Indian Town Hall is meant to not only start a dialogue but to take action. Tribal leaders and community members will attend along with elected officials from the federal and state governments university professors and students, policy advisors, Indian youth, developers and the general public.

The mission of the ACIA is to develop practical solutions to state tribal issues. Previous town halls have brought together tribal, state and federal agencies along with the private sector to make recommendations on issues ranging from tourism and economic development to cultural preservation.

Sponsorships are available.
For more information, telephone 602-542-3123.

Mayor: Casino vote to come

By Molly Tippen
Journal Newspapers

ROMULUS, Mich. — Romulus officials reveled in the news that the House bill that would allow an Indian casino to open in Romulus likely will face a vote in June.

Mayor Alan Lambert said city officials met with U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D-Dearborn), who informed them that Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi will send the House bill onto the full House for a vote sometime in June.

For city leaders, the progress of the bill is good news, though obstacles to approval remain.

“I think the issue will be

getting it through the Senate, Lambert said. “But we feel it ultimately will be approved, and we can move forward.”

After a slew of bad news on the corporate front, the city is banking on the casino to bring in new revenue, and jobs, Lambert said.

“We’ve lost two manufacturers, and combined, about 700 people lost jobs,” he said. “I know for a fact that many of those people live in Romulus. The bottom line right now is that we badly need the jobs.”

Approval of the bill would settle a long-standing land claim by bands of the Chippewa Indians to build casinos in Port Huron and Romulus.

The process of building a casino in Romulus progressed earlier this year when the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee advanced a bill that would allow the land claim by the Indian tribe to build a casino on land not deemed a reservation.

A delegation of Romulus casino supporters testified about the economic development aspects of a casino Feb. 5 in front of the House Natural Resources Committee.

Several speakers, including Lambert, testified about the casinos as a spur for economic growth in Michigan. Supporters who back the plan include Dingell, who spoke at the hearing,

and several others who sent letters up support, including Sen. Carl Levin and Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

Officials from Detroit, including Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-Detroit), testified against the measure because they believe a casino 17 miles outside of the city will cut into the dedicated revenue stream Detroit currently received from three casinos.

A casino development would bring at least one 200-room hotel and an additional restaurant and service businesses to cater to gamblers and travelers on site at the Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

Estimates indicate such a project would bring about 3,000 jobs to Wayne County and would provide a dedicated revenue stream of \$4 to \$10 million annually.

The most important piece of the puzzle is job creation, Lambert said.

“We want to get started as soon as possible,” he said. “We need to get people back to work.”

Lambert said the city would fast-track the development through the planning commission as soon as the approval is secured, if the measure makes it through the Senate.

Voters approved the pursuit of a city casino after a special election in December 2003.

Top man on Sitka totem pole needs clothes

SITKA, Alaska (AP) — For nearly seven decades, a sad-eyed wooden lump of a man has been gazing out over Sitka Sound beset by the pelting rains and biting winds that whip in from the Pacific Ocean.

He’s the top man on a 40-foot totem pole, but his airy position may not be a sign of respect.

The figure of Alexander Baranov, an early 19th century governor of Russian America, appears to be naked. Historians aren’t sure why, but some believe his lofty perch is an example of the ‘shame’ poles that were carved to heap ridicule on their subjects.

Storyteller Bob Sam, a member of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, would like to see Baranov get his clothes back. He has been lobbying to replace the aging pole with a new one that’s more closely tied to the original intent: commemoration of the peace treaty that Baranov helped broker in 1805 after a battle between the Russians and the Tlingit Indians.

“The original idea of the pole was to make peace so that the clan that was involved in the battle could move on with their lives,” said Sam.

“And it’s cold up there,” he added.

Sitka was the base of operations for fur traders with the Russian-American Company of which Baranov was chief manager. The period was marked by bloody skirmishes among the Russians, the Tlingits and rival traders from Britain’s Hudson Bay Company.

The pole was commissioned by the U.S. Forest Service 135 years after a pivotal battle that ushered in the peace talks. Its carvings include the dagger-bearing Tlingit warrior K’alyaan, a Russian bear and double-headed eagle and clan symbols like the frog and the raven.

Documents uncovered by Bob Medinger of the Sitka Historical Society indicate that it was made at the request of local Tlingit leaders of Sitka’s Kiksadi clan as part of a public works program to ease unemployment.

But instead of being carved in Sitka, the pole was carved in nearby Wrangell, historic rivals of the Sitka Indians and a former base of operations for the Hudson Bay Company. It stirred protests from the moment it was unveiled.

In a letter dated March 1942, native leader Andrew P. Hope pleaded with the BIA’s Superintendent of Indian Affairs to remove the pole and erect in its place one that was carved in Sitka instead.

Hope wrote that the pole did not represent the true story of the peace treaty, noting that Baranov was placed at the top of the pole “naket, dishonoring the great man who was in charge at the time of war and peace (sic).”

“There were threats that this pole should not go up and, if it did there would be trouble, and it would be cut down,” said Medinger. “There were definitely some very hard feelings from the local leaders.”

Today, it’s hard to tell if Baranov is really in the buff; age and weather have peeled away the paint and softened contours. But researchers have examined the figure closely.

In a 2004 assessment of the pole’s condition, a National Park Service wood conservator used a crane to go eyeball to eyeball with the figure. He noted what looks like a loin cloth below the waist line but is actually a crudely carved wooden patch that appears to have been added once the pole arrived in Sitka.

“The patch is covering an area that could reveal the carving to be of a male figure,” wrote Ron Sheetz in a discrete reference to rumors that the original figure was anatomically correct.

Perhaps even more telling is the original design sketched by Tlingit carver George Benson of Sitka. It shows the bald round-headed figure with cuffs and a collar, while no such lines appear even in early photographs of the newly carved and painted pole. The surface of Baranov’s body is as smooth as a baby’s skin.

If it’s true, as anthropologists say, that totem poles can tell a story, this one is a twist-



Associated Press

In this photo provided by the Sitka Historical Society and Museum, a historic totem pole is shown from 1943, shortly after it was erected in Sitka, Alaska. The figure at the top of the pole is Alexander Baranov, an early 19th century governor of Russian America, and he appears to be naked. Historians aren’t sure why. Bob Sam, a member of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, is trying to get a new pole erected, one that would have a fully clothed Baranov.

ed tale.

The pole was a project of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a work program that was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal.’ It was launched during the Depression to put people to work.

In southeast Alaska, CCC jobs included the carving and repair of totem poles and the program is credited with breathing new life into a craft that was rapidly disappearing.

Though the pole’s designer Benson was a carver, he was also a craftsman and an

employee of the CCC.

And when it came time to do his own pole, he was already busy building a seawall for the park where the totem now stands. It seems no one else was available in Sitka, so the Forest Service sent the red cedar log to Wrangell, where the totem trade had flourished.

As a young boy, Dick Stokes, 83, used to watch his grandfather carve poles at the old mill site in downtown Wrangell. He said half a dozen men with carving knives and adzes would labor over a single pole, each working on a separate section.

They were paid a dollar plus room and board for a day’s work, said Stokes, good money when ten cents bought you a loaf of bread.

He recalls many of the poles, which were often replicas of older works. For example, they copied a shame pole called “Three Frog,” originally intended to cast ridicule on a man over an unpaid debt.

But Stokes doesn’t remember the Sitka pole, though he’s not surprised to hear about Baranov’s birthday suit.

“It sounds like something they would do,” he said with a chuckle.

Bob Sam won’t speculate why the Wrangell carvers would have changed Benson’s design, but he’s convinced they did.

Though controversy over the pole died down long ago, Sam revived the old stories when the community started discussing a memorial to honor the Tlingits. He believes a new pole would be a fitting memorial.

He’d like to see the old pole safely preserved but replaced with one that has a similar design. This time, however, Baranov would lose his top spot to K’alyaan, but get his clothes back.

“The local Tlingit community didn’t want that to happen to Baranov,” he said. “They wanted to make peace, but the Wrangell carver carved him naked and that was kind of a shameful thing to do.”

On the Net:
<http://www.sitkahistory.org/>

Judge denies separate trials for chief

By Roxana Hegeman

KANSAS (AP) — Malcolm Webber, the self-proclaimed chief of an unrecognized American Indian tribe, cannot have a separate trial from other tribal members in an alleged scam to defraud immigrants, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Wesley Brown ruled that Webber, also known as Grand Chief Thunderbird IV, has not shown a “real risk” that his defense will be prejudiced by a single trial.

Prosecutors contend the Kaweah Indian Nation defrauded legal and illegal immigrants across the nation by falsely claiming tribal membership would give them U.S. citizenship and would allow immigrants to obtain

other documents and benefits, including Social Security cards.

Attorney Kurt Kerns, who represents Webber, argued in court documents that Webber believed he was providing a legitimate method for illegal immigrants to become registered in the United States and enjoy a first step toward citizenship.

He wanted to separate the trials because Webber contends the bulk of the alleged fraud was committed by underlings in their efforts to make money while other defendants are arguing that they were duped by Webber.

Federal prosecutors last year charged 11 people in a 17-count indictment. Charges have since been dismissed against one defendant and another defendant has plead-

ed guilty to falsely claiming U.S. citizenship.

Webber and the remaining nine defendants are scheduled for trial Aug. 5.

The indictment charges Webber, 69, of Bel Aire, with four counts of harboring illegal immigrants, one count of possession of false documents with intent to defraud the United States, three counts of conspiracy with intent to defraud the United States, one count of mail fraud and one count of producing false identification documents.

Remaining defendants named in the indictment are Debra J. Flynn of Wichita; Chuck Flynn of Wichita; Jorge B. Villareal, a citizen of Mexico who lived in Bell Flower, Calif.; Eduvigis Del Carmen-Zamora of Wichita

and a native of El Salvador; Angel O. Zamora, a citizen of Guatemala; Britton A. Bergman of Wichita; Hector Nolasco Pena, a citizen of Honduras who lives in Oklahoma City; and Victor W. Orvellana, a citizen of Mexico who lives in Long Beach, Calif.

Jamie Cervantes, a citizen of Mexico, has pleaded guilty to submitting a Social Security application in which he falsely claimed to be a U.S. citizen. His sentencing is June 10.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs denied Webber’s request for federal recognition of his Kaweah Indian Nation in 1984. The agency said Webber was not an Indian and that his organization had no historical characteristics of an Indian tribe.

Comanche Nation official sentenced to prison

By Jay F. Marks
The Oklahoman

OKLAHOMA — Ray Anderson begged for mercy Wednesday, but a federal judge concluded the former Comanche Nation police chief’s punishment for embezzlement had to include some time in prison.

Anderson, 55, resigned from his post in March when he pleaded guilty to one count of embezzlement in federal court in Oklahoma City.

U.S. District Judge Robin Cauthron sentenced him to five months in prison and five months of home detention. Anderson also must pay more than \$50,000 in restitution to the tribe.

He apologized Wednesday for abusing the tribe’s trust in

him.

“I did wrong, and I’m sorry,” Anderson said. “I’ve never been in a situation like this before, and I don’t intend to be in this situation again.”

Attorney Ryland Rivas said Anderson was well regarded as police chief, but he made some mistakes — likely because he was never trained to handle his department’s finances.

Anderson was accused of setting up a bank account without the tribe’s approval in November 2004, according to court papers.

He deposited money given to the police department into the account, but spent the money on gambling, meals and gifts, prosecutors said. His actions cost the tribe more than \$50,000.