

Blackfeet divided over enrollment proposal

GREAT FALLS, Mont. (AP) — A debate over whether to expand the eligibility requirements to enroll as a Blackfeet tribal member is dividing the northwestern Montana reservation.

Enrolled members qualify for more health and social service benefits, plus they get to vote on tribal matters and hold office within the nation. But on both sides, the bigger question is whether expanding enrollment will create greater unity or threaten the tribe's existence.

For the past 50 years, Blackfeet tribal eligibility has been determined by whether a person is at least one-quarter Blackfeet, meaning that at least one grandparent must be a full-blooded Blackfeet. A majority of federally recognized tribes use that measure, known as blood quantum, to determine eligibility, accord-

ing to the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission.

But an organization called Blackfeet Enrollment Amendment Reform is collecting signatures for a petition seeking to change that standard. Its members want enrollment eligibility to include anyone who has proof of being the child, grandchild or great-grandchild of an enrolled tribal member.

Supporters say the change would lead to more tribal inclusion and unity.

Those opposed to the proposed lineal descent eligibility include members of the Blackfeet Against Open Enrollment movement, who say blood quantum separates those with a close affiliation to Native American life and cultural values from others with little or no personal connection to their ancestral heritage.

There are about 105,000 people who identified themselves as "Blackfeet Indian" on the 2010 U.S. Census.

The Blackfeet tribe in 2011 had 16,924 enrolled members, according to tribal enrollment office statistics. But there are about 105,000 people who identified themselves as "Blackfeet Indian" on the 2010 U.S. Census.

The Blackfeet's original constitution, written in 1935, included a requirement that tribal members be at least 1/16th Blackfeet. The constitution was amended in 1962 to raise that requirement to a quarter.

All Blackfeet children liv-

ing on the reservation prior to Aug. 30, 1962, were also included as tribal members. But in some cases their children do not meet the blood quantum requirement and are excluded from tribal rolls.

Robert Hall's parents are enrolled members but with a 15/64 blood quantum, he is not. He grew up on the reservation, speaks the Blackfeet language and identifies with Blackfeet cultural values.

Hall said he believes blood quantum system is racist.

"We are literally living in a caste system—people with certain genetic qualities who are denied access to resources because of their racial makeup. If any other group in America was advocating this type of racial purity, they would be condemned as racists," Hall said.

Indian Head Casino

— Employee of the Month —

Tanaya Hunt



Tanaya Hunt earned the Indian Head Casino Employee of the Month Award for June. Tanaya works in the Cottonwood Restaurant.

"She is a very dependable employee with a positive attitude," said Margie Tuckta, casino Human Resources director. "She is very creative with great suggestions, and is an awesome team player!"

Congratulations Tanaya!

NY holding on to seized Indian cigarettes

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York officials are holding on to a truckload of untaxed Indian-made cigarettes they seized, challenging the recent order of a state judge who said the state had to give them back.

State police and the Cuomo administration say they are not changing their enforcement practices despite the court ruling. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has filed an appeal notice that temporarily halts the order of state Supreme Court Justice David Demarest.

Demarest ruled on June 18 that there was no tax due on the 26,000 cartons of Signal-brand cigarettes going from the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation to HCI Distributors, a subdivision of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, finding no legal basis under current New York tax law or regulations to hold

them. They were taken from a tractor-trailer stopped Jan. 23 at a U.S. Border Patrol checkpoint at Waddington in northern New York.

Last November, administration officials said state law subjects unstamped cigarettes to seizure regardless of the origin or destination.

Richard Azzopardi, spokesman for Gov. Andrew Cuomo said: "This administration is enforcing the law and we will continue to do so."

Representatives of cigarette manufacturers on the Akwesasne Mohawk Reservation in northern New York, whose business has been hurt by seizures this year including some other truckloads, met with administration officials last week in Albany but declined afterward to comment. No progress was reported.

HCI sued state police, St. Lawrence County District Attorney Nicole Duve and

her assistant, Jonathan Becker, arguing it had legally bought the cigarettes from Oherase Manufacturing LLC on the Mohawk reservation and that it had accurate paperwork that specified its destination as the Winnebago reservation in Nebraska.

State police seized the tobacco. Demarest concluded no taxes were due and said no criminal or civil proceedings were ever begun, so the cigarettes should be returned.

Calls to Duve and Becker were not returned.

"Here, the New York State Police, at the specific direction of the St. Lawrence County District Attorney, has seized property owned by the petitioner, without a warrant and without commencing a criminal complaint," Demarest wrote. He rejected the state's argument that the cigarettes needed tax stamps. Under New York law, ciga-

rettes can be sold to tribe members without the state's tax of \$4.35 per pack but should be taxed when sold to non-Indians. That has resulted in a booming discount cigarette business for some tribes who say that as sovereign nations they shouldn't pay state tax at all.

The state has renewed enforcement efforts following nearly two decades of failures. Recent measures included crackdowns on Internet sales and requiring cigarette wholesalers to prepay the sales taxes before supplying reservation stores with non-Native brands.

So far this year, troopers have seized more than 260,000 cartons of unstamped cigarettes.

The state Department of Taxation and Finance said it has taken possession of 180,000 cartons this year and has so far returned 108,500.

Guard soldiers study Little Bighorn Battlefield

FORT MEADE, S.D.

(AP) — South Dakota National Guard soldiers from the 196th Regiment traveled to the Little Bighorn Battlefield near Garryowen, Mont., on July 4 to study the successes and failures of battle known as "Custer's Last Stand."

The Guard says an analysis of both sides of the historic battle is one of the major events required for students to graduate from the 58-day commissioning program and become 2nd lieutenants.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Wall says studying military history teaches junior military leaders to think in terms of terrain and tactics.

In 1876, Lt. Col. Colonel George A. Custer and his 7th Cavalry were wiped out by Sioux and Cheyenne Indians in the battle.

Numerous studies in recent years have uncovered a great deal of information about the locations, allowing tactics to be studied.

Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Wall says studying military history teaches junior military leaders to think in terms of terrain and tactics.

Monastery closure affecting Indian cultural center

MARVIN, S.D. (AP) —

The upcoming closure of the Blue Cloud Abbey monastery in northeast South Dakota is leaving the future of its American Indian Culture Research Center in doubt. Center director Colleen

Cordell says that the planned August closure will also close the center, which houses a collection of photographs and artifacts that document the history and culture of the Dakota people.

Parade on the Fourth



The Warm Springs Fourth of July Parade was one of the bigger ones in recent years, with many tribal organizations and community members joining in.



Spilay photos.

