

Federal agency sued over casino

By Kevin Abourezk
Lincoln Journal Star

LINCOLN, Neb. — The state of Iowa filed a lawsuit Friday in federal district court challenging a decision by a federal agency allowing the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska to build a casino near Omaha.

The tribe won a December decision from the National Indian Gaming Commission to build a casino on the tribe's trust land just northeast of downtown Omaha in Carter Lake, Iowa.

Iowa filed its lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa.

The lawsuit alleges the tribe misled the commission in seeking the restored lands designation. The tribe "stated that it intended to use the five-acre Carter Lake parcel for a health clinic and other tribal services, but never for a casino," the lawsuit states.

Ponca Chairman Larry Wright Jr. defended the tribe's actions, saying it merely had changed its mind in its intentions for the land.

As for the commission's decision, he said, it was based on sound legal principle and would survive Iowa's lawsuit.

"At the end of the day, the decision will stand based on the merits," Wright said. "We'll continue to move forward with our plans."

In January, Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning filed a lawsuit challenging the commission's decision to allow the tribe to build the Carter Lake casino.

In late July, the U.S. Justice Department asked the federal court to dismiss Bruning's complaint, arguing the state of Nebraska lacks legal standing in the matter.

Bruning has argued Carter Lake's location near Omaha gives his office legal standing as it would impact Nebraska.

On Monday, Bruning's office filed a motion opposing the justice department's efforts to get Nebraska's lawsuit dismissed.

Bruning hailed Iowa's lawsuit.

"The likelihood of success for those who are opposed to the Carter Lake casino just increased dramatically," he said.

Pottawattamie County officials in Iowa recently stepped into the controversy and are considering taking legal action to stop the tribe's casino plans.

Wright said the tribe's world-class casino would create 1,800 jobs and millions in annual revenue benefiting Carter Lake and Pottawattamie County.

He said the tribe and county officials have been discussing the casino and he's hopeful they'll be able to negotiate a settlement.

"We think those conversations have went well," he said.

Heidi McNeil Staudenmaier, a Phoenix attorney who specializes in Native gaming, said Friday it's rare for a state to sue the NIGC for decisions it has made.

"The NIGC certainly will take it seriously and have to defend it," she said.

Still, the Ponca's legal troubles likely won't delay its plans, at least until the federal court issues a decision. That's because states lack jurisdiction over tribes because of their sovereign status, she said.

"It's one more block that the tribe has to face," she said.

Tribe opens \$50 million resort and casino expansion

Anne Jacobson
The Red Wing Republican Eagle

RED WING, Minn. — The tribe's newly expanded Treasure Island Resort & Casino hotel is big on details. Brazilian granite. Natural fabrics. Sculpted carpet. Swags. Etched glass. Exotic blooms. Artwork. Flat-screen TVs in every room - and in a few bathrooms.

One detail not obvious to the naked eye, however, is extent the Prairie Island Mdewakanton went to hire area firms whenever possible for the \$50 million expansion.

Student athletes return from Cowichan 2008

Doug Etten
Lakeland Times

MINOCQUA, Wis. — For 10 local student athletes, this may be as close to the Olympic experience that so many other athletes are currently experiencing across the globe.

If you ask them, however, it's merely a stepping stone toward bigger and better things.

"It's definitely something I won't forget anytime soon," said LUHS sophomore and Lac du Flambeau tribal member Tanner Davids. "I made a lot of good friends and hope the competition helps me better my game, too."

Davids had competed in the past Indigenous Games held in 2006 in Denver, Colo. The games, he said, were a bit different because of the level of competition he was not only playing against, but with.

"Everyone on the team was just solid," Davids said. "You didn't have to worry about the defensive side of things because some of those ground balls just weren't going to get through."

Getting to the games wasn't easy, however, as the athletes needed to help raise funds to pay for the expenses that not only come along with competing, but traveling as well.

"Doing car washes, selling food at events and stuff like that helped us raise a lot of the money," James Tecumseh said. "I'm glad we did it because it was a lot of fun."

Along with the hard work of the athletes was a generous

donation from many local parents, supporters and especially the Lac du Flambeau tribe.

"We really have to thank the tribal council especially," Bill Wildcat, coach and parent said. "Without their generosity coming through for us at the end, we would have been in trouble. They really pulled through."

Tecumseh played for Team Wisconsin on the basketball court where he says competing was at times tiring, but worth the one memory that he says he's never had before now.

"Getting an 'And-1' was pretty cool," he said. "I'd never gotten one of those before so it was really neat to do that."

Like many athletes, the experience off the athletic surface was, at times, just as unforgettable.

Relationships between players, though coming from across the Wisconsin tribal communities, was something the children and young adults had to harvest on their own.

"We all had something in common when we stepped onto the field and that made it easy to get to know one another," Katie Waterman said. "I've been playing softball for years and it was all pretty much the same except for the people we were playing with."

Waterman said that though the teams are comprised of primarily the cream of the crop, the games and situations were similar to what she sees in the Flambeau area and on the high school diamond at LUHS.

"I thought the pitchers especially would be a bit

quicker, but it was pretty much just like high school."

Waterman says she too looks forward to the next set of games which in three years from now will move closer to home in Milwaukee.

"I'll have to be playing as an adult then because I'll almost be 21, but I am still looking forward to it."

For LUHS sophomore Lakita Maulson, stepping on the basketball court comes natural although the type of competition she saw in Ontario was a bit different.

"There was a lot of scrappy play," Maulson said. "It was a lot of fun playing against girls with the skill level like they had."

Having to adapt to the atmosphere was easy, Maulson said, as many of the same aspects she sees at the WIAA level were unchanged.

"The players, coaches and referees were still all really into it," Maulson said. "It made for some really good games."

Mary Ann Wildcat said one big adjustment for her was the timing of the games, being mainly in the morning as opposed to afternoons and evenings.

"Sometimes we were having to get up at 6-6:30 a.m. just to be able to get a shower, get packed and to the gym on time," Wildcat said. "We were playing and staying all over the place."

With all the hustle from hotel, to gym, to practice and back again, Wildcat said it didn't leave for any time to even think about being bored.

"We kept pretty busy in

between games," Wildcat said. "There was a lot to see and a lot to do, which made the whole experience."

Much like is done in the Olympics, opening ceremonies give the teams and athletes a chance to showcase their national pride. These students were able to do the same.

"Each nation got to march with their own flag which I think made us all very proud," Wildcat said.

"It was hot, though, especially wearing black wind pants and our team jackets."

The team jackets were something that both the coaches and players used to identify who was from where. After a couple days, it became a little more difficult as athletes and coach both began swapping apparel like it was a trading card.

"I got my jacket from Manitoba," Bill Wildcat said. "I know a lot of other kids and coaches who did that same thing with their coats and pins."

Jackets were something that, according to the athletes, they thought for sure they'd be wearing constantly.

"I mean we were in Canada, we thought it would be cold, but here we were playing in 90 degree heat on some days," Wildcat said.

Though the memories have been made means the games are over, the experience of playing in the 2008 Indigenous Games will be one the athletes have brought to Lac du Flambeau, or areas where they live, and will share with those proud supporters throughout the community.

"We really owe a big thank you to all those people who continue to support the kids back here in Lac du Flambeau," Cecelia Stewart said. "This was a great opportunity for these kids and it wouldn't have been possible without the support behind them."

Overall, team Wisconsin brought home a total of 31 medals from the 2008 games. This ranked them 12th out of a total of 22 Indigenous teams from around North America.

Of the 31 medals awarded, 12 teams brought home gold, 10 won bronze and nine silver.

History of the games

In the 1970s, a number of visionaries began to explore the idea of promoting Indigenous cultures and supporting Indigenous youth through athletics and community leadership.

Leaders of various native and non-native communities helped fuel the concept that eventually evolved into the plan for a large-scale, multi-sport North American event that remains strong today.

The first-ever North American Indigenous Games were held in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1990, with approximately 3,000 participants. In less than two decades, the number of sport and cultural participants has tripled to more than 9,000.

By encouraging youth to participate in athletic competition, these games have become a vehicle for promoting healthier lifestyles and strengthened relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of North America.

State backs tribe for federal status

By Dylan Darling
Redding Record-Searchlight

REDDING, Calif. — State lawmakers have said the Winnemem Wintu Tribe should be recognized again by the federal government.

But leaders of the small north state band of American Indians said the call will only be ceremonial unless it is heard by members of the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., and the tribe gains recognition once again with the federal government.

The status would bring federal aid for health care and housing, reserving 42 acres that was once the site of a tribal village in Jones Valley near Lake Shasta as trust land, and sovereignty for the tribe of 123 people, said Mark Franco, the tribe's headman.

"Having the federal recognition restored will allow us that government-to-government status," Franco said.

He said the tribe had federal recognition until it was dropped from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs' books by a "clerical error" in the mid-1980s.

Introduced last year by Assemblyman Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael, Assembly Joint Resolution 39 urges Congress to correct the oversight and restore recognition. The resolution passed though the Assembly last month and Senate last week.

"California has sent a clear message today: Our state stands in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu Tribe to correct a terrible injustice by the federal government," Huffman said.

Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa, R-Richvale, and Sen. Sam Aanstad, R-Grass Valley, who represent the north state, both voted against the resolution, Franco said.

While critics of the tribe's effort for recognition said it is an attempt to get into the casino business, Caleen Sisk-Franco, the tribe's chief, said it has no such plans. She said the tribe has been approached by groups that help regain status and build gaming halls, but the tribe declined the offers.

"If we were seeking a casino, we would have one already," she said.



Hanging in the Capitol Hill office of Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., in Washington, July 21, are three black-and-white prints of Native Americans photographed by Barry Goldwater, who died in 1998. This election year, Native Americans will have a rare opportunity to vote for a candidate who knows their issues well and has worked with them for years. Yet, Republican presidential candidate John McCain's long history with Indian country may be hurting him as much as helping.

ing will be Aug. 30.

"We are proud of our ability to provide for ourselves and our team members," Tribal President Ron Johnson told people in the packed lobby. "And we are equally proud of our ability to contribute to the economic success of the region. This project allows us to accomplish both."

Knutson Construction of Rochester and RSP Architects of Minneapolis led the project. Locally, the vendors included Red Wing Glass, which etched the lobby windows and balcony glass with buffaloes and eagles, and

Hallstrom Florist & Greenhouses, whose arrangements can be found everywhere from the lobby to new suites.

The 15-month project also has generated 85 new jobs at Treasure Island Resort & Casino, pumping \$2 million in additional wages into the local economy, Johnson said.

Allan Kronberg, casino general manager, stressed how the addition of the family entertainment center, bowling facility, event center and convention meeting rooms will help attract

tourists to the Red Wing area. The enlarged venue also furthers the tribe's efforts to diversify and grow, he said.

Johnson concurred, noting that the tribe started with Island Bingo in 1984, purchased Mount Frontenac Golf Course in 2000, built Dakota Station in 2004 and now has a premiere resort destination.

"This business diversification has helped Prairie Island continue our path of self-sufficiency just as the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act intended," he said.