

## It's Happening at Chinook Winds ... by Teresa Miller

Revenue from the temporary center was used to pay some of the construction costs of the permanent center, to help repay the loans for the purchase of the property, the gaming equipment and to defray the start-up expenses of the permanent facility.

In March, as required by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and the tribal/state compact for Class II gaming, the Tribal Council established a gaming commission of five members with regulatory responsibilities to ensure that all federal, state, and tribal gaming laws and regulations are complied with, including conducting background investigations; and issuing, revoking, and denying employee and vendor licenses. A tribal monitor also was chosen.

Of the 250 employees hired for the temporary facility in the spring of 1995, 56 were tribal members.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held exclusively for tribal members and staff on May 26 and a grand opening was held the following day for the general public.

Based on recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Committee, a general plan for the use of gaming revenues with percentage allocation for various uses over a five-year period was adopted by the Tribal Council by resolution on July 16, 1995, and sent to the NIGC as required.

In July 1995, the Tribal Council approved the final external design and preliminary interior layout of the permanent facility, which included floor plans for a child care center and arcade for older children.

On Sept. 22, the official groundbreaking ceremony was held to launch the construction of the permanent facility.

On Sept. 23, the Tribal Council unanimously named Burgess Harmer, formerly GM of Comstock, as general manager of Chinook Winds. He had, until his appointment to the GM position, served as principal consultant to Chinook Winds.

As required by IGRA, an environmental assessment was conducted. Prepared by Tierra Environmental Services of San Diego, the EA was sent to the NIGC for approval by certified mail on Sept. 30 and hand-delivered to the chairman of NIGC on Oct. 4. Within a few weeks, the tribe was informed that the EA was approved.

Although the site work and preparation began on Oct. 17, the fabrication of the steel was delayed and not delivered to the site until Dec. 27. The project continued to be plagued by inclement weather, seriously impeding construction. PCL, however, reinforced its crews, developed an accelerated time schedule, and planned to wrap the steel in a "cocoon" to protect the crew from the weather.

In December, the Tribal Council approved the interior design of the permanent facility.

Of the 201 people employed by Chinook Winds at the end of 1995, 126 had successfully completed their six-month introductory period and 56 of the employees were tribal members.

The new 159,000-square-foot facility, most of which was constructed during the inclement winter months, seemed to take on a life of its own. With construction moving at a breakneck pace, it appeared to literally grow out of the ground. Everyone held their breath to see if construction would be completed in time for the advertised opening. Work continued round the clock until the final moments, when the last few light bulbs were put into place.

The grand opening of the new facility took place on June 28, 1996, amid much fanfare and a feeling of great pride and accomplishment for all those who took part in making the dream a reality. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was complete with skydivers, banners flying behind airplanes across the sky, and a full-scale reception with hors d'oeuvres and dignitaries. Tammy Wynette and "The Indian and the White Guy" (Williams & Ree) were the featured entertainment, and television coverage was all part of the long-awaited opening day.

The latter part of 1998 was a time of further planning for improving Chinook Winds. These plans included expanding the gaming floor to accommodate more machines and new games, increasing the size of the buffet and fine dining room, and relocating and remodeling the lounge.

To create additional room for administrative services, a new facility was constructed on the former site of "The Tent." This was designed not only to house the Human Resources Department, but also the child care center and arcade, all three of which had been located in the permanent center. The new facility also was designed to house the Gaming Commission.

With the acquisition of a 20-acre parcel of land on Logan Road a short distance from Chinook Winds, construction began for urgently needed additional parking.

As for Chinook Winds management, a full-time general manager was appointed in June 1998 and a Board of Directors was established to oversee operations.

As tribal members gain experience and knowledge, increasing numbers are being appointed to responsible supervisory positions, i.e., director of Human Resources, Facilities director, director of Casino Operations, Compliance officer, Guest Services manager, Winner's Circle manager,

Bingo manager, IS manager, and internal auditor.

According to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), tribes are required to enter into compacts with the state for Class III games. The Siletz Tribe successfully negotiated a compact in 1995 to conduct games at both the temporary and permanent facilities. But the tribe continued to encounter obstacles in 1998 in negotiating with the state for needed additional Class III games – games that the tribe was legally entitled to conduct.

The state was requiring the tribe to contribute a percentage of gaming revenues to charities for the right to conduct the new games. The Siletz Tribe opposed this requirement because it viewed this as extortion and an unwarranted intrusion on the tribe's sovereignty.

The state refused to acknowledge the fact that the Siletz Tribe, by resolution, adopted a "Plan for the Uses of Gaming Revenues in 1995," in accordance with IGRA that provides for a percentage allocation to charities.

Although the Grand Ronde and Cow Creek tribes acquiesced to the state's conditions and were allowed to conduct the additional games, the other tribes, including the Siletz, were still in negotiations over this issue as 1998 came to a close.

During 1998, Chinook Winds continued its reputation as a premium entertainment center, presenting such headline performers as Bill Cosby, Lou Rawls, Glen Campbell, Wayne Newton, Travis Tritt, Jay Leno, and Gladys Knight.

The convention center also was the scene of such major events as the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association conference, American Pool Association pool tournament, the Oregon Symphony, Prudential Life Insurance conference, Oregon Gasoline Dealers convention, a major bridge tournament, the Women's Violence Intervention Program benefit dance, Governor's Government to Government Conference, and the National Tribal Conference on Environmental Management, held in conjunction with the EPA.

Chinook Winds also was the scene of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) conference, hosted by the Siletz Tribe. This was attended by national Indian leaders, including Ron Allen, president of the National Congress of American Indians; Rick Hill, president of the National Indian Gaming Association; and Henry Cagey, president of ATNI.

As we progress into the future, Chinook Winds will continue to grow and become the major resort showplace to go to in the Pacific Northwest.