

Recession, fakes, tough times for Indian jewelers

By **HEATHER CLARK**
Associated Press Writer

GALLUP, N.M. -- Navajo silversmith Jackie Platero has been selling her family's handmade jewelry for 18 years, with the past two years, among the most trying.

Platero and other jewelers and jewelry traders say the nation's economic woes has hit them hard, as the cost of silver, gold and precious stones rise and fewer customers buy pieces. If that wasn't enough, they say, they are increasingly having to compete against knock-offs of their jewelry -- much made cheaply in Asia and Mexico.

"I just told the kids that Christmas this year is going to be a lot less than they usually get because the bills come first," said Platero, a mother of 10 children who lives in the Navajo community of To'hajilee about 40 miles west of Albuquerque.

Platero said she and her husband, also a jeweler, are thinking about taking on second jobs, perhaps at Wal-Mart, after the holidays.

No one really knows how big the Indian jewelry market is. Meridith Stanton, executive director of the Interior Department's Indian Arts and Crafts Board, in a rough estimate says it could generate as much as \$750 million annually.

Stanton said she's seen evidence that the market for Indian jewelry has been hurt by the recession. Longtime arts and crafts events in California, Connecticut and New Mexico have closed. Meanwhile, smaller crowds are attending many events that have remained open.

Artisans have had to downsize their works so customers can afford them.

"This period of time is a rough time for anyone. Any jeweler, any artist, is trying to adjust to leaner times," she said.

For top jewelers like Al Joe of Dilkon, Ariz., the recession means

scaling down to make pieces more affordable, but Joe said the best jewelry is still in demand. He sells pieces directly to galleries in Massachusetts, Washington, D.C., Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

"It's more like a survival of the fittest that's going on right now," he said.

In Gallup, there's a saying -- perhaps exaggerated -- that 80 percent of the world's American Indian jewelry comes through the western New Mexico hilltop town. Whatever the figure, there's no disputing that local traders who sell jewelry and other crafts, such as colorful wool rugs and pottery made by members of the nearby Navajo, Hopi, Acoma and Zuni tribes, also feel the pinch.

Traders say their wholesale business, which in the past has come from the East and West coasts and Texas, has fallen between 25 and 40 percent this year.

"We don't have the numbers that we used to have. That's because their business is down," said Bill Richardson, the 91-year-old owner of Richardson's Trading Co., which sits among a line of jewelry stores on historic Route 66. "They don't need this stuff. What do you need this stuff for? You can't eat it."

Ellis Tanner, who founded Ellis Tanner Trading Co. in Gallup in 1967, said his wholesale business with traders in the East and Midwest has fallen by 80 percent. But trading with Japan and Europe has helped prop up his business, giving his store an overall 25 percent decline in its wholesale accounts.

"The last six months, it really started showing up," Tanner said.

Stanton said one effect of the economic downturn has been positive for the Indian Arts and Crafts Board: More people are reporting complaints about fakes, made in sweatshops in the U.S. or imported from China, Thailand and other Asian countries and Mexico and being sold as handmade Indian jewelry.

Slumping economy hits the Indian casino industry

By **SUDHIN THANAWALA**
Associated Press Writer

SAN FRANCISCO -- The economic downturn has slowed the growth of Indian gaming in America but the industry is faring better than traditional casinos, a report released Thursday shows.

Revenues climbed by 1.5 percent last year -- the smallest increase since a federal law regulating the industry was passed in 1988, according to the Indian Gaming Industry Report by economist Alan Meister.

That was down from a growth rate of 5 percent in 2007 and an average rate of about 15 percent from 2001 through 2006.

The \$26.8 billion industry outperformed the commercial

casino sector, where revenue dropped about 7 percent to \$30 billion in 2008, according to Meister's report.

Experts say Indian casinos have the advantage of being dispersed across the nation, making them more easily accessible than casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

"Indian gaming is in people's backyards," said David Schwartz, director of the Center for Gaming Research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. "A person from Southern California is not going to Vegas, but to a California Indian casino where they can spend a couple of hours. That's what you're seeing."

Despite declines in the number of visitors and the amount of money they spent in some

locations, the industry as a whole was helped by expansions, new casinos and new games, Meister said.

"Some states were down while others were up," he said during a telephone interview.

In 2008, tribes operated 442 casinos in 28 states, up from 429 the previous year.

Much of the revenue increase came from Oklahoma, which added nine new gambling halls.

That state's \$2.9 billion in revenue allowed it to surpass Connecticut to become the second largest Indian gaming state behind California.

Another state posting significant revenue growth was Florida, where the report said the Seminole Tribe added different machines and table games

such as blackjack to its existing casinos.

California was among about nine states, including Connecticut and Minnesota, that saw revenues fall although it continued to lead the nation in Indian gaming revenue at \$7.3 billion. California experienced a decline of nearly 6 percent from \$7.8 billion in 2007.

"It's definitely been a challenging environment," said David Gutierrez, a spokesman for Red Hawk Casino in Placerville, Calif., which opened last year.

"We're near Sacramento, so we have a lot of people with government jobs who have been furloughed."

Gamblers are still coming through the doors, but spending less, he said.

Ohioan seeks return of beloved artifact from historical society

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Edward Low knew he wasn't supposed to play there, high up on a sandy hill in Parkersburg, W.Va., overlooking the silver ribbon of the Ohio River.

But the 12-year-old and two friends, armed with boyish curiosity and a World War II trench shovel, had sneaked away from home to explore.

While digging a foxhole to play soldier, Low hit something hard about 15 inches deep in the soil. The thin piece of sandstone, about 5 inches by 3 inches, was engraved with Indian markings of human faces and birds.

Low didn't know then that he'd found a valuable piece of prehistory: an Early Woodland Adena cultural artifact created 400 years or more before the birth of Jesus. Its value at auction has been estimated at up to \$200,000.

To Low, it was simply his "Indian rock." For years, he kept it wrapped in a newspaper in his

sock drawer at home, bringing it out occasionally for show-and-tell at school or to show colleagues at work.

Now 76 and in poor health, Low finds himself in a bitter legal fight with the Ohio Historical Society. Earlier this year, he filed suit in Franklin County Common Pleas Court.

Low said he lent the artifact to the historical society in 1971 for research and display; the society contends he gave it to the state, and so refuses to return it.

"I feel like I have done nothing wrong and they're flat-out stealing," Low said.

Historical society officials would not comment on the dispute. They deferred to a statement by attorneys that said, in part, that Low donated the tablet in 1971, a fact noted in two issues of Echoes, a society publication.

"Although Mr. Low has known since 1971 that the Society considered the tablet to be a gift, he did not inform the

Society that he considered the transfer of the tablet a loan rather than a gift until December 2007," the statement said.

"The Society has protected and preserved this valuable artifact since 1971. It is vigorously defending the suit filed by Mr. Low so that the people from Ohio, other states and other nations may continue to enjoy and appreciate the tablet."

The saga began in May 1971 when Low, who had moved to Ohio, read a story in The Columbus Dispatch about Raymond Baby, then curator of archaeology at the society. Low subsequently took the tablet and went to see Baby. At Baby's request, Low left the tablet with him for what was supposed to be a week to 10 days to research its origin.

Low didn't hear from Baby for three months. When Baby finally called in September, he offered to buy the tablet. Low refused, but agreed to allow the society to keep it for public dis-

play for an indefinite period. In return, Low said, he was offered and accepted a lifetime membership in the society.

At no point, Low says, did he sign an agreement to sell or give the tablet to the historical society. He always considered it a loan. "I never intended for them to keep it," he said. "I told them it's not for sale."

Low said the artifact has great sentimental value for him, not only because he found it as a child, but also because he has American Indian ancestors who could be related to the ancient Adena people who made the carving.

"We treat donations as permanent and not subject to changes in attitude on the part of the individual donors," the late William K. Laidlaw Jr., executive director, said in a letter to Low. "We have applied this principle in consideration of your request, and we are prepared to defend our title to the Adena tablet."

Idaho's Nez Perce ship coho eggs to Oregon

LAPWAI, Idaho (AP) -- The Nez Perce Tribe in northcentral Idaho expects to ship 700,000 bright orange Clearwater River coho salmon eggs from the Dworshak National Fish Hatchery to the Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery in Estacada, Ore., as part of efforts to rebuild endangered spawning runs.

This is the first time in 15 years that the Nez Perce Tribe is returning coho eggs from the Clearwater River to the lower Columbia River as part of its Clearwater Coho Restoration Project.

Indian casino lets booze flow on gambling floor

CHEROKEE, N.C. (AP) -- A casino on a North Carolina Indian reservation will soon start serving alcohol to patrons while they gamble.

Harrah's Cherokee Casino is hiring more bartenders and buying more equipment and alcohol. The casino general manager, Darold Londo, says alcohol could be served on the gambling floor as early as this week.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee voted in June to allow alcohol sales in the 11-year-old casino in the North Carolina mountains.

Warm Springs Police Department
Monthly Crime Statistics for November, 2009

W.S.P.D Calls for Service, Police Reports and Response Time Statistics		W.S.P.D Uniform Crime Report other than Part 1 Crime Statistics		W.S.P.D Traffic Accidents, Citations	
CATEGORY		Elder/Adult Abuse	0	Traffic Stops	260
Events	1392	Assault	3	Non-Injury Accident	0
Police Reports	221	Assault & Battery	13	Injury Accident	8
Priority One Calls	271	Forgery/Fraud	3	Fatality Accident	0
Average Response time(Priority One)	4 min.	Theft	12	Speeding	3
Average Response time(Priority Two)	5 min.	Malicious Mischief	17	Seat Belts	1
W.S.P.D Arrested Persons Number of Native Adults & Juveniles		Weapons Violations	6	Defective Equipment	2
CATEGORY		Sex Offenses	2	Failure to maintain lane	6
Native Adults	173	NDDHD	1	Operators license required	5
Native Juveniles	21	NDDHD (Paraphernalia)	1	W.S.P.D Uniform Crime Report Part 1 Crime Statistics - Calendar Year	
TOTALS	194	DUII	17	CATEGORY	
W.S.P.D. Arrested Persons Number (Native & Non-Native Adults)		Liquor Violations	1	Murder	0
CATEGORY		Intoxicated/Detox	86	Manslaughter	0
Native	164	Disorderly Conduct	13	Assault resulting in serious bodily injury	0
Non-Native	9	Child Abuse	5	Assault with a dangerous weapon	0
TOTALS	173	Runaway (persons under 18)	4	Rape	1
W.S.P.D Telephone Calls, Calls for 9-1-1 and Alarm Calls/Signals Received at Dispatch		Restraining Order Violations	0	Sex Abuse of a minor	0
CATEGORY		Domestic Violence	8	Robbery	0
Number of Telephone Calls Received	2431	Fights in progress	13	Arson	1
Number of 9-1-1 Calls Received	158	Disturbance	4	Theft > \$1000	0
Number of Alarm signals Received	22	Reckless Drivers	29	FIP (Felon in Possession of Fire Arm)	1
		Shots Fired	10	Totals	3
		Child Neglect	15		
		Attempt/ Suicide	6		
		Harassment/Stalking	8		
		Totals	277		