

Tribe can Regulate its Own Gaming Now says Commission



Photo by Kim Mueller

The National Indian Gaming Commission (IGC) recently announced that the Grand Ronde Tribe is now recognized for operating a self-regulating Indian casino. The Menominees in Wisconsin are the only other Tribe in the United States to have such

a distinction. "This is something we have strived for for many years," said Grand Ronde Gaming Commissioner Lynn Hillman. "We far exceeded the highest levels required by the IGC for self-regulation."

Hillman Announces Self-Regulation Certificate at General Council Meeting



Photo by Brent Merrill

ANNOUNCEMENT—Gaming Commissioner Lynn Hillman informed the General membership that the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are now one of only two Tribes in the country to own and operate a self-regulated casino.

By Brent Merrill

The final General Council meeting of the year was held on Sunday, December 3 at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde. Three program presentations were made and discussion followed each report. Here are the highlights:

■ GAMING COMMISSION

The first report was by the Grand Ronde Gaming Commission. Commissioners were introduced to the General Council as well as the new Executive Director of the Gaming Commission Eric Reiss and his wife Bridget.

The Gaming Commission consists of Chairman Lynn Hillman, Vice-Chair Leonette Galligher, Gene Davidson, Mary Mode and Pat Mercier.

Hillman gave the presentation and detailed the responsibilities of the commission. He said the commission worked on the gaming compact negotiations between the State of Oregon and the Spirit Mountain Casino.

Hillman informed the membership of the fact that the Grand Ronde Gaming Commission is the only one of its kind in the state to be completely autonomous from the Tribe. What that means is the Gaming Commission is a completely independent body from the Tribe or the ca-

sino. All commissioners are part-time and the commission employs 7 full-time personnel. The Gaming Commission reports to Tribal Council.

"We regulate," said Hillman. "We protect Tribal assets."

The Gaming Commission was created in 1995.

"Tribal Gaming is the most regulated industry in the country," said Hillman. "We had to work with the state to build the casino business. We had to work on the government-to-government relationship."

Hillman said that the Gaming Commission has processed over 5,000 applications since 1995. He said the commission conducts background investigations on all potential employees at the casino — including drug screens.

The Gaming Commission also licenses vendors and conducts audits of the casino on a regular basis.

Hillman said that Tribal members should be proud that casinos from all over the country use the casino's set of standards, regulations and internal policies as models for their own operations.

Hillman announced that Grand Ronde's Spirit Mountain Casino is now one of only two Tribal casinos in the nation to receive a Certificate of Self-Regulation from the Indian Gaming Commission (IGC).

"This is something we have strived for for many years," said Hillman of the rare designation. "What this means is that the Tribe can regulate itself. We have the highest of standards and we passed the criteria with exceptional marks."

Hillman explained that IGC personnel spent three days at the casino auditing every aspect of the entire operation.

"The staff is what makes this possible," said Hillman. "We far exceeded the highest levels required by the IGC."

The IGC will present the Certificate of Self-Regulation to the Tribal Council on Tuesday, January 2.

Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison said the Menominees of Wisconsin are the only other Tribe in the United States

to receive the Certificate of Self-Regulation from the IGC.

"We should be proud of them too," said Harrison of the Menominees who were also a terminated Tribe. "They also started with nothing."

■ NANITCH SAHALLIE

Dr. Tom Austin, the Executive Director of the Tribal Health and Wellness program, introduced Nanitch Sahallie Director Candi Henry to the General membership.

Nanitch Sahallie is the Tribe's youth residential treatment center in Keizer, Oregon.

Henry started her presentation by using the proper pronunciation of the name "Nanitch Sahallie." She said language preservation is very important at Nanitch.

Many young people from 22 Tribes were provided services at Nanitch during the last year. Henry explained that the program serves Tribes all over the Northwest.

This year six young people from Grand Ronde used the services at Nanitch.

Henry said 84 percent of the young men in the program were successful and that 76 percent of the young women were also successful in their individual treatment.

Henry explained the breakdown of her program's budget dollars. She said that most of the program dollars come from the Indian Health Service and that additional dollars come from the State of Oregon and the Tribe.

Outreach and support programs are also very important aspects of the care each client receives at Nanitch.

"Nanitch is a safe, sheltered, structured environment for these young people," said Henry. "When they go home, it is not always as safe as it is here. We follow up and try to pro-

vide outreach and support."

Henry informed the membership that Tribal Elder Dorothy Lawe teaches a class for youth at Nanitch on a weekly basis. And she said that cultural education is a big part of what goes on at Nanitch.

Nanitch Sahallie recently received national accreditation for three years — which is the highest accreditation possible.

■ BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Next, Dr. Joe Stone the new Behavioral Health Program Director introduced himself to the membership and explained why he wanted to be in Grand Ronde. The Behavioral Health program was formerly known as the Mental Health program.

"I noticed that the Tribe was growing and doing many things," said Stone. "This will be an exciting and progressive program. I see a great deal of strength in this community."

Stone said having the concern of Tribal Council is critical to the success of his new program. He also said it is important to hear the concerns of Tribal members.

Stone explained that the program is currently going through the state process to set up the program.

"I don't want any generic Indian stuff — no pre-packaged curriculums," said Stone of pre-prepared treatment programs designed for Indians. "What is important is that we integrate culture and spirituality and the resurgent strength of the Grand Ronde people into the program."

■ DOOR PRIZES

Gene Davidson won the drawing for a special Wellness gift. Mary Mode, Robert Nagle and Rob Whisler each won \$50 and Todd Shandy won \$100. Scott Mode won the Veteran's Memorial 50/50 drawing for \$52.

**NEXT GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING:
SUNDAY, JAN. 7**

**11:30 a.m. at Tribal Community Center
Presenters: Tribal Court and Legal Aid**