

Blackfeet member utilizes old technology

Great Falls Tribune

GREAT FALLS, Mont. — When a Blackfeet tribal elder presented her family with a gift 10 years ago, Latrice Tatsey didn't see it as much more than a stick.

But for the past 20 months, Tatsey has used the striped calendar stick as a link to her past and a key tool in her future research.

It wasn't until her father, Terry Tatsey, gave a presentation to her college class about how the stick was used thousands of years ago to unite bands of the Blackfeet for tribal ceremonies and how similar the ancient system is to our modern calendar that she became interested.

Use for

An inch shy of 4-feet long, the calendar stick is a tool used to mark the days, months and years. Using shadows, it indicates the time and season, while a feather waves with the wind.

A stripe of red tops the stick, illustrating the Blackfeet Tribe's creation story. From there, 30 black stripes alternate with 29 yellow ones, which are used to mark the days.

Latrice Tatsey learned that the traditional Blackfeet calendar is based on days between full moons, so the months are shorter and the year lasts 360 days.

The calendar stick also has four small lines to record quarter days once a year, a slightly different way of working out leap year.

Perhaps more logically than the traditional Roman calendar, the Blackfeet calendar begins in the spring, not Jan. 1.

"There are a lot of similarities, but there are also a lot of differences," Tatsey said.

Each band of Blackfeet had a person responsible for knowing how to use the calendar stick. The stick helped coordinate the tribe's bands, which came together for ceremonies and celebrations.

In January 2007, Tatsey was hired as a research intern looking at alternative energy.

Beginning use

A junior majoring in natural resources at Blackfeet Community College, she began using her family's calendar stick to measure shadow lengths and wind direction every Tuesday at 2 p.m., or 1 p.m., depending on daylight saving time.

All of her data was recorded based on the Blackfeet calendar.

The National Science Foundation was so interested in her use of traditional tools to study modern science that officials asked her to be one of four presenters at their national meeting last month in Washington, D.C.

Sharing

Being asked to share her research with top scientists was an honor, but Tatsey said she considers other audiences far more important.

This summer, she also shared her studies with teachers at Montana State University and the University of Montana, and she gave presentations to third-graders on the Blackfeet Reservation, a tradition she plans to continue this school year.

As part of the presentation, the young students make their own calendar sticks to use throughout the year.

"It's really important to me that the younger generation picks up this tradition," Tatsey said. "If this knowledge isn't transferred down to the younger generation, it will be lost."

The calendar stick also encourages students to study science at an earlier age, she said.

"What's best to me is they are learning about this, but they're also learning about science," Tatsey said. "They'll already have research experience at a young age, before they get into middle school."

Tribe wants talks on casino

Boston Globe

BOSTON — The Mashpee Wampanoag tribe is planning to formally ask Governor Deval Patrick today to negotiate a compact for a \$1 billion resort casino in Middleborough, an overture that could reignite the gambling debate and eventually clear the way for the state's first casino.

The tribe has already been pursuing a casino through a federal Department of the Interior application. But striking a deal with the state would probably speed approval and allow the tribe to offer bigger jackpots and more games, including blackjack and craps, while giving the state a share of casino revenues.

"We'd like to start the negotiations and get the ball rolling," tribal chairman Shawn W. Hendricks Sr. said yesterday in an interview. "I see no reason why the state wouldn't sit and talk with us."

Tribal officials are hoping to negotiate a deal with the state over the next several months that, if the necessary approvals from the federal government come through, could allow the tribe to start construction on a massive

casino as early as spring. It would be similar to the deals struck by Connecticut for the Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun casinos. The billions earned by those casinos have proved to be alluring for the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, as well as Patrick and some other Massachusetts officials who see legalized gambling as a way to help pay for state needs such as road repairs.

The tribe will deliver a seven-page letter, which has been expected for several months and was obtained yesterday by the Globe, to the governor today with the request that negotiations begin "at the earliest mutually convenient date."

The move could give Patrick fresh ammunition if he decides to revive his effort to persuade the Legislature to license three casinos in Massachusetts. Patrick has contended that since the federal government might approve the tribe's casino regardless of the state's position, Massachusetts might as well embrace gambling, control the business, and reap a share for state coffers.

Administration officials declined to comment yesterday before seeing the letter.

Under the terms of the federal Indian Gaming Act, the tribe cannot force the state to begin negotiations because it does not have its federal lands taken into trust. The governor was hesitant in June about beginning negotiations until the tribe won placement of its land in federal trust.

"It doesn't start until they say it starts," Patrick said. "And there's not a lot of point in starting until the land-in-trust process is finished. . . . They have expressed an interest in working with us when the time comes."

Any deal between the tribe and the governor would probably also need the approval of the Legislature, so the tribe is also sending the letter to Senate President Therese Murray and House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi.

The tribe won federal recognition last year, which set it on course to build a resort casino with 4,000 slot machines, game tables, a 1,500-room hotel, and a host of amenities including a golf course.

Achieving the next step, getting federal approval to place its land in trust, can take several years, but tribal

officials think it is on course for approval in the first or second quarter of 2009, according to the letter.

Compact negotiations can become complex and include discussions over who has jurisdiction over police and fire services on the property and how traffic would be handled. If a compact is signed, the tribe said it would upgrade Route 44, a \$170 million expense.

Most significantly, the negotiations would determine what percentage of slot revenues the state would receive. When Connecticut negotiated with its tribes in the early 1990s, the Indians agreed to pay the state 25 percent of slot machine revenue.

For Patrick and the Legislature, choosing not to negotiate with the tribe could carry risks.

The Mashpees say in the letter that, even if the state does not approve a deal, it plans to pursue its federal rights under the Indian Gaming Act to develop a casino with bingo-style slots. Those slots, called lass two machines, look similar to regular slot machines but are not as popular with gamblers and not as lucrative for casino operators. Upgrading to bet-

ter machines would require state approval.

"No matter what ultimately happens with the negotiations, please know that it is the tribe's intent to operate America's most successful casino resort in Middleborough," Hendricks wrote in the letter. "We hope that we can do so in a manner which benefits all of us to the fullest extent possible."

Patrick filed legislation last year that would have licensed three casinos in Massachusetts, creating jobs and bringing in state revenue. His legislation was voted down by the House in March, but the governor is expected to file new legislation when the Legislature reconvenes in January.

Still, there are multiple variables that could spell trouble for the tribe.

The Globe reported last week that slot revenues at the two Connecticut casinos and two Rhode Island slot parlors are down over last year, despite adding 1,300 slot machines in the last year. Slot revenues are also down nationally, according to a recent report from the American Gaming Association.

Hendricks, the tribal chair-

Buzzing around



Cable Hoover/Independent

Garry Miller of Phoenix, begins setting up his bumble bee ride at the Navajo Nation Fair in Window Rock Tuesday.

Singer dies; known for her versatility

Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Clea Bradford, 67, a versatile jazz singer who toured the Soviet Union with Earl "Fatha" Hines and recorded with Clark Terry in the 1960s, died Aug. 19 of complications from breast cancer at Holy Cross Hospital. She lived in Silver Spring.

Bradford, who settled into a second career as a voice coach in the Washington area after two decades of touring, was not a big star but a "huge twinkle," as she once joked to The Washington Post, and was a favorite of critics. She performed locally in the 1970s and '80s, and reviewers found her compelling, noting her range, versatility and homlike phrasing.

"Clea Bradford has been compared to other vocalists but the equation fails on two counts," former Washington Post critic W. Royal Stokes wrote. "One, despite surface similarities, she is not an imitation. Two, attentive listening reveals that her craft derives from horn players rather than singers."

Critics commented on her striking looks as well as her vocal expertise. She was almost 6 feet tall with high cheekbones and long straight hair, characteristics that she attributed to her mixture of Choctaw Indian and Ethiopian ancestry.

Slain man was a hero

By Chris Kitching
Winnipeg Sun

WINNIPEG — A 20-year-old man who was slain in northern Manitoba on Wednesday morning was honoured by his band a day earlier for saving a teenage boy's life this summer, the victim's family said.

Bernard Spence's relatives were awaiting more details from the RCMP yesterday, but were told Spence was stabbed in the neck while he was asleep in his bedroom on the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House), about 800 km north of Winnipeg.

Youth charged

RCMP were called to the house at about 7:45 a.m.

A 17-year-old male was arrested and charged with second-degree murder, RCMP said.

Spence's stepfather, Eric Smith, was unaware of the motive but said there may have been an exchange of words sometime before the attack.

"The individual or individuals came to him ... while he was resting," said Smith, who is married to Spence's mother Sharon.

He said the homicide did not happen at her house.

Spence, who enjoyed skateboarding and playing basketball, was working as a counselor and mentor to youth in programs offered through NCN's family and community wellness centre. Smith said.

As part of his job, he took kids on camping and canoeing trips.

It was during a recent trip that Spence and another person intervened to prevent a boy from committing suicide. Spence was recognized during a ceremony Tuesday.

"He had been honoured by the wellness centre as a hero for his actions," Smith said. "Bernard and another individual had intervened and were able to save the youth's life."

Smith said Spence had overcome his own share of trials as a youth and had his sights set on finishing high

school and pursuing a career in the military.

"He'd had his share of ups and downs like we all do but he was making all the right steps to move forward in his life," Smith said. "You kind of have to have that certain thing inside you to serve your country. The core of Bernard was a caring heart."

Family shaken

Smith said the family has been shaken by the tragedy but hopes to one day forgive Spence's killer.

"It's a challenge to lose a young man and the circumstances make it additionally (difficult)," Smith said. "It brings an additional burden of attempting to understand and reason the actions of others."

Spence is also survived by two sisters, Marylou, 24, and Alexandria, 12, and 11-year-old brother James.

RCMP said the 17-year-old suspect is scheduled to appear again in court in Thompson on Sept. 16.

Pechanga Tribal Council member dies in Denver

By Jeff Horseman
and Julissa McKinnon
Riverside Press-Enterprise

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — A newly elected member of the Pechanga Tribal Council died after being involved in an altercation outside a nightclub in Denver, where he had attended the Democratic National Convention, authorities said.

Following the fight at 2 a.m. Sunday, Gabriel Pico was rushed by ambulance to an area hospital where he died almost two days later, according to Sonny Jackson, spokesman for the Denver Police Department. Jackson said he had no information about Mr. Pico's injuries or condition following the altercation.

Jackson said the Denver Police Department is investigating Mr. Pico's death.

Mr. Pico, 41, was pronounced dead at 8:20 p.m. Monday, said Michelle Weiss-Samaras, chief deputy coroner for the Denver Office of the Medical Examiner, the agency conducting the autopsy.

A statement from the

Pechanga Tribal Council released Tuesday said Mr. Pico also suffered a heart attack over the weekend. Family and friends were by his side at the time of his death, according to the statement.

Mr. Pico had recently been elected to his first term on the seven-member Pechanga Tribal Council in July. The council sets policy and administers programs for the tribe, which runs the Pechanga Resort and Casino outside Temecula.

"This is a big loss for our Tribe," said Chairman Mark Macarro. "Though Gabe had only been in office a few weeks, it was evident that he was a tremendous asset to the council and the tribe. He will be missed dearly."

Mr. Pico leaves behind three daughters, two sons, one grandson, six siblings, his mother, Bernice Pico, and several nephews and nieces. His father, the late Gabriel "Gibby" Pico, served as tribal chairman from 1982 to 1987.

Funeral services for Mr. Pico are being arranged, according to the council's statement.