

Menominee Nation traced every log for Bucks' hardwood floor

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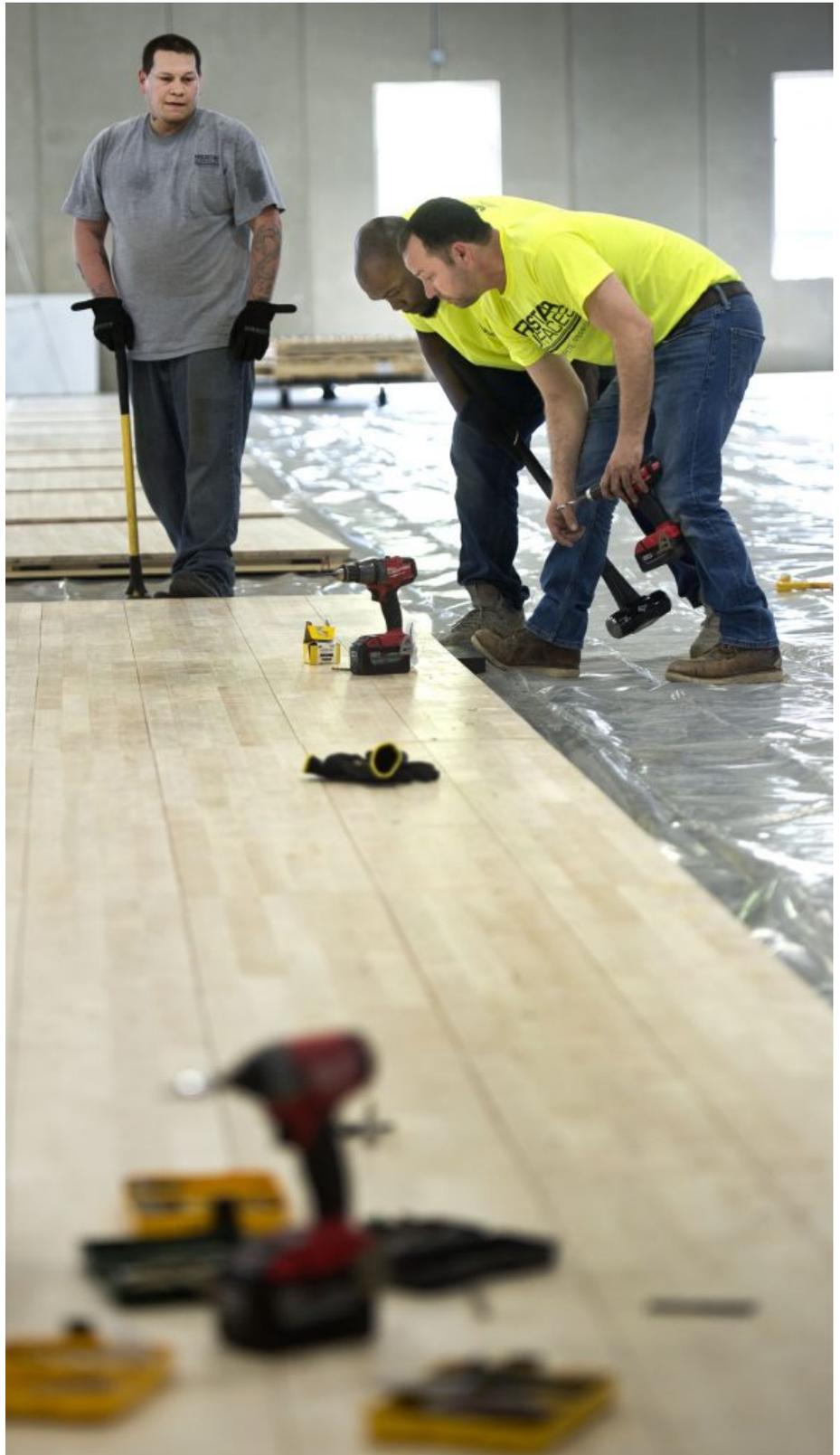
GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Many factors went into the Milwaukee Bucks winning the NBA championship this year, but Menominee Nation business officials believe the tribe's hardwood maple court had a lot to do with it.

The Bucks' basketball court is made from lumber produced from the Menominee Forest, which provides a sustainable harvest for the tribe's sawmill business.

"We trace every log," said Nels Huse, marketing specialist for Menominee Tribal Enterprises, adding that every tree is carefully selected and hand cut by loggers.

When the court was installed about three years ago, Menominee tribal citizens performed a traditional Native American blessing with drums, dancing and prayers to Mother Earth over the floor.

"We're not just praying for the Bucks to win, but we're also praying that the floor holds up well and that there are no injuries," Huse said.



Allen Metoxen, Ricky Gill and Ryan MacCallum assemble the primary floor for the arena that would eventually be named the Fiserv Forum on May 25, 2018. (File photo by Kevin Harnack)

He said in a statement that the blessed floors made a difference in the Bucks' championship win and Bucks President Peter Feigin responded with a message saying he agreed with that assessment.

Huse noted that the Bucks had lost only one game on the home court during the playoffs this year and credits the MTE floor, the Green Bay Press-Gazette reported.

Adrian Miller, president of Menominee Tribal Enterprises, said the tribal forest where the wood came from holds a philosophical, cultural and spiritual framework that speaks to the Native American connection with Mother Earth.

Keith Klitz is a Menominee "hand-sawyer," or lumberjack employing careful techniques to target certain trees for harvesting from the Menominee Forest.

"There is a strong belief throughout the community that the blessing of the Bucks' floor by the Menominee entourage helped keep the Bucks organization healthy and motivated to win the elusive NBA championship in six (games)," he said. "The spirit of the Menominee Forest is ensconced in that marvelous home floor of the reigning NBA champs, the Milwaukee Bucks."

Miller said all of the MTE loggers and millworkers take great pride that they had a hand in producing the lumber used to make the floor.

"Our land ethic and commitment to sustainable forest management and principles uniquely sets the Menominee forestry apart from all other integrated forest management and wood products businesses, nationally and internationally," he said.

The NBA basketball court standards require that the floors be made of hardwood maple from beyond a certain northern latitude and the Menominee Forest is located within the ideal climate.

"Lumber from this latitude is a harder and better strength quality," Huse said. "It needs a good, hard winter to really get strong."

He added the maple wood used from the Menominee Forest are from trees much older than would typically be used from other sawmills.

The 220,000-acre Menominee Forest is one of the healthiest in the world, largely because it was spared from waves of clear-cutting by European loggers.

The Menominee carefully manage and select trees for lumber in a sustainable method so the forest can provide a livelihood for generations to come.

The Menominee Forest also produces lumber for the NCAA through MTE and its partner Connor Sports of Amasa, Michigan, for which it provides wood.

MTE also produced gym floors for the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a court for the LA Clippers.

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