

THE BUFFALO NEWS

SENECA NATION

Deal reported near for Cheektowaga casino

By LOU MICHEL
News Staff Reporter
3/14/2004

ALLEGANY INDIAN RESERVATION - Seneca Nation of Indians officials confirmed Saturday that a deal to purchase a 45-acre site in Cheektowaga for a third casino is close to completion.

"I think it will be in the very near future," said Tribal Councilor Donald "Flip" White, who is involved in negotiations with Uniland Development Corp., owner of the site at Holtz Drive and Genesee Street.

The nation recently reached a tentative agreement to buy the site, which is across from Buffalo Niagara International Airport, but Tribal Councilor Cyrus M. Schindler said discussions are still continuing.

"The gaming corporation's negotiators are waiting for a response from the landowner," Schindler said of talks between the tribe's Seneca Erie Gaming Corp. and Uniland of Amherst.

Schindler and White are members of the gaming corporation, which is handling the site acquisition in Erie County for the Seneca Nation's third casino. Once the deal is concluded, the Tribal Council is expected to approve the deal.

The council met here Saturday, but there was no formal discussion on the gaming corporation's efforts to acquire most of Uniland's Airborne Business Park in Cheektowaga, where the casino would be built.

"The end result will be to make the best choice for the people of the Seneca Nation, and Cheektowaga remains our focus," said Seneca Nation President Rickey L. Armstrong Sr. Of Buffalo Mayor Anthony M. Masiello's efforts to enlist the help of elected state leaders, including Gov. George E. Pataki, and force the Senecas

to open a casino in Buffalo, rather than Cheektowaga, Armstrong said he understands the mayor's frustrations.

"None of this was orchestrated to go outside of Buffalo. Buffalo was the original intent, but this is just the way things worked out," Armstrong said.

Tribal Councilor Richard Nephew said the gambling compact between the nation and state allows the Senecas to look elsewhere in Erie County if a suitable location cannot be found in the city.

"We did look at sites in the city, and no satisfactory agreement could be made, so we looked elsewhere, as we can under the compact," Nephew said.

The Senecas run the Seneca Niagara Casino in the former Niagara Falls convention center and are building a second one on reservation land in Salamanca.

e-mail: lmichel@buffnews.com

This material is copyrighted and is for your exclusive personal use only. Republication or other use of this material without the express written consent of The Buffalo News is prohibited. The Buffalo News can be contacted at 716-849-4444 or by e-mail at republish@buffnews.com.

