

Traditional Indian game gets new life

GLENPOOL, Okla. (AP) – Twelve-year-old Derek Hill rolled a round disc made of Oklahoma sandstone down a well-worn path while two other sixth-graders threw wooden poles trying to hit the rolling stone.

Whoever hit the stone got a point, he said. Caleb Bigpond, 12, who is Muscogee Creek and Pawnee, stood at the other end to roll the stone back.

"It's fun," said Hill, who is Muscogee Creek and Euchee. "Every time I throw the pole, it feels like I keep getting better at it."

The students were playing a variation of a historic American Indian game called chunky (or chung-kee). Traditionally, players try to get their poles or spears as close as possible to where the stone stops rolling.

Once the favorite pastime of

many tribes, including Cherokees, Choctaws and Chickasaws, the centuries-old game has become a lost art, said Kristi Collington, director of Indian Education for Glenpool Public Schools.

"I have only seen one stone for sale in my life," Collington said. "They are extremely hard and time-consuming to make."

The chunky stones are traditionally made of hard stone hand-sculpted into a disc shape about five to seven inches in diameter. The polished stone has depressions on each side. Even centuries ago, chunky stones were cherished and typically each village had only one.

After the class used rolls of masking tape and unsharpened pencils to teach students about the game, Creek elder Ben Yahola loaned his chunky set so students could see a real

stone. But he felt the school needed its own set.

So Collington set her mind to getting a real stone and approached EuroCraft, a marble and granite fabrication company in Glenpool, to make it. Yahola's stone was shown to the company as a template.

"EuroCraft donated the stone," Collington said. "I am so grateful to them because I maybe had about \$200 from my Indian Education budget to spend."

Bringing the game back to life for her students is part of keeping American Indian culture alive, she said.

"It's important for students to get outside and get a sense of what it would be like to hunt for food and get an appreciation for where our food comes from," Collington said.

Not only did the game allow

Indian warriors – who used spears in the game – to sharpen their hunting skills, but it was central to each tribe's social and cultural growth, she said.

"The game was so important that many high-class warriors would even be buried with a chunky stone," said Collington, who is Cherokee. "I've heard of instances where warriors would bet their wives. We (Indians) have always gambled."

In Glenpool schools, 34 percent of its student body is American Indian, she said.

"(EuroCraft's donation) helps us accomplish our goals in the program, which are to promote cultural awareness and providing an opportunity to students to learn about language, history and customs that they may not otherwise have," Collington said.

Study shows Navajo dunes on the move

FARMINGTON, N.M. (AP) – A decade-long federal study says that a drier climate on the Navajo Nation is causing sand dunes to grow and move, potentially threatening grazing, roads and buildings.

The study by a U.S. Geological Survey geologist found that sand dunes are growing fast and moving more, including old dunes that previously were stable. More than a third of the 27,000-square-mile reservation is covered by sand dunes and sand sheets, and it has experienced varying degrees of drought for the past 15 years.

Geologist Margaret Hiza Redsteer called the Navajo Nation – specifically the southwestern portion in Arizona – "just on the edge of being habitable."

Her work also noted the vulnerability of indigenous people who rely heavily on the land.

"The annual moisture here has historically been just enough to get by," she said in a statement. "When there is even a small change, there is a huge effect."

Some of the sand dunes are moving at a rate of 115 feet per year, the report found. Faster migration of active sand dunes and the immobility of previously immobile dunes can threaten housing, roads and the health of residents.

The study will yield data on diminished vegetation cover and the increasingly arid environment, which threatens livestock, grazing, infrastructure and livelihoods on the reservation. The areas that call for the most alarm are the lands near the Colorado Plateau, located near Flagstaff, Ariz., and surrounding the Hopi

reservation.

Redsteer found that besides growth and new movement in existing dunes, new dunes were increasing in number. The new dunes form downwind from rivers and washes, largely from dry, wind-blown river sediment. For instance, the dune field outside Flagstaff, has grown by 70 percent since 1995, when the most recent drought gripped the Nation.

The dunes are moving northeast at speeds as high as 157 feet per year in 2009, which was unusually dry and windy.

Sand storms and dune movement also occurred in the northern and eastern parts of the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. The wind direction, however, was very different.

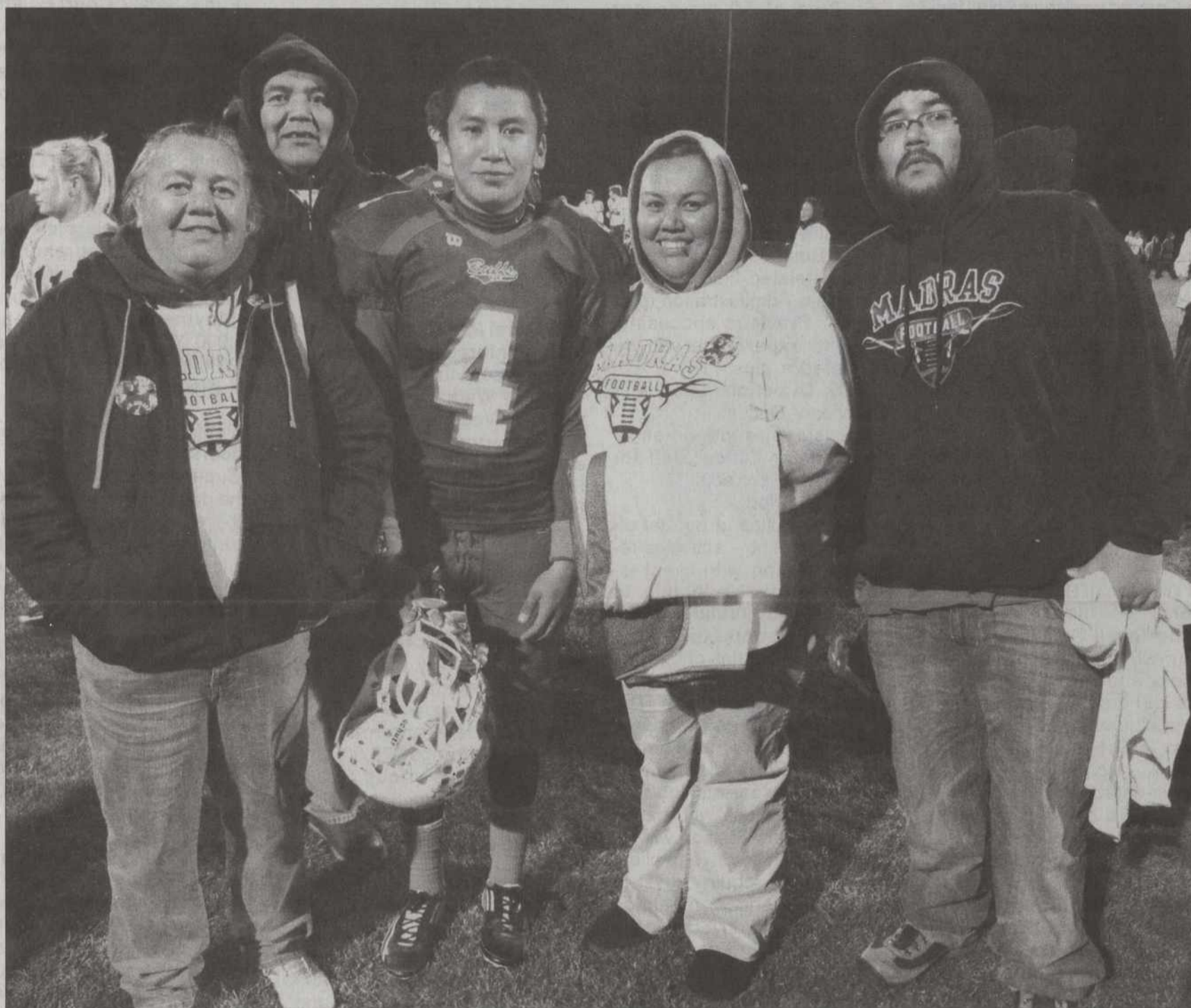
Wind blows predominantly northeast in Arizona, while it blows south in Arizona, said Sam McCown, a meteorologist for the National Climatic Data Center.

If the trend continues, some officials warn that much of the Navajo Nation will become uninhabitable.

"The Navajo Nation is intended to be a permanent homeland for the Navajo people," John Leeper, director of the Navajo Water Management Branch, said in a statement. "However, much of that homeland may be in jeopardy if these trends cannot be successfully mitigated."

Geologists and Navajo officials are trying to use Redsteer's work to find solutions, including placing barriers in dunes to stabilize them and planting seeds in the sand to encourage vegetation.

Final home game



Yvonne Iverson/Spilyay

The Mitchell Family – Lori, Robinson "Gorky", Rodney, Cyrille, and Arthur (from left) – gathers after the MHS football game to congratulate and celebrate a victory in the Estabed Dome.

Ex-Okla. tribal leader indicted for embezzlement

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) – A federal grand jury has indicted the former president of the Tonkawa Tribe on 17 counts for allegedly conspiring with two others to embezzle more than \$500,000 from the tribe, federal prosecutors said Monday.

Anthony E. Street, 47, faces one count of conspiracy and 16 counts of embezzlement from an Indian tribal organization. Street appeared in court in Oklahoma City on Monday and a trial date was set for December.

Street, Vice President Gordon Warrior and Secretary-Treasurer Dawena Pappan are accused of writing more than 300 checks to themselves from the tribe's general fund for personal use from April 2005 to April 2008. Street and Warrior served in office until elections in 2008 and Pappan resigned that year, prosecutors said.

The three took care of daily operations as members of the

tribe's business committee, including among other responsibilities, ensuring that proceeds from the tribe's casinos were spent on legitimate tribal expenses under established procedures, the indictment read.

In August 2007, Street, Warrior and Pappan approved large pay increases for their work on the business committee, the in-

dictment alleged. Street's wages increased from \$25.66 an hour to \$62.50 per hour, resulting in an annual salary of \$130,000.

Street, Warrior and Pappan also were accused of approving blank voucher requests with no explanation for why there were taking money from the general fund.

Street and Warrior remained

in office until 2008, when tribal elections were held. Pappan resigned in June of that year, and a new business committee was chosen, prosecutors said.

Court records didn't indicate if Street had retained an attorney to represent him. Prosecutors listed him as a resident of Ponca City, but a telephone listing for him couldn't be found.

Bone found in Columbia at Kennewick

KENNEWICK, Wash. (AP) – A jaw bone found in the Columbia River at Kennewick is believed to be the very old remains of an American Indian.

The Corps of Engineers

plans to deliver the bone to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation.

The bone with six teeth was found in late October by a cleanup crew on the bank of the river near a Columbia Park

boat launch.

Police called the Benton County coroner who sent photos to a state anthropologist. Officials determined there was no crime or missing person involved.

Mich. Indian community mourns traffic deaths

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. (AP) – Southeastern Michigan's Indian community is reeling from the loss of four men killed in a traffic crash.

All four are affiliated with the Detroit-area's Telugu community. Those in the group have ties to the State of Andhra in India and speak the Telugu lan-

guage

The state police say the four were hit head-on in their SUV by a wrong-way driver on Michigan-10 in Southfield.

Cherokee Nation changes rules for workers

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. (AP) – An executive order by the new principal chief of the Cherokee Nation allows tribe employees to discuss their employment with members of the Cherokee legislative branch.

The Tulsa World reported that Principal Chief Bill John Baker signed the order so workers can speak openly about their duties with their council repre-

sentatives.

The order overturns a policy that was in force for six years, prohibiting the tribe's more than 8,200 employees from discussing employment issues with any of the 17 members of the Cherokee Tribal Council.

Baker took office earlier in October after four months of election disputes that resulted in a second vote being called.

Forum addresses Native Americans dropout rate

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) – About 20 people gathered for a forum in Rapid City last week to address the problem of Native American high school dropout rates.

Much of the discussion centered on stories of bullying and harassment experienced by Native American students and their parents. But officials and parents also talked about the need for collaboration.

Jim Bradford, a South Dakota legislator, says teachers

need to take the time to familiarize themselves with their students' home lives, and parents need to get involved in their children's education.

School board member Suzan Noto do, but part of the solution also is to highlight the accomplishments of high-achieving Native students.

The ongoing forum will meet the fourth Friday of each month.

Events celebrating Native life

CARBONDALE, Ill. (AP) – Southern Illinois University is hosting events to celebrate Native American culture and life.

The festivities for Native American Heritage Month at the Carbondale campus have started and run through next month.

They include traditional Az-

tec dancing, performances by traditional drum groups, a harvest dinner, film discussions and political lectures.

Many of the events are free. On Tuesday, the traditional drum and dance group called "Iron Necklace" will perform on campus.

The next Spilyay deadline is Friday, Nov. 10. Thank you!