



Tribe takes issue with article in *The Economist* based on flawed study

In 2014 alone – \$808,225 in higher education and adult vocational grants, \$400,000 in out-of-area health care payments, \$1,324,711 to Tribal Elders individually and to Elders programs designed to “increase overall Tribal health and educational attainment and to ameliorate the negative effects of termination...”

These are just a few of the items toward which the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians put gaming funds in 2014, in addition to the per capita payment of \$1,200 to Tribal members.

Receiving a payment of about \$1,000 annually – that isn’t already dedicated to rent or mortgage, electric bills or the like – is a great benefit to Tribal members, but it certainly isn’t enough to quit your job and start loafing, no matter how attractive “sloth” may seem.

On Jan. 12-13, a reporter from *The Economist* magazine visited the Siletz Tribe and the community of Siletz ostensibly to gather information for a story on how casinos benefit Tribes.

On Jan. 15, an article appeared on *The Economist*’s website under the headline, “Of Slots and Sloth: How Cash from Casinos Makes Native Americans Poorer.”

The article relied on generalizations, anecdotes and one “study” of Northwest Tribes by a private attorney published in a student-run law review (*Sovereignty, Economic Development and Human Security in Native*

American Nations by W. Gregory Guedel, published in the *American Indian Law Journal*).

That law review article drew a straight line from casino profits and per capita payments to poverty without identifying any other factors that could contribute to poverty.

Shawn Fremsted, a senior fellow with the Center for American Progress and a senior research associate with the Center for Economic and Policy Research, and Erik Stegman, an expert in American Indian and Alaska Native policy at the Center for American Progress, have criticized *The Economist*’s reliance on the law review article, stating, “In short, the study is absolutely useless in terms of providing meaningful evidence to support *The Economist*’s claim.”

Siletz Tribal Chairman Delores Pigsley pointed out that the law review article relied on faulty assumptions and mistakes of fact.

“One of the biggest problems is that the study includes ‘on-reservation population and poverty statistics,’ but the reporter presented these statistics as representative of the entire Tribe. No Tribe has all of its members living on the reservation,” said Pigsley.

The article states there are 2,452 Tribal members living on the reservation. Tribal data shows there are only 582. The Tribe has 4,984 enrolled Tribal members and only 1,188 live in the two counties where a casino employment commute would be practical.

The study included only 24 Tribes, .096 percent of the 250 Tribes with casinos. Not enough Tribes took part in this study to label all Native Americans as poorer because of casinos, as indicated in the headline of the article.

The Economist article also stated, “After the Supreme Court ruled in 1987 that Native American Tribes, being sovereign, could not be barred from allowing gambling, casinos began popping up on reservations everywhere.”

In reality, Tribes can have casinos only in states that already have some form of gambling. The report cited by the reporter says that 250 tribes (44 percent of the 566 federally recognized Tribes) have casinos in 28 states (56 percent of available states).

The reporter also wrote that, “... the biggest problem may be the way casino profits are sometimes disbursed ... Per capita payments range from as little as a few hundred dollars a year to more than \$100,000.”

Yet the reporter cites just one statistic on per capita payments, the one for the Siletz Tribe, and provides no information on other Tribes’ payments.

The reporter failed to mention any of the details provided by Tribal staff during a 30-minute interview, including how the Tribe uses the remaining 60 percent of gaming profits.

These include economic development funds, health care (medical, dental,

optical), education scholarships, transportation, Elders social and recreational activities, Tribal language instruction and Tribal culture and history programs.

The reporter provided no information on the Tribe’s economic diversification efforts. The Siletz Tribe has RV parks, in Lincoln City and Salem; and several buildings that rent space to business tenants in Lincoln City, Depoe Bay, Portland, Salem and Eugene, plus an industrial property in Toledo. This information is contained in publications provided to the reporter.

Tribal members and the wider community also benefit from other resources gaming has made available, including more than \$9 million distributed by the Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund. Overall, the Tribe has distributed more than \$11.4 million through the charitable fund and other Tribal resources.

After reading *The Economist* article, the Tribe can only conclude that this reporter came to Siletz with a headline already in mind and was only looking for interviewees who would provide statements that support that story.

She apparently thought she found it in the two individuals she quoted – one of whom works and one who doesn’t – and in citing a “study” that appears to be as flawed in its “facts” as her article.

Read the “State of Indian Nations” address by Brian Cladoosby, president of the National Congress of American Indians, on pages 12-14.



Photo by Diane Rodriguez

Candidates for the 2015 Tribal Council election include (l to r) Gerald Ben, Reggie Butler Sr., Rusty Butler, Bonnie Petersen, Frank D. Aspria, Sharon A. Edenfield, Cynthia Bellinger Farlow, Tracy M. Lancaster, David R. Hatch and Selene Rilatos.

All ballots for this election must be received by 4 p.m. on Feb. 7. You can vote in person on Feb. 7 at the Tribal Community Center in Siletz, Ore., from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Tribal members – be sure to cast your ballot by Feb. 7!