



## The Post-Standard

### Cayuga Indian Nation deal with state seems off again

**Spokesman says nation objects to state's proposal with Oklahoma tribe.**

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The on-again, off-again, on-again casino/land claim deal between the Cayuga Indian Nation of New York and the state is apparently off again.

Clint Halftown, the nation spokesman, said the Cayugas are backing out of the Nov. 18 proposed settlement because the state has a similar deal with the rival Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma.

Friction exists between the two Indian nations, the co-plaintiffs in the Cayuga Indian land claim to 64,015 acres of ancestral land around the north end of Cayuga Lake.

"The Cayuga Nation of New York is anxious to resolve its claim against the state for illegally taking our land two centuries ago, but it is unwilling to do so if out-of-state tribes are given any land as part of the settlement," Halftown said in his news release.

In the same announcement, Halftown said the nation would not renew its contract with Empire Resorts Inc. to build and manage the casino at Monticello Raceway in Sullivan County because Empire had failed to win federal approval for the casino. The contract expired Friday.

The development surprised many officials close to the deal.

Todd Alhart, a spokesman for Gov. George E. Pataki, said the state had yet to hear from Halftown and considers the proposed settlement to still be in the works.

It is the second time in five months that the Cayugas have nixed deals to settle their share of the 25-year-old land claim in exchange for a state compact to launch a lucrative Las Vegas-style casino in the Catskills. In August, the nation said it was backing out of a similar agreement because the state had amended that deal to include a casino in the Catskills for the Seneca-Cayugas.

Halftown also told The Post-Standard recently that the Cayugas were proceeding with the settlement because they did not want to risk losing their appeal of the \$247.9 million judgment awarded to both nations in 2001. The Cayugas are seeking \$1.7 billion while the state has asked for a much smaller award from the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Charles Degliomini, a spokesman for Empire, said Empire remains confident that the Cayugas will complete the land-claim deal and wind up with one of three state-approved casinos in the Catskills.

Halftown did not return three telephone messages.

LeRoy Howard, chief of the Seneca-Cayugas, said he does not think Halftown's announcement will affect his nation's pending casino deal.

"We signed our deal with the state first so we're not concerned at all about the Cayugas backing out of this. . . . These are separate deals so we don't feel there is going to be any impact," he said.

The Seneca-Cayugas signed their agreement the week before the Cayugas reached their settlement. Both deals require approval from Congress and the state Legislature.

Last month, a small group of Cayugas who oppose settling the land claim for a casino sent a letter to Pataki saying the deal was invalid because they said Halftown lacked the authority to sign the agreement. Even though the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs still recognizes Halftown as the nation's representative, they said he had been removed from the nation's governing council last July because he was in poor health.

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