

North American Indigenous Games draw 4,500 athletes

Vancouver Sun

DUNCAN, British Columbia — While the Cowichan Valley is reaping the economic windfall from the North American Indigenous Games this week, the chief of the band hosting the games said exposure to a culture of diversity and excellence may be the biggest reward.

“There are so many returns, like the opportunity to share culture,” said Cowichan Tribes Chief Lydia Hwitsum, who opened the games in Duncan on Sunday.

Hwitsum said she was very proud that the athletes wanted to speak in their own languages during the opening ceremonies.

Hwitsum said it’s also been inspiring to have Olympians present at the games, like Cowichan’s own Richard Peter, a two-time Paralympic gold medalist in wheelchair basketball, who can give the 4,500 athletes participating a standard for achievement.

“That exposure, seeing indigenous people succeeding at the Olympic level it really does make the North American Indigenous Games a potential stone for athletic excellence,” said Hwitsum.

This is the seventh edition of games, which started in Edmonton in 1990. It is the first time a tribe, not a city, played host to the event.

These games are bringing an significant economic surge to the region.

Duncan mayor Phil Kent, who also sits on the Cowichan Valley Regional District board, said the impact of the games is expected to infuse more than \$35 million to the region.

“Everything is completely booked,” Kent said, referring to hotels and campsites. Some people are staying in Nanaimo and Victoria and making the daily commute.

Kent said local merchants have seen an increase in sales leading up to the games, while parking lots have been packed over the weekend in the town of 5,000.

The farmer’s market, normally closed on Sundays, was full of eager shoppers.

“We’re happy as punch to have them here,” said Kent.

“Everyone is pulling hard to make it really fabulous experience for everyone visiting.”

On Sunday, a parade of drummers, spiritual leaders and more than 4,500 young aboriginal athletes made their way down Canada Avenue, the main street in Duncan, ending at the Si’em Le’lum Field where the ceremony was held.

Before passing through the field’s red gates, each of the 23 teams requested permission from Chief Hwitsum to enter Cowichan territory.

Team B.C., the final team to enter, was greeted with raucous cheers from the crowd. Organizers estimated more than 20,000 people filled the field to welcome the athletes.

The ceremony concluded with the raising of the Cowichan Spirit Pole, as symbolic for the games as the torch is to the Olympics. The spirit pole, which signifies the strength and unification of the province, was etched with carvings of a frog, a salmon, a wolf and an eagle.

It has travelled across the province since May with carver Carey Newman and more than 10,000 British Columbians helped with the carving.

“The Cowichan Tribes have stepped up in spades to host this event and they’ve done a fabulous job,” said Kent.

The games continue to Aug. 10. The event also features a Cultural Village artists’ market, the Cowichan International Film Festival, a Coast Salish art gallery and live entertainment by aboriginal performers.

Tribe’s teens visit Washington

By Carole Bacon
Mohave Daily News

NEEDLES, Calif. — The Fort Mojave Indian Tribe’s teen council traveled to Washington, D.C., on July 9 in support of and to participate in the final walk to the Capitol’s steps with the people of the Longest Walk 2. The Longest Walk 2 was an 8,000 mile trek across the U.S. to raise awareness about major issues concerning Native American people such as cultural survival and the preservation of sacred sites.

Seven teens, six chaperons and Kelly Hills, the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe’s community relations liaison, paraded down Constitution Avenue with approximately 500 American Indians marching toward the Nation’s Capitol.

Tribal member Johnny Ray Hemmers held high a flag displaying the emblem of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe.

The teen council is com-

prised of Fort Mojave Tribe teenagers 13-17 years of age. Coordinated by tribal member Ashley Hemmers, the council was established by the FMIT in an effort to have a venue for youth to voice both their opinions and concerns.

Teen council President Taylor McDowell expressed his excitement on how fortunate he felt to be part of the march to the Capitol and how Native American voices will be heard regarding the protection of sacred sites.

According to Hills, 30 years ago on July 22, 1978, the Longest Walk issued a manifesto to members of Congress. The manifesto was a result of a five-month walk across the U.S. to gather support that halted legislation aimed at abrogating over 371 treaties signed between Native American Nations and the U.S. government.

Some of the same issues presented during the 1978 Longest Walk are still ongoing issues that have not changed;

some are said to have gotten worse, such as the desecration of Native American spiritual sites, contamination of land, water and air, nuclear development, acid rain and other problems plaguing Mother Earth.

The “Manifesto for Change” that was presented to the House Judiciary Chair, United States Representative John Conyers, Democrat from Michigan, included a request to “halt the contamination of the Colorado River and establish a participatory inquiry into past and present pollution of water sources in the Colorado River area and its detrimental effects on tribes along the river.”

“All life is sacred, clean up Mother Earth,” is a mantra that the Mojave people live by. According to the representatives of the Longest Walk 2 the Mojave tribe has relied on the Colorado River for drinking water and agricultural farming for centuries, but over the last 40 years they began to

notice a different smell to the water. Upon testing the water, the Mojaves were informed of high levels of chromium present.

The Colorado River travels through the Havasupai reservation located on the Coconino Plateau and the basin floor of the Colorado runs along the border of the Grand Canyon National Park. In response to recent exploratory drilling for uranium in the area, the Havasupai General Council passed resolutions expressing its concern over the contamination of the Havasupai communities’ water sources.

A common thread amongst the native tribes is the revered use of water, a central element for life, in many ceremonies: naming ceremonies, seasonal ceremonies, sweat lodges and other healing ceremonies.

According to the tests done on the Colorado River, the Mojave Tribe and Havasu Tribe that inhabit the land along the Colorado River are at risk because of toxic con-

tamination.

The “Manifesto for Change” brought by the Native American people requested, at its earliest opportunity, that Congress enact strict laws to halt the continued contamination of the Colorado River from companies and corporations and protect all tribes along the Colorado River. The manifesto also called for hearings by Congress to be held and convened to expose the massive wrongs being committed against Native people and the environment. It was also requested that the Justice Department investigate all complaints regarding the contamination of the Colorado River.

The conclusion of the manifesto requested that the President of the United States of America sponsor a federal public inquiry concerning the water sources and communities on and near the Colorado River, with the active participation of tribal communities that live or rely on the river.

Horse blanket



Associated Press

The horse culture of the Plains is reflected in the Painted Pony student blanket design by Thomasina Stevens. The Painted Pony will gain international fame this August when woven by Pendleton Woolen Mills as part of the American Indian College Fund’s limited edition student blanket line. Steven’s design won first place in the student blanket contest and will be sold internationally to benefit the Fund’s scholarship programs.

No vote on casinos, but board will hold hearing

By Roger H. Aylworth
Chico Enterprise-Record

OROVILLE, Calif. — A proposed advisory vote on future Indian casinos in Butte County was pretty much dead on arrival before the Board of Supervisors Tuesday, but the panel has decided to hold a comprehensive hearing on the impact of gambling on both the public and private sectors.

Oroville Supervisor Bill Connelly had asked the board to consider an advisory ballot measure for the November election that would have asked whether the county should support additional casinos.

Tuesday he made clear his proposal wasn’t aimed at any tribe or specific casino proposal.

“This was just an idea to let the public voice their opinion for or against gaming in general,” said Connelly.

The county is currently involved in a federal lawsuit where it is seeking to block a proposed Chico Rancheria Mechoopda casino to be

located off Highway 149, about two miles east of Highway 99.

Almost as soon as Connelly introduced the issue, it was clear there was no support among his fellow supervisors for such a ballot measure.

Supervisor Kim Yamaguchi of Paradise said such a vote was “moot” because tribes are sovereign, and local agencies such as Butte County have no official role in such decisions.

A ballot measure of this sort would not ultimately answer the serious questions people have concerning Indian gaming, according to Chico Supervisor Jane Dolan.

“I think it would better, to me, to have a factual hearing on what the concerns are and what the board can or cannot do about” casinos, said Dolan.

Connelly said such a hearing could focus on the impacts on the county and the board could take a formal vote in favor of or opposed to future casinos.

Supervisor Maureen Kirk of Chico said the goal would

be to let the community express its opinion.

Kirk said the Highway 149 site is “a bad location for the Mechoopda,” even though, theoretically, that proposal wasn’t part of the discussion.

Yamaguchi called Indian gaming a “huge issue throughout the state,” and added that the federal government has to find ways to mitigate impacts on local jurisdictions.

While not being specific about any plan or tribe, Supervisor Curt Josiassen, who chairs the board and represents the southwest corner of the county, said he has heard rumors of as many as three tribes pondering potential casinos in Butte County.

Butte County Chief Administrative Officer C. Brian Haddix said he could tentatively set the hearing for Sept. 23.

He said the date couldn’t be firmly scheduled until he met with county department heads who would have to gather the necessary information for the board.

Senator says more needed to cut reservation crime

Rapid City Journal

FORT YATES, N.D. — Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., says a temporary increase in the number of police officers on the Standing Rock reservation has helped curb violent crime, but a long-term solution still is needed.

Dorgan, chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, held a hearing Monday in Fort Yates on the issue with Sen. John Thune, R-S.D. The Standing Rock reservation straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border.

Dorgan says the number of police officers on the 2.3 million acre reservation was increased from nine to 29 for 90 days, and it helped reduce a violent crime rate that was 5.5 times the national average. He says programs to provide law enforcement to Indian communities have consistently been underfunded and calls it a “national disgrace.”

The Bureau of Indian Affairs announced at the hearing that Operation Dakota Peacekeeper would be extended for an additional 30 days, a move applauded by both South Dakota senators.

“The policing surge on

Standing Rock has not been in effect for very long, but tremendous improvements are being made and I am glad to learn that the operation will be extended until the end of September,” Thune said.

Sen. Tim Johnson, a member of the Indian Affairs Committee, said Operation Dakota Peacekeeper has made a “dramatic impact on the reservation, and has shown what can be done when the BIA properly dedicates resources to combating violence in Indian Country.”

Testimony also came from Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Ron His Horse Is Thunder, Tribal Judge William Zuger, BIA Policing Director Patrick Ragsdale and South Dakota U.S. Attorney Marty Jackley.

Ragsdale described the pressure environment on Standing Rock as, “highly conducive to lawlessness.” In his testimony, Jackley hailed the surge as a “great success story,” while Zuger testified that “life on the reservation is finally becoming safe.” Chairman His Horse Is Thunder said that the surge has indeed reduced crime and that the community is now able to sleep at night.