

Coeur d'Alene Tribe's gaming gifts add up

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — When the Coeur d'Alene Tribe first signed a gaming compact with the state of Idaho in 1992, tribal leaders insisted on donating 5 percent of net casino gaming proceeds to education on or near their reservation—a gesture that has added up to \$16.8 million in donations since 1994, including \$1.5 million this year and \$1.8 million last year.

"The tribe originated the idea," said David High, the now-retired deputy Idaho attorney general who for years oversaw negotiations with the state's Indian tribes over gaming. "They didn't have to do it."

In fact, High said, the National Indian Gaming Regulatory Act forbids states from taxing or assessing any kind of fees on the proceeds of tribal gaming. "Congress intended the tribes to get the financial benefit of Indian gaming and did not want the states trying to take a piece of that," he said.

But in the case of the Coeur d'Alenes, "The tribe has agreed to it is the thing," High said.

Later, the tribe wrote the 5 percent contribution into a tribal gaming initiative that Idaho voters strongly approved in 2002, prompting two other Idaho tribes, the Kootenai and Nez Perce, to add it to their compacts as well.

The biggest beneficiary of the Coeur d'Alenes' donations has been the beleaguered Plummer-Worley School District, which has received \$3.125 million, including \$110,000 this year and \$110,000 last year. The second-biggest beneficiary was the Coeur d'Alene Tribal School in DeSmet, which got \$2.8 million.

"We've been very grateful for it—it's helped us out an awful lot, helped our students," said Judi Sharrett, Plummer-Worley superintendent.

This year, the tribe's contribution to Plummer-Worley made up 2.4 percent of the school district's budget.

The district is one of the state's poorest; it's the only one for which the state has had to force a property tax increase after local voters repeatedly refused to approve a bond to replace a condemned elementary school.

"They're close and a lot of our kids go there," said Helo Hancock, the tribe's legislative liaison, adding, "There's certainly a need there."

Ernie Stensgar, the longtime Coeur d'Alene tribal chairman and current vice chairman who signed the original gaming compact with the state, said, "I think we wanted to really give people a good look at who we were. And giving is part of our culture."

That's a tradition that stretches far back into the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's history, from helping out starving and freezing white settlers in pioneer times to the cultural tradition of handing out blankets, shawls, drums and bandannas at tribal events.

The Nez Perce and tiny Kootenai tribes also have taken pride in their donations since 2002, and note that like the Coeur d'Alenes, they've given more than the required 5 percent and have supported many causes, including college scholarships, social programs, wildlife restoration and local kindergarten classes.

But the success of the Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel, which has made the tribe the second-largest employer in North Idaho, behind only Kootenai Medical Center, has prompted some grumbling in recent years over who got how much of the education money. That's prompted the tribe to stop holding formal ceremonies announcing the donations for the past two years, which led to speculation that the tribe no longer was making them.

"I know in the recent years they just haven't wanted to make a big showing about it,"

The tribe now employs nearly 2,000 people, including 1,300 at the casino

said state Rep. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene, who chairs the Idaho Council on Indian Affairs.

In August, the Coeur d'Alene Press reported that schools in the region, including Plummer-Worley, hadn't gotten contributions from the tribe in two years, though the same newspaper had published an article in January noting that the district had included grant funds from the casino in its budget. The Idaho Lottery issued a statement saying the tribe had met its 5 percent requirement and had been "good stewards of their gaming activities and generous neighbors to the communities on or near the reservation as well as to other good causes."

Said Hancock, "We challenge anybody to find another organization who gives more to the community than the Coeur d'Alene Tribe." He called suggestions that the tribe wasn't keeping its 5 percent promise "ridiculous and offensive."

The hubbub prompted a series of public records requests to the Idaho Lottery Commission, the agency designated to oversee tribal gaming in the state. Most sought a breakdown of who got how much money from the Coeur d'Alenes' 5 percent donations, but the lottery doesn't have that information. Both the tribe's compact with the state and the 2002 initiative say the donations are handed out "at the sole discretion of the tribe."

The only information the tribes hand over to the Lottery Commission is their audited financial statement, which shows the 5 percent figure, along with other proprietary information about their gaming operations, such as, in some cases, background checks on employees and information about security

procedures. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's compact with the state exempts from public disclosure information it submits to the state under the trade secrets clause of Idaho Public Records Law.

Compacts between the state and the other tribes contain similar trade-secrets confidentiality provisions.

High noted that the Coeur d'Alenes' donations to the communities around them stood them in good stead when then-Gov. Phil Batt convened a task force in 1997 to hold hearings around the state to determine whether Idahoans still wanted to allow gambling on Indian reservations. Despite a membership that included a host of gambling opponents, the task force voted narrowly in favor of allowing limited reservation casinos to continue operating.

"At the hearings, we had local government people coming in, saying how gaming had benefited their communities," High said. "So it was obviously really a wise move on their part."

In 2002, when he was a candidate for Congress, Gov. Butch Otter endorsed the tribal gaming initiative.

Idaho's once-destitute Indian tribes have thrived since they added gambling operations. Unemployment among Coeur d'Alene tribal members before the casino was as high as 70 percent, while now there are more jobs than tribal members on the reservation. Among all residents of the reservation, including non-Indians, unemployment has dropped by half from 11.3 percent in 1990 to 5.2 percent, on average, between 2005 and 2009, according to the Idaho Department of Labor.

Hancock said the tribe now employs nearly 2,000 people, including 1,300 at the casino; nearly 70 percent are non-Indians.

Native American woman approved for sainthood

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (AP) — A Native American woman is among seven new saints approved by Pope Benedict XVI. That puts the Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha on track to be canonized next year.

Tekakwitha was a Native American baptized in 1676 in the Mohawk Valley.

She fled to a mission in Canada after being scorned and threatened in her home village near what is now the village of Fonda.

Benedict signed decrees last week approving miracles attributed to the intercession of the woman and six others, the last obstacle to their canonizations.

Mich. woman brings Indian remains home from Canada

MOUNT PLEASANT, Mich. (AP) — A Michigan woman attending college in Canada returned home for Christmas with the remains of American Indian that were kept at a museum for more than 100 years.

The remains, along with other items, were then repatriated Monday by the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe in central Michigan's Isabella County. It's not known how the remains

ended up at the Museum of Vancouver in British Columbia, although officials say there was much "random collecting" in the early 20th century.

The remains were transported by Emily Birky of Glenn, Mich., who is pursuing a doctorate at the University of British Columbia. She believes the remains were removed from a mound near the Cass River, south of Saginaw, around 1905.

Jury dings Calif. tribe for \$31 million in casino dispute

PLACERVILLE, Calif. (AP) — A Northern California jury has returned a \$30.4 million judgment against an Indian tribe for breaking its contracts with a company that was supposed to help build and furnish slot machines for a casino in El Dorado County.

The Shingle Springs Band of Miwok tribe said it would appeal the verdict returned late last week.

The jury awarded Chatsworth-based Sharp Image

Gaming of Chatsworth in its long-running dispute with the Miwok over the tribe's aborted plans for a casino in the late 1990s. The tribe instead contracted with a Minnesota company to build the Red Hawk casino in Placerville, which opened in 2008.

The tribe claimed that its contract was invalid because the slot machines the company planned to supply violated gambling regulations that existed at the time.

Long-time Navajo judge to retire

CHINLE, Ariz. (AP) — Navajo Nation District Court Judge Leroy S. Bedonie is retiring at year's end. The tribe's Judicial Branch announced that

Bedonie will retire Dec. 31. Bedonie has served the Navajo Nation court system since 1989 when he was confirmed as a probationary judge.

Woman sentenced for embezzling

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A St. Michael woman convicted of embezzling from the Spirit Lake Tribe has been sentenced to three years of probation and restitution.

Patricia Robertson, 53, will spend six months of her time on home confinement. U.S. Attorney Timothy Purdon says the woman who also is known as Patricia Cavanaugh was ordered to pay back the tribe nearly \$5,500. Robertson was coordinator of a tribal program that helped people with low incomes pay their heating bills. She was among five tribal officers and employees indicted on theft and embezzlement charges last spring.

Hopis lose suit over effluent for snowmaking

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The Hopi Tribe has lost a round in court in its bid to stop Flagstaff from selling treated sewage water to Arizona Snowbowl. Coconino County Superior Court Judge Joe Lodge ruled in favor of the city last week.

It's not clear if the Hopis will appeal the decision. "We're going to seriously take a look at what we have," said Hopi Chairman Le Roy Shingoitewa.

The judge said the substantial components of the case had already been decided in federal court, and the tribe was legally required to raise its objections earlier.

"The plaintiff was clearly on notice in March 2002 that the city of Flagstaff intended to contract with Snowbowl to purchase reclaimed wastewater to be used for snowmaking at the Snowbowl ski area," Lodge wrote in his ruling.

The ruling sidesteps some of the new legal questions raised by the tribe, such as whether reclaimed wastewater can legally be used to make snow if the melted snow then flows into other water basins outside of Snowbowl, which is prohibited by state regulations.

Flagstaff officials were pleased with the ruling.

Delay sought in Crow triple killing trial

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The defense attorney for a man accused of killing three family members on southeast Montana's Crow Indian Reservation has asked a federal judge to delay a trial that was scheduled to begin this week.

Public defender David Merchant said the request

was made because the ballistics report has not been completed on a weapon recovered from the car of suspect Sheldon Bernard Chase when he was arrested in Spokane, Wash.

Chase is charged with first degree murder in the deaths of his 80-year-old grandmother, his cousin and his cousin's boy-

friend. He is being held at the Yellowstone County jail.

The U.S. Attorney's Office has not objected to the request for a continuance.

Merchant says that if the court grants the request the trial likely would be delayed several months.

We Need a Logo!!!!
\$200 Prize

The "Let's Talk Diversity" Coalition is in need of a logo for our: website, flyers, press releases and all other Coalition work. We need something that represents our Motto: "BUILDING COMMUNITY STRENGTH THROUGH DIVERSITY"

Respect Strength Equity Vision
Diversity Hope Community Health
Colorful/vibrant Inclusion Fairness Empowerment Celebrate

Please keep the above words in mind while creating our logo.

The Let's Talk Diversity Coalition is a community coalition which came together to promote equality and fairness in Jefferson County and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

To enter into the contest please send your name, contact information, design and design explanation to Erin Tofte at erint@bestcaretreatment.org or 715 SW 4th St., Suite C, Madras, OR 97741 please email or call with questions 541-325-5001 ext. 4221. Contest is Open until February 29th. Thank you for your interest! We look forward to seeing your design!