

## Judge to reconsider Carter Lake casino ruling

By Tom Shaw  
Omaha World-Herald

CARTER LAKE, Iowa — The federal government on Friday asked a judge to reconsider a ruling blocking the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska's casino project in Carter Lake, Iowa.

U.S. District Court Judge Charles Wolle ruled last month that the tribe was bound by a 2002 agreement not to use its five acres of land in Carter Lake for gambling. The tribe had told the State of Iowa that the land would be used for health services.

The judge also ruled that the federal National Indian Gaming Commission exceeded its authority in declaring that the tribe can have gambling on the land.

The federal government wants the court to reconsider the ruling, saying the judge made factual and legal errors.

"We are confident that the law remains on the side of the tribe and continue to pursue our world-class resort in Carter Lake that will create great economic benefits for the community," Tribal Chairman Larry Wright said in a statement.

Last year the tribe sought and was granted permission from the federal commission to use the land for gambling purposes.

Iowa and Nebraska, as well as the City of Council Bluffs, filed suit against the federal government earlier this year.

Carter Lake is on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River and is almost completely surrounded by Omaha.

## Hopi marksmanship attends regionals

TUCSON (AP) — On Saturday, Dec. 6, The Hopi JROTC Marksmanship Team traveled to Tucson, Ariz., for the Marksmanship Regional Finals hosted by Flowing Wells High School. There were over 15 teams from around Arizona who participated in the regionals. Hopi placed 5th over all the other teams in the finals with the overall score of 1,788 points.

There were eight cadets who went on the trip, and five of them shot. The top five shooters who shot were Cadet 1st Lieutenant Angelo Dixon, 2nd Lieutenant Carrie Jones, 2nd Lieutenant Dominique Halwood, Cadet Private Kachina Jenkins, and Cadet Private Joseph Nahsonhoya. There were three more cadets who came to watch and cheer for their fellow teammates. They were Cadet 2nd Lieutenant Saniel Honyaktewa, 2nd Lieutenant Robin Wadsworth, and Cadet Private Monique Chapman.

Hopi's top shooter was 2nd Lieutenant Carrie Jones with the overall score of 497, with 1st Lieutenant Angelo Dixon close behind her with the score of 479. Although Hopi didn't get first place, they congratulated each other on their victory of getting 5th place.

Major Taylor said, "They did the best they could. They would have done better if we had our top shooter Tasha LaBahe, but she had a previous engagement to be at, but it was still successful."

## Immokalee casino unveils blackjack tables

By Mark S. Krzos  
Fort Myers News-Press

IMMOKALEE, Fla. — It's a late Tuesday afternoon - not exactly a day for diversion - but you wouldn't know it from inside the Seminole Casino in Immokalee.

Located about 40 miles from Fort Myers, the casino in this town of 20,000 people is thriving. A \$12 million expansion doubling the casino's size is under way.

Outside, construction crews are putting a beige plaster over the casino's aluminum siding and large trucks are moving materials in and out of the large parking lot where gamblers are driving in circles trying to find a parking space.

Inside, slot machine bells, bings and beeps are heard everywhere.

And just to the right of the casino's poker room sits a new sight - blackjack tables.

On Dec. 4, the casino took its first major step toward big-league gambling when it unveiled 12 blackjack tables. The casino initially planned to have the tables open by Jan. 1.

"We wanted to have a soft-opening," said Gary Bitner,

spokesman for the casino and the Seminole Tribe. "The idea was to make sure everyone knew what they were doing."

### Tallahassee turmoil

Getting to this point hasn't been easy. Late last year, Gov. Charlie Crist signed an agreement between the tribe and the state that would allow seven Indian casinos to install Las Vegas-style slots and card games in exchange for hundreds of millions dollars that the state could spend on education.

Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio quickly challenged the agreement saying Crist had no authority without legislative approval to sign the agreement.

Some eight months later, the Florida Supreme Court sided with Rubio, R-Miami.

It may have been too late.

Immokalee and the Seminole Hard Rock Casinos in Tampa and Hollywood had already moved forward with their plans. Slots were installed at all three casinos and 71 blackjack tables opened in Hollywood two weeks before the ruling.

The fight, however, is far from over. Barry Richard, the

attorney for the Seminole tribe in Tallahassee, argued that the state "has no regulatory control over the Seminoles' gaming on its land."

"The National Indian Gaming Commission will be the ultimate decider," he said. "They'll be the ones who decide if the Seminole's can have Class III gaming."

Class III gambling includes virtually all games of chance.

Richard said that going back doesn't seem like an option now, not with the state of the Florida economy.

"What we want to do is continue talking with the governor's office and meet with the Legislative leadership," Richard said. "Some 2,000 people are employed directly because of Class III gaming."

Since the arrival of Vegas-style slots and blackjack, the casino added 125 more employees and it's estimated that once the current expansion is complete, the casino will add 400 more.

### Expansion continues

Despite another fight looming once the Legislature reconvenes, the Immokalee

casino isn't standing still.

More than 100 construction workers from Kraft Construction of Naples are making structural and aesthetic improvements to the interior and exterior of the Immokalee casino.

Among the additions - part of a 35,000 square-foot, \$12 million expansion - is The 1st St. Deli, an upscale restaurant and entertainment lounge called the Zig-Zag Lounge.

"We're doubling the size of it," Bitner said of the Immokalee casino.

The casino also plans to increase its number of slots from 800 to 1,100. Right now, about half are considered Las Vegas-style slots.

"As of right now, there are no plans to increase the number of blackjack tables or add other card games like baccarat," Bitner said.

Bitner also said it's too early to discuss long-range plans such as a high-end hotel.

"There is a potential for a significant project there. It's not 100 percent," he said. "It's just a little early to make any kind of announcement on any major complex like that.

There are just too many variables at this point."

### Blackjack attracts

On this Tuesday afternoon, there are several empty seats at the blackjack tables, which are nonetheless more crowded than the nearby poker room. Throughout the afternoon, players come and go. One of them, Jennifer Cole, 43, of Fort Myers, said blackjack is a big lure.

"Usually, we go to the Bahamas to play," she said. "Now we don't have to go as much. We can come here. It was only a 37-minute drive. I'd expect we'll be here more often now."

Ernie Smith, 71, of Fort Myers, described himself as a poker player but didn't deny that blackjack is going to have a major effect on the casino.

"There's no question about it," he said as he watched over one of the new blackjack tables. "It's a Tuesday afternoon and you can't even find a place to park outside."

Bill Vandevender, 29, said he was just looking for something fun to do Tuesday when he and a friend decided to make a trip down from Lehigh Acres.

"With blackjack and slots, it's getting close to being a real casino," he said.

## A sign for repair



Associated Press

A sign pointing the way to Alabama-Coushatta facilities is in need of repair Nov. 19, near Livingston, Texas. The tribe is hoping to gain the approval to open a casino in the upcoming legislative session.

## Rosebud Sioux tribe to deliver 2,600 Christmas turkeys

By Jomay Steen  
Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. — Naughty or nice, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe today will deliver 2,600 Christmas turkeys to all households in the 21 communities of the Rosebud Indian Reservation, officials said.

While the shipment cost more than it did last year, Melissa Poignee, the tribe's community services director, said a local winning bid brought the best quality turkeys for less than her budget allowed.

"It is money worth spending," she said of the tribe's efforts to provide food for the holidays.

At 9 a.m. today, community members will arrive at the Community Services Warehouse to load thousands of frozen turkeys for the various districts. This year, All Stop -- a locally owned gro-

cery store in Rosebud -- submitted the lowest bid for 2,600 turkeys, each weighing 12 to 14 pounds, for \$27,700. It is the first time a tribal member has been awarded the tribe's holiday turkey contract.

"I'm really glad a local business got the bid," Poignee said.

The Rosebud Tribal Council allocates money from its Rosebud Casino account to provide a turkey annually for the holidays. Because up to five or six families can sometimes live in a single household, the tribe can afford to deliver only one turkey per household rather than to individual families, she said.

Poignee generally works with a \$50,000 budget for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. This year, the tribe tossed in an additional \$10,000 to help bridge the gap caused by rising prices.

Poignee said costs have risen since 2007, when she brought 2,300 Christmas turkeys for \$23,500 or averaged \$10.21 a gobbler. But a sinking economy pushed turkey prices up 44 cents per turkey to \$10.65.

Poignee said 3,000 turkeys were delivered for Thanksgiving and 2,600 will be delivered for Christmas.

"There's a bigger demand for turkeys at Thanksgiving," she said.

Today, a line of designated people will arrive to load pickups, trucks and cars with turkeys from the warehouse. They will then return to their communities to deliver the birds. Recipients sign for delivery and that list is returned to Poignee and her staff.

"Last year, the turkeys were out of our warehouse within two hours. Everything was delivered and within the homes in two days," she said.

## Family gives up adoptive son on court orders

By Nicole Gonzales  
KSL News

SALT LAKE CITY — It was an emotional evening for a South Jordan couple who had to give up their adopted baby tonight. The couple lost a custody battle to the birth mother and her Native American tribe; tonight they had to turn over their baby to a tribe representative.

Emotional doesn't begin to explain what happened at the couple's home tonight. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. No one wanted to see that baby go.

The family savored the last moments they'll ever spend with little Talon. It was filled with tears of sadness, not wanting to let go.

The boy's adoptive mother, Heather Larson, said, "There's not enough words to describe it. We're losing our son."

They're losing him to his birth mother, a member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribe. According to Heather and Clint Larson, she's a heroin addict. Because of that, Talon won't go to his mother; instead he'll go into tribal foster care.

He leaves a stable home, a loving home, with people who obviously love him. And he's going to strangers," Heather said.

Friends and family gathered tonight to support the Larsons, everyone wanting to hold Talon one last time.

Kami Larson, Heather's sister-in-law, said, "It's going to be devastating to them. I don't know how she's going to be able to handle today. I don't think I could do it."

Toni Worthington was there to support the Larson family. She said, "Heartbreaking, that's why we're here, it's heartbreaking to even think of the possibility of your child leaving."

And as the time neared to say goodbye, the feeling in the air was devastation. The family walked out of their home carrying Talon while supporters sang a hymn. Heather, Clint and their older son kissed Talon goodbye. The tribe representatives sat in the car, and waited.

"He's ours, no matter what they do tonight, no matter what the judges say, no matter what the tribal attorney says, he's ours," Heather said.