

Road part of Indian burial site

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (AP) - Construction on an area road has been delayed partly because of its location on an ancient American Indian burial site, state transportation officials said.

"There was the potential for Indian artifacts all through this," Texas Department of Transportation district engineer Craig E. Clark said last week.

The transportation department knew about the burial grounds before construction began in June 2000, but it didn't become public until last week.

Clark said Ennis Joslin Road has been delayed because the department had to move utility pipes that were in unexpected

places and because of the extent of the burial site. Initially, the project was expected to be complete in late 2003. It's now expected to be complete in September.

Clark said that the site beneath the road runs almost the entire stretch from South Padre Island Drive to Ocean Drive.

Transportation department officials did some test excavations to find out the extent of the burial site in the late 1990s, before construction began, said Nancy Kenmotsu, director of cultural resources for the transportation department. "They probably are ancestral to the Karankawas," Kenmotsu said.

The department met with

members of the Karankawa tribe before construction started, she said.

The transportation department contracted with the University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research to preserve the artifacts.

Archaeologists have found skeletal remains of a few individuals, along with several tools made from shells and rocks, Kenmotsu said. But most of the bodies are buried below where the construction contractors are digging.

Archaeologists will likely do carbon testing to date the artifacts once construction is finished. The burial site probably dates from 2500 B.C. to 1000

A.D., said Robert Drolet, an archaeologist at the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History.

"They're ancestral to the Karankawa, but we can't call them by name because they may not have gone by that name," Drolet said.

Ennis Joslin was widened from two lanes to five lanes to allow a better flow of traffic from South Padre Island Drive to Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and Naval Air Station Corpus Christi. Transportation officials said they didn't mention the burial ground earlier because they were concerned looters might scavenge bones and ancient tools.

Cherokee Nation plans to begin no-limit blackjack, poker games

CATOOSA, Okla. (AP) - The Cherokee Nation plans to begin games of blackjack and poker with no-limit betting at its Catoosa casino next week, tribal officials said.

David Stewart, chief executive officer of Cherokee Nation Business Enterprises, said games should begin as early as Wednesday and no later than Friday.

The first cards in the no-limit games are expected to be dealt at the Cherokee Nation Casino Resort in Catoosa, an \$80 million gaming facility which opened earlier this year.

"It is going to be mayhem and chaos," Stewart predicted about the first day of card playing in Catoosa. "I don't know what the other tribes will offer, but they will eventually experience the same thing."

Stewart said the Cherokee Nation is remodeling all tribal gaming facilities to accommodate card tables. At the Catoosa site, plans are to immediately open 12 blackjack tables and eight poker tables. However, the facility will eventually have 30 each of blackjack and poker tables.

The announcement of the card games by the Cherokee Nation would appear to make

it the first tribe to offer card games among local Indian gaming facilities.

Such card games are allowed under a compact agreement with the state of Oklahoma. State Question 712 established the compact, which allows Indian tribes to compact with the state for card games.

Meanwhile, the Cherokee Nation has been preparing for the day when the tribe would cut its first deck of cards.

Stewart said the tribe has been training card dealers for all Cherokee casinos, including casinos in West Siloam Springs and Roland near the Oklahoma-Arkansas border. Other tribes thinking about expanding their gaming operations into blackjack and poker are close behind the Cherokee Nation.

Gov. Bill Anoatubby of the Chickasaw Nation announced Friday at an intertribal council meeting that his tribe's gaming compact was approved Thursday by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. "I think you will see some very positive results from the compacts, which would not have been possible without the support of our people and the legislative councils," Anoatubby said.

Gay marriage debate comes to Navajo Nation

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. (AP) - The debate over same sex marriage is coming to the Navajo Nation.

Tribal Council delegate Larry Anderson Sr. has proposed legislation that would restrict a recognized union to a relationship between a man and woman.

"Navajo Nation laws...are outdated and need to be updated. That's why I'm asking for an amendment that states it is unlawful to have a marriage between two (same) sexes," Anderson, the delegate from Fort Defiance, said.

Critics of the proposed legislation say Anderson is attempting to rewrite cultural history to parallel conservative Christian backlash against gay rights across the United States.

Wesley K. Thomas, a Navajo originally from Mariano Lake and an assistant professor of anthropology at Indiana University at Bloomington, Ind., said same-sex relations among Navajo and other native peoples did not become an issue until Christian values were forced upon tribes 150 years ago.

"It wouldn't have been a question since it was a normal part of life," Thomas said. "It wasn't hidden. It's being questioned because of the immersion and acculturation of the dominant society. This (proposed) legislation is a romantic image that Anderson is trying to instill."

Anderson said his legislation is intended to "promote strong families and strong family values" - not discriminate.

He noted that members of the Navajo Nation Council who are homosexual or who have issues with the proposed legislation will be allowed to express their concern before the vote, which will take place during the Navajo Nation Council winter session Jan. 24-29.

"They're going to be submitting their comments on the Navajo Nation Council floor," Anderson said.

President Joe Shirley Jr. couldn't be reached for comment. His chief of staff said Shirley is a traditional man who is also respectful of today's society, but he didn't know which position Shirley would take on the issue.

Thomas said he believes the proposed legislation will pass because Navajo people have become conditioned to accept Western values.

Anderson said he used traditional Navajo teachings as a basis for his proposed legislation.

"Traditionally, Navajos have always respected the woman and the man union. Family values are important. The Navajo elders said we should respect both men and women," he said.

Indian artists discuss future

SANTA FE (AP) - A facilitator at a gathering of American Indian artists said they should not be afraid to cross the threshold between contemporary and traditional art.

"We need to beware of the danger of being museum-ized... of being under glass," Steve Fadden, a faculty member at the Institute of American Indian Arts here told the gathering Saturday.

The common themes raised among participants were the importance of preserving

American Indian languages and respecting elders and traditions.

Fadden said he learned late in life how to communicate in the Mohawk language of his ancestors. His first language was English.

Several participants agreed with Fadden's call to branch out with their art, saying that they need to explore multimedia.

Steve Wall said the public often thinks of Indian art in terms of ethnic stereotypes, rather than expressing how American Indians live and inter-

act with other people.

The participants also discussed their desire to use art and education to pass on history and knowledge from an American Indian perspective. They said students receive a distorted account of American history in typical classrooms.

"We have to work on breaking down the internal biases placed on us by outside forces," said Jessie Ryker-Crawford.

"Art plays an important role in that."

Indian man first to earn doctorate at S.D. Tech

(AP) - The first American Indian to earn a doctorate from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology considers himself an Indian man who practices science rather than a scientist.

Timothy Bull Bennett says he can relate to what the great Boston Celtic coach and player Bill Russell meant when he said: "I'm not a basketball player. I'm a black man who plays basketball."

"That has always stuck with me," Bull Bennett says. "I'm not a scientist. I'm an Indian man who practices science. I am very comfortable with who I am as an Indian man, strong in my convictions. I am also a believer in science and the scientific method and know how to apply it."

He looks at what he does as a scientist through the perspective of an Indian. This insight interests officials at the South Dakota college, which is trying to recruit more American Indian students.

Last May, Bull Bennett became the first American Indian to earn a doctoral degree from South Dakota Tech. He is a member of the Mi'kmaq Tribe from northern New England and eastern Canada. Born in Maine, he grew up in Wyoming and attended college at Casper College and the University of Wyoming before completing an undergraduate degree at Black Hills State University. Bull Bennett returned to the University of Wyoming to earn a master's in wildlife and range ecology.

In 1998, South Dakota Tech recruited him. Now, they see him as a harbinger. The school has created a multicultural committee to develop strategies to attract more Indian students. This spring, recommendations will be made to President Charles Ruch.

Bull Bennett was recruited into a multidisciplinary Ph.D. program at the university involving atmospheric, environmental and water resources. His doctoral research was on bison.

Now, he is the science education coordinator for five

North Dakota tribal colleges. In a program funded by the National Institutes of Health, he is working to increase the number of Indian students enrolled in higher-education biomedical research programs.

In the past two years, South Dakota Tech has set records for enrolling and graduating Indian students. But it still falls short. In fall 2003, Tech enrolled 22 first-time Indian students, the most ever, and had a total Indian student enrollment of 65, also a record. But that represented only about 4 percent of the student body; Indians make up 8.3 percent of the state's population.

Last May, nine Indian students earned undergraduate or graduate degrees. This semester, there are 10 Indian graduate students at Tech and 65 undergraduates.

"As a university, we are making progress. But this issue is so important, we can't sit back and say we've done our job," says Al Boysen, a professor in Tech's humanities department and the multicultural committee chairman.

Bull Bennett says it is especially important the institution make a commitment to bringing Indian students to science and engineering, because the university, founded in 1885, was largely created to produce engineers for the gold-mining industry that had a key role in ending the traditional lives of Northern Plains Indians.

"Really, that stood against everything the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty stood for," Bull Bennett says of a higher-education institution established to educate mining engineers. When the U.S. abolished the 1868 treaty and opened the Black Hills to mining, it paved a path that ultimately led to the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the Indian wars of the late 1870s. In that conflict, regional tribes lost both their homeland and nomadic way of life.

If Indians since then have been forced to live in a culture founded on European thinking with its high regard for logical procedure and science, many of

them in the 21st century can enrich that intellectual approach with traditional insights, Bull Bennett says.

"We are very connected to the land and the resources around us. Our society is built on that. Our sense of space is what drives us, as opposed to the sense of time that drives Western societies."

"There's a contingent of very talented and intelligent people within American Indian communities. They bring a diverse knowledge of who they are. They can make great students of science, if opportunities were provided."

Such thinking resonates at South Dakota Tech.

"Historically, the work ethic of South Dakota Tech students was enough for them to get a start on a great career," Boysen says.

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