

New Quechan resort job fair draws hundreds

By Darn Fenger
Yuma Sun

YUMA, Ariz. — Hundreds of people flocked Tuesday to the construction site of Quechan Casino Resort in hopes of hitting an early jackpot by landing a much-coveted job in today's rough economy.

Up for grabs are about 1,000 jobs at the Quechan Casino Resort, which is slated to open in February 2009. Those jobs range from entry-level positions like house-keeping all the way to top executive spots in departments ranging from marketing to gaming.

More than one hopeful applicant liked the prospect of a solid job to Christmas truly coming early for them.

"A job right around the Christmas holiday? This has to be some kind of miracle," said Don Clark, a job applicant hoping for a spot in the security department. "I'm just staying optimistic."

It was standing room only at the resort's employment center, which opened Tuesday and was quickly inundated with a steady stream of job seekers. Officials with the resort said they were certainly pleased to see such an "above average" number of people wanting to work.

"I'm very impressed. We're thrilled to have the kind of response we have right now," said David Julian, executive director of marketing for Quechan Casino Resort and Paradise Casinos. "We think this rush will continue on through the course of the day, through the course of the week. By the end of the day we will have gone through hundreds and hundreds of people."

Julian said that the current economic crisis is certainly driving many applicants to the rare opportunity for such a large number of opened jobs, but they pointed to overall excitement for the project as another powerful driving force.

"But even more than the economy, this is a great opportunity for this area. There's an opportunity here, not just for a job, but for a career. This facility, there is no other facility like it probably for a 150-mile radius," the casino official said. "Certainly the Quechan Tribe is very happy to offer these opportunities."

The employment center for the Quechan Casino Resort is located directly on the construction site. To get there take the Algodones Exit off Interstate 8, turn south and follow the signs.

The center will remain open until the resort is open in early 2009. The center is open from 8:30 to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday.

Clark, the job applicant, said the prospect of getting hired by the resort amounted to the chance for a new life.

"Oh, it's been rough in this economic," he said. "I have applications all over the place, but there's very few people hiring."

He said that he's currently employed full time, but needs to earn more money in a career offering some kind of future.

"I just want to find something a little bit better, maybe something where I can get my foot in the door and see a career develop from it," Clark said. "I'm tired of working for jobs and just want a career that I can work in for 20 years and one day look back and say 'I like what I did.'"

Another job applicant waiting in the long lines Tuesday was Lupe Luera, a husband and father of three who said a good job would truly be a life line for his family.

"It's not good. It's just been really hard trying to find a job," Luera said. "Employers just aren't hiring a lot of people right now. It's hard, but we're getting by because my wife is working. This is a relief that there are openings

Court gives troubled youths second chance

By Krista J. Kapralos
Everett Herald

TULALIP, Wash. — The young man wore loose jeans slung low on his hips. The hems were worn and frayed, and wet from being trampled on rain-soaked sidewalks. A large black sweatshirt flopped over his shoulders and arms.

It was 7:30 a.m., and he needed help.

Don "Spat-ub-kud" Hatch welcomed the teenager into a courtroom in the Tulalip Tribes' courthouse, and told him to sit down. Before long, the young man faced Hatch and two other Tulalip elders. The teen seemed hopeful that the elders would do all the talking, but the elders refused to let him slide.

"Don't just say, 'Yeah,' say 'Yes!'" Hatch said after the teen answered questions with little more than grunts.

"We're going to try to get you back in school," elder Lee Topash said.

"How is this elder court working for you?" Virginia Carpenter asked. "Do you think it's helping?"

The teen made eye contact with each elder. He answered their questions as best he could. At the end of his time, he walked around the table to give each person a warm hug.

For the young man and others who appear before the Tulalip Tribes Elder

Court, the board of senior citizens who offer grandparentlike advice is their last hope at starting adult life with a clean slate.

"When we release them, their charges are wiped clean," Topash said.

Tulalip Tribal Court handles cases charged by Tulalip Tribal Police, including drug abuse and sales, driving while intoxicated and violence. But if the defendant is between the ages of 18 and 25, has never before been charged with a crime, and seems to be straddling the line that separates criminals and productive citizens, the judge can choose to turn that offender over to Elder Court.

The court started about three years ago, when Hatch met with Tribal Court judges to find a way to give tribal youths another chance.

Since then, eight young people have graduated from Elder Court.

"We're playing the role of grandparents," Hatch said. "Sometimes, it's all they need."

The Elder Court calls the young defendants "clients." Clients are scheduled to appear before Elder Court early on Friday mornings. If they're late, they face a reprimand.

Once inside, elders begin an interview. There are questions about school, jobs, home life. Most clients answer, Hatch said. But some dig in

their heels. One even asked to be turned back over to Tribal Court.

"We had to convince him to stay," Topash said. "We told him that the charges will follow him for the rest of his life if he doesn't stay."

They warn clients that criminal charges could keep them from getting a job at the Tulalip Casino, where tribal employment specialists and trainers work overtime to find jobs for tribal members.

Most of the time, the cautions work. The clients agree to stay on at Elder Court.

"But some people just don't want anyone telling them what to do," Hatch said.

Tulalip Tribal Court Judge Gary Bass said he has referred more than 25 people to Elder Court over the past three years. That's a small percentage of the 500 or so cases the court hears each year, but the change is making a big difference.

"With the ones who are successful in Elder Court, we don't wind up with them back in criminal court," Bass said. "You get them to start learning about their culture, their heritage, and you can actually change the way they act in their life."

It's not easy to make it through Elder Court. Clients must return to appear again and again. Along the way, the young adults are asked to

interview relatives and create a family tree.

That's an eye-opener for many clients, Topash said. They often discover that members of the Elder Court are second cousins of their parents, or great-aunts and uncles. Like in most tribes, Tulalip Indians must prove that their lineage connects them to historic tribal leaders in order to be enrolled in the tribe.

But many tribal members who were born on the reservation and who haven't had to prove their ancestry don't know their own lineage, Hatch said. When a client discovers that the elder who is handling his or her case is a relative, they're often more willing to do what's asked of them.

Elder Court doesn't have very many guidelines. The elders can ask a client to return again and again, every few weeks, and assign five, 10, 20 or even 40 hours of community service.

"We never come in here with an agenda because you just never know," Topash said. "Mostly we just play it by ear."

A client graduates from Elder Court when the elders decide he or she is ready.

Even then, a young Tulalip Indian doesn't escape the eagle-eyed supervision of the elders.

"We're a small community, so we see them around," Topash said. "A lot

Koruba tribal protest



Associated Press

An Indian of the Amazonian Koruba tribe protests in Brasilia, Wednesday. Brazil's Supreme Court resumes voting on whether to break up a vast Amazon reserve, a dispute over the 4.2 million-acre Raposa Serra do Sol reservation pitting about 18,000 Amazon Indians against a handful of large-scale rice farmers who have violently fought efforts to remove them.

Cayuga Indian Nation seeks court order to sell cigarettes

By Scott Rapp
Syracuse Post-Standard

SYRACUSE, NY — It's back to court for the Cayuga Indian Nation in its long-running tax feud with Cayuga and Seneca counties.

On Wednesday, the Cayugas will seek a court order that would allow them to resume peddling tax-free cigarettes at their convenience stores in Union Springs and the town of Seneca Falls.

The nation was forced to stop selling cigarettes Nov. 25 after sheriff's deputies in both counties seized all of their 17,600 cartons of smokes for not paying some \$485,000 in state excise taxes on them.

The Cayugas plan to ask state Supreme Court Judge Kenneth Fisher, of Monroe County, for an injunction on grounds that last week's searches were illegal and that the counties are trying to enforce a law that is not in effect, Daniel French, a nation lawyer, said Monday.

The counties say otherwise. They will argue that the Cayugas' LakeSide Trading stores are not on sovereign, tax-free reservation land and that it is illegal to possess and sell unstamped cigarettes on non-reservation land, Seneca County District Attorney Richard Swinehart said.

"We say we have the right to do it; they say we don't. The judge will decide; that's the bottom line," Swinehart said.

The court hearing is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. in Cayuga County.

Both counties have been trying for about 3 years to force the Cayugas to pay taxes on sales of cigarettes and gasoline at their convenience stores.

The excise tax on the confiscated cigarettes amounts to \$27.50 per carton but does not include sales tax.

The counties say the Cayugas are driving competitors out

of business because the nation can sell their goods at lower, tax-free prices.

"There's no exemption for them not to pay the tax. They're simply evading paying millions of dollars of taxes," Cayuga County District Attorney Jon Budelmann said.

The Cayugas own many properties, including the two stores, in their ancestral homeland around the north end of Cayuga Lake.

Their application to have the stores and other properties put into federal trust which would make them sovereign and tax-free forever is pending before the federal government.

French said the dispute has little to do with whether the stores are on sovereign, tax-free reservation land.

Instead, the state tax code lists the nation as a "qualified reservation," a designation, he said, that allows for the Cayugas to sell tax-free cigarettes.

Also, French said, a state Supreme Court judge in Buffalo has barred the state from collecting taxes on sales at Native American businesses.

The judge issued the injunction in January 2007 because the state failed to issue tax-exemption coupons for Indians who buy goods from Native American merchants, French said.

"Our contention is the law the district attorneys (in both counties) are trying to prosecute is enjoined from being enforced," he added.

The state Taxation and Finance Department has yet to implement a coupon system for collecting taxes from the Cayugas and other Indian merchants, nearly two years after the injunction was issued.

"It's a complex issue and the administration is trying to reach a reasonable solution with the Native American tribes," Tom Bergin, a department spokesman, said.

Killer, Iron Cloud are new representatives

By Brian Daffron
Indian Country Today

ANADARKO, Okla. — The returns came in slowly for South Dakota House District 27, showing Republican candidates Dawn Rasmussen and Kenny Fox ahead of Democratic co-candidates Kevin Killer and Ed Iron Cloud, who are both members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

But when the returns came in for the Indian communities within Shannon, Bennett and Jackson counties, the people of Pine Ridge Reservation made their voice heard and elected two of their own to represent them. By the time the last ballot counts came in from Wanblee, S.D. at approximately 1:30 a.m. CST, Killer had the most votes with 2,750 votes

at 26.4 percent and Iron Cloud receiving the second-highest count at 2,402 votes and 23.06 percent of the district's vote.

"I made a prediction, and it came true," Iron Cloud said in a phone interview shortly after the final results, commenting on the prediction made to Indian Country Today in a previous interview. "I'm really happy. I know that I want to make the state government more open, where people feel more open with it."

Iron Cloud, resident of Porcupine, S.D., also said that his goals upon entering office is to "educate the legislature as to who we are as a people," in terms of American Indian issues such as living conditions, and that he wanted to work with "both sides of the aisle" upon being sworn

in as representative in January.

ICT also tried to contact Killer upon the final vote counts, but was at first unsuccessful. After catching up with Killer by phone later in the day, Killer admitted that his cell phone battery died after receiving many calls of congratulations, making him temporarily unavailable.

"I'm just trying to figure out what's next," Killer said. "It's a little overwhelming, but I'm thankful for the support from Native communities."

Killer said that his goals upon entering office center on working with the relationship between tribal governments and the state of South Dakota "as it relates to education, health care, law enforcement and economic development, especially gaming and alternative energy."

Killer added that the election of both himself and Iron Cloud can be attributed to the "Get Out the Vote" efforts made within Native communities. Historically, Killer said that Shannon County, which is within Pine Ridge Reservation, has the lowest voter turnout in the entire state.

However, in this election, Killer said that Shannon County voted 95 percent to re-elect Senator Tim Johnson, D-S.D., 95 percent to re-elect Rep. Stephanie Herseth, D-S.D., and 88 percent for Senator Barack Obama, D-III., for President. To Killer, this high turnout within Shannon County alone "showed people the power of the Native vote" and that it should receive greater emphasis in future elections, he said.