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Casino expansion ahead of schedule

Good fall weather allows contractors to speed up construction

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

The southern expansion of Spirit Mountain Casino will be complete in April instead of August, casino interim general manager Roy Rhode said Sunday, Oct. 7, during the Tribe's monthly General Council meeting.

Although much of Rhode's Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. presentation occurred in executive session because it dealt with casino finances, he said afterwards that good fall weather helped contractors get ahead of schedule on the expansion.

Spirit Mountain Casino is undergoing its fourth major expansion since opening in 1995 and is closer to becoming a destination resort.

The two-story expansion will

add 135,396 square feet, including an events and entertainment center, a new Coyote Buffet, conference rooms and office space for the casino's Human Resources Department, which is currently housed two miles west of the casino on Highway 18.

Rhode said the second floor, which will house offices and surveillance, will be open in late December and the first floor, which will house the new buffet and events and en-



Interim general manager Roy Rhode

tertainment center, will be open to the public in April.

Rhode said he was looking forward to having an indoor concert venue so that casino patrons would not have to battle the bees and wind to enjoy live entertainment.

"That's not good customer service," he said.

One part of the expansion is already complete. The new Playworld events center opened in late August.

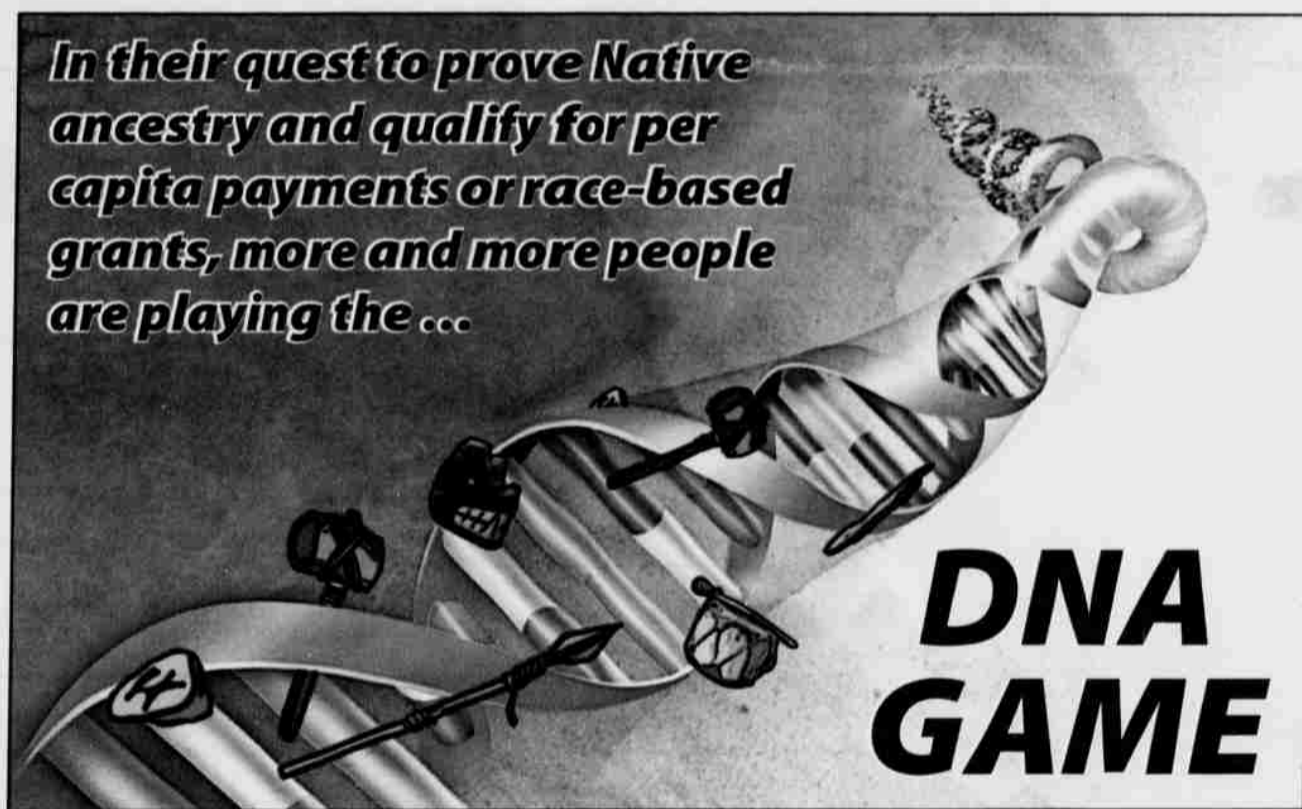
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A waterfall was built behind the current lodge and in front of the new events center at Spirit Mountain Casino.



Photos by Toby McClary

In their quest to prove Native ancestry and qualify for per capita payments or race-based grants, more and more people are playing the ...



DNA GAME

Illustration created by George Valdez

Genetic testing has limited uses for Tribes, but experts warn people seeking ancestral links to look before they pay

By Ron Karten
Smoke Signals staff writer

DNA testing's increasing popularity has reduced prices and enticed more people to use the tests in an attempt to prove their Native American heritage, say Tribal enrollment specialists for two Oregon Tribes.

Why? It could be the cachet of having Native heritage, but more likely it's the cash.

The money in some cases comes from Tribal payouts and generous benefits for Tribal

members, especially those who belong to Tribes that own casinos. In other cases, it comes from savings offered to those designated as a minority by colleges and universities.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and other Oregon Tribes have seen a rise both in the number of companies offering DNA tests and the number of inquiries about becoming Tribal members based solely on those results.

"We get many calls for this," said Grand Ronde Tribal member and Member Services Enrollment coordinator Margo Mercier. "I tell them

that a DNA test will not help."

"When you become a per capita Tribe," said Siletz Enrollment clerk Loraine Butler (Siletz), "that changes a lot of things."

Among the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, enrollment regulations require a DNA test for a child when only the father is a Tribal member.

The Cow Creeks use DNA testing for children of unmarried couples. At Warm Springs, testing is only used if there is a

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Shooting at Tribal Housing believed gang-related

By Toby McClary
Smoke Signals staff writer

A recent shooting has increased concern among Prostar Security personnel and Tribal Housing authorities about possible gang-related activity in Grand Ronde.

About 3:30 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 29, Prostar Security employee Tim Prindle was patrolling Tribal housing because of "high activity" during the weekends. As Prindle was walking through Tilixam Circle, he said he saw a white vehicle pull

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Photo by Toby McClary

Prostar Security employee Tim Prindle, left, and Polk County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Nathan Goldberg assess the damage caused by two bullets fired into a stop sign in Tribal Housing.