

Swinomish Casino & Bingo Celebrates 25 years!



Drawing of proposed Swinomish Casino, 1993. Photo: Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Archive.

It has been 25 years. Where has time gone? What began as an industrial park that was created to be a marina changed, due to set back plans, and a bingo hall was born, with great success. The Swinomish Tribe will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of gaming this July. The gaming operation began with a bingo hall that had created jobs for 75 people, which a majority was tribal members. The official opening for the bingo hall was June 29 1985 with an elaborate ceremony.

It was a new and much needed revenue generating stream for the Swinomish tribal community. The revenue generated from the casino has helped with many tribal endeavors: improved medical & dental clinics, creation of a fitness center, housing development program, NWIC satellite campus, and numerous others. Revenue from the casino has helped to build the Swinomish Chevron gas station, which is doing extremely well!

This all began with the bingo hall in 1985, and gained momentum with the addition of Class III gaming. Today Swinomish casino features close to 700 slot machines, 13 table games, six poker tables, as well as a 300-seat bingo hall. The latest addition to the bingo hall has been Comic Bingo. This is a great late night bingo experience with loud music, black lights, and exciting games all while a bingo caller is calling bingo. Along with gaming the property offers The Starlight Lounge with full-service dining, the Two Salmon Café, Swinomish Deli, and the Cave Bar. For those interested in a getaway, the casino also has a 35 space RV park with a beautiful view and full hook ups.

Currently Swinomish Casino has close to 300 employees and benefits not only the tribe, but is also a contributor to the local economy. The casino also supports non-profit organizations such as the local Boys and Girls Club, the Relay for Life, as well as other various area organizations.

Kyle Bailey values that casino for two reasons. "As a tribal member it is the main source of income to our tribe, and for me, it's my job that I feel lucky to have." For Jesse Wolf John the casino "means a lot" to him, for it gives him "a job with benefits, a way to provide for my family, and a chance to move into a three bedroom home." Jenny Peters, who has worked

at the casino for fourteen years on and off, reflects that, "As a tribal member I am proud that we have a casino. I want it to succeed, for it is important that we have tribal employment to teach, train and learn new levels of skills. It means that I have a job, and we have an opportunity to grow within the casino from being a floor worker to a management position. The casino provides jobs, income for our community, stability,

friendship, and growth for both me and the community."



Groundbreaking for Swinomish Bingo Hall, 1985. L-R: Lydia Charles, (front), Ivan Willup (rear), Marvin Wilbur, Dennis Courtney, Bernie Mahowald, Bob Joe, Swinomish Tribal Chairman, Jim Wilbur, Laura Wilbur. Photo: Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Archive.

Myrtle Bailey Rivas, who has been with the casino since the Bingo Hall opened in June 1985, echoes Jenny's sentiments. "The casino has been great because it has succeeded in what it was planned for, and that is to help the tribe become self-sufficient and provide jobs for tribal members and others. It has provided me with an income to live, and I have grown with the company. I enjoy seeing all the guests come in, new ones and old ones, and I know a few from way back when. Being promoted to Table Games Manager in June of last year has been a whole new challenge for me, and one that I definitely look forward to succeeding in. I am excited for the benefits that we have built for the tribe." But what does Myrtle value most from her profession the past twenty-five years? Her husband, Tom. "I met him when he was a bingo customer!" ♣

For more information about Swinomish Casino, visit www.swinomishcasino.com.