

## Chinook Winds gives to local community in the spirit of the season

Sharing with others is a time-honored tradition at the very heart of Tribal culture for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, owners of Chinook Winds Casino Resort. This philosophy is put into practice within the local community.

Although according to Tribal custom it is unseemly to be boastful, at this time of the year it's good for people to know the spirit of the season is alive and well, especially during these hard economic times.

Every December, the casino and its associated properties participate in "giving" activities that help provide for those in need within the community. This year is no different.

In conjunction with the North Lincoln Fire & Rescue Volunteer Christmas Toy Drive, the Chinook Winds Bingo Department collected 208 toys for children of the community.

"The response of the staff and our guests has been tremendous. This year's contribution was the largest we have ever seen," said Bingo Manager Chad McCormick.

A giving tree located near the entrance to the Bingo Hall in the casino and another in the lobby of the administrative offices were trimmed with tags listing the needs or wishes of area children. As in years past, all 117 tags on these trees listing items for families and foster children were filled in time for the holidays.

This year, Chinook Winds Casino answered the call to assist with the community Christmas dinner known as Operation Christmas Spirit. In previous years, Chinook Winds has provided food but this year staff volunteered to take care of the scheduling and cooking, plus the casino

provided all of the food with the exception of the desserts.

The staff at Chinook Winds also volunteered to help distribute more than 23 boxes of toys collected by the Lincoln City Dollar Tree store. Among those organizations receiving these were Siletz Tribal Community Children's Party, Siletz VFW Christmas dinner, BAMA - Miracle on 51<sup>st</sup> Street, Lincoln City Kiwanis Club, Oregon National Guard Family Christmas, Depoe Bay Fire Department Toy Drive, Depoe Bay Elks Christmas, Lincoln City Food Pantry, Operation Christmas Spirit, North Lincoln Fire & Rescue, Lincoln City Elks and Lincoln City Eagles for Christmas baskets.

The Siletz Tribe gives a percentage of its net profits to charity each year as part of the compact between the state and the Tribe. Chinook Winds Casino Resort makes a large contribution each year in addition to the grants given out by the Tribe simply because giving is at the core of the American Indian way of life.

Rather than choose one or two charities to support, the philosophy on giving is to support as many organizations as possible in their endeavors, providing assistance in reaching their individual goals or fulfilling their need.

Overall, the Tribe has honored its tradition of sharing within the community by distributing more than \$8.6 million through the charitable fund and other Tribal resources. Chinook Winds has donated more than \$1.8 million in cash and fund-raising items since it opened in 1995. The casino also provides in-kind donations of convention space for various fund-raisers as well as technical support, advertising and manpower for many community events.



Courtesy photos from Chinook Winds staff

Tami Haines, Debbie Perkins and Julie Rhoades from the Lincoln County Child Welfare Department accept Christmas gifts for children in foster care from Chinook Winds Human Resources Department staff members Mariah Garza and Becky Bennett.



Finance Director Angela Calkins, Food and Beverage Director Chuck McPherson and baby Cash David Engles at the employee Christmas party.

## Gerard fondly remembers Zakoji's "valuable contributions to Indian people"

*Editor's note: Hiroto "Zak" Zakoji, long-time consultant to and friend of the Siletz Tribe, passed away July 27 at age 83. He was a friend of Indian Country who helped a multitude of Tribes and is remembered for his dedication and desire to support Indian causes. Forrest Gerard (Blackfeet) is a former assistant secretary for Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of Interior, a long-time friend of Zak's and also a long-time friend to the Siletz Tribe. This is his remembrance of Zak.*

By Forrest Gerard

Hiroto "Zak" Zakoji's parents emigrated from Japan to the United States in hopes of providing a better life for their children-to-be. His parents settled in Portland, Ore., where Zak and his sister were born.

His parents have gone to a greater reward and he is survived by a sister and other relatives.

Unfortunately, his family's life was uprooted following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. The family was sent to a containment camp for Japanese Americans, justified in the belief they and others might harm the United States.

Zak harbored no bitterness from this experience and joined the U.S. mili-

tary. Following this service, he graduated from college and went to find his place in the world.

Zak made a decision early on to dedicate his life to working on behalf of Indian people. He served them faithfully and with distinction at several reservations in Oregon.

I heard of Zak's work early in my career in Indian Affairs and I joined him when he was employed by the Siletz Tribe and I served as its Washington, D.C., consultant.

It was a period when the Tribe sought federal approval of land trust in Salem to serve as a gaming site. Zak showed his sense of humor in this effort that required our attendance at many meetings with city officials in Salem. We traveled back and forth from Portland and when I made a point of this fact, he smiled and said, "Maybe we will be known as the I-5 kids!"

That effort failed and the Tribe established a successful gaming enterprise in Lincoln City on the Pacific Coast.

Zak continued his work for the Tribe in many areas and contributed to successful ventures that benefit the Tribe and its members to this very day.

I wish to comment on several of Zak's attributes and values that made him a successful professional worker and a



File photo

Forrest Gerard, Hiroto "Zak" Zakoji, Joe DeLaCruz and Nelson Witt

personal friend as well. Among these, I would cite his loyalty; a strong work ethic; fulfilling his work in an honest manner; appreciation for the views and beliefs of others; ready acceptance of difficult and controversial work assignments; was respected by his employer and fellow staff; conducted his work with his employer's best interests in mind; and never sought personal recognition or attention for his

work on behalf of Indian people.

If I were asked to describe Zak in a few words, I would characterize him as a good and decent man whose primary goal in life was to contribute to efforts that would improve the social, economic and political standing of Indian people.

I join the scores of people who will miss Zak, but we shall also remember his valuable contributions to Indian people.