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Tribes Find That Casino Wealth Can Leave Trail Of Resentment May 23, 2004

The home of the once-destitute tribe that built the world's biggest resembles an upscale suburb like East Amherst. Members of the M. Pequot Tribe live in gigantic new homes amid hilly woods, with Hum in many driveways. The former home of a tribal leader, is now on di tribe's glitzy \$193.4 million museum.

The Pequots aren't the only tribe to make big money on gambling. 9 casinos were legalized in 1988, the federal government says, India has grown into a \$14.5 billion a year industry.

But with money comes complication.

The Pequots' Foxwoods Casino allowed them to give members ann of \$30,000 or more - just for being Pequots. But some members go stipends than others, and rivalries developed. Some tribal busine went belly-up, and Pequots acknowledge that drugs and family viol problems on the reservation despite its wealth.

"We've essentially been rebuilding a community, and that's a ch Senecas don't face," said John Guevremont, the tribe's chief operati

Meanwhile, in Central New York, the successful Turning Stone Ca enabled the Oneida Nation to offer its members \$50,000 grants t homes. Yet some Oneidas claim that money and power have Oneidas' chief executive officer, Raymond Halbritter, into a vindictive

Some tribes in California have feuded and filed lawsuits over bloodli tribal membership rules that determine how money is distributed.

"When Indian tribes had \$100, they fought over it. You can imagine fighting there can be when they have billions," said Lance G. M Harvard-educated business leader of the Winnebago Tribe in Neb believe me, the tribes are much better off with billions."

Seneca Nation leaders have been observing the experiences of other

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If the Seneca casinos continue to do well, they could bring in as much as a billion in profits over the next 21 years, estimated Cyrus M. Schindler, chairman of Seneca gaming operations.

Schindler expects to square off against Tribal Council Chairman Barr Barr Sr. in the next election for the Seneca presidency in November. Because the tribe must find ways to use the gambling windfall to help the people, especially those in need of better housing.

On a person-by-person basis, the Senecas will never be as wealthy as the Pequot. There are about 700 Pequot - and 10 times as many Senecas. Some Senecas want the nation to double or triple the stipend for Senecas, which totaled \$1,000 last year.

President Rickey L. Armstrong said it would be "imprudent" for the tribe to hand out huge amounts of cash. He favors using the money for government services and encouraging business growth.

Morgan, chief executive officer of the Winnebagos' highly successful gaming operations, has a few suggestions.

The Winnebagos have earned a national reputation for developing gaming businesses that generate more than \$50 million a year. A casino provides seed money for a wide array of businesses - ranging from a day-care company to one that builds modular homes - and provided enough money for every adult tribe member. The Winnebagos even started their own college.

Morgan said the Senecas should try to develop new ventures - such as tobacco, gasoline and casino businesses - and should also set more priorities to address serious social problems, such as alcoholism.

"The Senecas need a game plan," Morgan said. "We set aside 30 percent of profits for long-term investment, 20 percent for economic development, 10 percent for tribal per capita payments, 5 percent to education and 5 percent to address social problems."

"The Senecas were sort of stuck with tobacco and gasoline. Gaming was the key. Now the tribe really has a chance to bloom."

Andrew Lee, a Seneca who serves as executive director of the Harjo Foundation on American Indian Economic Development, said successful tribal governments are the key to successful governments.

"You can have the assets of sovereignty, but if you can't back them up with institutions that work, you're not going to get too far," Lee said. "The key is to develop an environment in which economic development can take place."

Seneca leaders face another challenge in the years ahead, on the issue of bloodlines and tribal traditions that date back centuries.

The Senecas are a matrilineal society. Only those whose mothers were

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are considered to be enrolled members of the tribe. Only enrolled 9 inherit reservation property and receive full benefits from the nation health care and annual stipends.

A growing number of Seneca males - including several tribal leaders married to non-Senecas. Some Senecas suggest that anyone whose father was a Seneca should qualify as an enrolled tribe member.



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