

Martinez takes over as Tribe's Finance Officer

Veteran moves cross-country from south Florida

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

After 20 years in the Everglades with the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, ending as chief of staff and financial officer, Cuban-born Julio Martinez, 46, was looking for a change.

He said he wanted to use what he had learned while with the Miccosukee in other places.

He started with the Miccosukee right out of college, the year before Indian gaming took off, and soared with the once poor, 600-member Tribe as it grew into a major enterprise with \$1 billion in annual revenues.

The Miccosukee Tribe, located just on the edge of the lucrative Miami population center, offered Martinez a front row seat among Natives who live in "hammocks," or tiny communities of thatched roof huts, way out in the Everglades. Hammocks is the Mikasuki word for these small encampments, each a family outpost.

These hard-to-reach hammocks kept the Tribe alive and together during the time of European encroachment, he said.

When Martinez arrived at the Miccosukee Reservation in 1989, it was funded 90 percent by gov-

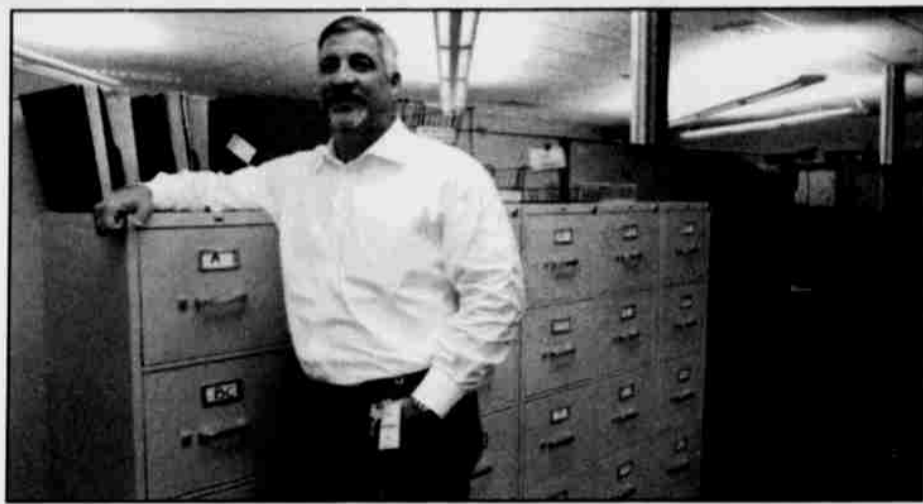


Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Julio Martinez is the Tribe's new Finance Officer.

ernment grants. Today, it is a very wealthy Tribe funded 90 percent by a casino and other enterprises they run.

"I wanted to take what I'd learned there to other places," Martinez said.

The biggest of those: "I learned to listen," he said.

"When I first started, I wanted to talk, to tell what I knew, but they are taught to listen. They don't talk over one another. They still speak Mikasuki and most also speak English. They use a lot of allegory. They communicate important points using short stories.

Historically, that's how they teach their children."

Since his arrival in Grand Ronde in July, Martinez has been evaluating Tribal portfolios and reported to Tribal Council. "There is no urgency to change anything. The investments are well-structured and well-documented."

"Diversification," he said, "is a need for all Tribes that are going to survive. Relying on a single source of revenue is dangerous.

"I'm very happy to see that this Tribe is actively pursuing this."

Martinez said he anticipates working in partnership with the

Executive, Legal and Economic Development offices in safeguarding and building Tribal assets.

Gaming revenue, he said, has enabled Tribes "to organize a true government and fight for their rights."

Coming from a life near the ocean, Martinez and his wife, Marcie, found a place on the Oregon Coast, near a golf course (he's a golfer) and, of course, the ocean. Though in Miami, the ocean is 80 degrees. He said he is planning on playing golf, but not on swimming in the Oregon Pacific anytime soon.

On the other hand, working in the Everglades, he said, a snake once came through the porous wall of his office, and other deadly Everglade creatures also came knocking from time to time, creatures he won't have to worry about in his office here.

He said he loves a lot of outdoor activities, including fishing. Oregon's reputation for great outdoors played a part in his decision to move cross-country.

"I was warned about the rain, but in south Florida, we have torrential rains. Maybe I've been spoiled because since I arrived, there have been a lot of beautiful days.

"I'm here to take what you have, which is working, to protect it and make sure your assets continue to be invested properly." ■

Collecting lampreys keeps tradition alive

LAMPREY continued
from front page

The project was the first long-distance transmission of electricity in the country, Gersh said, and it drew industry to the site, much of which has now moved on.

"It's a hidden gem," said Gersh, "a secret. It's the second largest waterfall in the country by volume, behind Niagara Falls. It's a magical, deeply powerful place."

"Holding on to traditions is really, really difficult," Grand Ronde Cultural Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard told Lindsey Grayzel, field producer for NarrativeLab Communications, as the camera rolled, "but through the annual lamprey collection, the Tribe keeps this tradition alive."

Especially these days, when the numbers of lamprey and the number of Indians who still eat lamprey, have dwindled. The Tribe collects lamprey each year to make it available to the Tribal community. Elders may find it difficult to collect lamprey the way they used to and Tribal youth may know little about this part of their culture.

Thorsgard called the collecting and preparation of lamprey an important part of Tribal culture.

The catch was better this year than last. The first look at a spot at the foot of the Falls yielded only a few, but Thorsgard found a cache in a small pool he had sat down by while waiting for the camera crew.

"I saw something move, and I reached in and pulled out five of

them," he said. Then he reached back in for more.

"No matter how many we catch," said Tribal Fish and Wildlife Coordinator Kelly Dirksen during his interview with NarrativeLab, "they're always all gone in the first half-hour (of the giveaway to the community). There's a huge demand, but if you've ever eaten it, you might wonder why."

He described the taste of lamprey as a cross between "burnt tire and fish."

"My grandfather called them 'slave food,'" said Thorsgard, "which is ironic because he ate them himself."

The interviews covered Thorsgard's and Dirksen's early experiences with lamprey. They included public disinterest in preserving the lamprey runs, ("They suffer from bad p.r.," said Dirksen) and some of the reasons that the public should care.

Beyond their cultural importance and ancient origins, Dirksen said, if other predators don't have lamprey to eat, they'll probably be dining on fish that humans do like to eat.

Tribal member and Natural Resources staff member Torey Wake-land was thrilled, as he always is, by the experience. He has been participating for years, he said.

"I really enjoyed it. It's fun and it's exciting. I always like it. It's something I look forward to every year."

The interviews also touched on some concrete cultural history. An "eel man" petroglyph still is visible, when the water level is low, on one of the rocks seen as the boat ap-

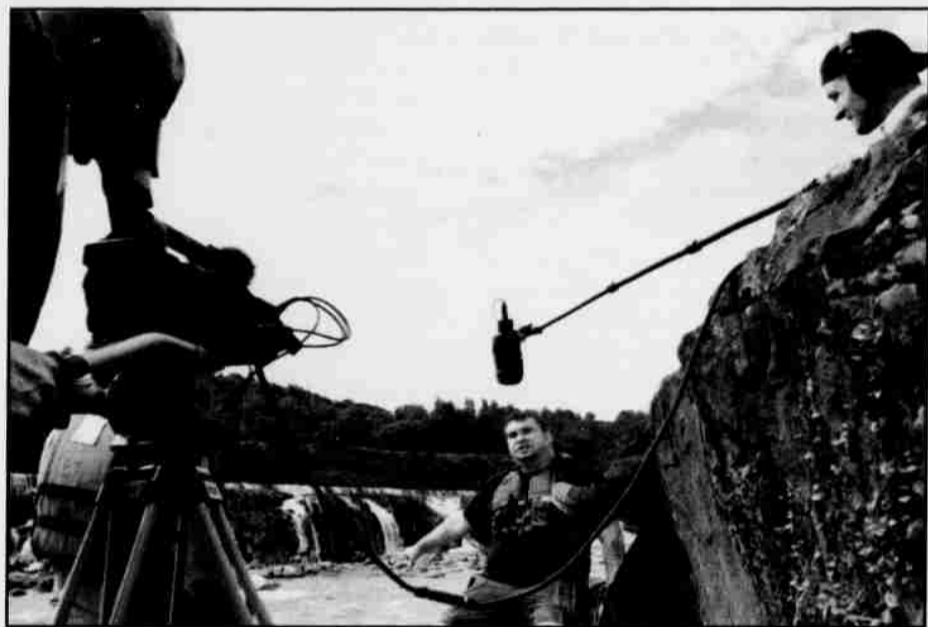


Photo by Ron Karten

Tribal member and Cultural Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard (center) answers questions as PGE cameraman Craig Cunningham (left) and independent soundman Phil Gerke (right) record the session.

proaches the Falls.

Back in the day, said Thorsgard, "When the water went down, the eel man showed up and our ancestors knew it was time to fish for lamprey."

The history "is alive" in Thorsgard, Gersh said.

While the mostly deserted mills and factories across the river from the Falls detract from the cultural scene, Dirksen said, once you're under the Falls everything else disappears and the feel of the history and culture return.

There will be two versions of the video, due for completion in the

first quarter of 2012, Gersh said. One will be a 10-minute, YouTube piece, and the second, for distribution to community groups, schools and others, will be 30 minutes long.

"At Willamette Falls," Gersh said, "we can reach back deeply into Oregon's history. The Falls is a touchstone for who we are, where we come from and perhaps where we're headed.

"People who know the Falls are passionate about it."

"Stay tuned," he added. "We'd love to do a screening in Grand Ronde." ■