

Cherokees eyeing takeover of HIMC

By TEDDY SNELL - TAHLEQUAH DAILY PRESS

The Cherokee Nation has begun an objective planning process to decide whether or not to assume some or all operations at Hastings Indian Medical Center, which is currently operated by the Indian Health Service.

"We have the opportunity to create a comprehensive health care system that will provide better treatment for our patients," said Principal Chief Chad Smith.

"The reason we are considering this plan is that many other tribes operate some or all of the services at the Indian hospitals in their areas, and by doing so they eliminate confusion for patients and give them access to more health care funding by removing layers of federal bureaucracy. All signs indicate that having a comprehensive health care system, including both inpatient treatment at the hospital as well as outpatient treatment at tribally operated clinics, means better health care and more funding for health care."

The hospital serves citizens and members of all federally recognized tribes and, according to Cherokee Nation Communications Director Mike Miller, will continue to do so regardless of the outcome.

"Should Cherokee Nation assume either some or all of the operations of Hastings will have no affect whatsoever on who receives services," said Miller. "Provided the person has a Certificate of Indian Blood registration with a federally recognized tribe, they will be able to receive care."

District 1 Tribal Councilor Bill John Baker indicated some concern was generated before the announcement was made Friday

"I have had a few phone calls because of all the rumors that leaked out preceding any official comment," said Baker. "The first round of comments had to do with what I thought of the move, although at that time, I knew nothing of the plan but what I had heard through the rumor mill."

Baker said he met with tribal official on Friday and was assured no action would be taken until the tribe had conducted an in-depth investigation of both the pros and cons of such an endeavor.

"Assurances were made about the employees," said Baker. "I was told the employees would be allowed to decide whether they would maintain their federal employee status at the same grade, pay status, seniority, etc.; or become employees of the tribe."

Baker indicated the next round of assurances need to involve growth and potential patient care.

"Until those things are lined up, I'm keeping an open mind," he said.

Baker indicated he welcomed concerns and comments from citizens and HIMC employees alike, going as far as releasing his phone number, (918) 453-1720.

"This might be the most important decision the Cherokee Nation has made in the past 30 years," said Baker. "It will certainly affect the lives of citizens and others over the next 30 years. We don't want to make a mistake on this one."

Under the proposed plan, Hastings would receive millions in new funding from the Indian Health Service to spend on health care locally. That additional funding could provide increased services at Hastings, including a wider variety of prescription drugs.

"Right now, you can go to a Cherokee Nation clinic and get certain medications that aren't available at Hastings," said Melissa Gower, Health

Services Group leader for Cherokee Nation. "If we were all in the same comprehensive system, patients would have access to the same medications."

CN Tribal Councilor Dr. Brad Cobb, chairman of the council's health committee, believes the move would aid tribal citizens.

"When you are talking about health, you are talking about quality of life and you can't wait to try to make it better," said Cobb "To a patient, the current system is confusing because patients don't understand that the Cherokee Nation doesn't already run the hospitals, and doesn't understand why the care available at the clinics is not always available at the hospital. By having a comprehensive system, you can get rid of a lot of the confusion, which means a better experience for the patient. It's all about services."

Gower says the Cherokee Nation wants every employee at Hastings to stay should the Nation decide to assume any operations.

"Cherokee Nation wants the patients to have the comfort of knowing that they will be able to see their same trusted physicians, nurses and health care providers," Gower said. "Employees will be given the option of becoming a tribal employee, or remaining at the hospital as a federal employee."

Cherokee citizen Ed Crittenden was outraged by the announcement, and believes the tribe cannot afford to undertake such a measure now.

"With Congress threatening to shut off all federal funds to the Cherokee Nation because of the election called by Chief Smith, which attempted to dissolve 140 years of Cherokee Freedmen being Cherokee citizens as prescribed by our ancestors in the Federal Treaty of 1866, this is not the time to consider the tribe taking over the critical healthcare of W.W. Hastings Hospital," he said. "Right now, Hastings would not be affected by any cut in federal funds to the tribe because it is a federal hospital. Allowing the Smith administration to make it into a tribal hospital right now will create eminent disaster within our health services."

Crittenden, a longtime critic of Smith, believes the proposal may be an attempt at subterfuge by Smith.

"I believe the main reason the Smith administration is rushing to pull Hastings under the tribe is an attempt to provide his administration cover from the disaster he has created, hoping that Congress will choose not cut tribal healthcare funds if that would also close the local hospital," he said. "Further I doubt seriously if Congress will cut healthcare dollars. Instead I look for them to come in and begin supervising healthcare while they are investigating the Smith administration for its many improprieties."

Tribes are allowed by federal law to assume operations of hospitals within their jurisdictional area. The planning process will continue until June 1. Any transition of operations would not take place until Oct. 1.



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Keetoowahs to seek control of W.W. Hastings Hospital

Muskogee Phoenix
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TAHLEQUAH — The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma announced Tuesday it will attempt to contract to operate area Indian Health Services facilities, including W.W. Hastings Indian Hospital.

The UKB request includes all facilities in IHS's Tahlequah Service Unit: W.W. Hastings Indian Hospital and other federally funded health service units, health programs and clinics operated or staffed by IHS.

The Cherokee Nation said last week it is considering a bid to manage Hastings.

A UKB media release states the tribe anticipates immediate discussions with the IHS. The UKB will make efforts to discuss the plan with with the present Tahlequah Service Unit employees as part of an effort to retain present IHS employees after the facilities are operated by the UKB, the release states.

The UKB has 12,000 members, 97 percent of whom live within the boundaries of its tribal jurisdiction in eastern Oklahoma, said spokesman Sammy Still.

He said the UKB is covered under the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act, and "they (Cherokee Nation) are not."

He said other tribes in the jurisdiction are to be in agreement with anyone contracting Hastings.

"UKB tribal members are not getting fair treatment in health care or contract services — mainly because of the contract for contract services," Still said. "As UKB members, we're being denied services. We're trying to get contract services out of IHS — not trying to fight with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. We're trying to get service we should receive."

He said although UKB are one-fourth bloods and anyone who has a Certificate Degree of Indian Blood card or anyone who is Native American would be served.

Chad Smith CD mailed to tribal members

I received a CD from the CNO last week glamorizing the tribal government and it's achievements for 2007...man, it looked good but when you know the rest of the story like we do it is nothing but smoke and mirrors...

But, that doesn't surprise me since it is coming from a man who is serving an illegal third term with illegal council members serving with him...Chad and gang are spending tribal monies like it is going out of style...

Thank God, I don't have to rely on the tribe for my living...the CD hitting the Nation looks good but it stinks like a turd to those of us who know what they are doing in Tahlequah.

mjs

Lady Indians finish 5th in Nike Tournament of Champions

By Dan Agent

CHANDLER, Ariz. — The Sequoyah Lady Indians lived up to their national ranking at the 11th Nike Tournament of Champions, defeating three of the top teams in the country to take 5th place of the 16 teams competing in the division.

Three Lady Indians made key plays in the final minute for a 49-45 victory over the Archbishop Carroll (Pa.) Patriots in the 5th place game Dec. 22 at Hamilton High School's Hancock Gymnasium.

Senior center Cassie Moore hit a jump shot from the baseline with 55 seconds remaining to go ahead 46-45, their first lead since the three minute mark of the second quarter. With 18 seconds to go, senior guard Angel Goodrich stole the ball at mid-court from Patriot Kerri Shields and drove to the basket for an uncontested lay-up, increasing the lead to 48-45.

In the final seconds, senior guard Lorin Hammer rebounded a missed 3-pointer by the Patriot Holly Mershon and hit one of two free throws with 0.8 seconds to go for the final score of 49-45.

The Lady Indians relied on their pressure defense throughout the tournament, getting the attention of the competition.

"Everybody was talking about us. The coach of Notre Dame Academy (Mike Teasley) said they did not want to play us," Sequoyah head coach Bill Nobles said. Notre Dame Academy was ranked No. 1 by USA Today when the tournament began, but lost to Long Beach (Calif.) Poly in the division championship.

Nobles said a lot of the teams from the east do not see the kind of pressure defense the Lady Indians play. "It starts with defense. That's how we play."

Their effort took a toll though during the four games. "We were really banged up and tired. Credit goes to coach (Carroll) Johnson for getting our kids ready to play."

The Lady Indians advanced to the fifth place consolation by beating the Auburn Riverside (Wash.) Ravens, 72-63, Dec. 21, in the third round game, rebounding from their second loss of the season to the 12th ranked Southridge (Beaverton, Ore.) Skyhawks.

Goodrich led the team in scoring with 28, including 15 of 18 free throws, 11 in a row and nine of those in the third quarter as the Lady Indians built the lead to 59-36 at the end of the period.

Hammer hit nine of her 14 in the opening period and a 23-10 at its end. Moore scored nine, Mariah Norwood hit eight.

Cold shooting in the second round game Dec. 20 against Southridge resulted in a 50-44 loss, bumping the Lady Indians



to the consolation bracket.

Their swarming defense forced turnovers, but could not overcome the consistency and height of Southridge, three-time Oregon state champs, who will be going for their fourth in a row in March.

The Lady Indians cut the lead to five points in the final two minutes as they outscored the Skyhawks 14-12 in the fourth quarter, but they could not overcome the halftime deficit of 25-18.

Nikki Lewis hit two 3-pointers in a row late in the third to get them close, and Hammer hit two threes early in the fourth.

Goodrich led the Indians with 14 points. Lewis finished with eight. Hammer and Norwood scored six each. Moore netted five.

The Indians were also cold at the free throw line, making only nine of 17 free throws for 54 percent.

It was their second loss of the season and only their third loss since Jan. 28, 2006.

In the first round game on Dec. 19, the Lady Indians beat Ursuline Academy of Wilmington, Del., 67-40.

Ursuline, ranked No. 8 by USA Today, played without their 6-3 center, Elena EllaDonne, who many consider the nation's top player and has signed to play at the University of Connecticut. But her presence may not have helped as the Lady Indians defensive pressure forced turnovers.

Ten players scored for the Lady Indians, led by Goodrich who finished with 13 points, eight rebounds, eight assists and six steals. The Indians hit nine 3-pointers, with Hammer netting four for 12 points and senior forward Brea Brewer making three. Lindsey Hammer scored seven.

The Lady Indians made history by becoming the first Native American team to play in the tournament. They are also one of the few teams to have played all players in the tournament as Nobles made sure each player participated.

All played with intensity in a team effort, including Lindsey Hammer, Sukey Deere and freshmen Taylor Johnson, who came of the bench and immediately hit a 3-pointer with less than a minute to go in the first quarter against Archbishop Carroll.

Going into the tournament, Nobles said the invitation to play was a reward, comparing it to a "bowl game" for the team's three consecutive state championships, their 27-0 season in 2006-2007 and 41 wins in a row that ended against 6A Booker T. Washington earlier this season.

Crittenden v Cowan Watts

Editor's Note: A source sent us a report on the interviews of Cara Cowan Watts and Ed Crittenden.

According to the listener, it was a set back for them (CNO) for sure, cara cowan started out talking about the tribes rights to sovereignty and calling the freedmen "non Indians", and that the Cherokee people had spoken; the dj then went and said that "guess who had just come to the studio all the way from Tahlequah"... and he announced Ed Crittenden. The dj said that the program would be limited to just the two of them... anyway, the Cowan, was saying that the treaty wasn't relevant to tribal membership, Ed reminded her that they used the same treaty to keep the Delaware in, she said that the Delaware had paid for membership and that freedmen had gotten more reparations than the black slaves from the deep south - Ed said that the Freedmen received the land and per capita payments as citizens just as the other citizens did; Ed continued to hammer the treaty and the promises made to the Freedmen; she said that the federal government didn't honor the treaty and that it allowed the tribe to have a representative in the U.S. Congress (i think that was an earlier treaty though marvin); Ed talked about how the Freedmen had come on the trail and lived with the other Cherokees, holding office even, she said she thought all the Freedmen who had held office had Cherokee blood (Marvin, this may be so but they went put down on the Cherokee by blood roll, they were put down as Freedmen - I do know descendants of Freedmen councilors Stick Ross and Jerry Alberty got termination letters in march). Ed reminded the people that Freedmen served in office along with Red Bird Smith.....Cowan said that all indians in any tribe can lose their citizenship at any moment and that if the Freedmen can't be voted out, they have more rights than anyone else in the tribes....Ed talked again about the treaty.....(fat chance that the cowan would be voted out, huh marvin?)... she talked about the support the CNO had from other tribes, and apparently had sent in the NCAA resolution (which again, I cant find anyone who can say it was voted on on the floor); and something about this resolution from the Canadian group. she said that almost 80% of the Cherokee people had voted against the Freedmen, Ed counted back that very few people had actually voted in the election.....Ed really held up the truth, and I was glad that he was able to get up there, I was kind of worried about the weather.....

Ordinarily the Cowan would never go and do battle with some person who knows anything, they try to just go somewhere like out to Canada where the people don't know squat about the Cherokee people and its history and put out their garbage.....she said that the CNO wants to be just like other tribes and have only Indians, Ed said that the CNO and its history isn't like these other tribes that she is talking about....

end of report