

"Most of the five women who first started PACT were mothers or grandmothers," Dewberry says. Given three and a half days to put together a petition that called to stop the tribes from building the casino, the five women collected 1,300 signatures; Dewberry presented the petition to Gov. Kulongoski with Dylan and her 6-year-old son Andrew in tow.

Today the group is both larger and more diverse. "Many people on the steering committee are retired, from all sorts of jobs: from a rocket scientist to a milk truck driver," Dewberry says.

Dewberry herself is most concerned about the social repercussions of the casino. Among the potential effects is increased traffic on Highway 126, the highway that most Siuslaw High School sports teams must travel to get to league games.

Dewberry also worries that members of the community will become addicted to gambling, and that this will affect their children.

"As a teacher you see the hardships of a kid in a normal life, all the other addictions out there," she says. "It's like it cannibalizes people, what the gambling addictions do."

As to the tribes' plans to improve education for their children, Dewberry says, "Education is very valuable, but it goes back to whether they'll really be benefiting the tribe and the community. I have a hard time seeing the 6 percent of casino profits that the tribes will eventually be giving back to the community as philanthropy, because of the costs to peoples' lives. I'm sure that there will be some good that comes of it, but, in my mind, there are problems with money that causes harm to other people."

The issues that concern PACT members, Dewberry stresses, are as diverse as the organization's members themselves.

"People who are fighting this are fighting it for a variety

of reasons. It's just how it would change the whole community, the flavor. The having a 24-7 bright-lights, honky-tonk feel, it's just not what people want."

Tribal Administrator Francis Somday has his own opinion on this: "Really what they're after is, they don't want to see anything that will increase traffic

dollars spent in the casino are one hundred dollars not spent in other businesses," says Dewberry. In a community where 10 percent of families live below the poverty level and where logging — a traditional source of income — now employs few, any adverse impact on local businesses can have people running scared.

But Bob Garcia disagrees with what he sees as a pessimistic view of the future. When the casino opens at the end of this month, it will employ 117 to 130 people. Of these jobs, about 80 will require no prior casino experience. This is no small number in a community with a 3.3 percent unemployment rate.

"There aren't logging jobs anymore, there aren't mill jobs," says Garcia. "As the casino goes forward, it will first provide employment to local residents, and second contribute to the economic self-sufficiency of the tribes. Right now, every dime the Confederated Tribes has comes from the government."

PACT supporters point to casinos located outside of the state as examples of what the future may hold for Florence. Some tribally run casinos' records have been murky, giving few benefits to the communities in which they're located and delivering little aid to the tribes they're meant to serve.

But Garcia points to other tribal casinos within Oregon as better examples of what can be expected from the Three Rivers Casino, saying, "In Oregon, their records are crystal clear."

At Florence Café this morning, the waitress is distracted. Big-boned and wholesome as a milkmaid, she plops plates heaped with home fries onto a table, then stalks off toward the fogged-up window at the front of the

Ideal Location?

When it comes to Oregon tribal casinos, location is everything.

The inauguration of the Three Rivers Casino will mean a total of nine American Indian casinos in the state. Among these, the most profitable are located at strategic points along well-traveled roads and highways.

Oregon's most visited tourist attraction, in fact, is one such casino. Located on state Highway 18, about 60 miles from Portland on the way to the coast, Spirit Mountain Casino is owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. It attracts 3.5 million visitors per year.

The Three Rivers Casino also looks poised to benefit from an ideal location. Situated at the juncture of two of Oregon's busiest highways, the casino is just 65 miles from Eugene via Highway 126, and is easily accessed from points north and south along Highway 101.

"It's a great coastal location," says Bob Garcia, the tribes' Economic Development Director

"The city of Florence has a lot of interesting attractions, including the dunes and the beach. Our casino will be quite a bit smaller than Spirit Mountain, but hopefully we'll be able to grow in the future." — *Jasmine Pittenger*

and population. They love this town. What they forget is that land was taken from the tribes at gunpoint with a treaty that was never fulfilled. And that is wrong."

Members of PACT are also concerned about the effect on local businesses of competing with a casino. "One hundred

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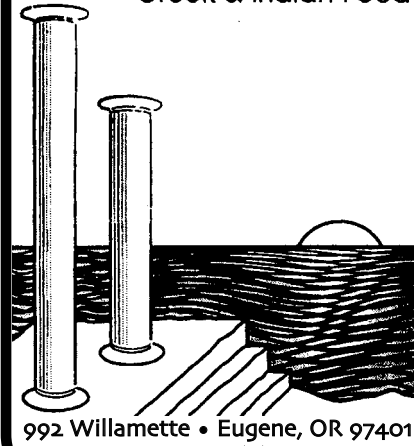
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