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A. Malik's family moved from Detroit to Clay Township when he was a kid. As a young man, he served a term on the Algonac City Council.

About 20 years ago, he made headlines with an ambitious, controversial and unsuccessful plan to build a huge marina at a former

youth camp on Harsens Island. Today, he works closely with Mike and Marian Ilitch, founders of the Little Caesars pizza chain and prominent developers in Detroit. Malik is a wheeler-dealer. He has a reputation for making things happen -- and for making powerful enemies. Casino development is not a game for the timid.

Q. Are the Ilitches involved with the Port Huron casino?

A. Nope. Mike Ilitch, as owner of the Tigers, Red Wings and Pistons, plays no role with the gambling side of the family's business empire. His wife owns the MotorCity Casino in Detroit and is a partner with Malik in other casinos, including one under development on Long Island. Marian Ilitch is not an investor in the Port Huron casino. If Desmond Landing blossoms as a tourism center, the Ilitches reportedly would consider investing in non-gambling projects, possibly a new home for Silver Sticks hockey.

Malik, by the way, works from an office in the Ilitch Holdings' suite on the top floor of the Fox Building in Detroit.

Q. Does Bay Mills have an historic claim in Port Huron?

A. Not a strong one. In the 1940s, the Bay Mills band split from the Sault, by far the largest branch of the Chippewa nation in Michigan.

The tribe with a rock-solid claim to Port Huron is the Saginaw Chippewa, owners of the state's largest casino at Mount Pleasant.

Q. What is the Saginaw Chippewa claim?

A. In the Treaty of 1807, Michigan's territorial government bought millions of acres south of White Rock (near the Sanilac-Huron county line).

The treaty included a 1,287-acre reservation in what is now Port Huron. We are talking of an area bordered roughly by Military, Griswold, 10th Street and the Black River.

In the 1830s, during Andrew Jackson's presidency, federal troops herded Port Huron's Indians (as well as those from a reservation on Swan Creek near New Baltimore) onto boats. They were taken forcibly to reservations in Kansas. Those who escaped the roundup fled to Saginaw and joined the tribe there.

By the way, the Port Huron band was known as Mekadewagamitigweyawiniwak, or "People of the Black Water." At 28 letters, it is the longest Native American word known to scholars.

Q. Do the Saginaw Chippewa support the Port Huron casino?

A. No. No. No. The tribe has fought Bay Mills vigorously.

Mike Connell: Casino still seems like a long shot - Port Huron Times Herald

Written by Administrator

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For example, a casino bill introduced by U.S. Rep. Candice Miller in 2004 was blocked by House Majority Leader Tom Delay, R-Texas. This was after Delay's good friend, lobbyist Jack Abramoff, had pocketed \$14 million from the casino-rich Saginaw band.

The Saginaw band also joined Kirk Kerkorian, the billionaire owner of MGM, in financing opposition to a Port Huron casino bill that went to the House floor in June 2008. It was crushed, losing on a vote of 297-121.

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