

## NATIVE NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

### Hearing on Indian Whaling Report Draws Intense Clashes

SEATTLE, WA. (AP) — Battle lines over the Makah whale hunt are as sharp and divisive as ever.

The Makah consider their centuries-old whaling tradition a central part of their identity.

"We will not wake up one morning and our minds will be different. Our minds are set," said Gordon Smith, Vice Chairman of the Makah Tribal Council. He called on opponents to set their emotions aside.

Anti-whaling activists consider whaling a barbaric attack on sentient creatures.

"I cannot and will not stifle my feelings. You are set and so am I," said opponent Kay Farrell.

They were among scores of people who spoke recently at a hearing on the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) environmental assessment of the impact of the Tribe's bid to resume whaling.

Using a canoe, a traditional harpoon and more modern guns and chase boats, the Makah killed a gray whale in May 1999, their first in more than 70 years.

The assessment, the second prepared by the agency, was ordered last summer by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which found the agency violated the National Environmental Policy Act when it approved a hunt management plan before completing an impact study. The process had been challenged in a lawsuit filed by former Rep. Jack

#### "BOTH SIDES"

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Metcalf (R-Wash.), operators of whale-watching boats and others.

The Makah suspended hunting after the decision, and the management plan was scrapped while NMFS weighed four alternatives ranging from no hunt at all to an unrestricted hunt with a five-whale annual limit. The agency concluded Makah whaling would not threaten the gray whale population.

The agency's final environmental assessment, including a preferred alternative from among the four options, is expected this spring.

Some opponents of the whale hunt resorted to ridicule and profanity.

The report was rife with "poor science, incomplete and inaccurate reporting," said marine mammal Biologist Toni Frohoff of the Humane Society of the United States.

Some activists contend the gray whale population, estimated by the fisheries service at a potential all-time high of 26,000, is actually

threatened with extinction.

Some complained that the hearing was held in Seattle on a weeknight, when many working people in Clallam County, where the Makah Reservation is located, were unable to attend. Those who did make the five-hour trip argued for consideration of the impact on their communities.

"It just doesn't stop... the stress over whether it's going to happen," said Margaret Owens of Peninsula Citizens for the Protection of Whales.

"We blame you and all your bosses for this mess," Owens told NMFS officials, contending the controversy had "turned our community into ground zero for racial disharmony."

Anti-whaling activists came from as far away as Hawaii — Jeff Panahoff of the Whale Man Foundation — and Toronto — Julie Woodyard of the World Whale Police.

While most simply backed the no-hunt option, Andrew Christie of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society,

whose ships prowled the waters off Neah Bay for months in hopes of preventing a kill, suggested a trade-off—return of traditional Makah lands now held by the National Park Service.

The Makah are the only U.S. Tribe with a treaty that guarantees whaling rights.

"They knew what was important to their people," said Billy Frank, Jr., a Nisqually Indian and head of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

All five Makah Tribal Council members, plus several carloads and a charter bus of Neah Bay residents, attended the hearing. They also received support from Aleut, Navajo, Sioux, Haida, Chippewa, Cheyenne and other Tribes around the nation and from civil-rights and some environmental activists.

"It's very important to our people, and that's why so many of them are here," said Tribal Chairman Greig Arnold.

The no-hunt option would be "putting an end to these people's songs, to their dances, to their gatherings... to their pride," said Dennis Miller, an Aleut from Alaska.

The Makah stopped hunting whales early in the 20th century after commercial whaling reduced the population to dangerously low levels. The Tribe moved to revive its tradition after gray whales were taken off the Endangered Species List in 1994.

### Indian Affairs Council Backs Erasing 'Squaw' from Idaho Maps

BOISE, ID. (AP) — The Indian Affairs Council recently voted unanimously to endorse the initiative of all six Indian Tribes to erase the word "squaw" from geographic locations throughout the state.

The council, which includes representatives of the Tribes, legislature and the governor's office, forwarded the resolution to the Senate State Affairs Committee, where initial indications were that it would be approved.

Sen. Moon Wheeler, the American Falls Republican who heads the council, called the word vile and disgusting, agreeing with Tribal members that changing the offensive geo-

graphic name is more than an exercise in political correctness.

"I can understand the sensitivity of Native Americans," Wheeler said.

If approved by both houses, the resolution directs the State Department of Lands and the Idaho Human Rights Commission to form a committee with the Tribes to identify geographic locations with "squaw" in the name and recommend new names. The ultimate authority to change the names lies with the U.S. Board of Geographic Names.

"We can find beautiful names for those places," said Coeur d'Alene Tribal Chairman Ernie Stensgar.

The Coeur d'Alenes are working

with the Nez Perce, Kootenai, Shoshone-Bannock, Shoshone-Paiute and Northwest Band of the Shoshoni Nation. Indian leaders said the word is a vulgar racial or sexual insult. In Maine's Passamaquoddy Tribe, it translates roughly to "whore." In Iroquois it is derived from the word for female genitalia.

"We all understand when we are insulted," Stensgar said. "If there were only five Indians who lived in this state and are offended by it, it is our responsibility to address the issue."

The word appears on more than 1,000 geographic features nationwide, primarily in the West and Midwest, according to the U.S. Geologi-

cal Survey. The states of Montana, Maine, Oklahoma and Minnesota already have taken action through their legislatures, and British Columbia has eliminated the word as a place name.

Advocates said joining those jurisdictions would underscore Idaho's opposition to racial and ethnic prejudice.

"We have a blight in Idaho not of our own choosing because certain people chose to move to Idaho and claim their race is dominant," Stensgar said. "We're proud of who we are and where we live. We're proud of our people, and we're proud of our state."

### Lummi Indian Tribe Breaks Ground on New Casino, Replaces Old One

BELLINGHAM, WA. (AP) — Lummi Nation officials have broken ground for a new Tribal casino, four years after the closure of the old one.

Tribal officials hope the \$15 million casino will bring more jobs to the reservation, where unemployment hovers between 30 and 50 percent.

The 25,000-square-foot casino will feature more than 300 video slot machines, a dozen game tables and a restaurant. It's being financed by The Merit Management Group of Chicago and is scheduled to open by November of this year.

At the recent groundbreaking ceremony, Lummi and Merit officials predicted the coinless slot machines

will make the difference this time.

"No question — it's what got the Tribe interested in gaming again," said Gordon Adams, a Lummi Indian Business Council member. "All up and down the coast, they were having a huge impact on gaming."

The casino will create 150 new jobs and training will begin as soon as August, said Merit CEO Joe Canfora.

"Everyone who is willing to work, we are going to put to work from construction all the way through," he said.

Isabelle Revey, a gaming supervisor at another area casino, served drinks at the old Lummi Casino before leaving in 1994.

"It was great. We were the only

game in town then," she said. "But then tips went from an average of \$250 a day to \$80."

But, Revey said she wants to work at the new Lummi casino when it opens.

The new casino will be closer to Interstate 5 than the old one and the new slot machines should be an advantage, said Business Council Chairman Willie Jones. Tribal casino operators across the state say the new machines have helped the weakening industry.

Gaming revenues are slowly rebuilding after a 1997 decline that came when British Columbia allowed slot machines and expanded gaming

operations. That slump led to the closure of the previous Lummi Casino.

Now one of the biggest questions is whether alcohol will be served at the new casino. The former casino didn't serve alcohol until profits started going down. Business Council member Darrell Hillaire said he didn't know if the new casino would serve alcohol or not.

"There's a strong sentiment toward no alcohol in this community," he said. "The council will have to come together to answer that."

But Merle Jefferson, another Business Council member, hinted alcohol probably would be allowed.