

NATIONAL NEWS

New female tribal leader holds the talking stick now

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New York Times

SHINNECOCK INDIAN NATION—Taking her new seat at the head of the tribal council table, Lisa Goree spied among some office items a desk nameplate that read “Chaos Coordinator.”

“I guess that will go in front of me,” chuckled Goree, 60, who in April was elected as the first woman to lead the Shinnecock Indian Nation on eastern Long Island in more than two centuries.

While the United States has never elected a female president, and Mexico did only this month, female Native American chiefs are not rare. The Shinnecocks had female tribal leaders until 1792, when they adopted an all-male governing structure, Goree said. They had not had a female leader since then.

Now Goree’s supporters are touting her election as a return to its matriarchal leadership roots and a departure from centuries of male leadership sometimes marked by internal division and antagonism with local, state and federal government officials.

Goree likened her election to “a changing of the guard” in how the Shinnecocks approach relations on and off the reservation.

“Women are nurturing and maybe more sensitive to people’s issues, so maybe there’s a different way of going about how to handle things and be more responsive,” she said.

She takes over at a pivotal moment for the Shinnecocks, who are busy with several projects meant to generate much-needed revenue, including a contentious bid to build a travel plaza with a large gas station. Mere blocks away from sprawling mansions currently swarming with work crews primping them for summer, the Shinnecock reservation is a rural, unassuming 1.5-square-mile mix of modest houses and ramshackle trailers.

The tribe has a median household income far below that of the wealthy neighboring Hamptons towns.

Roughly half of the tribe’s 1,600 members live on the reservation,

Goree said, where basic infrastructure concerns include raising money to upgrade the powwow grounds in time for their annual Labor Day event, the source of one of the tribe’s biggest income infusions of the year.

The glaring inequity between the reservation and the surrounding areas has figured in the tribe’s often-adversarial relationship with the Town of Southampton, but Goree said she had a built-in advantage in dealing with town officials: She is one.

For more than a decade, she has served as town assessor, an appointed position that oversees the valuation of property for taxation purposes. She said she is the first Shinnecock chair to also serve as a Southampton official.

Goree said she was one of five girls raised by a single mother on the reservation before moving to nearby Riverhead at age 10. She returned in 1990 to live in a house built by her husband, Kristin Goree, a carpenter who helps maintain several reservation buildings and does private contracting work on homes there.

Two of their three daughters also work for Southampton. The youngest, Kesi Goree, became the first female Native American member of the town police force.

As Shinnecock Nation chair, Goree’s duties also include overseeing daily tribal operations and land issues, business and economic matters; presiding over leadership and public meetings; and casting a deciding vote on deadlocked tribal council decisions.

“Having a woman as the face of our nation for the first time since 1792 is remarkable,” said Bryan Polite, the tribe’s previous chair. Polite had a year left on his two-year term when he stepped down in April, citing exhaustion from the demands of the position.

“She comes with the connections and knowledge of the town government and knows all the players, so having a foot in both worlds is a real asset,” he added.

Southampton’s town supervisor, Maria Moore, who was



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Lisa Goree, chairwoman of the Shinnecock Indian Nation Council of Trustees, holds a talking stick used in tribal meetings. She is the tiebreaking vote for trustee decisions.

elected last November, said she had already met with Goree and was “looking forward to working with her to further a relationship of mutual trust and respect between the town and the tribe.”

Goree said her role with the town could prove useful in navigating land-use issues, whether shepherding tribal projects on their own property, or monitoring development by others on nontribal land that might disturb Shinnecock burial grounds. The job also provides a unique view of the wealth gap between the tribe and its neighbors.

As assessor, her purview of more than 50,000 parcels includes some of the highest-priced homes in the United States, including in Sagaponack, a village with a median home sale price of well above \$5 million.

On the reservation, tribal members pay no property taxes because it is sovereign land. When they turn 21, members are eligible for a free land allotment to build on, but financing a house can be

difficult because banks will not offer mortgages because the land cannot be resold.

“Southampton has a \$76.7 billion tax base, and we’re here trying to come up with \$70,000 for our weekly payroll,” Goree said.

The tribe has roughly 80 full-time employees to deal with matters like maintenance, housing, security, child and health care, and financial affairs, she said. The wealth gap has long been cited by the tribe partly as a historical consequence of centuries of losing its land over the nearly four centuries since English settlers first arrived in 1640. A 2005 land claim the tribe filed to regain roughly 3,600 acres near its current reservation was dismissed on appeal in federal court in 2016.

The tribe has undertaken several contentious projects on a nearby 100-acre parcel known as Westwoods. It is in a legal battle with state officials over its 2019 construction, despite local and state opposition, of two digital billboards along Route 27 leading

into the Hamptons.

The Shinnecocks have been blocked in the past from opening a casino on the Westwoods parcel, and the tribe’s current plan for a gas station and eventually a hotel complex there has already drawn scrutiny from neighbors and government officials.

Gail Murcott, whose Hampton Bays house abuts the Westwoods property, heads a local homeowners group that supports the tribe’s right to profitable projects as a financial lifeline but disputes its ownership of the parcel and has pressed the town to take legal action to claim it.

Murcott said the tribe had acted unneighborly by not consulting town officials or local homeowners before abruptly clearing Westwoods land in February for the gas station project. She said she hoped Goree would be less “in your face” than previous leaders and more considerate of the homeowners.

“She’s obviously a smart woman,” Murcott said, “and hopefully this is something where cooler heads will prevail, just like if the world had more women in charge, we probably wouldn’t have as many wars.”

Goree said, “No matter what we do, we always face challenges and roadblocks — someone is always trying to stop us.”

That has been a familiar tribal refrain over decades of failed attempts to open a casino. After many unsuccessful plans at more lucrative locations elsewhere, the tribe, under the previous administration, settled for a scaled-back version built as-of-right on the reservation.

But that plan also encountered opposition and is now on hold. Goree hopes the tribe can find a better plan and location.

Among Goree’s other goals is heading off what has become a recurring dispute with the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, where the U.S. Open will be held in 2026 for the sixth time since 1896. The event inevitably sparks controversy with the tribe, which says it once owned the land where the club now is and maintained burial mounds where the course now stands.

To avoid the usual bitter standoffs once the tournament approaches, Goree said she had begun talking with club officials. That aligns with her broader plans to organize regular informational meetings between tribal and nearby town leaders, “just so it’s not always us versus them.”

“Maybe it’s time,” she said, “to try a new way.”

One week reveals struggle of anti-abortion movement

ELIZABETH DIAS
New York Times

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — The Southern Baptist Convention voted to condemn in vitro fertilization at its annual meeting in Indianapolis this week, over the objections of some members.

Conservative lawyers pushing to sharply restrict medication abortion lost a major case at the Supreme Court, after pursuing a strategy that many of their allies thought was an overreach.

Former President Donald Trump told Republicans in a closed-door meeting to stop talking about abortion bans limiting the procedure at certain numbers of weeks.

In one chaotic week, the anti-abortion movement showed how major players are pulling in various directions and struggling to find a clear path forward two years after their victory of overturning Roe v. Wade.

The divisions start at the most fundamental level of whether to even keep pushing to end abortion or to move on to other areas of reproductive health, including fertility treatments. A movement that once marched nearly in lock step finds itself mired in infighting and unable to settle on a basic agenda.

In some cases, hard-liners are seizing the reins, rejecting the incremental strategy that made their movement successful in overturning Roe. Other abortion opponents are backing away, sensing the political volatility of the moment.

At a lunch at the Southern Baptist Convention this week, Tom Ascol, a prominent conservative pastor from Florida, bemoaned what the fragmentation meant for their cause.

“The most important thing is, can we agree on the goal?”

he said in a panel discussion. “Is the goal the absolute abolition of abortion in our nation?”

Some applauded loudly. Others stayed quiet.

For decades, the movement had honed a strategy to achieve a singular goal: ending a constitutional right to an abortion. But after that win, the anti-abortion movement has suffered a series of political losses. Democrats have won ballot initiatives in more than half a dozen states to protect abortion rights in state law.

For the first time in half a century, Republicans are trying to win a presidential election without the rallying cry of ending abortion as a mobilizing tactic for their base. The stakes are higher because it is unclear whether Trump will simply defer to their wishes in a second administration as he did in his first.

While abortion opponents dominate many conservative statehouses and courts, their efforts to go further — to ban abortion and transform reproductive health — have occasionally backfired. Republicans in swing states, prominent Senate candidates and even their champion Trump have all backed away from the anti-abortion agenda, for fear of more political fallout.

Even in anti-abortion strongholds, control is slipping. In Arizona, anti-abortion adherents make up the bulk of the Republican elected officials in the state Legislature, but this spring they narrowly lost their heated fight to reinstate a near-total abortion ban from 1864.

“We are at a reckoning point especially on the political side, where candidates, elected officeholders, have to make a choice on how much they want to protect life,” said Greg Scott, vice pres-

ident of policy at the Center for Arizona Policy, which supported the 1864 ban.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, the president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America who worked for years on an incremental strategy, has pushed for Republicans to embrace a 15-week national ban on abortion. When Roe fell, her organization was primarily worried about Democrats’ use of referendums to secure abortion rights in state constitutions. But now she sees a much bigger threat: Democrats winning office at the national level, and eventually codifying Roe with something like the Women’s Health Protection Act.

You have another election like the 2022 midterms, she said, “and all the ballot initiatives are a moot point.”

While disappointed in those results, she finds lessons in the long-term vision of her movement, which historically refuses to give up even amid major setbacks.

“The hidden reality of the pro-life movement is the determination,” she said. “It would be unrealistic to think it would be a straight line to success.”

In interviews, anti-abortion activists sometimes sounded frustrated. Some blamed the media, while others acknowledged their positions were minority ones. A third of Americans agree with the statement that “human life begins at conception, so an embryo is a person with rights,” according to the Pew Research Center.

Dr. Christina Francis, who leads the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, lost at the Supreme Court this week in the case that could have restricted access to medication abortion.



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Delegates at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

“We have a lot of work to do in talking to people about this issue,” she said in an interview last month. “Public opinion isn’t just going to change on a dime.”

A major challenge is getting lawmakers and politicians to push forward at all now that Roe is gone, said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America. “They haven’t really woken up to all that can and must be done,” she said. “For us, it is a lot of education.”

She sees a broader cultural challenge in the rising generation whose views about being human were formed by secularism, not by parents who took them to church, she said. Many do not want to have children at all, she noted.

An uncompromising segment of the movement is pushing ahead for “fetal personhood,” or giving embryos constitutional rights, a mission based in its Christian values.

Jason Rapert, who founded the National Association of Christian Lawmakers, is organizing

allied state lawmakers to push for such legislation and sees irreconcilable differences for America’s future.

“The bottom line for America, we are living in basically the same environment that the nation was in the 1850s, where the argument was that you could have slave states and free states,” he said. “The nation cannot go forward with kill states and life states.”

But other local actors in the anti-abortion movement are urging a longer term strategy.

“Gone are the days, in Ohio that is, of just introducing legislation to limit abortion,” said Mike Gonidakis, president of Ohio Right to Life, citing his state’s new constitutional amendment protecting abortion access, which voters approved in November.

“We might have to accept less than a whole loaf,” he said. “Our movement, our elected officials, need to appreciate sometimes you have to take what you can get now, and live to fight another day.”