

Tribe opposes coal fired plants

By Patricia Ecker
Mount Pleasant Morning Sun

MOUNT PLEASANT, Mich. — The Tribal Council of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe made it clear, by resolution, that they are opposed to and deeply concerned about the impact the eight proposed coal fired plants will have on Michigan, the Tribe and the future “seven generations” of people.

On Wednesday, the Tribe will host a conference to provide information to the community on climate change, energy and the potential impact of the proposed coal plants on the community.

“As Natives, we need to leave as little a carbon footprint on Mother Earth,” Craig Graveratte, environmental technician intern said. “Not only us, but we need to educate the others on our traditions, and to live in a more environmentally friendly way.”

The conference will take place at the Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Black River Room.

Guest speakers will include Steve Smiley who will talk about renewable energy as an economic development tool; Peter Sinclair who will talk about the big picture of climate change, and Lee Sprague, former Ogemaw of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, and clean energy campaign manager of the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter.

Sprague said that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality is considering four air permit requests which he believes to be “unprecedented.”

“At this time, there are four air permit requests, and Michigan has not issued an air permit in 25 years,” Sprague said. “In history, this has never happened before.

“Citizens need help understanding what is going on. Sally (Kniffen, environmental specialist for SCIT) and I were surprised at how few people know what’s going on,” he said.

Under Sprague’s leadership, the Little River Tribal Council built a network coalition that actively opposed a proposed 425 megawatt coal-fired plant in Manistee, Mark Dougher, a grants consultant for Michigan tribes said. “It was a long effort, but citizens group and the Tribe were able to bring in the economic and environmental impact on the community.

“The developer was looking to profit substantially. They sued the city (of Manistee) and the Tribe defended the city’s position. The developer’s case eventually got thrown out,” he said.

The resolution, dated Aug. 6, outlines the “grave concerns” about health risks caused by emissions of carbon dioxide, contamination of the lakes, streams, and ground water from mercury, and the environmental impact on the Great Lakes ecosystem.

The Tribe considers itself “stewards of the land”, Frank Cloutier, public relations manager for the Tribe said.

“Coal and our natural resources are being debilitated,” Cloutier said. “These gifts from Mother Earth.”

Sowmick said the Tribe is not against development, but they would urge Governor Jennifer Granholm and her administration rescind or deny air and water permits for all coal fired power plants.

“In the short term, there is job creation, but in the long term there will be harm to aquifers and wild life,” Joe Sowmick spokesperson for

Indian identity remains in question

By Betty Smith
Tahlequah Daily Press

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. — Is it the fullblood, whose ranks continue to decline, or the person with a large percentage of Indian blood?

Is it the person who meets a blood quantum, such as the requirement by the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians that its members be at least one-quarter blood?

Is it the person who, although having a slight degree of Indian blood, can prove descent from a person allotted land by the Dawes Commission and thereby has a card?

Or is it the person who, by whatever claim of family descent, claims Indian blood and perhaps a membership in one of dozens of “tribes” that have filed claims but have not been federally recognized?

And what can bona fide tribes, and their members, do about those with fraudulent claims?

A panel discussed all these cases during the concluding session of the State of Sequoyah Commission’s annual conference Friday at Northeastern State University. And during the discussion, one man who objected to its conclusions was ejected from the University Center.

“There are a number of issues that need to be addressed with different people in different states who come together and claim to be tribes,” said Dr. Richard Allen, policy analyst for the Cherokee Nation “We would like to make impersonation of a tribe, or a tribal citizen, a felony,” said Cara Cowan Watts, Cherokee tribal councilor.

“You can’t just create one. You can’t just make up an Indian tribe, culture or people. You can’t split off from another Indian tribe.”

The afternoon began with a presentation by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma on the controversy over whether descendants of Cherokee Freedmen should be considered full Cherokee cit-

izens.

Principal Chief Chad Smith then discussed the lengthy court battle over the freedmen issue, saying the federal courts should be allowed to determine the outcome of the pending case.

Dr. Jerry Bread presented a group of Native American studies majors from the University of Oklahoma who presented a debate on the freedmen issue.

As the students made their presentations, Murv Jacob, a longtime Tahlequah artist who portrays traditional Cherokee themes, went from table to table distributing copies of his letter to the editor published in Friday’s Daily Press. As he was doing so he exchanged words with Bread and Allen.

They and several other men escorted him from the hall outside the Herb Rozell Ballroom and down the steps of the University Center.

“I’m being dragged out of here!” Jacob exclaimed.

Although campus security was called, Jacob returned to his studio near NSU without further incident.

Jacob’s letter stated there were many more pressing issues facing the Cherokee Nation than the one he raised, specifically mentioning statements by Cowan Watts calling him a “wannabe” and a “fake Indian.”

Contacted at his studio later, Jacob wanted to make no further comment on what happened in the call.

“I was told 20 years ago that if they persisted in calling me a fraud I could take them to district court right now,” he said. “If they persist I will have them in district court and they will have to prove I am a fake.”

Jacob has said he has Kentucky Cherokee ancestry through his Ironically, several speakers during the afternoon discussed people who claimed Indian descent from a grandmother, sometimes a “Cherokee princess,” sometimes a woman of an uncertain tribe.

And there are many of those rather uncertain tribes, and certainly unrecog-

nized by the federal government.

Dr. Carol Morrow of Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau became interested in who was, and wasn’t, Indian when she learned about various Missouri tribes claiming to be Cherokee, including the Northern Cherokee Nation of Old Louisiana Territory, based in her area. She spent a decade researching these tribes and their various claims of Cherokee heritage.

“There are lots and lots of Cherokee groups in Missouri and Arkansas,” she said.

“These are just self-identified groups. Many of them have split from parent groups, gone off and set up their own. Many of the groups from Missouri claim heritage of people who left the Trail of Tears and settled in the area.”

Demographics show there is no basis for those claims, she said.

Some Missouri Cherokee groups claim descent from a group of Cherokees who left North Carolina in 1721 and moved west; others from those who sided with the British, left their homelands in the 1780s, and settled in southeast Missouri.

Others claim to be part of the western Cherokees who settled in Arkansas between 1818 and 1828, before the Cherokee removal.

“But if you get into the historic documents they are invisible in Missouri,” she said.

Those documents from the early 1800s list a number of tribes living in Missouri, but no Cherokees.

She presented a list of 15 tribes claiming some form of Cherokee descent that have applied for federal recognition. Many also have achieved nonprofit, tax-exempt status. People can pay to become members of many of these groups.

Morrow discussed the case of “Chief Paul White Eagle” (Paul Manfred Smith), head of a Kansas-based group, and of Beverly Baker Northrup, chief of the Old Louisiana Territory

group since 1982.

She said Northrup retained her title although she had been voted out more than once, and wrote a book called “We Are Not Yet Conquered,” about her genealogy.

She apparently determines who is eligible for tribal membership, Morrow said.

She said students have obtained cards from some of these groups and have come to her in vain seeking Indian scholarships or other assistance.

Northrup has obtained \$120,000 in federal grants to help her tribe complete its application, but it has been pending since 1992 without further action, Morrow said.

Panelist Troy Wayne Poteete, a former Cherokee tribal councilor and justice of the Cherokee Supreme Court, noted the federal government could save millions by not awarding grants to such dubious claims for tribal recognition.

“You talk about stupidity, that’s stupidity gone to seed,” he said.

Poteete and other panelists jokingly adopted such “wannabe” names as “Chief Flies High and Eats Pie,” “Chief Talks Trash,” “Princess Dream Catcher” and “Princess Buffalo Wings.”

They brought up such real life “wannabes” as Ward Churchill, who has pretended to be a Cherokee and UKB member, and who “plays an academic Indian,” according to Cowan Watts.

“He has appropriated the Cherokee culture for too long.”

She also brought up Martin Webber, also known as “Grand Council Chief Thundercloud IV,” of Kansas, who has sold tribal memberships, including cards to illegal aliens, for as much as \$1,500.

Cowan Watts said the federal papers filed by the so-called nonprofit tribes are interesting indeed.

One tribe showed collection of \$109,670 in fees from tribal members over a four-year period, at \$25 per card.

Language survival



Associated Press

Marilyn Balluta, right, speaks Dena’ina as Helen Dick listens Saturday, during a Dena’ina language immersion class hosted by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe in Kenai, Alaska. Participants in the class, which ranged from elders to youths from across the Cook Inlet area, joined together at three large tables to take turns speaking the Alaska Native language.

Seminole tribe slates election

Tulsa World

TULSA, Okla. — The Seminole Nation has set a Sept. 20 special election to determine whether to establish a tribal court and remove U.S. secretarial approval of tribal constitutional amend-

ments.

The General Council passed an “open voting” resolution for this election only to allow registered voters to vote at any election precinct regardless of precinct assignment.

Polls will be open from 7

a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Tulsa Creek Indian Community, 8611 S. Union Ave., Mekuskey Mission, North Community Center, Strothers Community Center, Sasakwa Community Center and the Oklahoma City Muscogee (Creek) Association.

Tribe OKs pact to take over hospital

By Clifton Adcock
Tulsa World

TULSA, Okla. — The Cherokee Nation Tribal Council voted Thursday evening to ratify an agreement with Indian Health Services to assume control of the W.W. Hastings Indian Hospital in Tahlequah.

The tribe likely will assume operational control of the hospital, near the Tahlequah City Hospital, about Oct. 1, Principal Chief Chad Smith said.

The vote, held at a special meeting, was 13-4 for ratification of the agreement.

Smith said the tribe’s takeover of the hospital, which now is run by the U.S. Office of Health and Human Services’ Indian Health Service, would cut bureaucratic red tape and allow the hospital to work with the Tahlequah City Hospital while expanding and improving accessibility and service.

“They can really only go so far in improving Indian health coverage because of the complexities of the federal government,” Smith said. “By us contracting, it gives them leeway, flexibility to do a lot of the things they can do to increase health care, and it allows us to combine our resources with them.”

The Cherokee Nation also plans to expand the facility and create new ones on adjacent property owned by the tribe, Smith said.

Measures that would help

improve the services at Hastings include separating the emergency room from walk-in patient care and adding specialty services, he said.

In July, the Cherokee Nation announced its plan in the coming years to build a 200,000-square-foot health-care facility, a surgery center, and buildings for doctors, medical storage and health-care programs.

Last year, the hospital recorded about 244,000 patient visits in a space meant to accommodate 60,000 patient visits, according to a media release from the tribe.

“It’s a great opportunity because you have willing partners with the same goal, and that is (to) increase Indian health care by increasing not only quantity of services but kind and quality of services,” Smith said.

However, some councilors said the acquisition of a hospital is happening too fast, leaving work that still needs to be done on the tribal clinics and questions as to whether the tribe can properly manage a hospital.

“There were too many unanswered questions,” said Jodie Fishinghawk, one of the four councilors to vote against the measure. “It was a huge takeover.”

Other councilors who opposed the measure were Tina Glory Jordan, Bill John Baker and S. Joe Crittenden.

Ledyard: Norwich police pull man from Thames River

Norwich Bulletin

NORWICH, Conn. — A 76-year-old man whose boat cap-sized Monday morning was pulled from the Thames River by members of the Norwich Police Department.

At 11:41 a.m., Norwich dispatchers received an emergency call for mutual aid from Montville of a report of an

overturned boat near Dow Chemical in Ledyard.

The Norwich Police Harbor Patrol boat and Marine 1 from the city’s fire department searched for the man.

Police quickly pulled the man from the water, said Sgt. Patrick Daley, and the 12-foot boat was towed to shore. The man declined medical treatment.