

Chinook Winds' Anniversary

It's been 15 years since the opening of the Tribe's historic Chinook Winds Casino. The beautiful gaming and convention center we see today, however, didn't just miraculously and suddenly happen.

Important events preceded its establishment. Early on, faced with diminishing fishing and timber industries and declining Tribal revenues, the Siletz Tribal Council and General Council looked to gaming as a potential economic resource as some other Tribes around the country already were doing.

In late 1991, the Siletz Tribe's six-member Ad Hoc Gaming Committee studied a number of possible sites for a gaming center, including some along I-5 and the Oregon Coast. After several years of intensive exploration of potential sites, we settled on a few closer to home.

Although then-Gov. Barbara Roberts and her staff were resistant to the idea of the Tribe establishing a casino off of existing Tribal property, a field trip for the governor to the scattered, hilly and virtually un-passable forest lands the Siletz owned convinced her that only land newly acquired by the Tribe would be suitable for a casino.

The Tribal Council focused on a site in Lincoln City on the beach overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Mark Hemstreet was the owner of the Lincoln Shores Development property on which the proposed site was situated.

Hemstreet offered to sell several parcels within Lincoln Shores to the Tribe. It so happened that the property was a former Tribal allotment owned by the Roger Freeman family. The Tribe agreed to purchase the property, but because of certain conditions imposed by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA), it was necessary to have the land taken in trust for gaming, a complicated process requiring congressional action.

Our Tribe was fortunate to have friends in Washington, D.C., such as Franklin Ducheneaux, who was thoroughly knowledgeable of IGRA. He helped move the congressional process forward.

The Tribe also owes a great deal of gratitude to then-Sen. Mark Hatfield, who sponsored the legislation in the Senate, and to then-Rep. Bill Richardson (now governor of New Mexico), who successfully introduced the bill in the House of Representatives. The legislation was the very last action taken by the 1994 Congress.

Our beautiful casino is the end result of planning that started as a dream. Council member Jessie Davis chaired the Ad Hoc Gaming Committee that held numerous community meetings that led the process ultimately to our success. Many members within, and persons outside of, our Tribe supported us throughout the process - Tribes, lobbyists and friends too numerous to mention.

When the construction of the major facility began, we had erected a temporary Sprung structure that we lovingly called "the tent." During the winter of 1995, our tent with its 250 slots, 12 card tables and a deli sustained a hurricane-velocity storm that ripped off a number of Lincoln county building rooftops, blew down trees and ripped apart trailer homes. But the storm amazingly left our tent in place.



Delores Pigsley

Chairman's Report

When it wasn't the severe winter weather that tried to devastate our efforts to establish a gaming center, it was a group of hostile Lincoln City citizens who campaigned vehemently against our casino, claiming our Tribe would attract prostitution, drugs and organized crime to our community. They were absolutely wrong, of course.

Throughout the winter of 1995, PCL, which was contracted to build our casino, managed to successfully fulfill its contract despite fighting against absolutely horrendous weather. PCL was, after all, the 11th largest construction company in the country that had built, among other major facilities, the Mall of America and the Denver airport.

Andy McCord was assigned as manager to construct our 152,000-square-foot casino, which he did by moving PCL forward on a very fast track, even working at night with floodlights in driving rain. Fabricated structural steel for the facility was delivered as ordered on Dec. 26.

The casino also had a Bingo hall designed to serve as a theatre. From its inception, Chinook Winds has attracted celebrity entertainers.

Mary (Dolly) Fisher, who then was a council member, was the one who named our casino Chinook Winds.

Our Tribal Gaming Commission was responsible, among other tasks, for ensuring the casino complies with all gaming laws, regulations and policies, and operates according to established minimum standards and internal controls. The Human Resources Department did the demanding job of hiring staff.

Burgess Harmer, formerly of the Comstock Casino of Reno, Nev., was hired as our first general manager.

Amazingly, within just one year, the large permanent facility was built. It was a red letter day for the grand opening of our beautiful casino.

As most of you know, since the opening, our Tribe has purchased additional properties adjacent to or in close proximity to the casino - the Shilo Inn luxury hotel, a nearby golf course, an office building on the hill overlooking the casino and 10 additional acres of clear land known as lot 57 that sits adjacent to our casino on the beach.

We are proud that we are a major landowner in Lincoln City as well as the major employer in Lincoln County. We celebrated last month by bringing together people who worked with the Tribe to establish the casino 15 years ago.

Meeting with Lincoln City Council

Mayor Lori Hollingsworth reviewed the successful partnerships the Tribe and the city have accomplished in the past year, including the continued Memorandum of Agreement, funding of the Taft High 7-12 jazz band class, opening of Siletz Technologies in the business incubator space and the Golf Course Water Agreement we just signed.

The Tribal Council and the city both agreed that the Memorandum of Agreement has served us well. The cooperative agreement allows the Tribe to make a contribution to the City of Lincoln City and in exchange the city agrees not to protest fee-to-trust applications under certain conditions spelled out in the agreement.

The Tribe's contribution is \$80,000 per year and the agreement is reviewed

every two years. This was the second year and the Tribe and the city agreed to renew it.

The meeting was cordial and we look forward to working together for the coming year.

Memorial Day

It's important to always remember all of our veterans and the Tribe does this at the annual Memorial Day Ceremony. It's also important to know and remember, specifically, our WWII veterans.

With the recent passing of Eddie Collins and Kenneth Hatch, we have few WWII veterans still living. They include Alfred Lane Jr., Buck Downey, Calvin Van Pelt and Ed Ben.

The Tribe recognized and gave tribute to these veterans when the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C., was christened. The veterans and their spouses were afforded a trip to the event and participated in activities that took place on The Mall.

It was a memorable event that showed the Tribe's appreciation for our Tribal heroes.



Courtesy photo

Gubernatorial candidate John Kitzhaber (center) kicks off his general election campaign at the Lincoln City Cultural Center on June 7. Joining in the discussion were Tribal Chairman Delores Pigsley and Lincoln City Councilman Rick Brissette. Kitzhaber continued his statewide tour that evening with a stop at Rogue Ales Public House in Newport to continue the discussion on his ideas for governing the state of Oregon.

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Deadline for the August issue is July 9. Submission of articles and photos is encouraged. Please see the Passages Policy on page 23 when submitting items for Passages.



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