

Critic wins Puyallup Tribe vote

By Rob Carson
Tacoma News

TACOMA, Wash. — The quiet revolution within the Puyallup Tribe of Indians continues.

On Tuesday, a third member of Full Circle, a group critical of longtime tribal leaders, took a seat on the Puyallup Tribal Council, the ruling body of the 3,800-member tribe.

The victory of Full Circle President Nancy Shippentower-Games marked the third time in the past three years that a Full Circle officer has been elected to the seven-person council.

The tribal council oversees all business of the tribe, one of Pierce County’s largest employers.

It was not an easy victory.

Shippentower-Games, who has been one of the council’s most vocal critics, beat out longtime council member Sylvia Miller in tribal elections June 7 by a three-vote margin.

But Miller filed a formal protest, claiming that improper campaigning and other irregularities had tainted the vote.

The tribal council spent Thursday in closed session with members of the tribal elections committee and attorneys, evaluating the allegations.

Council members were unable to reach a conclusion last week and continued the proceedings Monday. At the end of the day, Shippentower-Games was declared the winner.

“They went through each one of the accusations and evaluated them,” said John Weymer, a tribal spokesman. “They found some irregularities, but nothing significant enough to make the results come out different. So they certified the election.”

The tribe did not make the list of complaints public. But tribal members said the list included allegations that some of the ballots had been improperly filled out, that some absentee ballots were placed in unofficial envelopes and that Full Circle members, including Shippentower-Games, “intimidated” voters from a campaign table set up closer to the polls than the 100 feet allowed in the tribe’s election rules.

“None of the allegations was true,” Shippentower-Games said. “It was proven that I didn’t do anything wrong.”

Full Circle members did have a campaign table at the elections, but according to members, they brought their own 100-foot tape measure and were careful to set up beyond the limit.

About 50 tribal members founded Full Circle in 2005, frustrated by a tribal government they viewed as isolated and self-serving.

Led by David Bean, James Miles and Shippentower-Games, Full Circle compiled a long list of grievances against council members, including charges of nepotism, corruption, sweetheart deals with vendors and contractors, alcohol abuse, absenteeism and censored minutes.

In the past two tribal elections, Bean and then Miles were elected to the council, replacing established members who had dominated the council for more than a decade.

Shippentower-Games, a security coordinator at a tribal casinos, was one of Full Circle’s founders and among the most vocal of the council’s critics.

“It feels great,” Shippentower-Games said Tuesday, after her first day on the job. She said one of her main priorities will be bringing a sense of unity to the tribe.

“I’m also really concerned about the young people, the vulnerable ones,” she said. “And I want to get the elders’ facility built and do things for the tribe as a whole, so everybody can benefit.”

Incumbent Kathy Lopez, who served on the council for 15 years, did not get enough votes in the tribe’s primary election to proceed to the June 7 general election.

Officials discuss plans with commissioners

By Roger McKinney
Joplin Globe

COLUMBUS, Kan. — Before meeting Monday with the Cherokee County commissioners, Richard Klemp, vice president for government relations with Penn National Gaming, and John Berrey, business committee chairman for the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma, greeted each other and shook hands.

Both groups have casinos planned for the area.

The casino for the tribe’s \$301 million Downstream Casino Resort is set to open July 5. A hotel will open in the fall. The development is off Interstate 44 where Oklahoma, Kansas and Missouri meet. The casino is in Ottawa County, Okla., but the parking lot is in Cherokee County.

“This is exciting,” Berrey said when sitting down to talk with the commissioners. “We got to meet some folks with Penn National that we haven’t met before.”

Berrey had previously met with the commissioners about designating County Road 110 as a truck route for deliveries to the tribe’s casino and hotel, and eventually to Penn National’s casino and possible future hotel. He said Mon-

day that he had met with officials with Tennessee Prairie Friends Church, who told him of their opposition to the plan.

Berrey said the plan now is to use Prairie Road off U.S. Highway 166, then link with County Road 110 and avoid the church.

“We’re trying to include their concerns in our plans,” he said of the church.

Berrey said the tribe would like to replace a deteriorating culvert on Prairie Road to the county’s specifications and make other upgrades.

“We would provide the engineering services and construction,” he said.

Berrey also told the commissioners that the tribe recently bought 146 acres on the west side of County Road 110 in the county.

“We’re becoming a fairly large landowner in Cherokee County,” Berrey said. He said the tribe hopes to use the land for commercial or retail development associated with its casino and hotel.

“We hope to create a nice, tax-revenue-generating property,” he said.

Berrey said outside the meeting that he hopes plans for the truck route can be worked out before the casino opens, but if not, the tribe would do the best it can with the roads that are available.

Klemp reported to the commissioners about Penn National’s plans for its Hollywood Casino. Penn National scaled back its initial investment to \$125 million in response to the tribal project. The company’s contract with the Kansas Lottery Commission calls for it to invest an additional \$100 million in the project over several years.

“We retooled our proposal to be a phased-in approach,” Klemp said.

“We’re a pretty well-respected company in the industry. Any other company would look at it the same way.”

The Kansas Lottery Gaming Facility Review Board will meet July 9 at the Columbus Community Center. The state board has reserved the center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the meeting, which will include a public comment period and presentations by Penn National and state consultants. The board will take final action on the Penn National contract on Aug. 20 or 21.

The review board in other areas of the state must decide the best proposal from among several that have been sub-

mitted. In Cherokee County, the review board will either accept the contract or return it to the Kansas Lottery Commission for further negotiation. Penn National was the lone company to submit an application in the Southeast Gaming Zone, which includes Cherokee and Crawford counties.

Klemp said Penn National submitted its privilege fee to the state on June 4. He said that demonstrates the company’s commitment to the project.

“They put a \$25 million ante down that they can’t get back,” said David Cooper, the county’s attorney on gambling issues. The county’s expenses for Cooper’s fees are reimbursed by Penn National Gaming.

Klemp said Hollywood Casino is scheduled to open in May 2010.

Developer concern

Developer Steve Vogel also met with commissioners to say he opposes giving up any county roads or rights of way to the tribe.

Vogel, with partner Gary Hall, owns property north of the planned Penn National casino on the west side of Highway 166, and has options for other property on the east side of the highway and north of the casino. Vogel individually also owns property off Interstate 44 and along Stateline Road.

He said Penn National owns property along Prairie Road and he owns property along Stateline Road, both of which Berrey has proposed for improvements.

“We don’t have any hang-ups with the improvements” proposed by Berrey, Vogel said.

Commissioners said they have no plan to relinquish control of any roads.

“We weren’t going to give the road up,” said Commissioner Charles Napier.

“We want to retain ownership of it,” added Commissioner Pat Collins.

David Cooper, Cherokee County’s attorney for gambling issues, said Monday that the county filed an amended complaint in its lawsuit against the U.S. Interior Department related to Downstream Casino Resort, partly in response to the government’s motion to dismiss the lawsuit. Cherokee County officials initially alleged that the government failed to require environmental assessments by the tribe for the casino site.

Tribal money



Associated Press

Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire, right, listens to Brian Cladoosby, chairman of the Swinomish Tribe, during the 19th annual "Centennial Accord" meeting between the governor's office and representatives of the state's 29 recognized tribes on Tuesday, in Grand Mound, Wash. Gregoire has benefited from more than \$650,000 in campaign contributions from American Indian tribes in the state since 2004. The money came from about a dozen tribes that benefited when, in 2005, Gregoire killed a gambling compact potentially worth more than \$140 million a year to the state.

Smoking materials blamed for fire

CBC News

CANADA — A fire that killed three young boys and a man in Pukatawagan, Man., in March was caused by careless disposal of smoking materials, the fire commissioner’s office said Monday.

Two brothers — Troi Castel-Lapansee, 3, and Robert Castel-Lapansee Jr., 4 — and their cousin, Letrel Bighetty-Castel, 5, died of smoke inhalation in the fire in the remote community, located about 700 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg.

Simon Nicholas, 57, died almost three weeks after the fire in a Winnipeg hospital, also due to smoke inhalation.

The fire broke out on the afternoon of March 10 in a house trailer on the reserve. Local residents and firefighters rushed to the scene and saved Nicholas, but heavy flames prevented them from reaching the boys trapped inside.

FBI returns stolen American Indian artifacts to their owners

By David Kelly
Los Angeles Times

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. — A collection of rare American Indian artifacts worth up to \$160,000 was returned to its owners Friday after an investigation that began three years ago when thieves broke into an Indio museum and spirited the treasures away in garbage bags.

“I have told curators that everyone who comes through the door may not be an art lover,” said Joseph Stuart, a recently retired FBI agent who led the investigation. “Some of those people are looking to steal artifacts.” The items are often sent to Asia and Europe, where Southwestern art is highly prized, he said.

Stuart joined FBI officials and Assistant U.S. Atty. Denise Willett at a news conference Friday in Palm Springs to discuss the case.

The stolen art included nine intricately carved Zuni and Hopi pots and eight tightly woven reed baskets made by California’s Cahuilla Indians. The items were on loan to

the Cabazon Band of Mission Indians Cultural Museum when they were taken in January 2005. Three artifacts are still missing.

The thieves disabled an alarm, broke into a glass case and stuffed the baskets and clay pots into trash bags, investigators said. The FBI sent out fliers urging art dealers to be on the lookout for the items. One of the suspects, Steven Farmer, was arrested after trying to sell the artifacts to an FBI informant, Stuart said.

“He was trying to sell between \$140,000 and \$160,000 worth of artifacts for \$4,000 to feed a methamphetamine addiction,” he said.

Farmer, who agents said is a Riverside County resident in his mid-30s, was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison last December.

FBI officials would not say if they are seeking more suspects but said the case is still pending.

For Jane Andrade, the case is now closed.

“That pottery was given to me by my mother, who got it

from her mother,” said the La Quinta woman, who received her lost pottery Friday.

“We loaned it to the museum. When I got the call that everything was stolen, I was surprised. I’d like to know how they got it all out of the museum, transported it around for years and nothing happened to it,” she said.

Andrade has never really known where to put the fragile pottery. She’s kept it on her mantel or in other spots around the house.

“It was difficult when I had a kid and they were throwing a football around,” she said. “I will have to find a proper place for it now.”

The colorfully painted pots are round, squat, fluted and bowl-like. An especially ornate one has a picture of a deer with a spear through its heart. The pots originated in the Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado areas, and the oldest dates to before 1850, Stuart said.

The baskets were all made by California Indians. One belongs to the Agua Caliente tribe of Palm Springs. The

others were turned over to the state Department of Parks and Recreation; they will be frozen to kill any bugs or eggs, then placed in a collection in Sacramento.

The theft and trafficking of American Indian artifacts remains a major problem, with a thriving demand for black market pottery, baskets and tools.

Salvador Hernandez, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Los Angeles office, said the agency maintains a “robust” program tracking stolen art and will continue to investigate. It’s not just stolen art, he said; it’s stolen culture.

After the news conference, officials from Anza Borrego Desert State Park donned white gloves and carefully packed up the Cahuilla baskets.

“These are examples of Native American art that go back hundreds and thousands of years,” said Mark Jorgensen, the park’s superintendent. “We’re thrilled that they don’t appear damaged. So often these things are gone and we lose them forever.”