

## Paiute Tribe joins with police to fight drug abuse

By Nur Kausar  
St. George Spectrum

CEDAR CITY, Utah — The Paiute Tribe and local law enforcement have joined forces to combat drug/alcohol abuse and unhealthiness among the tribe’s people. The solution: A good ol’ game of basketball.

The tribe’s behavioral care department wanted to create an environment for communication and camaraderie where civilians and officers could let down their guard.

As a result, open gym night every Tuesday and Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. started last week in the Tribal Gym at 440 N. Paiute Drive.

“By having law enforcement present at open gym, it allows them to get to know our tribal members,” Tribal Chairwoman Lora Tom said. “Our older members and even our young kids look at officers as role models. We’re promoting an environment that’s safe, healthy and drug-free.”

Prevention and substance abuse counselor Damon Polk said the relationship is also to dispel perceptions of mistrust between the tribe and law enforcement.

For youth in the tribe, he said, the perceptions formed because of extensive drug and alcohol use among their parents and watching the consequences of abuse unfold.

“As interventions happen, our children see that and they can sometimes get a negative view of law enforcement if their parents are incarcerated,” Polk said. “We have a terrible history with alcohol and substance abuse. Alcohol was never a part of Native American culture, but it’s had devastating effects on our communities in North America and Canada.”

Because of this, violence and a disregard for law became common, and law enforcement saw this as the norm among tribal people, Polk said, festering mistrust and leaving the tribe’s people feeling stereotyped.

“But despite past relationships with them, they are here to protect the people and we are part of the people,” he said.

For this reason, Tom, Polk and others have pushed for creative collaboration.

“We as an Indian community cannot (fight drug and substance abuse) ourselves,” he said.

Polk said the tribe needs to understand that officers have their job to do and sometimes that means cracking down on unlawful behavior in the tribe.

“We can’t grow without recognizing what we need to correct,” he said. “We don’t want the tribe to become totally unhealthy, where we’ll constantly be singled out. We want to be resilient and corrective.”

Opening the gym provides a safe environment for the community, cutting down on idle time, he added.

Measurable benefits Polk hopes for include increased physical activity to fight struggles with diabetes and obesity, increased safety, increased response by law enforcement of alcohol- and substance abuse-related calls and a decrease in the school dropout rate.

“It’s not going to eliminate all our problems,” Tom said. “Some, not all. But we have the time to heal.”

Tom said success with Washington County was overwhelming in similar efforts with the tribe and law enforcement last year when they sponsored community dinners.

“Washington County Sheriff (Kirk) Smith made a commitment to the tribe, helping to deal with problems one-on-one,” Tom said. “I told local law enforcement, if Washington County can do it, so can Iron County.”

Community dinners with Iron County will begin Nov. 19. Tom said open gym and the dinners are open to anyone and she encourages locals to take part.

“We’ve been here for hundreds of years,” she said. “We just want to make our neighborhoods safe and fun for everyone.”

# Tribe’s gay marriage law faces challenge

By Jessica Musicar  
Coos Bay World

COOS BAY, Orge. — A Coquille Indian Tribe member is challenging a recent decision by the Tribal Council to allow domestic partnerships and marriages regardless of sexual orientation.

Brady Metcalf, who lives in Pahoa, Hawaii, said he believes the Marriage and Domestic Partnership Ordinance should be placed on a special tribal ballot, allowing the general council to weigh in on the topic. The general council includes every adult tribal member, of which there are about 580.

“I think it’s too big of an issue to be decided upon by six people who may or may not have their own agenda,” Metcalf said Monday.

He said he’s been circulating a petition to get it on a special ballot, but he emphasized that he isn’t opposed to gay marriage. The 46-year-old simply believes the entire tribe should put it to a vote.

“My personal opinion. I think that if gay people want to get married, they should get married. And if it doesn’t work out, they should have custody battles, and divide property just like anyone else,” Metcalf said. “(But) they’re making rules that are binding on everyone that are going to benefit two peo-

ple.”

According to Tribal Attorney Brett Kenney and the May edition of tribe’s newsletter “Coquille Tribal Tidbits,” the new tribal law does two things. It recognizes marriages and domestic partnerships formed in other jurisdictions, such as tribes, states, countries and provinces, for the purposes of extending tribal spousal or domestic partner benefits.

Secondly, the law authorizes new marriages under tribal law between both homosexual and heterosexual couples, when at least one person is a tribal member. However, these marriages can’t be initiated until the Tribal Council adopts follow-up laws addressing divorce and child custody. Kenney said it will take at least another four to five months for these potential laws to be reviewed.

“That law has been passed ... but those marriages will not begin until we can deal with the break up of those marriages under our legal system,” Kenney said.

He added that both portions of the ordinance recognize marriages and domestic partnerships regardless of the gender of the two people involved. However, there are some restrictions, such as the two parties can’t be first cousins or any closer kin or under the

age of 18.

The first couple expected to take advantage of the new ordinance is Jeni and Kitzen Branting. They are planning a May wedding at the tribe’s plankhouse. Attempts to reach Kitzen Branting were unsuccessful.

Kenney said the Tribal Council adopted the ordinance on May 8, following more than six meetings and workshops and about a year after tribal members raised the question of the tribe honoring same-sex relationships involving tribal members. The ordinance passed in a 4-2 vote. Kenney would not reveal the council members opposed to the proposition. He added that the council accepted written and verbal testimony from the general council through a 90-day comment period, starting Feb. 7. Notices regarding the potential ordinances were posted at locations on tribal property including the clinic, housing authority and tribal headquarters, Kenney said. A notice also appeared in the tribal newsletter.

Regarding a petition, Kenney said no Tribal Council members have expressed concerns.

“The only comments I’ve heard is that the tribe welcomes tribal member involvement in the legislative process and that they have no desire to interfere with and expressed no angst over this

petition,” Kenney said.

However, if Metcalf is able to collect one-third or more signatures — about 200 — from the tribe’s general council members, a special election could become a reality. The signatures would be presented to the tribe’s election board, Kenney said, but there is no deadline to do so.

“If that happens, then there is an election,” the tribal attorney said.

Metcalf said he’s been circulating petitions via tribal members in the Coos Bay area and within the tribe’s five county service area. He also sent about 600 petitions on the back of candidacy letters he mailed while running for vice chairman. The co-owner of an auto parts store lost the race last week to incumbent Thomas Younker, he said, by 39 votes. Metcalf also serves on the tribe’s fish and wildlife committee.

So far, he’s received more than 60 signatures, he said. Metcalf noted that his issues with the ordinance are over the wording, that the tribe would have to keep records of marriage licenses and certificates, and that the ordinance goes against Oregon and federal law.

“It seems like something we don’t need to get involved in,” Metcalf said. “I don’t know why we want to go into the marriage business. I don’t understand that at all.”

## Beating won’t be tried as hate crime

GREAT FALLS, Mont. (AP) — The Glacier County attorney has declined to press charges under the state hate crime law against three brothers who a county commissioner says beat him while calling him a “dirty Indian” and other names.

“We know they were shouting racial epithets, but I look at that as a function of ignorance,” County Attorney Larry Epstein said. “I think this was simply a crime of violence.”

A law passed by the 2007 Montana Legislature makes it a felony to cause bodily injury to someone on the basis of race, creed, religion or national origin.

Todd, Brian and Aaron Molenda are charged with misdemeanor assault for the attack on County Commissioner Ron Rides at the Door early on Sept. 20 in Cut Bank. All have pleaded not guilty.

Rides at the Door said he was attacked when he tried to stop the brothers from beating a local ranch hand. Rides at the Door said he was punched and kicked and that someone

stomped on his cell phone as he tried to call 911.

State Sen. Carol Juneau, D-Browning, a sponsor of the hate crime legislation, said Epstein should review the law and consider the more serious charges.

Epstein said he is familiar with the state hate crime law but chose not to prosecute based on it because he doesn’t believe Rides at the Door was targeted because of his race.

“I was disgusted. It was awful,” Epstein said. “And I reviewed this case with an eye toward charging felonies. If I could prove this case was racially motivated, I’d charge them.”

Instead, he believes the attack was because of Rides at the Door’s intervention and threat to call police.

“My sense is that this was motivated by violence, not race, and that any person who stepped into that situation, no matter his race and color, would have been beaten as well,” Epstein said.

## Officer fired after sex charge

Miami Herald

MIAMI — A Seminole police officer charged with trying to have sex with his 17-year-old daughter has been fired, a tribal spokesman said Tuesday.

The 46-year-old man, who is not being identified in order to protect the girl’s privacy, lived in Sunrise and had been a member of the Seminole Police Department since December 2006.

“He has been terminated as a result of the arrest,” Seminole

Tribe spokesman Gary Bitner said.

According to the Sunrise Police Department’s arrest report, the man’s mother walked in on him in the kitchen of their home Thursday afternoon and saw him grabbing parts of the girl’s body. Both the suspect and the daughter were fully clothed.

The girl told police her father had been giving her Ambien sleeping pills for several years and that “after she falls asleep, she doesn’t know what happens,” police said.

## Undecided supporter



Associated Press

Independent voter Michael Loya poses at his home in Arroyo Seco, on Friday, Oct. 10. He’s undecided about who he will support for president.

## Ottawa Indian Tribe members get free tuition

By Mara Rose Williams  
The Kansas City Star

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — While the cost of a college education jumps every year, Ottawa University has agreed to educate some students for free.

The university, which has its main campus in Ottawa, Kan., and another in Overland Park, has signed an agreement to house and educate for free members of the Ottawa Indian Tribe, which donated 65 acres of land for the school nearly 150 years ago.

The agreement is an extension of the original condition of the land donation — free tuition to any member of the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma. In addition to free tuition, tribe members now will get their student fees, room and board paid for.

The agreement extends to all of the estimated 2,700 officially recognized members of the tribe. The offer is available

at any Ottawa University campus, including its residential campus in Ottawa; and its adult-education campuses in Overland Park; Phoenix and Chandler, Ariz.; Brookfield, Wis.; and Jeffersonville, Ind. It also includes online courses.

The agreement, effective in January 2009, was reached last weekend between the university’s recently named president, Kevin C. Eichner, and Ottawa Tribe Chief John Robert Ballard.

Ballard was not available for comment Tuesday, when the agreement was announced.

“We believe that expanding this agreement is in keeping with the Ottawa spirit and honors the heritage of this institution and its relationship with the Ottawa Tribe,” Eichner said.

Since the mid-1970s there have been 50 members of the tribe at the university. Seventeen have graduated, and currently three tribe members attend the school.

## Chairman wants ‘one-stop’ oil shop

By Lauren Donovan  
Bismarck Tribune

BISMARCK, N.D. — While North Dakota will see record oil production this year from nearly 4,000 oil wells, those numbers won’t get much boost from the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

Chairman Marcus Wells Jr. said he and other officials want to bust through a logjam of backed up oil permits by creating a “one-stop” oil shop on the reservation.

There are only two Bakken formation wells on the reservation, despite the fact that nearly all the minerals are leased up and \$122 million in lease payments - almost all for oil acreages - have been sent out to the Three Affiliated Tribes and individual allottees. The tribe expects to receive another \$32 million in lease payments within the next two months, Wells said.

Elsewhere, hundreds of wells have been or are being drilled into the Bakken formation, but a 49-step process for

wells on the reservation slows permits there to a trickle, Wells said.

Wells said the idea is to get the BIA, Bureau of Land Management, Minerals Management Service, and the Office of the Special Trustee - all agencies involved in the permit process - under one roof so permits can be issued more quickly.

The chairman said even though leases and bonuses are moving along, there are 60 permits pending an environmental review before drilling can start.

“The permits are still taking too long,” he said.

Wells said tribal members are putting their bonus payments into homes, investments and transportation and are “looking at royalties.”

The Bakken formation is the source of some of the state’s most productive wells on the east side of Mountrail County, where the reservation is located. The industry is eager to move across onto reservation land to see how well the formation produces going west.

The BIA added extra staff to issue leases and bonus payments, but drilling companies that want to probe their acreage and get a return on their investment in leases face an 18-month wait, or longer. Outside the reservation, the State Department of Mineral Resources’ oil and gas division can issue a drilling permit in about a month.

Wells said he is working with Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., on the one-stop oil shop request.

Dorgan made the request Friday to George Skibine, acting deputy assistant secretary for Policy and Economic Development for Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior.

Dorgan said with an estimated 4.3 billion barrels of recoverable oil, the Bakken is one of the richest oil reserves in the country.

“There is no reason to allow a lot of red tape and a scattered bureaucracy to continue to cause these delays,” Dorgan said.