

New book details role of Oneida Indians during war

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) --The stories of Oneida Indians fighting and dying alongside Americans during the Revolutionary War have been a source of pride for generations of Oneidas, including Ray Halbritter.

The leader of the Oneida Indian Nation heard them often while growing up in central New York.

But Halbritter said when he told people outside the tribe about the contributions his ancestors made during the country's fight for independence, his words often prompted quizzical looks.

"People just sort of look at you like, 'what are you talking about?'" said Halbritter, the Oneida Nation's federally recognized representative.

Halbritter and other Oneidas hope a new book by a pair of college history professors will help shed light on an often overlooked aspect of the American Revolution, including the tribe's fighting in some of the most decisive battles.

"Forgotten Allies" was written by Joseph T. Glatthaar of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and James Kirby Martin of the University of Houston. While the authors relied for the most part on scholarly research, the Oneidas' oral tradition served as a guide.

"These stories were handed down by generation to generation, practically word for word," said Halbritter in a telephone interview earlier this week from Manhattan, where a news conference for the book's release was held.

The project started a decade ago when the Oneidas hired Glatthaar to collect documents and write a report on the tribe's experiences during the Revolution. Glatthaar soon realized he had too much material for a mere report. He suggested that he and a friend, Martin, instead write a book, under the stipulation that the Oneidas would have no editorial control over its content.

The Oneidas agreed.

"Forgotten Allies" details the Oneidas' unsuccessful efforts to remain neutral when the American colonies rebelled against British rule, the tribe's harrowing experiences during the long years of fighting, and the post-war loss of millions of acres of tribal lands.

It may come as a surprise to some Americans that the American Revolution involved more than minutemen, redcoats and the occasional Hessian. At two of the most significant battles of the war — Oriskany and Saratoga — Oneida warriors played key parts in the combat.

"They feel like they had a hand in the founding of the United States of America, which is true," Glatthaar said of today's Oneidas.

The book, Martin said, could help cure what he called the nation's "historical amnesia" when it comes to American Indians.

"Traditionally, we have had a rather narrow view of who participated in the Revolution," he

said. "The cast of characters is much broader than what we've been willing to admit over the years."

The Oneidas, one of the six tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy, decided to fight on the American side after attempts at neutrality failed. Some Tuscaroras joined them, but most of the rest of the Six Nations fought for the British.

In August 1777, at Oriskany, near present-day Utica, Iroquois fought Iroquois in what's considered by many historians to be the bloodiest battle of the Revolution.

A contingent of Oneidas was with a force of Mohawk Valley militiamen marching to the aid of patriots besieged at a frontier fort by the British and their Indian allies.

The militia walked into an ambush. Hundreds were killed, along with some Oneidas and dozens of other Iroquois. Several Oneidas distinguished themselves in combat, including a husband, his wife and their son,

who were credited with killing several of the enemy.

Just weeks later, Oneida warriors headed for the upper Hudson River where a large British force was marching toward Albany to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies. Glatthaar and Martin write that the Oneidas proved valuable, using their forest fighting skills to scout for the Americans, harass the redcoats, pick off the enemy and take prisoners.

The defeat of the British at Saratoga brought the French into the conflict on the Americans' side, a deciding factor in the war's outcome.

The following year, Oneida warriors made the long trek to Pennsylvania's Valley Forge to serve with the Continental Army commanded by George Washington, who praised his Indian allies for their "perseverance and fidelity."

Most of the Oneidas back home, facing threats of destruction from fellow Iroquois and

the British, eventually moved to the safety of Schenectady, 90 miles to the east. Three of the tribe's four principal villages would be destroyed in the bloody raids that devastated the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys until the end of the war in 1783.

"The Oneidas were refugees in Schenectady while their warriors were still fighting," Martin said. "It shows the realities as well as the complexities of the Revolutionary War."

A half-century after the Revolutionary War ended, the Oneidas' homeland had been reduced to 32 acres from a territory that once covered a swath of central New York stretching from the St. Lawrence River to Pennsylvania.

The Oneidas have since reacquired some of their original land, and today they operate the highly successful Turning Stone casino near Utica.

The tribe's wartime service was later forgotten—or ignored—by everyone but the Oneidas, Halbritter said.

Officials use audio to help Navajo voters

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)—In the northwestern corner of the state, the phrase used by some Navajos to refer to the Green Party is the color of "the stuff-that-sits-on-top-of-rocks-in-a-stream planning group."

Trying to interpret certain English words into Navajo can be tricky, said Zane James, Native American election coordinator for the secretary of state's office.

"You sometimes beat yourself up crazy about it, trying to find a proper interpretation everyone can understand," he said.

For the first time, New Mexico will provide voters with a translation of the ballot into Navajo through what's called a "voter assist terminal."

Voters can go to the polls, put on a set of headphones, and James' voice will guide them through the ballot as they mark off their choices.

"Obviously we have been doing interpretations before, but never on a machine," James said.

The terminals will be set

up at some polling sites in San Juan, McKinley, Sandoval, Bernalillo and Cibola counties in time for the general election Tuesday, said Ray Baray, spokesman for the secretary of state's office. Federal law requires voter assistance in areas where there is a language minority of 5 percent or more.

In Utah and Arizona, Navajo interpreters are stationed at polling sites.

Many Navajos can speak their native language fluently, but can't read or write it, James said.

Navajo speakers, along with elections officials from Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, the three states the Navajo Nation crosses, began discussing election terminology about 20 years ago and recently completed a 38-page glossary of translations, said Kimeth Yazzie, program specialist with the Navajo Election Administration.

United States senator, for example, is "Washington the upper house leader," while United States representative is "Washington, the lower house leader."

Terminology for the major political parties was fairly easy.

At least 95 to 99 percent of all Navajos know that the elephant, or "the animal that ropes with his nose," and the donkey, "the long-eared animal," are affiliated with the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively, James said.

Minor parties, such as the Green Party or the Independent Party, posed more of a problem for translation because the parties are fairly new and have no mascot, he said.

The label chosen to identify the Independent Party, for example, would sound like this in English: "another planning group that they refer to themselves as."

The label for the Green Party would sound like this in English: "the identical planning group."

While not as colorful as the phrase used in some parts of northwestern New Mexico, James said the label was chosen because it was simpler.

The glossary is updated at quarterly meetings of election officials from the three states, Yazzie said.

Water is trucked to isolated community

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN, Utah (AP) — Trucks have been delivering water to an isolated, mountainous American Indian community near the Arizona border, and officials are worried that harsh weather could arrive before a pipeline is repaired.

"We can't quite figure out what is causing (the pipeline) not to work," said Rick Bailey, San Juan County administrator and director of emergency services.

For five weeks, four trucks carrying more than 22,000 gallons of water have made the 64-mile round trip to Navajo Mountain from Shonto, Ariz.

The cost: \$5,000 a day.

It is a steep, rugged area near the Arizona border, where 97 percent of the 1,200 residents are American Indians.

The water shortage is a "pretty serious problem for these people," said Roger Hansen, spokesman for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in Provo.

The agency has been scrambling to get \$75,000 to continue paying for the water deliveries.

The problem began in August when heavy rain washed away soil that covered the pipeline,

which connects a spring to the town's water tanks.

The flood damaged about two dozen sections of water line. Despite repairs, water still won't flow, Bailey said.

"Our problem is going to be if they can't get this pipeline fixed and winter comes and it gets snowed in," he said.

The long-term solution is to build a pipeline stretching 30 miles from Inscription, Ariz.

The federal government is willing to provide \$3.4 million but not until 2009.

Cherokee election protest is filed

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. (AP) — A descendant of an emancipated Cherokee Nation slave has filed legal action to stop an election on whether to require Cherokee blood for tribal membership.

Vicki Davis of Chelsea, a

descendant of black freedmen, filed a 22-page protest with the Cherokee Nation Supreme Court on Wednesday — the last day of a 10-day protest filing period.

Cherokee Nation Chief Chad Smith last month called for a

special election in February after more than 2,000 signatures were verified with the Cherokee Nation Election Commission.

David Cornsilk, lay advocate counsel for the freedmen descendants, said careful consideration went into the protest.

Gambling disagreement spills into controller's race

SACRAMENTO (AP)—A fight in the Legislature between unions and several Indian tribes over lucrative gambling compacts has spilled into an unlikely place—the campaign for state controller.

Four tribes have spent \$958,000 over the last couple of weeks to back the Republican nominee, former state Assemblyman Tony Strickland. In response, labor groups and some other tribes have plowed more than \$3 million into campaigns to support Democrat John Chiang, a member of a state tax board.

The four tribes backing Strickland are the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation. They were on the losing end of a fight in the Legislature in August over gambling compacts they had negotiated with the Schwarzenegger administration.

The deals would have allowed the four tribes and two others to operate 23,000 more slot machines at their casinos. In exchange, the state would have gained billions of dollars in additional tax revenue.

One of the compacts, which would have allowed the Agua Caliente Band to open a third casino in the Palm Springs area and add 3,000 slots, was rejected by the Assembly after unions com-

plained that the agreements would have made it tougher for casino workers to organize.

The other five compacts were never brought up for votes before lawmakers adjourned their 2006 session.

The four tribes, operating as a group called Team 2006, also have spent \$2 million to support the campaigns of eight legislators.

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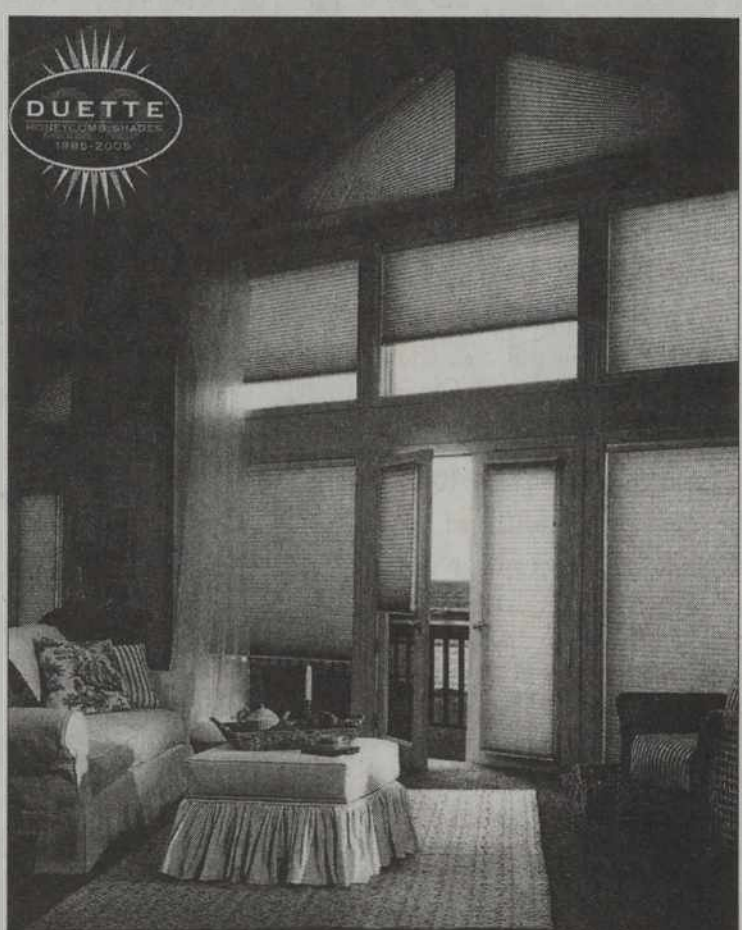
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