

Abenaki corn returned to tribe

WELLS RIVER, Vt. (AP)—They've been called the "original Vermonters."

They are a tribe that was here well before the first settlers.

And in the next few generations the last vestiges of their tribe could become extinct.

There are some within the tribe who have been working to preserve their ways and traditions and earlier this month, a little more hope was granted.

At the Old School House in Wells River, the Koasek Abenaki tribe accepted the return of the corn seeds of their ancestors and took another step toward acquiring the schoolhouse for their planned Koasek Cultural Academy. Plans for the academy—which comes under their nonprofit White Pine Association—include cultural exchange programs, historic preservation and language preservation.

"We only have a few left who can speak the original language," said chief Nancy Lyons. "I expect it will be extinct in the next generation, maybe two, if we don't start preserving it now."

Lyons is leading the way to

secure money through grants, donations and fundraisers to buy the building from Charlie and Sarah Calley of Newbury, who said the building is being used for office space and apartments. Negotiations are taking place now, the Calleys said.

"We can't imagine better stewards for this building," said Sarah Calley during a short ceremony in front of the schoolhouse Wednesday afternoon.

The big focus recently however was the return of the Abenaki corn seeds, which have been out of the hands of the original people for about 300 years. Though it may seem like a small gesture on behalf of the Calleys, it meant a lot to the tribal members who gathered at the school to receive the gift.

"This is the first time in 300 years our corn has come home to us," Lyons said.

As customary after receiving a gift, Lyons said, the Abenaki would give a gift in return. She then presented the Calleys with an Indian sage—an item used for prayer—a small Abenaki basket and a T-shirt bearing the

name of the Koasek Abenaki.

Centuries before the arrival of English settlers in the 1760s, the native Abenaki people grew corn on the fields of the oxbows of the Connecticut River in Newbury, Vt., and Haverhill, N.H., according to historical information gathered by Charlie and Sarah Calley. When settlers arrived, they obtained corn seeds from the Indians and continued growing it, always saving enough seed for next year's planting.

The process of planting this corn, which only grows about waist high and produces one four-inch ear per stalk, was passed down through the generations of the settlers and eventually came to the family of the late Carroll Greene.

The Calleys met Greene in 1973. Greene, who had grown up in Newbury, grew the corn exclusively. He eventually gave the Calleys several ears of dried seed corn and asked them to keep the process going. Every spring since 1973, the Calleys said, they have planted the seed, thinning and weeding the rows and enjoying the corn, which

comes early, usually in July. The Calleys said the corn withstands drought very well, thrives in a wet summer and never gets diseased.

The Koasek Abenaki plan to redistribute the seeds and start replenishing the corn. Lyons said there are even a few members in their tribe interested in growing the corn themselves.

The location of the Old School House for the tribe's Koasek Cultural Academy is ideal because it's the location of what was, historically, the center of commerce for the Abenaki tribe, said Lyons.

She said the academy will have many aspects to it, not just for the preservation of Abenaki history, but also for the community. Plans include a health and healing center that will offer licensed clinical and social workers who are schooled in alcohol, drug and HIV prevention. There are plans for a traditional arts and crafts workshop where Abenaki citizens and others can learn traditional crafts from master craftsmen of the Abenaki Nation and elsewhere.

Court rules in favor of Osage royalty claims

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A federal court has ruled that the federal government failed to provide the Osage Nation with all of the money it was due for oil leases on tribal land.

The tribe planned a news conference to discuss the decision, filed Thursday in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

The ruling could clear the way for the tribe to collect a major settlement.

"We're talking a considerable amount of money. It's huge," said Rex Hackler, a spokesman for the tribe.

The tribe, based in Pawhuska in northeast Oklahoma, is in the process of calculating how much money it is owed.

OPI unveils Indian education materials

HELENA (AP) — Superintendent of Public Instruction Linda McCulloch unveiled new Indian Education for All classroom materials Thursday.

Indian Education for All is a law that mandates Montana schools teach all students about its American Indian tribes and reservations. The mandate was written into the Montana Constitution in 1972, but this year is the first that the state has committed substantial money to the directive.

School districts are receiving anywhere between \$100 and \$10,000 or more from the state, depending on how many students are enrolled. The schools started receiving that money on Aug. 25.

The materials include videos, curriculum guides and model lesson plans that are available for free to teachers on an Office of Public Instruction Web site.

The office is also suggesting additional materials or activities the districts could spend money on to teach students about the tribes and reservations.

Because school districts have local control over their budgets, OPI cannot mandate the districts spend the money in a particular

way, but can make suggestions.

"Schools were coming to us saying they have this money, but didn't know what to spend it on," said Tara Jensen, a spokeswoman for OPI. "This gives them some ideas."

Three videos produced by the University of Montana Regional Learning Project, in collaboration with OPI Indian Education Division, are now available to teachers. DVDs of those videos were mailed to schools earlier this week, Jensen said.

More resources will become available as schools continue to implement Indian Education for All curriculum.

OPI collaborated with Fish, Wildlife and Parks to create 25 model lesson plans for K-12 teachers that feature a Montana state park. The lesson plans can be used in classrooms or adapted to the park itself. This gives teachers the opportunity to localize Indian education in their communities by going to the park nearest to them, Jensen said.

Another new resource is a K-12 language arts, science and social studies curriculum guide developed by Sandra Fox, an Indian education expert.

School becoming known for innovative programs

POWHATTAN, Kan. (AP)—For Candace Wishkeno, school was always more than academics. It was a second home, where teachers became mentors and cultivators of her Indian culture and classmates turned into lifelong friends.

Wishkeno's mother worked in the business office at the Kickapoo Nation School, where she learned how to add and subtract, read chapter books and write in cursive in its elementary school. Twelve years later, in 1986, she graduated from its high school, picking up her diploma alongside the seven other students in her class.

Since then, Wishkeno has seen her daughter graduate and her son complete kindergarten at Kickapoo Nation School. And, her loyalty to the K-12

school has deepened after serving seven to eight years on its board of education.

"It's our tribal school and I try to support it," she said. "It's like an extended family environment."

Kickapoo Nation School is the only tribal school in Kansas. It's listed on the Kansas Department of Education's roster as an accredited nonpublic school.

"Because of the funding situation, we are different from a unified school district," superintendent Ken Tarrant said. "The money is contractual. ... We're not funded through the tax base like public schools."

Kickapoo Nation School—on the south edge of this Brown County town of about 90 people—receives funding through federal programs based

on the number of Indian students with CDIB cards enrolled during a designated count week, according to the school's Web site.

CDIB cards verify a student's degree of Indian blood.

Mary Livingston, who has been principal at the school for a year, said students typically come from four tribes—Kickapoo, Sac and Fox, Iowa and Potawatomi—but students from other tribes and non-Indian students are welcome, too.

The school doesn't receive funding for non-Indian students, the Web site states. So, while Indian students attend free of charge, tuition fees are assessed for non-Indians—\$100 a semester for an individual student or \$200 a semester per family.

Livingston said buses pick up

students from as far away as Topeka and White Cloud and transport them to the school. Eighty students were enrolled at the school in 2005-06. Staff, including 14 certified teachers, topped out at 35.

While Kickapoo Nation School doesn't have the money to issue laptops to each student or install PowerPoint equipment in classrooms like some wealthier Kansas districts, the school has garnered a reputation for at least two of its programs—Family and Child Education, and bilingual education.

Family and Child Education, or FACE, has been implemented in 38 schools across the country, with Kickapoo Nation School being designated as the top program for 2005.

Former casino opponent now supporter

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A business owner previously opposed to a proposed casino in West Warwick will now manage a tourism center inside the casino if it is built.

Providence restaurant owner Robert Burke last week joined Las Vegas-based Harrah's Entertainment, who has partnered with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, to push for the casino. Voters will decide in November whether to amend the state constitution to allow for the casino to be built in Rhode Island.

Casino advocates are proposing a tourism center inside the casino to promote other Rhode Island destinations. The "Gateway Center" would provide information on local restaurants, hotels and other tourist attractions in the state. Burke agreed Wednesday to manage the center. "Under the guidance of Bob Burke the Gateway Center will ensure that our state's small businesses and hospitality industry grows, prospers and creates jobs," Chief Sachem Matthew Thomas said.

Tewa storyteller remembered by hundreds

OHKAY OWINGEH, N.M. (AP)—Several hundred people turned out to pay their respects to Tewa storyteller and linguist Esther Martinez.

"I'm 99 percent sure she would say, 'Do not grieve. This is a sad day but believe in our ways—that the spirit lives on,'" pueblo Gov. Joe Garcia said Wednesday in his eulogy.

Martinez, 94, was killed Saturday night when the pickup truck she was in was hit head-on in Espanola by a truck driven by Jaime Martinez Gonzalez.

Police found an empty tequila bottle on the floor of Gonzalez's truck; he has been charged with vehicular homicide.

Martinez had just returned to New Mexico from a National Endowment for the Arts celebration in Washington, D.C.,

where she accepted a National Heritage Fellowship.

She was honored for her stories and life's work preserving her native Tewa language and traditions.

Before going to Washington, Garcia said Martinez made two visits: one to the Rev. Terry Brennan, who gave her the sacraments, and one to the pueblo council to ask for a blessing.

"She said, 'It's not about me, it's for our people,'" Garcia said. "She said, 'This is for all Indians in our country.'"

Garcia said Martinez "energized the entire community" by preserving the Tewa language.

Martinez taught her native language at schools in Ohkay Owingeh, formerly known as San Juan Pueblo.

She also helped translate the New Testament of the Bible into

Tewa and compiled Tewa dictionaries for various pueblos, which have distinct dialects of the language.

On Wednesday, the bells of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church rang 53 times before a chorus of chanting and drumming outside drowned out the chiming.

Two lines of men in black shirts and jeans carried Martinez's body, wrapped in a Pendleton blanket and tied to a rough wooden pallet, into the church.

A procession of hundreds of people followed the pallbearers through the pueblo's streets as they carried Martinez's body to the cemetery.

Brennan told those gathered at the service: "She may have been 94, but she was about 16 in her heart. She loved life."

Meskwaki 'code talkers' honored

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Eight Meskwakis may soon receive congressional gold medals for helping the United States track enemy forces during World War II.

The U.S. Senate last Wednesday passed a measure that would allow Congress to honor all American Indians who served as "code talkers" during the 20th

century, said Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa. The bill needs approval from the House and President Bush.

"The Meskwakis were intensely involved in World War II, and it only makes sense that they get the recognition that they have long deserved," said Grassley, who co-sponsored the measure when it was first intro-

duced last year. "Native Americans from all across the country made sacrifices and they should not be forgotten."

The Meskwakis, whose settlement is based in Tama County, were among those from 18 tribes who used their language as a secret code during World War II.

Bead artist leaves legacy

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP)—Juneau lost more than a world-renowned bead artist when Emma Frances Marks, 93, died Sept. 18.

"She was the face to the Tlingit people. She was the face of the culture," said Rosita Worl, president of the Sealaska Heritage Institute. "She represented the best of the Tlingit people."

"She was the matriarch, well-known and well-versed in the culture," said her son Paul Marks, one of the family members at her side when she died at Marks Trail, the family homesite on Douglas Island.

The Alaska State Museum in Juneau has nine of Marks' works in its collection, said registrar Donna Baron. One, a pair of earrings, is on loan to New York's American Museum of Natural History for its traveling exhibition of Native American Jewelry. The museum held a show displaying more of her work in 1988.

Her son-in-law, Richard Dauenhauer, said her work was given to international dignitaries, including Bishop Desmond Tutu.

"What she went through in her lifetime was just incredible," Dauenhauer said. "She was born into a Tlingit-speaking world, and now it almost doesn't exist. All of these ways of life that people survived with for

thousands of years are now obsolete."

Emma Marks, whose Tlingit name was Seigeigéi, was born in Yakutat in 1913. A Raven of the Sockeye clan and the Alek River Canoe Prow House, she grew up on Dry Bay and on the Italio River, still a remote area, Dauenhauer said.

She married Willie Marks and moved to Juneau in 1926. She and Willie Marks had 16 children. She outlived eight of them, as well as her husband. Marks learned beading and skin showing as a child, according to Dauenhauer.

The family was so traditional, he said, that the members lived on a boat, the New Annie, still speaking Tlingit at home after most other families had abandoned it.

Before failing eyesight and strength prevented her from continuing her art near the end of her life, her awards included the Alaska Governor's Award for the Arts in 1989.

Marks was more than an artist, said Patricia Wolf, chief executive officer of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art.

"She is one of the best known and most skilled Tlingit bead artists, Wolf said. "She was very willing to share her knowledge."