

Gun Lake Tribe Celebrates 20th Anniversary of Federal Reaffirmation



Gaming revenue from Gun Lake Casino, which opened in 2011, provides services for tribal citizens including health care and education.

The Gun Lake Tribe, formally the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, recently celebrated 20-years of federal reaffirmation by the United States of America. The tribe has a unique history which is well documented under several treaties signed by the U.S. government, a historic reservation in present-day downtown Kalamazoo, and an affiliation with the Methodist Church that created an Indian community that has endured since 1838.

“Today we celebrate a remarkable history of perseverance, community, and culture,” said Bob Peters, Chairman of the Gun Lake Tribe. “We also recognize the tremendous hardships our ancestors endured, which our present-day elders did as well, to keep the Bradley and Salem Indian communities, and families, intact. We are a proud people with a bright future, but we honor our past on this day.”

In the early 19th century the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band inhabited the Kalamazoo River valley. Chief Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish signed the 1821 Treaty of Chicago that created a three-mile square reservation for the Band at present-day downtown Kalamazoo. The City of Kalamazoo recently installed new street signs that feature 1821 reservation boundary markers.

The Chief would also sign the 1827 Treaty of St. Joseph which required the Band to relinquish the newly created

reservation to the federal government in exchange for a promised payment and a new home. The Band received neither, and instead a difficult era of relocation ensued.

The Band avoided forced removal west of the Mississippi River, known as the Trail of Tears, by moving north to several temporary locations. The Band found protection under the Church through the creation of the Bradley Indian Mission settlement in 1838. The Salem Indian Mission would be established nearby.

After years of petitioning for federal recognition the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, known as the Gun Lake Tribe, achieved formal reaffirmation on August 23, 1999. The tribe’s citizens would later vote to adopt a Tribal Constitution which established a democratically elected governing body of seven Tribal Council members.

Today the tribe strives to provide services to its citizens such as health care, education and language and cultural preservation. The Gun Lake Casino opened in 2011 and now provides government gaming revenue that allows the tribe to fund these important programs to maintain its self-sufficiency. ♣

For more information about the Gun Lake Tribe, visit gunlaketribe-nsn.gov.