

In all its business partnerships with Native American tribes, First Astri has achieved two important goals: It has developed long-range business plans in conjunction with tribal leadership that meet tribal goals for economic parity employment and community welfare and it has managed gaming operations profitably by employing as many tribal members as possible.

According to Fofas, First Astri is the only Native American gaming management firm with a complete training program designed specifically to help tribal members learn the necessary skills and obtain the experience required to take on all levels of gaming operations and management.

"We're very proud of our track record in this area," Fofas said. "At Sycuan, the tribe is at 100 percent employment. Every tribal member who needs or wants a job has been trained or is employed. At the Lummi reservation, more than 100 tribal members are already employed and that number is expected to double in the next 12 months. Many of these people had been previously unemployed."

The dealer training school, operated by First Astri, is staffed by trainers from the Mirage Casino in Las Vegas, and has graduated more than 100 tribal members to date.

One of the advantages of undertaking a gaming operation, Fofas noted, is that it allows a tribe to keep its current means of income but diversify for greater income and economic security.

Lummi Management committee chairman Richard Jefferson agrees.

"The casino provides employment for tribal members and decreases the tribe's reliance on the seasonal fishing industry. Most of all, the project will give us enough income to further expand and diversify our economic base," Jefferson said.

The Lummi Gaming Center opened late last year in Bellingham, Wash. and is expected to achieve first year sales of approximately \$10 million. Expansion plans are already on the drawing board.

First Astri's management team represents more than 50 years of combined experience in helping Native American tribes in areas other than gaming. Their expertise includes working with tribes on federal

grant applications and grant management and counsel on water rights and serving as liaison with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal organizations.

The Sycuan Gaming Center has been featured on American Broadcasting Cos news program, all three local network television affiliates, the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times and countless other newspaper and magazine publications.

This high visibility, its extensive advertising campaign on freeway billboards, television and radio, the beautiful turquoise logo and the enthusiastic employee service are the result of First Astri's commitment to marketing. Many of the concepts were borrowed from Walt Disney, Western Airlines, Copper Mountain Resort and Taco Bell/Pepsi.

"Our research showed us very early that people come to Indian gaming centers because they place a high premium on the entertainment experience," Fofas explained. "We've made sure that a customer's entire experience from actual gaming activities, to customer service, to refreshments, to overall ambiance was one of quality. In short, we work very hard to ensure our patrons have fun."

There is no disputing that gambling has become a popular national pastime over the past decade. It is legal in most states, endorsed by state governments and accepted by the public in growing numbers. State lotteries have blossomed in the last 28 years. In 1963, there were no state lotteries and last year, there were 39 state lotteries which collectively raised nearly \$20 billion. That figure is almost four times larger than the annual gambling revenues in Nevada. By contrast, Americans spent \$7 billion at movie theaters and \$8 billion in record stores.

"The timing for Native Americans could not be better now that the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act has opened the door," Fofas said. "The potential is virtually unlimited, and according to every statistic available, the public is ready to play."

(Taken From Indian Gaming Magazine)



## Chairman's Report on Gaming

From: Delores Pigsley

On April 20, 1992, Governor Barbara Roberts issued a statement to the media in which she expressed opposition to the Siletz tribal gaming proposal. The Governor went even farther by stating that she "will oppose any proposal by any tribe to acquire new land for off-reservation gambling."

My response to the Governor's statement on Indian gaming was delivered immediately following her press conference. In it, I expressed surprise "that the governor did not ask to meet with us prior to making this announcement".

I said the governor's opposition "will not stop us from pursuing our gaming facility"...that our "legal opinion is that the

governor does not have final authority on this issue. The authority rests with the Secretary of the Interior," and "the governor's response is one piece of information which Secretary Lujan will consider in his decision..."

On April 24, I issued another statement to the press on behalf of our Tribe in which I said:

"Today, the Siletz Tribe withdrew its application with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs to pursue acquisition of a South Salem site (on Mission Street, at Turner Road SE) for its proposed gaming facility. The Tribe is continuing to pursue siting of its gaming facility in North Salem (on Portland Road at I-5) under the provisions of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

Although the North Salem site remains the only site currently on file with the BIA, this does not preclude the Tribe from pursuing other sites in other communities for its



Proposed Gaming Facility

gaming facility. The Tribe has said throughout this process that it will remain open to pursuing a variety of sites in different locations, and we reserve that right.

It is important to point out, in light of comments made Monday by Governor Barbara Roberts, that the nature of our reservation leaves the Siletz Tribe no choice but to seek a site off-reservation on which to establish a gaming facility. Our Tribe does not have a residential reservation like some other tribes.

The Siletz Reservation is made up of 27 separate parcels of steeply wooded timber land, accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicles. The fee-to-trust land acquisition process is the only means by which the Tribe can exercise its sovereign legal right to pursue gaming for economic development and tribal independence.

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