

LMC President Robert Harrison shakes hands with Tribal Chairman John Warren while Tribal Education Director Sam Morseau looks on

Debra Haight / HP correspondent



# Small talk, big money

## Pokagon Band chips in for LMC tech project

By DEBRA HAIGHT  
HP Correspondent

DOWAGIAC — It's impressive what can follow when two people talk.

Sometimes it can lead to a \$500,000 commitment to help build a community col-

lege technology center.

The Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi Indians will chip in \$100,000 per year for the next five years to help create Lake Michigan College's planned \$10 million Hanson Technology Center. The parties an-

nounced Tuesday.

The impetus for new partnership came from a conversation between two Niles school district officials. Interim Niles Superintendent Michael Lindley is also on

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the LMC Board of Trustees while Assistant Superintendent Rich Klemm is a Pokagon tribal member and a member of the Pokagon Band Gaming Commission.

"Mike was talking to me about LMC's Hanson project, and I approached our tribal and casino leaders," Klemm said Tuesday after a late morning press conference at the Pokagon community building on Dailey Road. "I asked them if they

wanted to be in a meeting with LMC officials, and everyone was excited about it."

"I can't think of a more worthwhile project to be involved in," Klemm said. "I'm excited for our (tribal) kids and it will help the general public as well. Everyone benefits, it's a regional effort."

The partnership is expected to bring economic opportunities to tribal members and boost the capital campaign for LMC's planned \$10 million tech center.

The center will be on the

college's Napier Avenue campus in Benton Township and will open in fall 2016.

"It's about creating economic growth by supporting businesses that grow jobs and providing training for tribal citizens," LMC President Robert Harrison said after the press conference. "This is a huge step forward for our capital campaign. ... This is an amazing day not only for the tribe but for Southwest Michigan."

Tribal Chairman John Warren said the partnership means a new chapter for the

tribe as tribal citizens will be able to get training in manufacturing fields, in courses focusing on tribal culture and government and in the gaming, hospitality and culinary management fields.

On the manufacturing side, tribal members will be able to get associate or higher degrees and receive apprenticeships with the tribe's non-gaming Mno-Bmadsen economic development enterprise.

"It's hard to find young talent to run machines in manufacturing," Warren said. "This will get them

into facilities where they can learn life skills. This will create opportunities.

"The technology center gives us opportunities for economic development and sustainable growth. People can get bachelor's degrees in casino management. That's something new and something we hope will encourage people to have good jobs here, stay in the area and spend their money here."

A key part of the new partnership on the tribal side, Warren said, is that tribal members from the same communities can form

"cohorts" to study and learn together throughout the entire course of a degree program.

Pokagon Education Director Sam Morseau said the new LMC partnership is the latest the tribe has made with area colleges and universities. The Pokagon Band also has partnerships with Southwestern Michigan College; LMC for casino management, hospitality and culinary arts; Indiana University at South Bend, Western Michigan University and Michigan State University.