

Nev. higher ed seeks increased Indian enrollment

RENO (AP) — Higher education officials have formed a coalition to try to turn around the historically low number of American Indian students who go on to college in Nevada.

"A lot of students from rural areas haven't been away from the reservation at all, and when they come to larger urban areas and onto a university campus, it's quite overwhelming," said Sherry Rupert, executive director of the state Nevada Indian Commission.

"So they need that help to make the transition."

To meet that need, the Northern Nevada American Indian Higher Education Collaborative was formed last fall by the University of Nevada, Reno, Truckee Meadows Com-

munity College, Western Nevada College and Great Basin College.

To further the collaborative's mission, UNR hired Kari Emm last August as the full-time outreach and retention coordinator at its Center for Student Cultural Diversity.

Emm, a member of the Yerington Paiute Tribe who was raised on the Walker River Reservation in Schurz, tells American Indian students they can succeed in college but must take the tougher courses that will prepare them.

They also must learn what financial resources are available.

"I tell them, You can make this happen. It can happen for you and here's how you can do it," Emm told the Reno Gazette-Journal.

Across the state, the percentage of American Indian students attending Nevada colleges and universities has trailed far behind other minorities for the past decade.

From 1996 to 2006, the percent of American Indian/Alaskan students increased by 20 percent compared to 63 percent for blacks, 138 percent for Hispanics and 148 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders, according to statistics from the Nevada Higher Education System.

American Indian students represent only 1 percent of the student populations at UNR, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada State College and the College of Southern Nevada. With 4 percent, Great Basin College in Elko has the largest

percentage of American Indians students, compared to 3 percent at Carson City-based Western Nevada College and 2 percent at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno.

Brittney Santos, a UNR freshman and member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, said having someone like Emm to talk to has helped her.

"College is definitely a stressful environment at times, and to have someone who knows what you're going through and who has gone through it, too, really helps you," said Santos, 18, who hopes to become a pharmacist.

Chelsea O'Daye, a member of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony who lives on the Hungry Valley Reservation, said

Emm checks on her and the other students to make sure they're on track to earn their diplomas.

"Kari is someone we can connect with," said O'Daye, a UNR freshman who wants to become a pediatrician and work at the colony's Reno clinic.

This semester, UNR is offering a course in Native American studies. The Native American Student Organization was formed last fall, with Santos and O'Daye heading the public relations and marketing efforts.

"So the club has become more known around campus and other students are beginning to understand our culture," Santos said.

Supreme Court will rule on Narragansett dispute with Rhode Island

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed Monday to resolve a dispute over the federal government's ability to take land into trust for American Indian tribes.

Indian rights groups fear that the case involving the Narragansett Tribe in Rhode Island could undermine tribal land across the country. The justices will hear the case in the fall.

The state argued that a 1934 federal law prevents the government from taking land into trust for tribes recognized after the law took effect, unless Congress specifically authorized it. The Narragansetts became a federally recognized tribe in 1983.

The 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston rejected the state's claim in July.

At issue is whether a 31-acre lot in Charlestown purchased by the Narragansetts should be subject to Rhode Island law, including a prohibition on casino gambling, or whether the parcel should be governed by tribal and federal law.

The dispute dates to 1991, when the Narragansetts purchased the land to build an elderly housing complex, which remains incomplete.

The state objected when the tribe asked the U.S. Department of the Interior to take the land into federal trust, which would place it largely under tribal and federal control. State leaders fear the Narragansetts want to build a casino on the site. Casino are banned under state law.

"The paramount issue of state sovereignty is the potential that this could open the door to a casino, at least a crack, over the objections of Rhode Island voters," said Attorney Joseph Larisa Jr., who represents the town of Charlestown.

Narragansett Chief Sachem Matthew Thomas did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Thomas has said his tribe intends to complete tie unfinished elderly housing complex on the property, but could also consider other economic development options.

Tribe plans to sign deal assuming ownership of Indian City U.S.A.

ANADARKO, Okla. (AP) — Officials with the Kiowa Tribe planned to sign a deal on Friday that would transfer ownership of an American Indian and Oklahoma landmark to the tribe.

The Kiowa Business Committee negotiated at length Thursday with shareholders of Indian City U.S.A., a historical park located on Oklahoma Highway 8 just south of Anadarko.

"I'm 99.9 percent sure it'll go through," Modina Waters of the

tribe's planning commission told the Lawton Constitution.

The tribe will offer an official statement once the deal is formally signed, Waters said.

George C. Moran built the park in 1955 with the help of University of Oklahoma anthropologists.

The 198-acre site holds an Indian village with life-size dwellings of seven Indian tribes — the Apache, Caddo, Kiowa, Navajo, Pawnee, Pueblo and Wichita.

It also contains a gift shop, museum and lodge, campground, amphitheater, two radio towers and an exotic game trail that includes buffalo and antelope.

Moran's son, George F. Moran, has worked at Indian City U.S.A. since 1973 when he took over for his father. He has served as executive director and general manager.

Park shareholders didn't receive acceptable offers when it was initially put up for sale for

\$3 million in 2004, Moran said.

The board of trustees decided to put it up for sale again in 2006, he said. One of the keys to the sale is the intention of the buyer, and Moran thinks the Kiowas have the right goals in mind.

"It's good to have a buyer with the resources and keep the park as is," Moran said. "I think they will make positive improvements."

The park has been neglected recently, and repairs have been

more than an annual operating budget of \$140,000 could cover, Moran said.

The park traditionally closes only on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

The number of visitors to Indian City has declined since its peak of 150,000 guests a year, Moran said.

"The last few years, it's really slowed down significantly," he said.

Cooking show features Native foods, culture

POST CREEK, Mont. (AP) — Jody Perez was sure that when, after a week at a Traditional Living Challenge Camp, she stepped on the bathroom scales back home, she wouldn't like what she saw.

"I really thought I was overeating all week," Perez says. There were buffalo and elk steaks, salmon, dried meat, vegetables, fruit — even camas that participants harvested, peeled, dried and baked in the ground with black tree moss wrapped in skunk cabbage leaves.

"People use camas in soups sometimes, and if you boil it, you get a bitter taste," Heather Cahoon, Perez's sister, says. "But baking it made it so sweet, it was similar to a yam."

The food at the camp was delicious, plentiful — and, it turned out, good on the waistline.

Perez ate to her heart's (and stomach's) content, and lost 6 pounds in the process.

Her four young children spent the week living in a tepee at the camp with her, and Perez was none too pleased when husband, Juan, picked the kids up at Blue Bay and immediately herded them through the drive-through at McDonald's in Polson.

She was sold on the benefits of a healthier, and more traditional, diet.

Simply by reading package labels and substituting healthier or more traditional alternatives in recipes in the months since, Perez has lost more weight — a total of 25 pounds — and stumbled on a new mini-career in the process.

She's co-host, along with Genevieve King, of a new cooking show, "Rez Chef," that premiered earlier this week on

KSKC-TV, the public television station at Salish Kootenai College.

King and Perez — and their guests — weave cooking and healthier lifestyles in with Indian tradition and culture on the half-hour program.

Anita Dupuis, director of the Salish Kootenai College Community Health and Development Department, came up with the ideas and grant money for both the traditional living camps and the cooking show.

"Historically, Native American genetics weren't made to properly digest and metabolize non-Native cuisine, i.e., sugar, flour and trans fat," Dupuis explains. Her goal is to help Flathead Indian Reservation residents combat diabetes and cardiovascular disease by returning to more traditional diets, or using foods with similar nutritional values to the ones their ancestors ate.

"In order to be successful, an intervention in Native communities must speak to who we are, must be based in and founded upon the traditional wisdom of our ancestors, and it must be learned by experience," she says.

With a grant from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, she hired Cahoon to produce "Rez Chef," and Cahoon tabbed King and Perez — both busy moms-on-the-go — to host.

With KSKC-TV general manager Frank Tyro directing, they taped five episodes (two were combined into one show) in the new Post Creek kitchen of Frances Cahoon, father of Jody and Heather. They're airing on KSKC-TV, the Salish Kootenai College public television station, on Mondays and Tuesdays over the next month.

Indian Gaming Commission chairman recovering from stroke

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Phil Hogen, who chairs the National Indian Gaming Commission, said he hopes to return to his Washington office next week after suffering a mild stroke.

Hogen, 63, remained at his Black Hawk home this week after undergoing treatment Monday at Rapid City Regional Hospital. He was

released Tuesday.

He attributed the incident to high blood pressure. Hogen said he went snow skiing Sunday, split some firewood at home and took a nap.

Upon waking, Hogen said, he had trouble reading a digital clock and couldn't recognize some words when he tried to read.

"It was kind of a frightening

little episode," he said.

Hogen said last Wednesday that he felt good.

"I hope to fly back (to Washington) over the weekend and be back at my desk on Monday."

Hogen, who also served as U.S. Attorney for South Dakota, has been chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission since 2002.



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