

St. Croix Indians Building Their Chippewa Identity

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Summary: Despite being initially known as the “Lost Tribe” the St. Croix Indians of Wisconsin have emerged as an elite group of Indians, remaining consistent with the success in their casinos, separating themselves from the negative stereotypes that have been assigned to them. Compared to the many tribes with their involvement in their casinos, the St. Croix Indians are among the best of the best and are no setting the example for other tribes across the country.

Background:

As we all know, relating to the culture Native American Indians being that they have been removed from their tribal lands by Americans, not many people really understand why this was the case. Of course we know that Americans “found” the land which was home to Native Americans and drove them away from lands with different so called payments or treaties, but what was so specific and important about the lands native to Indians that the Americans had to get that exact piece of land where Indians were? There were different resources that Indians used for survival and existence, which were either gold over on the west coast, or even fur and rice exports that were a common resource to be traded amongst different tribes including my St. Croix Chippewa Tribe of Wisconsin that I have been assigned to research information on this quarter. As this tribe established their first village in 1702 near Lake Superior in Wisconsin, forests near the lake was an extreme benefit in their fur trading business which eventually resulted in the production of various settlements which were also established as time went. In 1831 and 1832, Indian agent Henry R. Schoolcraft found Chippewa bands living in scattered interior villages along the southern shores of Lake Superior and on the upper reaches of interior drainages. They shared common woodland culture, but did not possess a political structure to unify them. At the time Schoolcraft encountered the Chippewa, he numbered several thousand and lived in peace with the U.S. Government, trading at posts located around the area. By the time state of Wisconsin became an established territory in 1836, there were six major groups in

Wisconsin. They were the St. Croix Chippewa Indians, the Potawatomi, the Winnebago, the Oneida and the Stockbridge-Munsee of New York State, and the Menominee. In 1837, the United States agents sent out a message summoning various St. Croix Indians from northern Wisconsin and Minnesota to a treaty making council at Fort Snelling. The U.S. Government declared to make a treaty for the whole tribe for the purchase of the land in the Wisconsin, Chippewa and the St. Croix valleys, which held rich forest of pine timber. The St. Croix Indians argued that those bands that lived or hunted on the land to be sold should make the decision. As the U.S. government made it seem that it was the timber for the St. Croix region that was highly possessed, it was really the copper and iron hidden in many valleys that were well sought after. As the chief of the St. Croix Chippewa at the time never signed this 1827 treaty, some say it was because he didn't agree to give up his land to the U.S. while others in favor of the treaty claimed that he didn't make the treaty in time to sign it, which eventually resulted in St. Croix Indians being pushed away from their native lands.

Findings:

The culture of my St. Croix Indian Tribe has been signified by many traditional churches in which all reflect on a diverse group of religious churches who have all characterized the Virgin Islands, its original location since Danish times. Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Dutch Reformed, Moravians, and Jews are among the many religions that have established places of worship during the 18th Century, continuing on their religions up until this day. Architecturally,

the churches display an interesting mixture of international styles and local detailing that speaks of their Creole heritage. During the process of evacuating tribal lands, religion was a key point of emphasis, while many Indians felt lost, did not know where to go, where to find help, what to eat or where to sleep. They had no one to go to, no one to believe in, except for the different Gods that they put their belief into to carry them out of their situations on uncertainty.

As many of the relating tribes of Wisconsin and all around our country, these Indian Tribes removed from their native lands have all been criticized and stereotyped for many different reason involving their casinos which are the many resolution to their economic and poverty problems. Of course there are the basic stereotypes that associate all Indians with being gamblers that are addicted to coming into casinos every night to throw their money away. There is also a stereotype that Indian gamings are controlled by scheming, immoral chiefs that are severely corrupted by money and power. Another stereotype stating that Indians exploit their cultures for economic gains. Another powerful stereotype is that “Casino Indians” aren’t authentically Native Americans, certain people with maybe just a fraction of Native American take advantage of the Native American opportunities. The only positive stereotype amongst the many that are associated with Native Americans and the establishment of their casinos are that they are “finally trying to better their lives by opening casinos.”. This is the main reason Native Americans have opened many casino resorts across the nation.

Throughout their history, the St. Croix people have been richly blessed. Formerly known as “The Los Tribe”, the St. Croix suffered removal from their ancestral lands but have persevered to become proven business leaders with a rich tradition and culture involvement in their casinos. Today the St. Croix have five main reservation communities: The Big Sand Lake, Maple Plain, Round Lake and Danbury and Gaslyna, located in northwestern Wisconsin. Dotted with lakes, streams and forests, the St. Croix reservation lands allow the St. Croix to practice their traditional harvesting of wild rice, maple syrup, berries, fish and deer, while they are fortunate enough to share their bounty with surrounding communities. Tribal traditions are carefully passed down to the tribes children so that the “Lost Tribe” does not ever live up to the hype of their old name. The St. Croix’s strong sense of tradition molds the foundation of their thriving business ventures, which include three casinos, St. Croix Casino Turtle Lake, St. Croix Casino Danbury and St. Croix Casino Hertel Express, which have all earned 8A certification from the business administration in the state of Wisconsin. With their distinctive intermingling of their old traditional and the new, the St. Croix people are sure to remain a cultural and economic force for many generations to come.

For a Tribe whose casinos have rallied less than a million visits in the last decade, revenue tends to not be a huge problem for the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, but it tends to seem that way in the long run. As 82% of the Indians revenue comes from casino gaming, this money is extremely beneficial and exemplified into the lives of not only the

working Indians who labor in the Chippewa casinos but also the retired Chippewa Indians who can no longer help out but still need income to survive. Non-gaming revenue brings in almost a fifth of the St. Croix Indians total income and is generated by other businesses that are operated by the Tribe, which includes restaurants, retail establishments, hotels, and construction companies. However, these non-gaming businesses are dependent on gaming revenue for financial support because of the fact that casino gaming brings in on average about four times as much revenue as non-gaming revenue. Last but not least grants from the United States government along with the Wisconsin government provide about less than a fifth of the tribes overall income annually.

The St. Croix Tribe owns and operates three gaming facilities: the St. Croix Casino, the Hole in the Wall Casino, and the Little Turtle Hertel Express. On the tribe's reservation in Turtle Lake, Wisconsin, it holds the most famous St. Croix Casino, employing 900 people with a 100,000 square foot facility. This facility includes 1,000 slot machines, 32 blackjack tables, and a bingo hall. This St. Croix Casino also uses the combination of 150 hotel rooms for guests as a way to increase revenue while also providing safety for guests. For those who begin to have a little too much to drink during the night, there's now a room available for them to eliminate the havoc of drunk driving. The Hole in the Wall Casino is located on the St. Croix Reservation in Danbury, Wisconsin, where it employs and provides

work for 230 people. It is a 16,700 square foot facility that includes 320 slot machines and 12 blackjack tables. The Hole in the Wall Casino also has an adjoining hotel with 38 rooms, as well as 35 parking spaces for recreation vehicles. This casino holds on average over 500,000 visits every year. The Little Turtle Hertel Express is located on the St. Croix Reservation in Hertel, Wisconsin. This building is more of a convenience store that also offers some gaming, providing 99 slot machines for guests. The Little Turtle Hertel Express may also be affected by the introduction of a new casino in Hudson.

The St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin is federally recognized as a tribe, obtaining land that covers as much as 3,000 acres. The tribes total enrollment measures to include approximately 1,000 members, although the total population in its casinos labor forces tallies to attend around 1700 people. As the three main casinos bring in more than enough work for the few Chippewa Indians remaining in the state of Wisconsin that are still in the working force, there is no excuse for these Indians to claim to be left out without jobs or work to find. The extra amount of workers needed in the casinos nearly equals the amount of Chippewa Indians in Wisconsin, meaning that non-tribal citizens now have job opportunities as well. The St. Croix Tribe is self-governing and is responsible for the general welfare of its members, despite the general interactions daily with non-tribal members in casinos.

Casino profits are distributed back to the Tribe and its members as monthly. Six percent of casino income goes the Tribe's permanent fund, which is used in emergency situations for the

tribe or its casino. The tribe and its per-capita account shares and splits the remaining 94% of the profits. The tribal account is used to support the services and programs provided by the Tribe, as its economic revenue accounts for the financing of all tribal programs and services, including health insurance, housing development, health clinics, education programs, elderly care, vocational training, environmental services, loans, scholarships, land acquisition, and tribal business ventures for example the casinos and hotels. The per-capita account is redistributed to Tribe members in the form of monthly payments. Tribal members who are not legally recognized as elders receive \$1,000 per month from the per-capita account, while elders receive \$1,500 per month. It is extremely helpful and life saving for this tribe to disperse money to Chippewa Indian families as the average family consumes only around \$26,000 annually, with around 15% of Indians still living in poverty. The lost business of the locations of the three casinos result in a big economic loss for the tribes total income, as the main portion of the casinos visitors live in Minnesota and have to travel over 90 miles to get to the St. Croix Casino and over 110 miles to get to the Hole In the Wall Casino. As a result the proposition of a new casino named the Hudson Casino was identified but because of the calculated predictions of this casino was projected to take around \$20 million from each of the casinos, it was decided best for the Hudson casino not to be built. Though this casino would only be 30 miles away from the tribes main resource of visitors in Minnesota, the loss of revenue in the remaining casinos would cause a decrease in employment in each of the casinos, which was not wanted.

Conclusion:

As the main source of income for the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin comes from casino gambling, increasing the total overall revenue that each casino consumes would be substantial to the lives of government of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians and also its tribal members. As this main source of income is not necessarily getting the job done for the households of each of the many Indian families in Wisconsin, another source of economic revenue will be desperately needed for the success of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin Tribe to continue over the many centuries to come and not become extinct.

The St. Croix Indian Tribe is a sovereign nation, meaning it is independent, separate, having political entities with the right of self-government. Though, this is a delegated type of sovereignty meaning that this tribal government includes the authority given the tribes by Congress. As a general rule, because of the concepts of tribal sovereignty, states and local governments are generally precluded from exercising jurisdiction over tribal members on tribal lands unless Congress has clearly expressed an intention to permit that assertion of jurisdiction.

While Indian tribes are sovereign governments, in 1924, the U.S. Congress conferred United States citizenship upon all Indians born within the United States. The grant of federal citizenship also made Indians citizens of the states in which they reside. As citizens, Indians can vote in local, state, and federal elections. This citizenship status does not affect the special relationship between the tribes and state and federal governments. This United States citizenship eligibility is

different than requirements to be considered a specific Indian. For example in my St. Croix Tribe, you have to have at least one eighth of your blood quantum showing that you have some of the Chippewa heritage Indian in you. This is a very moderate requirement compared to the Seminole Tribe of Florida where you have to have 1/4th of your blood quantum while one of your grandparents has to be a fully blooded Florida Seminole, with a written documentation proving that you are a family member of a Florida Seminole on the 1957 Tribal Role, all while you have to be sponsored with your enrollment by a current member of the tribe. Indian lands today, are subject to a complex set of laws that often impact individual Indian tribes in unique ways. The planning efforts of Indian tribes are often linked to the concept of "Indian country." Indian country includes Indian and non-Indian owned lands located within the boundaries of any Indian reservation; Indian lands owned by or held for Indians which are not part of a reservation but which are part of a dependent Indian community; and all Indian allotments, where the Indian titles have not been extinguished. Land held in fee by an individual Indian which is not part of a dependent Indian community is not part of Indian country. In terms of Indian ownership of land, the largest category of Indian lands are tribal trust lands. These lands are held in trust by the federal government for the use of a tribe. The federal government holds the legal title and the tribe holds the beneficial interest. Trust lands are held communally by the tribe in undivided interest and individual tribal members share in the

enjoyment of the entire property with no claim to a particular piece of land. The tribe is treated as a single entity that owns the undivided beneficial interest.

This lawsuit from St. Croix's application to have off-reservation land was taken into federal trust for the purpose that they wanted to establish a gaming facility. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Indication was challenged and brought to action by Indian tribes; "that it would decide whether to take land into trust before considering tribe's application for approval of off-reservation casino." Tribe moved towards preliminary injunction. Within tribal governments and Indian country's, tribal governments can enact laws applicable to trust lands and impose taxes on those lands and exclude non-Indians from those lands. They can also establish courts and administer justice, as well as determine tribal membership and form of government.

A confusing issue that I have found is one of Tribal control over non-Indian lands located in Indian country. The U.S. Supreme Court has set control to where tribes generally will not have authority over non-Indian lands within the reservation boundaries unless: the non-Indians enter into an agreed relationship with the Tribe through commercial dealings, leases, contracts, or other arrangements; or the non-Indian conduct "threatens or has some direct effect on the political integrity, the economic security, or the health and welfare of the Tribe." In other situations, courts have used this test to allow Tribes to regulate some uses of non-Indian lands. One court used the test to uphold tribal power to enforce a shoreline protection ordinance on non-Indian fee lands on the reservation.

In another case, the U.S. Supreme Court held that tribes could zone non-Indian fee lands within the boundaries of the reservation if those lands had retained their "essential character" as Indian land. If the essential Indian character of the area had been lost through significant non-Indian ownership of the land, the tribe has no power to zone fee lands of non-Indians. The power to zone the fee lands of non-Indians therefore rests with the local unit of government with land use jurisdiction over that area. A number of federal environmental laws authorize the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to delegate the administration of the federal environmental programs to state governments. Some of the laws also allow the EPA to treat tribes in the same manner as states by delegating administration of those programs to tribal governments. The general criteria for the treatment of tribes in the same manner as states are: that the tribe has to be federally-recognized; the tribe needs to have or be able to exercise extreme governmental powers; and the tribe must have the money, people, and productive resources to effectively implement a program.

Since 1984, the environmental policy has been the main base of the EPA's actions. The EPA's policy reflects the Federal Indian Policy adopted by President Reagan in 1983. The two main stresses the policy addresses are promoting of Indian self-government, and that the government will work directly with tribal governments on a "government-to-government" basis.

Environmental statutes which have been amended to allow for EPA authorization of tribal programs, include the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act.

Under two Acts, EPA has used its discretion to allow for tribal programs even though Congress has not specifically

provided for tribal assumption of the environmental programs. These Acts are the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Toxic Substance Control Act. In addition, three other environmental laws allow for a limited tribal role similar to the state's role. These laws are the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act; the Emergency Response and Community Right to Know Act; and the Comprehensive Environmental Recovery, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund).

EPA has a number of programs which seek to build tribal capacity to administer environmental programs on tribal lands. The process used by tribes for administering tribal programs is similar to the process followed by other governments to establish the necessary legal framework through the adoption of codes and ordinances and establish an administrative body to enforce tribal standards.

Conclusion:

The largest area employers are the county and the St. Croix Tribal enterprises, which includes three casinos and government offices. The St. Croix Casino and Hotel in Turtle Lake employs over a 1,000 people. The Hole in the Wall Casino and Hotel in Danbury employs over 200. The tribe employs many members at their Tribal Center buildings, which include a Health Department, Family Resource Center, Housing Authority, Construction Company, Youth Center,

and the various departments in the Tribal Center. A convenience store, The Little Turtle Hertel Express and Casino, combines a convenience store, gas station, and a casino and it's located in Hertel.. Established in 2001 the St. Croix Tribe opened their new Health Facility. The new Tribal Clinic employees one Dentist, and one pharmacist on staff. In addition, there are many other full-time health professionals on duty. With all of the cultural, economic, and political forces at place, the St. Croix Chippewa continue to build their tribal identity through casino messages as well as representations.

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