

Tribal Chairman of Jicarillas Receptive to Our Tundra Times

By LAEL MORGAN
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My assignment was to interview affluent Indians... tribes that have money and spend it well. The Jicarilla Apache of Dulce, N. M., were at the top of the list but Charlie Vigil, tribal chairman, didn't want to give me an interview.

He didn't care about the Los Angeles Times, he said. He was tired of publicity. Felt it didn't do his tribe any good.

I told him I worked also for the Tundra Times and suddenly he was much more friendly.

"Maybe you know someone I met," he said digging through a pile of business cards. "These people came to see us when they first got money."

The card he located was that of Albert Kaloa, Jr., late head of the Tyoneks. When they first received oil lease money, Kaloa had sought out the Jicarilla to find out how they handled their affairs so successfully.

This 1,800 member tribe is incorporated with \$15 million in capital assets which do not in-

clude their unappraised 742,000 acre reservation.

The petroleum industry leases 51% of their land, paying royalties that make up about 80% of the tribes annual \$2 million income. In addition there is about \$100,000 annually from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, income from a shopping center, motel, logging operations, cattle business and elk farm.

They have a deluxe motel development up for bid, a \$1.2 million recreation center (with pool, sauna, library and bowling alley) under construction on their remote reservation and a new factory for contract work which is proving successful.

Yet another investment materialized when the tribe decided to ask singer Johnny Cash to dedicate their factory. Learning producers of Cash's movie, "Gunfight" were looking for \$2 million, they decided to back it. The show will be premiered soon in Albuquerque and bookings look very good.

The Jicarilla have not always been wealthy. Once they were

roaming warriors but their number reduced to 400 by sickness. From that point until they lucked into oil in the 1940s, they were impoverished.

Tribal chairman Vigil attributes their current success to, "close knit obedience. All for one, one for all." His people have pooled their individual land allotments under the manage-

(Continued on page 6)

Tribal Chairmen...

(Continued from page 1)

ment of elected officials and investment bankers and have resisted wholesale individual handouts.

Probably the most diversified Indian development in the country is that of the Whiteriver Apache of southern Arizona. Their first sage move was to side with the U. S. Army against the renegade Geronimo which brought them, by act of Congress, 1,664,872 acres of prime real estate. Today they set their net worth at \$160 million.

Originally the Indian Bureau tried to set them up as sheep herders which hardly suited the fierce Apache temperament.

"After two years even the Indian Service had to concede it was a failure, notes Richard Cooley, Administrative Assistant to the tribal Chairman. "We became cattlemen about 1907 via raids into Mexico. One full blood had 1,000 head by himself."

Using this as a base, the tribe went into the lumber business and later opened the reservation to tourism. Today they operate the largest privately owned recreation area in the west realizing \$160,000 last year from fishing and hunting permits alone. They own filling stations watering spots and a motel.

In addition they've just created the largest cold water lake in the state and a \$1 1/2 million ski resort.

Their ski manager has secured federal funds to train 10 Apache boys to run the lifts and made ski lessons a requirement for the job.

Reckoned on assets alone, the Navajo Nation is the most impressive tribe, but they also have the largest membership (129,000 Indians).

Peter MacDonald, tribal chairman, concedes his nation's \$200 million in assets doesn't look quite as good to him as it does on paper, but there's no doubt the tribe is growing in power.

They own and operate their own utilities, lease an industrial complex and motel. They have \$10 million in a scholarship fund, have just opened their own college and own some of their own high schools where they teach many classes in their native tongue.

The tribe also has the nation's largest singly owned stand of Ponderosa pine, a \$12 million sawmill and considerable stake in an irrigation project which should give them 110,000 acres of farmland.

Investment capital came from oil, gas, uranium and coal deposits. MacDonald and his business

managers are aware these are depletable and are moving to diversify.

The tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs first went after payrolls, building plants for General Dynamics and Fairchild.

"Now we're looking for capital to create our own Economic Development Authority," MacDonald said. "The federal government has just set aside funds but nowhere near the amount we're looking for. We're talking about \$100 million to be matched by \$3-\$4 million in our own money. Chase Manhattan and the American Bankers Assn. seem reluctant to help but we haven't given up.

"We must move from a wage and welfare economy to an ownership economy." Despite growing prosperity, none of these tribes is without problems.

"If you got money, you've got trouble," Vigil warns. "We used to be just poor. Now we've got internal problems. People ousted, looking in, wanting a share of the whole thing."

Navajo MacDonald could well be speaking for the majority when he reports, "Our housing is almost universally inadequate. Our infant mortality rate, our life expectancy rate and our state of malnutrition are among the worst in the nation."

"Our tribe is at least three or four years ahead of its time... but we're short of human resources," admits Fred Banashley, Sr., tribal chairman at Whiteriver.

He's proud to note, though, that several of the youngsters his tribe sent to college have graduated and come home to work.

It seems to be a growing trend. On the increase is the number of clear thinking, well-educated young Indians who return to their reservations, which gives tribes a much better chance of managing their own affairs.

"The Nixon administration has said that the time has come for Indians to contract for control or operation of Federal program," MacDonald noted in his inaugural address last fall. "For the Navajo Nation this means we now have an opportunity to control and administer over \$100 million in (government) programs."

"My past years with the office of Navajo Economic Opportunity have convinced me that almost all things we have depended upon non-Indian administrators to do can be done as well or in some instances better by our own people and four our own people..."

"Our past gave us the present, but the future is ours to forge."