

THE GUN LAKE TRIBE



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Contact: James Nye: (517) 485-8060
Cell: (269) 598-4248

D.K. Sprague Retires after Twenty-Four Years as Chairman of the Gun Lake Tribe

Sprague Led Tribe from Pre-Recognition to Successful Modern Tribal Government

(Bradley, Mich.) – Today, the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (Gun Lake Tribe) (Tribe) announced the retirement of David K. (D.K.) Sprague as chairman. Sprague served as chairman since his initial election by the Bradley Settlement Elder’s Council in 1992. He is distinguished as one the longest serving tribal chairman, in consecutive terms, throughout Indian Country in the Unites States.

“It has been an honor and privilege to serve my community as chairman for the last twenty-four years,” said D.K. Sprague, former chairman. “I thank my family and the Tribe for supporting me, and God for allowing me to serve at a time when our dreams came to reality. I give recognition to our tribal leaders who came before me, as I merely finished what they started when the Bradley Indian Mission was established in the 1830s.”

The Tribe achieved federal re-acknowledgment in 1999 after many years of working through the federal acknowledgment process. The Tribe’s goal of reaching self-sufficiency through its pursuit of economic development under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act would take over a decade. During the last twenty-four years the Tribe went from having nothing to becoming a modern tribal government that can now provide for the needs of its people.

“I am proud to have served the Tribe under the leadership of D.K. Sprague,” said Vice Chairman Ed Pigeon. “I witnessed steady and consistent leadership in extremely difficult situations over a long period of time. It was amazing to see him put to the test so many times, but never waver. The Tribe is truly blessed that a person with such rare leadership qualities was in place at a time when it was most needed.”

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Many friends, family and staff members have expressed their gratitude to the former chairman for his dedication to the needs of tribal government staff and the team members who work in the gaming enterprise. He was always approachable and jovial with everyone around him.

“No one ever wanted this day to come,” said Leah Sprague-Fodor, Tribal Council member. “However, asking him to continue serving would be selfish of us. We know he served with everything he had for so many years. He has earned his retirement and now he should enjoy golf, traveling, baseball games and spending time with his family and friends.”

Sprague grew up in the Bradley area where he remained most of his life. He joined the U.S. Army and served in the Vietnam War. He served in 14 natural disasters worldwide as a Red Cross volunteer, which included an extended time of service in Louisiana for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. He is a lifelong member of the Methodist Church at the Bradley Indian Mission.

In the next 90-120 days the Tribe will hold a special election to fill the seat on the Tribal Council vacated by Sprague’s retirement. Afterwards, the Tribal Council will select the next chairman. In the interim, Vice Chairman Ed Pigeon will serve as acting Chairman.

Timeline of Gun Lake Tribe events occurring under the leadership of D.K. Sprague

1992	Bradley Settlement Elder’s Council elects D.K. Sprague to serve as Chairman.
August 23, 1999	Federal re-acknowledgment by the United States as a sovereign tribal government.
August 2001	Tribe submits land-into-trust application to re-establish reservation lands for the purpose of economic development under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.
January 30, 2009	Federal government takes land in trust for Tribe to construct Gun Lake Casino.
February 10, 2011	Gun Lake Casino opens.
May 14, 2014	Bradley Indian Mission Church building turns 100 years old, at that time the Mission is approx. 176 years old.
September 26, 2014	President Obama signs into law the Gun Lake Trust Land Reaffirmation Act.
October 2014	Approx. 300 acres of additional land placed into trust.
August 2015	Government Campus opens to tribal citizens and tribal government staff. Becomes the “Capitol Building” of the Gun Lake Tribe.
January 29, 2016	D.K. Sprague retires as chairman.

About Gun Lake Tribe

The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians (Gun Lake Tribe) has a rich history in West Michigan and close connection to the lands near Gun Lake Casino. The Bradley Indian Mission, located less than 3 miles from the Casino site, is the historic residential and cultural center point of the tribal community. The Tribe's ancestors, and political predecessors, signed treaties with the United States government dating back to 1795. The Tribe was re-affirmed to federal recognition in 1999. Gun Lake Casino provided badly needed jobs and economic development to the tribal community and people of West Michigan. For more information about the Tribe visit www.mbpi.org.