

New Mexico tribes line up against casino

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) – New Mexico's Indian tribes are lining up against one of their own as the federal government once again is considering a controversial proposal to let a northern New Mexico pueblo partner with a Santa Fe art dealer to build a hotel and casino along the Texas-New Mexico border.

The New Mexico Indian Gaming Association Inc., which represents tribal casino operators, recently filed comments with the Bureau of Indian Affairs opposing the plan, according to Mark Chino, president of the Mescalero Apache tribe, which operates Inn of the Mountain Gods resort and casino in the Ruidoso area.

The group's attorney declined to release a copy of the comments, but Chino said they are basically the same objections the tribes had when the project was first proposed—and rejected—under the Bush Administration. Those objections are based on questions about the tribes' claim to the trust land and its distance—more than 300 miles—from the pueblo.

"First of all, we don't believe that the project is going to benefit the people of the Jemez Pueblo, because as we argued back then that the developer is the one that appears to be the major beneficiary of the project as opposed to the Pueblo of Jemez and the people of Jemez," said Chino, whose tribe stands to lose the most among New Mexico Indian gaming operators if the Anthony project is approved.

Gaming has been on the decline during the recession, he said, and competition from a new casino just over 100 miles away and close to the populous El Paso-Las Cruces market "would devastate our hospitality enterprises here in Ruidoso. We have invested millions and millions of dollars in our hospitality enterprises. And that would certainly take away the lion's share of our business."

Chino said his tribe also disagrees with Jemez Pueblo's attempt to claim a historical connection to the land in question.

"We believe that the Mescalero Apache have a much greater historical connection to

that area of the Southwest," he said.

The Jemez Pueblo is located in northern New Mexico between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, along a corridor that already has a number of Indian casinos.

Under the proposal, the Jemez Pueblo and a Santa Fe developer and art dealer, Gerald Peters, would build a \$55 million casino and hotel in Anthony. The plan was shot down in 2008 by the BIA, which said it was too far from the pueblo to generate jobs for the tribe.

The Obama Administration reopened the request for the Jemez proposal and a handful of other off-reservation casinos last year, but no one seems to know why, Chino said.

"Everyone we have talked to hasn't been able to explain it," said Chino. "I am at a loss as to why the federal government chose to reopen those. If you go back... they determined it wasn't a viable project for a number of reasons. And now the Obama Administration, for whatever reasons, has chosen to take a second look at it... There has to be some kind of push

from officials somewhere in the administration to tell the Interior Department down to BIA, 'let's do this again, let's come to a different conclusion. It doesn't pass the smell test.'"

The BIA did not respond to questions from the Associated Press about the reason for the new review.

The governor of the Jemez Pueblo could not be reached. But a spokeswoman for Peters, Denise Ramonas, disputed Chino's assertions that Peters, rather than the Pueblo, had the most to gain. She cited a June 2008 ruling from the National Indian Gaming Commission that she said found that all the agreements between the pueblo and Peters complied with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

Many, including Gov. Susana Martinez, are concerned about the precedent that would be set if the project is approved. There currently are only five off-reservation casinos in the United States, all of which are within easy commuting distance of the tribes who run them.

Tonkawa Tribe pays \$2 million to settle lawsuit

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) – The Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma has paid \$2 million to a Las Vegas gaming management company that alleged in a lawsuit the tribe violated management agreements with the company when it took over control of two tribal casinos in north-central Oklahoma and barred company employees from them.

Gaughan Gaming, which had managed the Tonkawa Indian Casino in Tonkawa and the tribe's City Lights Casino in Newkirk near the Kansas border since 2007, sued the tribe in March alleging that tribal officials forcibly evicted Gaughan and its employees from the casinos and took over their control.

An attorney for Gaughan, Mike McBride of Tulsa, said last week a settlement agreement was reached over the past week in U.S. District Court in Oklahoma City, before a panel of the American Arbitration Association and before the Tonkawa Tribal Gaming Commission.

"It was unfortunate that Gaughan had to pursue litigation and arbitration. But ultimately Gaughan prevailed and justice prevailed," McBride said.

An attorney for the tribe, Gary Pitchlynn of Norman, said the tribe paid far less to Gaughan under the settlement agreement than the tribe would have received had it continued to manage the casinos.

"I don't consider it a win for Gaughan Gaming," Pitchlynn said. "They essentially settled for far less than what they were scheduled to make."

He said the casinos have made more money and have been maintained better since the tribe hired its own employees to manage them.

The casino management company's license was suspended on Sept. 28, the same day the tribe ordered company employees out of the casinos.

"Everything has been good since then," Pitchlynn said.

In its lawsuit, Gaughan claimed the Tonkawa Tribe breached management contracts and suspended the company's license without cause and in violation of its own procedures. In connection with the settlement, the tribe dismissed efforts to suspend the gaming licenses of Gaughan and two key employees who had previously been cleared of wrongdoing by the National Indian Gaming Commission.

Gaughan officials said the company operated the Tribe's casinos for more than three years, making well in excess of \$52 million for the tribe. Gaughan's management agreement said the company would receive 30 percent of the casinos' net profits as compensation for its services.

Gaughan's contracts with the tribe were set to expire in July at the Tonkawa Indian Casino and in September 2012 at Native Lights.

John Gaughan, CEO of the company, said issues that led to the dispute originated with disagreements with a couple of tribal leaders.

"But we greatly appreciated the experience of working with the NIGC and helping the people of the Tonkawa Tribe. We wish those tribal members nothing but the best in the future," Gaughan said.

Gaughan became involved with the tribe's casinos after they were shut down by the NIGC in part because it did not have an approved management contract to operate the Tonkawa Indian Casino. Gaughan's lawsuit said the company helped the tribe reopen the gaming operations.

The tribe was fined \$1 million by the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, which found that large cash transactions at the Tonkawa Bingo and Casino were not reported, as well as evidence that organized crime figures had used the casino and off-track betting operation to launder money, according to the tribe's website. The lawsuit said the tribe was placed on probation.

Salmon canning

Preparing fish prior to the canning process are Warner Williams, Josie Williams, instructor Danita Macy, and Jaime Smith (from left). Warm Springs is at 1500-foot elevation so salmon should be in the canner with 12 lbs of pressure for 100 minutes. If you would like more information on salmon canning or would like to participate in upcoming fruit canning classes contact OSU Extension at 541-553-3238.



Yvonne Iverson/Spilyay

Universities partner to save dying languages

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) – Hutke Fields pictures a time when younger generations of Natchez people use his tribe's Native tongue at ceremonies, while sharing oral histories and during everyday talk at home.

But Field's vision is complicated by the fact that only six people, out of about 10,000 members of the Natchez tribe in Oklahoma, still speak the language.

"We'll lose it if we don't use it," said Fields, who received assistance last year during a workshop dedicated to helping American Indian communities in Oklahoma to bring back disappearing languages.

Fields is a participant in the Breath of Life project—a joint effort by experts from the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Oklahoma—in which linguists mentor American Indians so they can better recover endangered languages.

It is modeled after a project at the University of California, Berkeley.

"We are growing field linguists," said Colleen Fitzgerald, associate professor and chairwoman of UT Arlington's Linguistics Department. "We are transferring knowledge to community members so they can teach their own languages."

The first workshop was held in summer 2010 at OU in Norman, Okla., which is also the site of the Sam Noble Okla-

homa Museum of Natural History. Members of three American Indian communities took part: the Osage, Otoe and Natchez.

Linguists and American Indians will be able to work together again next May. The project recently got a funding boost that will allow for a second workshop, Fitzgerald said.

The project team received a total of \$90,000 in grant money from the National Science Foundation, an independent federal agency that helps support research at colleges and universities.

The grant is spread over two years.

Besides training American Indian community members to be linguists on the ground, UT Arlington will be working to create linguistic databases that will ultimately enable the creation of online dictionaries and collections of texts in various languages, Fitzgerald said.

Each community will have a database which will also be stored in a repository at the Noble museum.

Oklahoma was described as a "hot spot" of linguistic diversity by experts in National Geographic's Enduring Voices Project, said Mary Linn, associate curator of American Indian languages at the Noble museum and an associate professor of anthropology at OU.

As North America was settled by whites, many tribes

"I grieve daily over the loss of cultural values..."

were forced to move to Oklahoma. As a result, there is not only a great deal of linguistic diversity, but also high levels of language endangerment, Linn said.

The languages grew even more endangered as American Indians assimilated to English-speaking culture that dominates society.

"It's hard to resist shifting to English," Linn said, adding that many small tribes picked up the languages of larger tribes.

Today, language sleuths rely on tribal records, grammar and alphabets that were often chronicled by missionaries, military generals and tribes. President Thomas Jefferson also collected word lists, Linn said.

Fields said the project allowed his community to computerize a dictionary and research. Now, Natchez people in South Carolina can practice with their Natchez friends in Oklahoma. This also allows Natchez histories to flow more readily from elders who still tell of their contributions to America as farmers expert in corn and beans.

Their histories tell of a people displaced from the Gulf Coast and of deaths from influenza that followed early encounters

with European explorers.

"I grieve daily over the loss of cultural values," said Fields, principal chief for the tribe. "It takes a community and economy and people who want to preserve."



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