

Gov. gets support from tribes

By Clare Jensen
Tacoma Weekly

TACOMA, Wash. — Governor Chris Gregoire paid a visit to the Puyallup Indian Reservation Oct. 25 for the second Democratic rally sponsored by the tribe in a week.

About 200 American Indians gathered at Columbia Junior High School, in Fife, to listen to various Democratic candidates speak on the issues for the election that is now less than one week away.

Gregoire, who has a history of working closely with tribes throughout her current term, received immense support at the rally as she spoke of her accomplishments, and future plans if she is re-elected over challenger Dino Rossi.

In the last election, Gregoire beat Rossi by a mere 133 votes. The closeness of the last race is one reason why the tribe has been avidly recruiting more American Indian voters and hosting rallies to get registered voters excited, and reminding them to vote.

"I am the governor in the United States who knows best...every vote counts," Gregoire said. "Let's make it happen. On Nov. 4 — no recounts."

Puyallup Tribal Councilmember Bill Sterud noted that in the past the tribe had "Never really delved into getting Natives to vote...but it seems to be working."

The bevy of Democratic supporters was decked out in hats, pins, T-shirts and signs, showcasing their stake in the upcoming election.

"This (rally) shows that you care about what happens on Nov. 4, and you care about what happens after Nov. 4," said Craig Bill, executive director for the governor's office of Indian affairs.

Pierce County Executive John Ladenburg, who is currently running for state attorney general, is another Democrat who has a long working history with the Puyallup Tribe.

"We really, really need Obama as president and Gregoire as governor to start to turn this back around," he said.

Tribal Councilmembers David Bean and Nancy Shipentower-Games both stated how important it was for the Indian and non-Indian communities to vote for Gregoire. They cited her working relationship with Washington tribes as the source for the Puyallup Tribe's strong support for her.

Alaska Native corporations thank Sen. Stevens



Joshua Borough/For The New York Times

Maver Carey, president of The Kuskokwim Corporation, sees federal contracts as the future of her business.

Senator helped Native corporation manage lands, money

By The New York Times News Service

JUNEAU, Alaska — In 1971, a few years after he was first elected to the Senate, Mr. Stevens helped write the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Also known as the "Billion Dollar Deal," the act established more than 200 corporations to manage almost 45 million acres and gave \$962 million to Alaska Natives in return for their ceding of all aboriginal land rights.

When the Alaska Native corporations struggled in their early years as they tried to turn people who had survived on fishing and hunting into business managers and to teach thousands of villagers to call themselves shareholders, Senator Stevens was there, too.

He helped corporations with financial difficulties by persuading Congress to approve a provision in the 1986 Tax Reform Act allowing the corporations to sell their accumulated tax losses to profitable companies seeking tax write-offs.

That same year, Senator Stevens introduced legislation that allowed Alaska Native corporations to participate in a Small Business Administration 8(a) contracting program, a provision that has proven lucrative to many of them.

And just a month ago, in the wake of questions that some of the corporations were misusing the contracting program, he successfully pushed Congress to remove a provision from the 2009 Defense Authorization Act that would have limited their access.

After his conviction on Monday on charges he violated federal ethics laws by failing to report tens of thousands of dollars in gifts and services he had received from friends, Senator Stevens's future in Congress is uncertain.

But Louis A. Thompson, 72, who has run one of the corporations, Kavlico Inc., for 36 years, said the companies had grown into sophisticated operations that could stand on their own. "Senator Stevens was very helpful early on and not just to Alaska Native corporations, to all Alaskans," he said. "But times

have changed."

Indeed, the Alaska Native corporations have made strides since the early days, when they built seafood plants before negotiating for fish deliveries and constructed hotels in remote villages that had never seen tourists. Today, they consistently rank among state's largest businesses. The small-business 8(a) contracting program has been important to that success.

As of May, 187 Alaska Native-owned companies were participating in the 8(a) program, according to a report by the Small Business Administration's Office of Inspector General. From 2000 to 2006, Alaska Native corporations won nearly \$13 billion in federal contracts.

Maver E. Carey, 41, the leader of one of those corporations, sees the federal contracts as the future of her business. And other small corporations are looking to her to help them navigate the complicated and expensive path to federal business.

Her enterprise, the Kuskokwim Corporation, represents Aniak and nine other remote Alaska communities. Its responsibilities cover a geographic area larger than New England, but without cellphone towers, major road systems or many jobs. "In Kalskag, one of our largest villages, there are 80 homes and 40 of them don't have running water," Ms. Carey said.

Kuskokwim's 2,903 shareholders want regular corporate dividends, and many also seek educational and employment opportunities from the corporation.

Kuskokwim was founded in 1977 when 10 village corporations decided that they did not have the staff or resources to build businesses alone. The merged entity formed a headquarters in Anchorage and eked out dividends primarily through investments in Alaska real estate and a conservative portfolio of stocks and bonds.

Ms. Carey, whose maternal grandparents are Yupik Eskimo and Athabas-

can Indian, turned to Kuskokwim in 1994 after earning a college degree, working for an engineering firm and being laid off. "My village corporation offered me \$9 an hour and I took it thinking I'd continue to look for a real job," she said. By 2003, after she had worked in every corporate department, the board asked her to become the chief executive.

She pushed diversification, with a goal of building Kuskokwim's shareholder equity to \$100 million by 2015. Last year, it topped \$18 million, up from \$14 million in 2006. In 2005, the company started TKC Development Inc. to focus on federal contracting. TKC subsidiaries have won work from the United States Navy and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Last year, Ms. Carey started an Alaska Native village corporation association. Her inspiration came from conversations with other chief executives facing challenges similar to her own. A membership drive under way has registered about 50 Native corporation executives.

Their goal is to be as successful as the Afognak Native Corporation, one of Alaska's largest businesses. Afognak is owned by 700 shareholders descended from the Alutiiq people of the Kodiak Archipelago. In 2006, its profits reached \$18.8 million on revenue of \$537.9 million, the latest figures available. That year, each shareholder received a dividend payment of \$21,688. Afognak employs 5,000 people globally, and about 50 of them are shareholders.

Afognak is now run by a non-native chief executive with significant government experience. It won the first of its major contracts in 2000, when it secured a deal to operate Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico. In recent years, it has won a contract to build a brigade combat team complex worth more than \$100 million at Fort Bragg, N.C., and another worth more than \$50 million to renovate the United States Embassy in São Paulo.

Still, there have been questions about the 8(a) contracts that have gone to Afognak and other Alaska Native companies. A 2006 study by the federal Government Accountability Office called for better S.B.A. supervision of Alaska Native corporations that hold 8(a) contracts. The agency's inspector general is currently conducting an audit of S.B.A. oversight of 10 to 15 of the largest Alaska Native corporations engaged in federal contracting.

In August, it found that two companies, Goldbelt Raven L.L.C., owned by Goldbelt Inc. of Juneau, and APM L.L.C., a subsidiary of the Cape Fox Corporation of Ketchikan, violated terms of the contracting program by entering into agreements that resulted in millions of dollars in 8(a) revenues being paid to companies owned by non-native managers. The administration suspended them from the program and moved to end their eligibility. Both companies are appealing the move, according to officials representing Goldbelt and APM.

Steve Colt, the interim director at the Institute of Social and Economic Research at University of Alaska, who has studied Alaska Native corporations, said that many of the corporations struggled to stay afloat in their first two decades of operations and that Mr. Stevens and the rest of the Alaska delegation worked hard to keep them in business.

"If you look at the historical record, there were lots of incidents of Stevens being very helpful to Alaska Native corporations," Mr. Colt said. "But I suspect that the number of assists has decreased over time." He predicted that whoever holds the United States Senate seat for Alaska in the future will fight for legislation that protects Alaska Native corporations because they now have a major impact on the state's economy.

Dorgan: Progress in Congress, but more work needed

By Indian Country Today

WASHINGTON — This year, Congress had both good news and bad news for Indian country.

The good news was very good. Congress approved and sent to the president the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2008.

That's the law that authorizes basic housing programs in Indian country. It expired in 2007. Getting it back on the books was an urgent priority.

There are very serious housing problems in Indian country. Today, 90,000 American Indian families are homeless or underhoused. Forty percent of on-reservation housing is inadequate. More than one-third of Indian homes are overcrowded.

These are near Third World housing conditions, right here in America. To get to just an "adequate" level of housing in Indian country, we need 230,000 more housing units in Indian country than we have today.

The United States has important trust responsibilities to American Indians,

and that includes housing. Sadly, the housing numbers make clear we have a long way to go before we've met that responsibility.

Getting the basic Indian housing program reauthorized is a critical first step. Since it began, this program has allowed tribes across the United States to build, acquire and substantially rehabilitate more than 1,600 home rental units and more than 6,000 home ownership units. That's real progress, but we still have a long way to go.

The legislation also makes some important changes. One of the biggest is new flexibility for tribes to target the housing funds they receive to better meet their local housing needs, through decisions made locally, by tribes themselves, not some federal official in far off Washington, D.C.

I intend to use my chairmanship of the Indian Affairs Committee to keep working to fundamentally reform and improve health care for Native Americans.

Another change allows tribes to use some of the funds to promote economic development in their local

area. Good jobs boost wages and incomes and, ultimately, make it possible for better housing in a community. This is an important improvement.

Unfortunately, though, it was not all good news coming from Congress this year on legislation important to Indian country.

A huge disappointment was the failure of Congress to send the president the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2008. We passed it in the Senate, where I chair the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, but it did not clear the House of Representatives.

The need for this legislation was just as urgent as the Indian housing bill. It may surprise many non-Indians — but few Indians — to learn that access to adequate health care for Native Americans is in such crisis that we literally have health care rationing in Indian country. Only 60 percent of American Indian health care needs are met. There's a saying on many reservations that "if you're going to get sick, do it before July," because that's when the IHS often runs out of contract health

money to treat Indian men, women and children.

The consequence is not surprising — widespread and serious health challenges throughout Indian country. Native Americans die at rates six times higher than the general population from tuberculosis, five times higher than the general population rate from alcoholism, five times higher from diabetes, and two times higher from suicide.

This was good legislation. The House should have joined the Senate in passing it. It included important new initiatives that would have dramatically improved Indian health efforts — mental health programs to address unusually high youth suicide rates; long term care programs for those suffering from chronic illnesses; and greater access to Medicare/Medicaid programs for broader health care coverage.

Unfortunately, unnecessary and highly controversial language regarding abortion was added to the Indian health bill and sunk it. Somebody wanted to make a political point rather than focus on increasing health care for Native Amer-

icans. As a result, urgently needed improvements for more than 1.9 million people served by the IHS were denied.

We did secure some victories for Indian health in the 110th Congress. In March, at my request, the Senate authorized an additional \$1 billion in funds for the IHS. I was also able to secure another \$250 million authorization for Indian health care as part of the Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Reauthorization Act of 2008. We still need to secure appropriations for these authorizations, but they are, even by themselves, important steps in the right direction.

While I am grateful for that progress, I intend to use my chairmanship of the Indian Affairs Committee to keep working to fundamentally reform and improve health care for Native Americans.

The First Americans urgently need and deserve better health care. My pledge to Indian country, as chairman, is to keep working until they get it.

Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., is the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Northern Cheyenne to honor battlefields

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The Northern Cheyenne plan to celebrate the recent designation of two battlefields as national historic landmarks.

The tribe will honor the history of the Rosebud Battlefield near Kirby and the Wolf Mountain Battlefield near Birney at an event planned in Lama Deer on Wednesday.

The battle of the Rosebud occurred June 17, 1876, when Sioux and Cheyenne forces attacked the command of Gen. George Crook. Both sides claimed victory, but Crook returned to Wyoming, where he was neutralized as part of a campaign to round up tribes and force them onto reservations.

A week later, more than 260 troopers under the command of Lt. Col. George Custer were wiped out at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

After that battle, Col. Nelson Miles was sent to Montana to retaliate.