

## Prospect of Beloit casino improving

BELOIT, Wis. (AP) — After more than a decade of intermittent negotiations, talks have resumed that could lead to a Ho-Chunk Nation casino being built in Beloit.

City and tribe officials have signed a preliminary agreement for a possible casino development, City Manager Larry Arft said this week. While details of the agreement haven't been released, representatives of both sides presented the tentative deal at a town hall meeting this week.

The Beloit City Council and Rock County Board of Supervisors will be asked to sign the agreement, a document that Arft said will "set the basis for the relationship" among the tribe, city and county.

A casino in the area would create thousands of jobs and

could lead to further development, Arft said. New businesses could include hotels, a theater, convention halls and shopping spaces, he said.

"You're talking about a significant boost to the whole Stateline Area," Arft said.

The casino idea has been floated for more than a decade. In a 1999 referendum, 61 percent of Beloit voters approved implementation of a casino project. But the project ran into roadblocks in Washington, D.C.

The tentative deal is "a workable product that is now suitable for review" by council members and the community, Arft said. A formal public hearing has been set for Jan. 17.

While the renewed efforts could still fall flat, there are several factors in the tribe's favor.

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Most notably, the Ho-Chunk have a deal in place with the state that allows the tribe to operate four class-three gaming facilities. The Ho-Chunk currently operate three, in Baraboo, Nekoosa and Black River Falls.

Beloit could be that fourth locale, said Jon Greendeer, the president of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

"The Ho-Chunk have something that no other tribe in the state has," he said. "This could very well be the last gaming, brick-and-mortar site you'll see

in the state."

Also to the tribe's advantage, previously conducted environmental-impact studies and land-use studies won't have to be repeated.

City management and Ho-Chunk officials have held intermittent talks ever since the tribe bought 32 acres of city land in 2008, Arft said. Negotiations intensified about six months ago, and a preliminary deal was hashed out right before Christmas, he added.

Greendeer said both sides have mutual interests and have shown "such a good level of understanding."

All parties involved approached negotiations with "an open hand, a smile and good feelings," Greendeer said.

## Quileute museum show debunks Twilight movies

PORT ANGELES, Wash. (AP) — An exhibit of 23 Quileute artworks intended to debunk the tall tales of tribal heritage told in the Twilight saga, will open at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian this week.

"Behind the Scenes: The Real Story of the Quileute Wolves" will open in the Sealaska Gallery on the National Mall at Fourth Street and Independence Avenue SW in Washington, D.C., Friday and be on view through May 9.

During the exhibition's opening weekend, Chris Morganroth III, Quileute tribal member and one of only two fluent speakers left in the tribe, will tell traditional stories for children and families in the museum's imaginATIONS Activity Cen-

ter and present Quileute culture and stories in the Rasmuson Theater during the Native Storytelling Festival.

The exhibition was organized by the Quileute tribe and the Seattle Art Museum, where it was on view for one year, beginning in August 2010.

The exhibit brings together rare works of Quileute art as a counterpoint to the supernatural storyline depicted in the popular Twilight books and movies.

Wolves are an important part of Quileute legend.

But werewolves — as depicted in Stephenie Meyer's popular daydream set on the West End — never were part of the LaPush tribe's heritage.

According to oral traditions, the first Quileute people were

changed from a pair of wolves into human form by the Transformer, Kwati.

Because of the creation legend, wolf imagery is prominent in Quileute art, and to this day, the tribe continues to enact masked dances to honor the original supernatural connection to wolves.

Among the pieces to be displayed in the Smithsonian exhibit are elaborate wolf headdresses, rattles, baskets and a whale-bone dance club.

"We welcome any opportunity we have to educate the world about the true story of the Quileute people," said Chairwoman Bonita Cleveland.

"The Quileute Tribal Council decided to take the global spotlight and attention we have received as a result of the Twi-

light phenomenon and share with the global audience our history, culture and traditions.

"The Smithsonian exhibit is the perfect forum to tell the authentic story of our people, and we are honored to have our ancestral items displayed at this prestigious venue."

Also on view will be historic drawings created by Quileute teens who attended the Quileute Day School at Mora from 1905 through 1908.

The drawings depict wolf ritual dances and shamanistic performances, house posts that were part of the Potlatch Hall and a whaling scene that shows a crew of eight men coming alongside a whale in their cedar canoe. At one time, whaling was an important endeavor for the Quileute.

## Navajo weavers turning art to profit

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — On the second Friday of every month, two very different groups of people, most of them New Mexicans, get together at a school on the Navajo reservation for one of the state's most unique commercial customs.

The Crownpoint Rug Auction got started in 1968 as a way for Navajo weavers to profit more from their hand-spun and woven textiles that were once used casually as saddle blankets, but were quickly becoming expensive works of art.

By 4 p.m., when the doors open to the Crownpoint Elementary School, more than 100 Navajo weavers and their families begin moving into the gymnasium with the results of months of work rolled up in plastic containers.

They unroll their rugs at the registration desk, giving their names and hometowns, which are written onto small cards that are stapled to the rugs that are then displayed on four folding tables.

By 5 p.m., the bidders, almost all of them Anglos, begin to arrive and look through what will be for sale. The biggest contingency is from Albuquerque, with a few from Santa Fe, Rio Rancho, Farmington, Gallup, Las Cruces and other New Mexico towns, a handful from the contiguous states, a smattering from other states, and one European couple.

Some of the bidders look as if they are dripping with money. Most of them appear to know

what they're doing, taking notes and occasionally measuring the rugs. Sizes are not mentioned on the cards. A few bidders appear to be professional traders. They are the most discreet of all.

On Dec. 9, there were 227 rugs up for auction — ranging from 1-by-2-foot wall hangings selling for as little as \$35 to rugs up to 8-by-4 feet that went for up to \$1,500. About half of them failed to get a minimum bid. Fifty-five people signed up as bidders — slightly less than average, said to be about 75. The auction lasted about two hours.

Before the auction begins, there's time for a Navajo taco and soda from a vendor inside the little school, and to look through more than a dozen tables with Native American crafts — Acoma pottery, Zuni fetishes, Navajo jewelry.

At 7 p.m., Christina Ellsworth, manager of the Crownpoint Rug Weavers Association, takes to the stage to welcome the bidders and weavers, and warn bidders against trying to buy the rugs outside in the parking lot. That would be unfair to the weavers who pay the association 15 percent of their selling price at auction, she said.

Then the auctioneers, Wayne Connell and Delbert Arty, take over. Mountaineer residents who run cattle auctions in Belen, they begin with brief descriptions of each rug as young people display them to the audience. Then they begin their hypnotic sing-songs: "Do I hear nine hundred? Nine hundred,

*In most cases, the rugs that do sell go for a third to half what they would be priced in a gallery in Santa Fe or other cities.*

nine hundred. Nine hundred there! Do I hear ten hundred? Ten hundred, ten hundred..."

If the rug fails to get a minimum bid after 30 seconds, the auctioneers declare it a no sale and direct it to be put in a special pile. Occasionally, the auctioneers drop the minimum price by \$100 or so. In those cases, the rugs often draw a single bid from people seated quietly in the back — apparently professional traders seeking a discount.

In most cases, the rugs that do sell go for a third to half what they would be priced in a gallery in Santa Fe or other cities. Payments can be made in cash or personal check at a desk set up beside the auction stage, but no credit cards are accepted. There are no overnight accommodations in Crownpoint, about three hours by car from Santa Fe. The nearest motels are in Thoreau (pronounced "thoroo") on Interstate 40, with better lodging in Gallup or Grants. The next auction is Jan. 13.

Weavers Association manager Ellsworth said she has taken classes in rugmaking and is an

amateur weaver herself. She said she's not a professional, but is experienced enough to understand the amount of work that goes into shearing sheep, carding, dyeing and spinning wool into yarn, setting up a loom and weaving a rug with a unique pattern.

"I've done some weaving, but I don't want to sell what I make," she said. "It's my rug, my design, and then I look at these rugs and I think, 'How can they come up with these designs?' You get these guys from Blue Gap, from Chinle, from Wide Ruins. How do they get these designs in their heads? I sit at my loom and I think, 'What kind of design shall I make?' It's real puzzling."

Ellsworth laughs at the prices paid for Navajo rugs off the reservation — "an arm and a leg" — versus what weavers get. She recalled how she and her mother stopped at a trading post near Farmington years ago to overhear a trader trying to persuade an elderly woman to sell him a big Ganado red at a low price.

"He just wanted to give her peanuts for it," she said, "so my mom told her in Navajo, she said, 'Don't be selling your rug like that. You put a lot of work into it. Take it to the Crownpoint Rug Auction. You'll get better money for it.' So the lady got her rug and she left, and I felt like saying something to that man: 'Why are you just giving them peanuts for those rugs? It's a lot of hard work for them.'"

## President of Navajo Code Talkers Association dies

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Keith Little, one of the most recognizable of the remaining Navajo Code Talkers and a vocal proponent for a museum to tell their story, has died.

Little died Jan. 3 at a Fort Defiance hospital, according to the Navajo Code Talkers Association. He was 87.

Little joined the Marines at 17. He was among hundreds of Navajos recruited by the U.S. Marine Corps and trained as Code Talkers, who used a code that was developed by 29 Navajos and based on the Navajo language.

Code Talkers used the code to confound the Japanese and help win World War II.

"My motivation was to

fight the enemy with a gun or whatever," Little told The Associated Press in a July 2009 interview. "When I went into the Marine Corps... I knew nothing about the Navajo code. It was really astonishing to me to get to Camp Pendleton and there were a bunch of Navajos there, and they were working with a Navajo code."

Little's health had been deteriorating over the past year, as he went in and out of hospitals between speaking engagements and appearances in parades — the last time in New York in November for Veterans Day, the association said. He was the longtime president of the Navajo Code Talker Association until his death.

## Wildfires force evacuation

BROWNING, Mont. (AP) — Two wildfires raging last week on Montana's Blackfeet Indian Reservation burned thousands of acres, forced scores to evacuate and destroyed several buildings.

Fueled by strong winds, two blazes started around sundown on Jan. 4, and together grew to

16,000 acres by early the next day.

At least 300 people were forced to leave their homes and a boarding school, though no injuries had been reported.

Rainfall helped dozens of firefighters and volunteers make progress in getting a handle on the fires.

## Idaho tribal leader pleads guilty on theft charges

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — An American Indian who rose to the heights of tribal leadership while in his mid-30s now may be headed to prison for a decade after pleading guilty to stealing federal money.

Kyle Prior of Nampa pleaded guilty Tuesday to using a bank debit card issued to a tribal foundation to enrich himself.

The 38-year-old is a former chairman of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes in

southern Idaho and northern Nevada. Between September 2008 and July 2009, Prior was the executive director of the Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation.

It was while leading the non-profit organization meant to help indigenous Americans that prosecutors say Prior stole money intended to help enact a fish and wildlife program for four tribal groups from Oregon, Nevada and Idaho.

## Tribe to vote on freeway planned on reservation

PHOENIX (AP) — Gila River Indian Community residents will vote on whether to allow the South Mountain Freeway extension on tribal land.

The proposal to be considered would amend current plans for the \$1.9 billion extension of Loop 202 would link west Phoenix to Chandler with a 22-mile, eight-lane freeway along Pecos Road. The current freeway plans would take out a church and more than 100 homes in Ahwatukee.

It would also cut through three ridges in the South Mountain preserve. The ridges are religiously and culturally significant to the Gila River tribe.

The vote on the issue is set for Feb. 7. The reservation realignment of the highway would

run along flat, undeveloped land and would not require the destruction of mountains or buildings. However, the state would have to negotiate to obtain several privately owned tracts along that route.

The Gila River Tribal Council has been developing ballot language. Voters will be able to go to their local polling place or use a mail ballot, said Gila River spokeswoman Alia Maisonet.

It's taken two years to bring the freeway relocation proposal to a vote, said Phoenix Councilman Sal DiCiccio, whose district includes Ahwatukee.

"Our community came together on a single plan," he said. The plan was to get the state and the Gila River community talking about shifting the freeway to tribal land.

## Reward offered for S.D. suspect reservation death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Federal authorities are offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of a man wanted in the killing of another man on

the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Ronald Kills In Water, 28, is wanted in the death of 53-year-old Robert Small Bear Jr.