



Billy Mills to Headline 'Positive Living' Month at Bois Forte

Olympic Gold Medalist to Encourage Health and Cultural Pride Among American Indians

NETT LAKE, MN--(Marketwire - May 12, 2008) - The Bois Forte Tribal Council has declared May "Positive Living" month, and to drive the point home, it moved beyond text books to the flesh and blood, inviting Olympic gold medalist and Lakota Indian Billy Mills to the reservation.

Mills sprinted to the lead in the final seconds of 1964's 10,000-meter run, stunning millions of viewers, setting an Olympic record and pulling off one of the games' greatest upsets of all time. The international star grew up at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

"The Indian community could not ask for a more inspirational role model than Billy, who reminds us that we can each achieve that which has never been done before," Tribal Chairman Kevin Leecy said. "He is a record setter, a Hall of Famer, a dream chaser, an American hero, and an American Indian."

In anticipation of Mill's visits, slated for May 22 and May 23, Nett Lake students are conducting month-long research on Mills and other American Indian role models. The students are also running 10,000 meters and timing themselves to better appreciate Mills' stunning Olympic finish of 28:24 -- which shaved 50 seconds off his previous personal best.

Mills will speak at 5 p.m. at a community carnival held at the Vermilion Boys & Girls Club on Thurs., May 22, and again at Nett Lake School around 9 a.m. on Fri., May 23. He will encourage Band members to cultivate healthy lifestyles and to take pride in their Native American heritage. After Mills' speech, he will visit with locals and then join in a community walk beginning at 11 a.m.

Band members will kick off Positive Living month April 30 with spring clean-up day. The month will feature a number of healthy activities, including ballroom dancing lessons, a youth basketball clinic, family movie night and, in Mills' honor, Nett Lake School Mini Olympics.

Mills is an active advocate of American Indian causes. He currently serves as the national spokesman for Running Strong for American Indian Youth, a non-profit organization that helps communities with self-sufficiency programs, youth activities and cultural-identity projects.

Band members would do well to heed their hero's exhortation to forge healthy habits. American Indians suffer from a disproportionate rate of diabetes, which is linked to obesity and heart disease. They also have higher rates of alcoholism and kidney cancer.

Mills' advice to preserve their Indian heritage is well timed. Bois Forte recently created a cultural committee, which is working to launch more frequent classes in the Band's native language along with youth lessons in crafting traditional Native dance regalia.

Ultimately, Mills' message to Band members pertains to achieving their potential. "The ultimate is not to win," he has said, "but to reach within the depths of your capabilities and to compete against yourself to the greatest extent possible. When you do that, you have dignity. You have the pride. You can walk about with the character and pride, no matter in what place you happen to finish."

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