

Law for English retains a foe

By Clifton Adcock
Tulsa World

TULSA, Okla. — Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chad Smith told a luncheon crowd on Wednesday that he will fight any future attempts to make English the state's official language.

He also said this year's failed attempt in the Legislature to place a constitutional amendment on the issue on November's ballot was mere political posturing.

Smith addressed the monthly luncheon of the Greater Tulsa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce at the Crowne Plaza Hotel downtown.

He said rather than passing legislation to restrict other languages, the Legislature should focus on measures that would encourage children to learn other languages and about other cultures.

Such a measure, Smith said, not only would help youngsters broaden their horizons, but show the state is open to other cultures, languages and points of view.

"Language is identity," Smith told the group. "It's how you see the world. Allowing different languages is a competitive intelligence."

Because of forced assimilation, such as punishment at Indian boarding schools for speaking the Cherokee language, fewer than 5 percent of tribal members speak the language, Smith said.

"The value for us in language, it brings activeness, it brings fulfillment, it brings depth," he said.

Smith said showing tolerance for other languages and cultures takes a broader view of the world.

"To me, that's what revitalizing a language is, thinking in color instead of black and white," Smith said. "When you capture the concept of English-only, what you're implying is ignorance; it's myopic. You stay confined in this little box."

This year, a measure sponsored by Rep. Randy Terrill, R-Moore, would have put the issue of English as an official language on November's ballot as a constitutional amendment. But it failed to come to a vote in the Senate after language in the bill was deemed unclear.

In previous years, when bills promoting English as an official language came before the Legislature, Smith often was allowed to speak. However, at a committee meeting this year on Senate Bill 163, he was denied the opportunity to speak, and interrupted after he heard Terrill speaking about how the bill's purpose "was to assimilate and acknowledge that bilingualism is divisive."

"What do we assimilate to? We assimilate to Mr. Terrill's mind, which is spooky in itself," Smith said Wednesday.

"This year, there's no question, it was placed for a constitutional referendum vote not because they wanted it to pass, but because they wanted to get Republicans to the polls. They believed they could pander to the lowest common denominator of the Republican Party and of the general public by saying 'We're tired of hearing Spanish.' Then you drive public policy by pandering to the lowest common denominator and prejudices of people, prejudices born out of fear of intelligence."

Forced assimilation is not the answer, Smith said, and the issued is unlikely to remain dormant for long.

"If we want to assimilate, it's not by force, but because we choose to adapt," he said. "This issue is not going away; it will be back next year."

Navajo VP meets with McCain

By Diné Bureau

ALBUQUERQUE — Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly was one of several tribal leaders in New Mexico to meet with Republican presidential nominee U.S. Senator John McCain on Memorial Day.

"It's important that candidates keep us in perspective," said Shelly.

"We're making great strides in many areas but we also need candidates to know our initiatives," said the vice president as he outlined water rights, energy, healthcare, and creating viable economic development opportunities.

Shelly was one of several

tribal leaders in New Mexico who were invited to meet with the presidential candidate. During his introduction, the vice president gave an overview of other issues deemed important to the Navajo Nation, including rehabilitating infrastructure for the Bennett Freeze residents, significantly increasing funding for jail and court facilities, and supporting tax incentives for renewable energy initiatives.

The tribe's Washington office said in a talk with tribal leaders about sovereignty, McCain said he would appoint a Native American in the White House.

"I will keep up with this a

priority because a great nation has to honor its treaties. We entered into solemn treaties. I want to assure you that there will be someone in the White House who will have my constant attention."

Education was also among the many issues discussed during the meeting.

Native American education "has been at a national disgrace for 200 years ... it is an abrogation of our responsibilities in our solemn treaty obligations we entered into," said McCain. "We have to have some straight talk. One of the problems is the quality of education. Even if we fund the schools, in which we have never done an adequate job,

we have got to attract good teachers. We have got to attract quality type of administrators."

To better education, McCain suggested tribal governments buy into the federal government's Self-Governance initiative, which was created by legislation he authored in 2004 while serving as a member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Healthcare issues were discussed briefly in the meeting, such as McCain's co-sponsorship of the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

In his discussion about substance abuse, he said, "I have been to Window Rock

many times and I would come over here to New Mexico."

According to the Washington Office, McCain said he was so appalled at stories about Gallup that he spent a Saturday night in Gallup about ten years ago.

"Frankly, that motivated me a great deal on the whole issue of alcohol abuse and many of the problems associated with it. It's one of the more interesting experiences of my life and one of the more sad ones," McCain said.

Among the important healthcare issues, citizenship was also discussed with tribal leaders.

"We go back and forth on this issue. Some tribes want stricter requirements on who is eligible for tribal membership and other want dramatically looser ones. This fight goes on back and forth in the Congress and within the NCAI (National Congress of American Indians)," McCain said. "It would help if leadership of Indian Country all over American came up with one set position and I think that would be adopted."

In response to a question about homeland security funding, McCain suggested that Department of Homeland Security funds be directed to "the sovereign tribal nations," rather than to states.

Before leaving the meeting, he urged tribal leaders to "have a vigorous voter and registration program between now and next November."

"Everybody should be voting — that's the first priority. If you vote for me or not, get everybody registered to vote — not only for the presidential race, but also the congressional races. There are all sorts of races that affect your futures," he said.

McCain's visit with tribal leaders in New Mexico is one scheduled stop among candidates in their appeal to Native Americans. On Wednesday Sen. Hillary Clinton was in Pine Ridge, S.D., as she outlined her plans to restore the White House liaison under her presidency, to strengthen tribal sovereignty, and to increase spending in healthcare to Native Americans.



Navajo Nation Vice President Ben Shelly meets with Republican presidential nominee Se. John McCain during a meeting with tribal leaders in Albuquerque on Memorial Day. — courtesy photo

Woman driving van full of kids killed in collision

Karen Brownlee
Regina Leader Post

REGINA, Saskatchewan — A teacher's assistant driving a van filled with children was killed following a collision with a car Monday night.

Thirty-eight-year-old Kara Thompson of Carry the Kettle First Nation, about 140 kilometres southeast of Regina, was driving 12 lacrosse team members between the ages of eight and 13 back to the First Nation after they played a game in Regina.

She was on the main road into the First Nation around 10 p.m. when a car driven by another Carry the Kettle resident struck the side of the van. There was a yield sign on the road the car was travelling on, said Sgt. Carole Raymond.

"As tragic as this is, it could have been much worse," said Carry the Kettle Chief Barry Kennedy.

The 12 children and the driver of the other vehicle, who was alone, were taken to hospital, said Raymond.

The children's injuries varied in severity and included lacerations and broken bones, said Raymond.

Carry the Kettle band manager Wayne Ironstar said some of the children

were taken to local hospitals, while the more seriously injured were taken to Regina, including his nephew. Some of them remained in hospital Tuesday morning, he said.

The 48-year-old man in the other vehicle was taken to hospital in Regina. Kennedy said he heard he was in critical but stable condition.

Ironstar said he was not sure if the van involved was a 15- or 20-passenger vehicle, but said it belonged to the First Nation.

Classes have been cancelled at the school at Carry the Kettle, although buses continue to run. A crisis management team is at the school.

Kennedy said he spent time with Thompson's family last night. They are distraught and shocked. Thompson was a mother, but Kennedy did not know the ages of her children.

Thompson was known for working closely with the children of the First Nation and took great pride in her work as a teacher's assistant, said Kennedy.

"All her heart's effort went into working with the kids," said Kennedy.

Indian Head and Mountmartre RCMP as well as the File Hills police force continue to investigate. No charges had been laid by Tuesday morning.

Tribal transfer agreement reached in Lemoore

By Dani Carlson
KMPH

FRESNO, Calif. — A Native American tribe made history Wednesday in Lemoore. In front of about 100 witnesses, 1,160 acres transferred into trust for the Tachi Yokut Native American tribe in Lemoore.

That means, according to tribal officials, the size of their reservation more than doubled.

The land the tribe's 776 registered members live on now is called the Santa Rosa Rancheria.

Now that the tribe has much more land, they say they will think about changing that to the Santa Rosa Reservation rather than Rancheria.

"Today is a great day we are getting back our homeland...even if it's one acre

it's still something that belonged to us before and it's finally coming back," said Clarence Atwell Jr. Atwell is the tribal chairman.

As to why now, U.S. officials had this to say, "Tribes are in the process of buying back and restoring lands they had hundreds of years ago to restore where they traditionally lived," said Amy Dutschke from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a sub set of the U.S. Department of Interior.

Officials like Dutschke said Wednesday's transfer took about five years, a little longer than the typical 2-3 it would normally take.

"We have not done very many acquisitions of this size it is pretty significant most of the land we see is 5-10 acre parcels or so," said Dutschke.

Tribal officials say the land cost about \$1.2 million, paid

for by profits from the Tachi Palace Hotel and Casino.

"Nobody will give you anything for free, we're just happy we have it back today," said Atwell.

Although expensive, members say the land is worth any price, because it represents a lot more to them than the dirt and empty fields that are on it now.

"We've lived of the land since the dawn of time and just getting this little sliver here means everything," said Raymond Jeff the tribal historian.

Tribal officials said they plan to use the land to build more homes and to diversify their industry. Atwell said they might try to build an outlet mall, and eventually a hospital.

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Graham to lead IKBI as president

Neshoba Democrat

MOUNT PLEASANT, Mich. — Jeff Graham has been appointed president of IKBI, Inc., a tribally owned and operated enterprise of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

Graham comes to the position after working with the company for the past three-and-a-half years as the director of operations.

"Jeff brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the IKBI team," said Charlie Benn, chairman of IKBI, Inc.'s Board of Directors. "We

know that under his leadership the company will continue to prosper and generate wealth and opportunities for the Choctaw community."

Graham has an extensive career in construction management with over 17 years of support to tribal enterprises prior to joining IKBI.

He replaces Josh Gambling.

"Jeff has been the driving force behind IKBI's success since its start-up phase," said Miko Beasley Denson. "I support Mr. Benn's decision in appointing Jeff. He is an outstanding director and I feel

very comfortable with him behind the wheel. He has worked with our tribal enterprises for almost 20 years. The Tribe fully supports this transition and looks forward to a successful future with IKBI."

IKBI is a general contracting firm that helps government and private sector clients, throughout the Southeast, with large commercial/industrial, earthwork, and renovation projects.

In the Choctaw language, ikbi means to make or construct.