

Ponca Tribe releases Carter Lake casino projections

Tacoma News

CARTER LAKE — The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has released projections related to its planned casino resort in Carter Lake.

The tribe’s projections show the project will create nearly 1,800 new jobs, draw 2.9 million visitors annually and increase the annual economic output of Iowa and Nebraska by nearly \$130 million.

The tribe shared the information after the state of Iowa refused repeated requests to meet with tribal leaders and publicly announced intention to challenge a National Indian Gaming Commission decision allowing gaming on the tribe’s restored lands.

“Out of respect to Iowa, we held the details of our world-class casino resort until the state had time to understand the sound arguments and facts presented in the NIGC final decision and ruling,” said Larry Wright Jr., chairman of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska’s Tribal Council. “But now our tribal members and the citizens of Iowa need to understand what’s at stake.”

Wright said that as early as October 2000, the tribe stated publicly that it could pursue gaming in Carter Lake as an economic development engine.

“We didn’t enter Carter Lake intending to build a casino, but after seeing the benefits gaming provides other Iowa tribal governments, we decided to exercise our rights to provide for our people,” Wright said.

In 2002, the tribe’s gaming ordinance was approved by the NIGC. In December 2007, the NIGC authorized gaming on five acres of trust land in Carter Lake. The only remaining step before construction is negotiating a compact agreement with the state of Iowa.

“The state of Iowa needs to stop avoiding the issue,” Wright said. “They’ve negotiated gaming compacts with three other Native American tribes and allowed other gaming to expand across the state. We’re no longer willing to be singled out in order to protect the corporate interests that oppose us.”

In a June 13 letter to Gov. Chet Culver, Wright asked for the state to reverse course on legal action and meet to discuss the casino resort.

“The governor has an open invitation to speak with us on a government-to-government basis at any time,” said Wright. “Obviously, he must first deal with the unfortunate loss of life (at the Little Sioux Scout Camp) and the ongoing devastation caused by the flooding.

“The Ponca Tribe and people stand ready to assist in any way we can, and we look forward to discussing the details of our Carter Lake casino resort and how the people of Carter Lake, the citizens of Iowa and the economy in general will benefit from a compact agreement with the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska.”

Longtime Cowlitz tribal chairman dies at age 73

By Allan Brettman
The Oregonian

VANCOUVER — John Barnett, who as Cowlitz Indian tribal chairman led the tribe to federal recognition and toward development of a casino, died this weekend, the tribe announced Monday.

A neighbor found Barnett, 73, in his home in Grays Harbor County, a tribe spokesman, Philip Harju, said.

“He died peacefully at his home,” Harju said, declining to elaborate.

Barnett, who was born in Portland, had been tribal chairman since 1982. He led the tribe when it achieved federal recognition in 2002.

Barnett had a “lifelong com-

Judge rejects Indians’ bid for new trial

By Katie Mulvaney
Providence Journal

PROVIDENCE — A Superior Court judge yesterday refused to order a new trial for three Narragansett Indians convicted of assaulting and scuffling with the state police during the smoke-shop raid, rejecting defense lawyers’ arguments that the jury was tainted by racial bias.

Judge Susan E. McGuirl denied a request for an inquiry into possible jury misconduct that included an accusation that one juror banged his water bottle like a tom-tom as the jury was about to render its verdict. “There were no clear racist statements that were said,” McGuirl said.

Defense lawyer William P. Devereaux had argued that the suggestion of prejudice and possible misconduct entitled the tribal members to a hearing and new trial.

Three of the jurors submitted affidavits to the defense team accusing two others of making offensive comments that they construed as racist, Devereaux said. One referred

to the Narragansetts as “those people” and questioned why tribal members rose from their seats when Chief Sachem Matthew Thomas took the stand, saying “he’s nothing.” The other banged his water bottle like a tom-tom as the jury was about to return its verdict — direct evidence of a racial thought process, Devereaux said.

In addition, a sheriff had caught the two jurors in question presumably discussing the deliberations with another juror outside the rest of the panel, Devereaux said. The forewoman, after consulting with one, sent a note to the judge saying the single minority juror was being intransigent, he said.

“There’s enough here to give us a hearing,” Devereaux said, adding, “They are entitled to the very end to know they got a verdict from a fair and impartial jury.”

But Special Assistant Attorney General Pamela Chin countered that there was no evidence that the jury had been corrupted by outside evidence. She acknowledged that there was some friction

between jurors, but dismissed the accusations as speculation and interpretation about the others’ actions.

The crux of the state’s whole case, she said, was that “those people” shouldn’t have put their hands on a cop, as the juror was claimed to have said.

“I don’t know how you make the leap to say that shows any kind of bias on the part of the juror,” Chin said.

She added: “I don’t know in this day and age what a tom-tom-like cadence would be.” She implored the judge to let the jury deliberations remain in the jury room.

McGuirl sided with the state, saying the accusations amounted to inferences and speculation. She, too, said she did not understand the reference to a tom-tom. She added that the defense had taken a risk by allowing tribal members to rise when Thomas took the stand, which might not have worked in their favor.

In the end, she said, the information did not rise to the threshold needed to demand a hearing. The defense did not

show sufficient racial bias to warrant an inquiry and new trial, she said.

Dozens of state police executed a warrant on July 14, 2003, to stop the tribe from selling tax-free cigarettes from a roadside shop on tribal land in Charlestown. The raid erupted into a scuffling match as troopers came onto the land. Seven adult Narragansetts were arrested.

After a six-week trial, a 12-member jury in April found Thomas guilty of assaulting a trooper. The panel also convicted Tribal Councilman Hiawatha Brown of assaulting a trooper by slamming her arm in the door and First Councilman Randy Noka of disorderly conduct for grabbing at an officer as police came onto tribal land.

Four others were exonerated, with the jury acquitting the Narragansetts of 12 counts and the judge dismissing another.

McGuirl yesterday also denied another motion for a new trial that asserted that the prosecutors had not produced enough evidence to convict.

McGuirl relied on photo-

graphs to support the convictions, particularly the images of Thomas grabbing Trooper Ernest Quarry from behind as Brown clutched Quarry’s throat. She called the interaction the “most disturbing” part of the whole incident.

Quarry, she said, was the best witness the state produced. “I thought his testimony was credible.”

Speaking outside the court yesterday, Thomas promised to appeal McGuirl’s rulings.

“Obviously, I’m concerned when I hear about somebody doing a tom-tom ... after they get a verdict, which in my opinion is like a victory dance.”

Rhode Islanders, he said, have difficulty understanding what might offend Native Americans.

“I think everyone in the courtroom, except the judge, I guess, felt it was offensive,” he said.

McGuirl delayed sentencing until tomorrow to give defense lawyers a chance to find out how various sentences might affect tribal leaders’ dealings with federal agencies.

Let’s get this casino started



Courtesy Photo
Navajo Nation and city of Gallup officials break ground on the new Navajo Casino in Churchrock on Monday. Construction is beginning on the building.

Rise in HIV cases ‘alarming,’ Regina health official says

CBC News

CANADA — The number of new cases of HIV in Regina has tripled over the past four years with aboriginal people now making up the majority of cases, Regina’s health region says.

Statistics from the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region showed that last year there were 36 new cases of HIV reported, compared to 12 in 2004.

Aboriginal people accounted for almost 70 per cent of the new cases, compared to 42 per cent in 2003. More than half the new cases were females. The statistics

were released Monday as part of the region’s newly launched campaign to encourage residents to get tested for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Billboards will be displayed across the city highlighting risky behaviours, including injection drug use and unprotected sex.

“We have seen an alarming increase in the number of new HIV cases in Regina over the past five years and we expect the situation will continue to worsen,” Dr. Maurice Hennink, the region’s deputy medical health officer, said in a news

release.

The use of intravenous drugs, working in the sex trade, and having unprotected sex are among the factors contributing to the increase, according to the health region. The incidence of the virus in young women has also increased in recent years, Hennink said.

That’s a particular concern because HIV complicates pregnancies, he said. An infected mother can transmit HIV to her baby during pregnancy or during birth.

The billboard campaign is expected to run for three months.

U.S. sued to block shift of Tamiami Trail into park

By Vanessa Blum
South Florida Sun-Sentinel

MIAMI, Fla. — The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida is suing the U.S. government in federal court to stop officials from relocating a one-mile section of the Tamiami Trail into Everglades National Park.

In a complaint filed Monday in Miami, the tribe claims the federal Department of Transportation broke the law by failing to consider alternatives that would minimize the environmental impact on the park and its wildlife.

The federal government wants to relocate the highway to help restore proper water

flow through the central Everglades, making up for decades of human interference.

But lawyers for the tribe contend the project could lead to “the irreparable destruction of a significant amount of federal park land.” Officials should have analyzed other options, said attorney Claudio Riedi, who represents the tribe.

“The choice of using park land will always be the first choice because it comes free. The government already owns it,” Riedi said. “It was recognized that you cannot use park land unless there is no feasible or prudent alternative.”

Rez school destroyed in blaze

HAYS, Kans. (AP) — St. Paul’s Mission School on the Fort Belknap Reservation was destroyed in a weekend fire.

The blaze started at about 7 p.m. Sunday, said Bum Stiffarm, chief administrative officer for the Gros Ventre and the Assiniboine tribes. Volunteer firefighters from Hays, Lodge Pole, Fort Belknap Agency, Harlem and Chinook responded.

The cause of the fire was unknown Monday, but a state fire marshal was at the scene investigating. No one was injured.

Stiffarm said the classroom, offices and cafeteria were total losses.

“We’re still assessing the gymnasium, but it looks like there’s extensive water and smoke damage,” he said.

“We don’t know if it weakened the structure.”

The Catholic school has an enrollment of 80 to 90 students in kindergarten through sixth grade and employs about a dozen people, including teachers, janitors, cooks, a librarian, a tutor and a principal, said Sister Laura Fucito of St. Paul’s Mission Church.

No summer classes were in session.

Fucito said it was too soon to know whether the elementary school and adjoining gym would be rebuilt.

“We’re just now beginning to look at those options,” said Joe Loncki, business manager for the Great Falls-Billings Diocese.

Until something is decided, students from St. Paul’s

could attend classes at the elementary school in Lodge Pole, about 11 miles away, Stiffarm said.

“We’re going to be initiating talks with the church to see what the educational plans are for the students,” he said.

St. Paul’s Mission School in Hays is one of four American Indian Catholic schools in the diocese, Loncki said.

The others are on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservations.

Fucito said the building that housed St. Paul’s was built in the 1970s to replace a previous mission school, which also burned down.

“All I know is that it was an excellent school,” she said.

“It’s a definite loss to the community, and hopefully something can be done.”