

Tribe supports school plan

By Linn Parish

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The Plummer-Worley school district needs a new elementary school and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe might be willing to help.

At a tour of Lakeside Elementary School earlier this month, Tribe Chairman Chief Allan told those in attendance that the tribe would consider giving the school district an additional \$1 million - \$100,000 annually over 10 years - to help pay for a new elementary school.

"The condition of Lakeside Elementary School is of great concern to the tribe," Tribal Spokesman Marc Stewart said. "The building needs to be replaced. The tribe is exploring various options to help the Plummer-Worley school district accomplish that goal."

The tribal council hasn't taken action on this matter, and no decision on whether to increase funding to the school district has been made, Mr. Stewart added. He said any additional money that might go to the school district would come from gaming revenue. While the potential offer was mentioned in the spirit of helping to fund a new school, it would be up to the school district to determine how to spend that money. In other words, the additional contribution wouldn't come with any condition from the tribe that it had to be spent on school construction.

The Lakeside Elementary School building in Worley was built in the 1930s, and the district's facilities committee has recommended building a new elementary school building near the district's high school and middle school in Plummer. According to a report from Spokane-based ALSC Architects PS, cost to build a new elementary school would be between \$8 million to \$8.5 million.

Annually, the tribe gives Plummer-Worley and other school districts money as part of its gaming compact with the state of Idaho; the agreement stipulates that the tribe will contribute 5 percent of its gaming income to school districts. During the past two years, the tribe gave schools in Idaho and western Montana a total of \$4.5 million. Plummer-Worley received \$320,000 of that.

The tribe hasn't made its contributions for the 2008-2009 school year yet. Mr. Stewart says the tribal council likely will be making a decision on how to divide the gaming proceeds in the next month or two. In past years, the tribe typically has announced in late spring or early summer how much each school district would receive.

Marcia Hoffman, the Plummer-Worley school district business manager, says the tribe's contributions to the district have totaled about \$2.7 million since 1994. During the past 10 years, Ms. Hoffman says, the annual amounts have ranged from \$85,000 to \$300,000. While the amounts have varied, the district has received \$220,000 a year on average during the past decade, and that accounts for roughly 5 percent of its overall budget.

The district keeps the tribe's donations in a fund separate from its general fund and doesn't budget that money until it is in hand. Through the years, the district has used money from the tribe to pay the salary of its school resource officer, as well as to buy a number of items for the school. Those goods have included computers, library books, a copier, uniforms, a lawn mower and custodian equipment, among other items, Ms. Hoffman said.

District Clerk Karyn Stockdale says the district has had two unsuccessful bond elections in recent years that would have financed school improvements. The district's school board hasn't decided when it will schedule another bond election nor what amount it will seek, but the board will have a special meeting Monday to discuss the issue. The meeting is scheduled for 7

p.m. in the boardroom at the district building, at 1157 E Street, in Plummer.

In May of 2006, the district asked voters for \$13.7 million to fund construction of a new elementary school and for improvements to the high school and middle school. Only 48 percent of voters approved the measure; a super majority of 66 percent is required for a bond measure to pass.

The next year, the district asked voters for \$10 million, but that election failed with 50 percent approval.