

Tribes share culture at gathering

UNIONTOWN, Ky. (AP)—Several American Indians came together recently at Uniontown Indian Day in Uniontown to share some of their beliefs, as well as information about their culture, with anyone who took the time to listen.

The event was very much an in-depth and hands-on history lesson about the lifestyle and culture of the American Indians.

People could participate in classes for stick weaving, beading, making corn husk dolls, medicine bags and dream catchers.

There was also a lesson in tepee construction and the art of smudging.

Matt Cordes, a member of the Long Plain First Nation of the Dakota Sioux and a resident of Radcliff, Ky., mesmerized a group of children and adults with his demonstration of tepee construction and the ceremony involved in building a home.

"As Indian people, one thing we have in common with other nations is that we respect the land we live on," he said. "When we move into an area, we respect the plant life."

That's why before con-

structing a tepee, a grass dance was held to stomp down the grass. Cordes said after the Indians moved on, the grass would grow upright again. The grass was not destroyed to make the home, he said.

"As we go through our daily lives ... we're always in tune with what the Creator has for us in our lives," he said. "Every aspect of our lives is spiritual."

"As a family begins to put up a home—we invite the spirits to come in and be a part of our home, to bless the home so good things go into the home."

Here, Cordes sang a song to bless the home.

"There's a lot of heart that goes into the songs—it's to share our hearts with the Creator as we sing these songs," he said. "In our culture, we're a very ceremonial people and there are songs for everything."

Cordes discussed different aspects of the American Indian culture while all the time building a small tepee. Once it was finished, a drawing was held for the tepee, which went home with a small boy in attendance.

Tepee construction wasn't the only attraction.

People could also experience smudging or the ceremony of cleansing.

Cairo resident Keith Gatewood, who is descended from the Sisseton-Lakota Indians who lived in the South Dakota area, explained that the idea behind smudging is to "soak the whole body with smoke."

The smoke is from burning sage, sweet grass and sometimes cedar.

Participants are asked to wave the smoke toward their heart and then up over their heads.

Smudging is performed before every ceremony, he said.

If there's one thing people should understand about American Indians, Gatewood said, it's that "it's not what you see on TV."

Not everyone wears buckskins and feathers, and medicine men aren't scary, he said.

But, Gatewood said, "American Indians have a spirituality that's been around for years. We're a very earth-friendly people. We believe everything is connected. If you change one thing, you change everything. Mother Earth is the support of all life. American Indians believe that everything, the rocks, the trees, are alive."

"We don't take anything from this earth without giving something back," Cordes said, in an interview later.

"Anytime we cut trees for a gift, to make a trade with the earth," he said. "We pay special attention and we don't want to disturb the ecosystem."

Veteran's Day weekend and Uniontown Indian Day, an event to raise funds for Ancestors' Day, coincide, Cordes said.

"With this being Veteran's Day, we're respecting our veterans and ancestors for protecting our lives," he said. "They've prepared this for us."

Cordes said American Indians endured a time of "white washing" when their culture became almost extinct through societal prejudice and Christianity.

He said Indians were forced to lose themselves in the white culture or face serious consequences.

"Our ancestors had to go into hiding to preserve our ceremonies," he said. "They did it in remote places so no one would catch them."

"I consider those ancestors our (the American Indians) veterans," Cordes said. "Ancestors and veterans protect our ways of life."

Texas company to buy Vicksburg's Horizon casino

VICKSBURG, Miss. (AP)—A Houston, Texas, gaming operator has signed an agreement to buy the Horizon Casino and Hotel in Vicksburg.

Nevada Gold & Casinos Inc. signed the pact this week with Columbia Sussex Corp. for about \$35 million, pending approval and licensing from the Mississippi Gaming Commission.

The company has investments in three Colorado gaming facilities and is also working with several Native American tribes to develop casinos in Pauma Valley and Ione, Calif.

Robert Sturges, chief executive officer of Nevada Gold, said papers will be filed with the Mississippi Gaming Commission within 30 days.

Also this week, Nevada Gold said it will sell its 43 percent membership interest in the Isle of Capri-Black Hawk LLC, which owns the Isle of Capri and Colorado Central Station, two casino facilities in Black Hawk, Colo.

"We want to own and operate our gaming properties. We do not want to be in the position where we are investors only," Sturges said.

Sturges said the 36,000-

square-foot Horizon casino and 117-room hotel have captured less of Vicksburg gaming's market share and received little attention from Columbia Sussex, which recently acquired Tropicana Casinos and Resorts.

Columbia Sussex, a private company based in Fort Mitchell, Ky., owns hotels or casinos in 31 states, including Lighthouse Point Casino and Jubilee Casino in Greenville.

Columbia Sussex paid \$28.6 million for the Vicksburg casino and hotel in 2003 and changed the name to Horizon.

The casino opened as Harrah's in 1993 as the state's first casino-hotel combination and as Vicksburg's second casino.

As Vicksburg's only downtown casino, Horizon holds potential, Sturges said.

"We have been very impressed with the city officials and their willingness to work together with local businesses ... to give people more reason to come to downtown Vicksburg," Sturges said.

Three other casinos operate in Vicksburg—the Ameristar, the Rainbow and Diamond Jacks.

Officials search for possible Cherokee artifacts

CANTON, Ga. (AP)—A company hired by the state Department of Transportation has been searching for artifacts at the site of a highway bridge project, an area believed to once have been occupied by Cherokee Indians.

Edwards-Pitman is digging through an area off Highway 372 just outside Ball Ground, the site of a future project to replace a bridge over the Etowah River and straighten out a curve.

The research is expected to continue for four months, said Terri Lotti, an archaeologist with

the state transportation department. The site is believed to be part of the Cherokee Indians' Long Swamp Village.

There are about six spots at the site where structures likely once stood, said Garrett Silliman, a field director with Edwards-Pitman. The location of the structures can be identified through staining in the soil caused by the wood used to build the structures.

Pieces of pottery and fragments of stone tools have been found there, he said.

Items found at the site will be

taken to a lab for analysis, catalogued and taken to the University of West Georgia.

"We are going to get as much information from the site as we can," Lotti said. "Hopefully, we will get some good information that will define their culture and prehistory."

The Long Swamp Village is one of the biggest American Indian villages in the county along with Hickory Log and Sixes, said Stefanie Joyner, executive director of the Cherokee County Historical Society.

It also is in the area where the Battle of Taliwa, which was fought between the Cherokee and Creek Indians, is believed to have happened. The Cherokee defeated their rivals and that led to the expulsion of the Creek from much of north Georgia.

"Anything they discover will help us learn about the lifestyle and their community," Joyner said. "It is one thing to say that Indians lived in Cherokee. It is another to pull up beads that were worn or instruments that were used by them. It makes them more real."

Indians mark centennial with protest march

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Chanting "no justice, no peace," American Indians and their supporters marched on the state Capitol Friday and denounced the events that led to Oklahoma's statehood 100 years earlier.

Carrying signs that read "Teach the Truth" and "This is

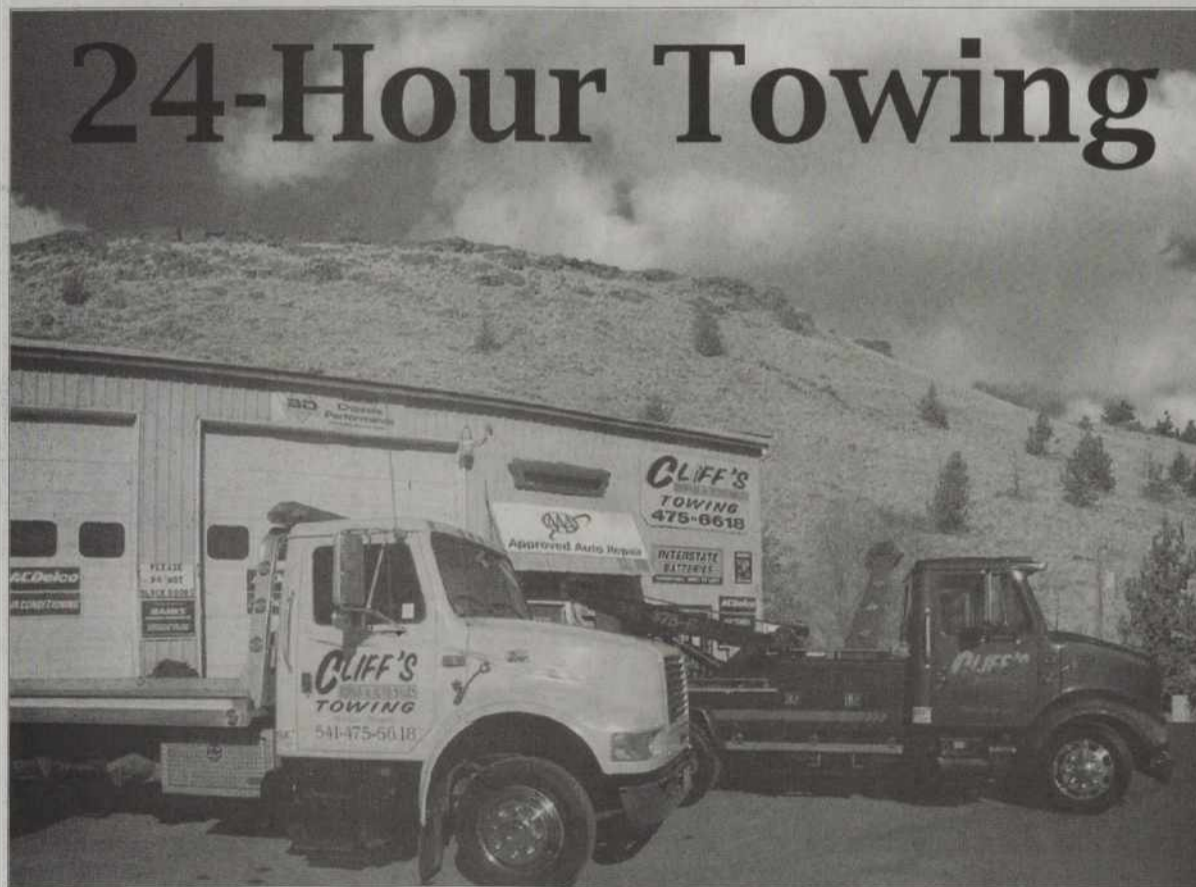
the Land of the Red People," about 500 members of various Oklahoma-based tribes observed Oklahoma's centennial by recalling how their ancestors were forced from their traditional lands primarily in the southeastern U.S. and marched to what became Oklahoma in the 19th century.

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