

Pine Ridge church closures leave void

Sioux Falls Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — The Episcopal Church of South Dakota will close nine churches and change the status of two others on the Pine Ridge Reservation and in Bennett County on Nov. 30, according to a church newsletter.

The churches are Church of the Inestimable Gift near Allen; St. Barnabas near Kyle; St. Thomas in Manderson; St. John's in Oglala; Church of the Epiphany, east of Pine Ridge; St. Alban's Station near Porcupine; St. Timothy near Potato Creek; Christ Church of Red Shirt Table; and St. Andrew's at Wakpamni Lake, according to St. Katharine Episcopal Church's September newsletter.

The Rev. Craig West, who serves St. Katharine's in Martin and is dean of Pine Ridge Mission, wrote in the newsletter that he read two letters from Bishop Creighton Robertson about the Episcopal Church's presence on the Pine Ridge Mission.

Robertson said closing church buildings is a difficult matter, but the diocese and churches need to use their resources wisely, according to the newsletter.

That leaves five centers for worship: Holy Cross in Pine Ridge, Church of the Mediator in Kyle, St. Michael's in Batesland, Gethsemane in Wanblee and St. Katharine's.

Two churches - Church of the Advent near Pine Ridge and St. Julia's in Porcupine - will switch to station status, meaning they will have at least four services a year.

Attempts to reach Robertson and Diocesan Administrator Randy Barnhardt were unsuccessful.

While a majority of churches in the diocese are on tribal lands, those in Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Pierre might have about 500 members in average Sunday attendance, said the Rev. Tim Fountain of Church of the Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls.

That compares to 2,100 members on an average Sunday at its 87 churches statewide, he said.

"This closure of nine is pretty big," Fountain said. "Usually there is one or maybe two when there's a closure."

The Rev. Rhoda Mesteth, 69, who serves Inestimable Gift, St. Thomas and Epiphany, said the diocese wanted Pine Ridge Mission churches to have Sunday school, raise church membership or fix buildings.

"I tried to talk to people about the consequences if church attendance didn't go up," she said. "They never say anything."

Mesteth wonders what will happen to church cemeteries and buildings.

The church near Allen, which is on station status, attracts 15 at Christmas. Epiphany has a similar attendance one that holiday. To Mesteth's discouragement, no one has shown up to church at Manderson at times.

She fears that no one will take the initiative to find a new church.

Gwen Bull Man, 56, of Potato Creek, who with her sister Flora and others in her family have been members of St. Timothy's for years, expressed sadness that her church since childhood was closing.

"What is the purpose of closing churches?" Bull Man said. Now the family must decide whether to travel 15 miles to Kyle or 19 miles to Wanblee.

The family also is hoping the church building can be retained for a community center. Bull Man said she will make that request in a letter to Robertson, and money would be raised to pay for electricity.

"We would like to have bingo," she said. "We don't have a community building in Potato Creek."

Indian tribes near federal recognition bid

By Indianz.com

WASHINGTON —A congressional bill to give federal recognition to six Virginia American Indian tribes will come before a Senate committee this month, marking the closest the tribes have come to that goal after years of trying.

"It just gives us more encouragement that we are making progress," said Wayne Adkins, an assistant chief with the Chickahominy tribe and president of the Virginia Indian Tribal Alliance for Life, which has lobbied for the bill's

passage. "It's been a long, slow process, so any positive step like that gives us a little more to hold onto."

The Thomasina E. Jordan Indian Tribes of Virginia Federal Recognition Act would allow the Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Monacan Indian Nation, Nansemond, Rappahannock and Upper Mattaponi tribes to compete for educational funds and other grants, as well as health care benefits open to federally recognized tribes.

Virginia Rep. James P. Moran, a Democrat, initially

introduced the bill in 1999. But the measure has seen limited progress over the years, in part because of concerns that it would result in the tribes pursuing casino and gambling interests in the state, accusations the bill's supporters deny.

The House passed a version in May 2007 that curbed the tribes' ability to pursue casino deals, marking the first time the measure had cleared either congressional chamber. The bill then was sent to the Senate Indian Affairs Committee and is scheduled for a hearing Sept. 25 — one day before

Congress is scheduled to adjourn.

Lawmakers are not expected to return until after the November presidential election, meaning time is short for the measure to make it to the Senate floor for possible passage this year.

"We know we're up against pretty tall odds right now, because time is running out," Mr. Adkins said. "Being an election year, too, it's just going to be difficult."

Mr. Moran said it's "conceivable" that lawmakers could pass the measure in a

last-minute rush this year, but added he's not optimistic. He said having the hearing will at least build momentum for efforts to pass the bill next year.

"It means that even if we don't get the legislation done at the end of the year, we have a stronger record to begin next year's effort," Mr. Moran said. "I think eventually we will get this."

The six tribes covered by the bill consist of roughly 3,500 people residing mostly in the Tidewater area of the state, Mr. Adkins said.

Cherokees, OSU partner for hospitality degree

By Clifton Adcock
Tulsa World

OKLAHOMA CITY — Some Cherokee Nation Enterprises employees are literally learning a lesson at work.

The gaming and retail arm of the Cherokee Nation and OSU are teaming up to offer a distance-

learning master's degree program in hospitality administration, two firsts for the university.

The partnership will mark the first time a hotel and restaurant administration degree will be offered via distance learning and the first time OSU has partnered with a corporate entity to offer a degree program on-site.

Before its partnership with Cherokee Nation Enterprises, OSU did not offer any hospitality coursework outside of its Stillwater campus.

Part of the College of Human Environmental Sciences, OSU's School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration has 440 students in its under-

graduate program and 65 master's and doctoral candidates.

So far, five Cherokee Nation Enterprises employees in Catoosa, Roland and West Siloam Springs are taking the remote class this fall using a teleconferencing format that broadcasts lectures live to the locations. The format allows

the instructors and students at all locations to interact, Cherokee Nation Enterprises spokeswoman Amanda Clinton said.

The first classes were limited in size to test the interest in the program and work out the details, said Radesh Palakurthi, an OSU Hotel and Restaurant Administration professor.

Gila River organics



Monica Almeida/The New York Times

Ed Mendoza, co-founder of a garden cooperative, uses traditional irrigation for organic crops in the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona in June. High rates of diabetes and obesity are a problem. Now, after decades of litigation that produced the largest water-rights settlement ever in Indian country, the Indians here are getting some of their water back. And with it has come the question: Can a healthier lifestyle lost generations ago be restored? Reviving the farming tradition will prove difficult, many tribal members say, because the tribes, who number 20,000, including about 12,000 on the reservation, have not farmed on a big scale for generations.

Tribe opens tech center at Longhouse

By Jennifer Becknell
Rock Hill Herald

ROCK HILL, S.C. — The Catawba Indian Nation today will unveil a technology achievement center, which will offer workplace computer training, a GED program and small business classes to tribal members and area residents.

The center -- located in the Longhouse on the reservation east of Rock Hill -- includes 11 new computers and will be staffed by a licensed instructor who will teach GED courses and a work-skills technology program.

"It provides such a wonderful opportunity to help our tribal members increase their skills," Catawba Indian Chief Donald Rodgers said. "It is an achievement center. What we perceive is everyone who participates will be able to achieve something."

The center is the fifth in the country opened as part of Hope and Harmony for Humanity, a grant-based initiative designed to bring

technology access and training to American Indians living in rural and remote areas.

Similar centers have been established at the Blackfeet Nation in Browning, Mont., the Leech Land Band of Ojibwe in Cass Lake, Minn., the Tigwa Tribe at Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, Texas, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet in Houlton, Maine.

High unemployment A U.S. Census survey found that in 2003 the unemployment rate for American Indians and Alaska natives was 9 percent higher than among the general population.

The Catawba Indian center was established with the help of \$150,000 rural development grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which paid for furniture, equipment and classroom supplies.

Other critical resources were provided through partnerships between the tribe and business or community organizations. IBM kicked in the computers, for exam-

ple, and the instructor is provided by Tri-District/Chester Adult Education.

Software for the center was provided by SeniorNet, a national nonprofit organization that provides computer and Internet education for older adults and seniors.

Although the center is intended to help tribal members, it will be open to all residents of York, Chester and Lancaster counties, said Karen Nichols, the tribe's director of economic development. Users will pay a nominal fee for services. Classes begin Monday.

Nichols said the center will offer services for people who want to earn a GED, senior citizens who have never used a computer, small business owners and those who want to learn or improve workplace computer skills.

Rodgers said he hopes the new center will be used to help people improve their lives. "The services are starting to happen for our tribal membership," he said.

University to announce the plaza's new design

Minneapolis Star Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS — Each of the state's 11 American Indian tribes will be represented outside of the University of Minnesota's TCF Bank Stadium.

Today, the school is expected to announce the design for the Minnesota Tribal Nations Plaza, the area leading to the main gate of the new campus football stadium.

The plaza, which was made possible after the Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota Community gave the largest single private gift to the U Athletic Department, will feature 11 "sky markers," one for each of the tribal nations in the state.

Each 18-foot sky marker will incorporate a tribal flag, crest and educational information.

"We're grateful to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for their support and for their commitment to recognizing all 11 of Minnesota's American Indian communities in this stunning plaza," Gophers Athletics Director Joel Maturi said. "This will be

one of the most vibrant and visible parts of TCF Bank Stadium and serve as a lasting tribute to the importance of Minnesota's American Indian people."

In October, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota donated \$10 million to the construction of the 50,000-seat stadium and an additional \$2.5 million for scholarships, with a preference given to American Indian students.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota, which owns Mystic Lake Casino, has committed another \$2 million for the plaza.

Tribal leaders said the decision to support the Gophers stadium was made in an effort to provide a better understanding of the history and role of Indians in the state.

The donation for scholarships -- which will be matched by the university -- should help increase enrollment by an underrepresented community.

At the beginning of last school year, there were 274 American Indians among the more than 33,000 undergraduates on the university's

Officer shot responding to call on reservation

By The Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. — A Bureau of Indian Affairs police officer serving as part of the BIA's Operation Dakota Peacekeeper effort was shot early this morning while responding to a domestic violence call on Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation, said United States Attorney Marty J. Jackley.

The shooting happened overnight at Little Eagle, which is 20 miles west of Mobridge in north central South Dakota. Jackley said the officer is receiving medical care, and details of his identity and condition are not being released at this time.

Another individual involved in the shooting is also receiving medical treatment for a gunshot injury. His identity and details of his condition are also not being released, Jackley said.

The investigation concerning the incident is ongoing and being conducted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, he said.