

June-July 2024

# INDIAN GAMING

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN GAMING INDUSTRY







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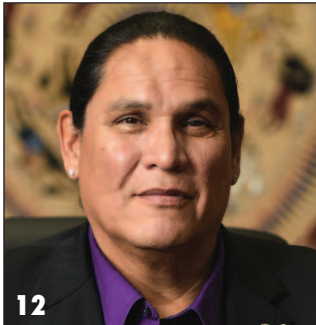
We hope to see you next year, when we do it all over again. Invite your friends!





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Dukon Harris

## Charles "Dukon" Harris Cover Artwork: *Eagle Dancer*

**D**ukon Harris (Sac & Fox) is a self-taught artist who was born and raised in Oklahoma. An enrolled member of the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, he grew up in a family of artists. His grandfather, the late Doc Tate Nevaquaya, was one of his biggest inspirations.

Dukon's art represents a collection of traditional ways of life through ceremonies, dances and culture. Much of his work was inspired by growing up around the powwow circle. His father, R.G. Harris, is a world champion fancy dancer. From a young age, Dukon had the opportunity to travel and see different powwow celebrations of tribes throughout the United States. Dukon watched dancers create an artistic flow through movement, and this would later inspire him to paint what he had seen.

From 2007-2010, Dukon attended the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, NM. During this time, he discovered the beauty of Santa Fe sunsets. Being strictly a charcoal pencil artist at the time, the sunsets inspired Dukon to learn about acrylic and oil paints. He has always seen the world through the eye of an artist and feels like nature is the best

teacher when it comes to color theory. He transforms his visions of Native American heritage and culture into vibrant paintings on canvas.

Dukon later relocated to Upstate New York to start a family with his wife, who is from the Mohawk territory of Akwesasne. In his time among the Iroquois people, Dukon began to express different styles of art through his paintings, carvings and wood-burnings. He has also taught painting classes to youth in the Mohawk territory as his way of giving back to the art community and believes it is important to nurture and encourage youth to express their thoughts and reflections of culture through art.

Dukon has shown his works in various markets, such as the Santa Fe Indian Market and the Smithsonian Art Market at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. The rich culture of his Native American people will always be his main subject and inspiration and he hopes his artwork inspires creativity for the next generation. ♣

*For more information about Dukon Harris or to inquire about his work, call (315) 705-1804 or email [dukonharrisartwork@yahoo.com](mailto:dukonharrisartwork@yahoo.com). You can view more of his work at [Dukon Harris/Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/DukonHarris).*

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

Recent casino resort projects show significant growth and innovation in Indian Country. The Catawba Nation has begun construction on their new \$700 million casino resort in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. The Chickasaw Nation recently opened Lakecrest Casino and Hotel near Lake Murray in South Central Oklahoma, projected to generate a \$102.4 million economic impact in its first year. And the \$238 million Choctaw Landing resort's recent opening was a major boost to the local economy, creating more than 400 jobs in Southeast Oklahoma. The list goes on!

Las Vegas is also seeing significant changes. Hard Rock International recently announced its plans to cease operations of The Mirage Hotel & Casino in July to begin the transformation of the property into the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino and Guitar Hotel Las Vegas. This ambitious project is expected to create over 2,500 construction jobs and will feature a distinctive guitar-shaped hotel, adding a new landmark to the city's skyline – furthering tribal ownership and innovation on the Las Vegas strip.

In this issue, we feature an Architectural Showcase of recent projects in Indian Country that underline the incredible growth and talent involved in expanding and upgrading tribal gaming properties, as well as an informative Case Study on WinStar World Casino and Resort's largest single-phase, non-gaming amenity expansion to date. Also included is our 2025 Design/Build Directory to keep on hand for upcoming project needs.

On the conference front, this month we head to the Northwest Indian Gaming Conference & Expo at Tulalip Resort Casino, followed by the OIGA Conference and Trade Show in Oklahoma City in August. If you are attending these important events, we look forward to catching up with you in person.



Steve Burke, Publisher

### IGA Associate Member • G2E Show Publication

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# LETTER FROM THE CEO

To our valued clients and partners worldwide,

Our collective passion, and what inspires me daily, is our role in bringing new gaming and wagering technology to market safely and responsibly as we work between regulators, operators, and suppliers. I saw it firsthand at our annual Regulators Roundtable in Las Vegas. We made history with a record-breaking attendance of nearly 400 regulators and industry experts traveling from across the U.S., Australia, Europe, and Latin America to collaborate on some of the biggest issues our industry faces today. Our highly anticipated cocktail reception also drew over 150 supplier representatives eager to network and join in discussion with regulators.

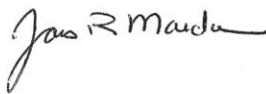
That drive to collaborate and problem-solve speaks to our determination to find new ways to bring new technology to market that was simply unimaginable just years ago. I am energized by the strides we continue to make as suppliers and operators innovate with input from regulators, who adjust to embrace novel ideas. Working together, we are changing the future of our industry.

As technology evolves and gaming moves more remote, one of the most significant issues our industry continues to face is cyberattacks. Last year, more than 60% of online gaming platforms and their casino affiliate programs experienced breaches or attacks. We saw a need for an organized security standard governing technology in the gaming industry, and so, assisted by our integrated cybersecurity company Bulletproof, GLI introduced our new Gaming Security Framework (GSF) that provides a standardized security approach for online, land-based, and cloud technology platforms.

We also increased our global testing footprint with the addition of Trisigma in April, adding their Spanish and Dutch offices to our testing platform. It joins our growing list of global testing labs, where we have completed 1,424,600 tests and 75,179 certifications in 463 unique jurisdictions over the past year – all while providing the highest quality, consistency, and world-class service.

These numbers are a true testament to your dedication to safety and accuracy as our industry continues to innovate. Our world changes daily, so adaptability will continue to propel us forward, and together, we can continue to redefine what's possible.

Looking forward to seeing you somewhere on the globe,



James Maida

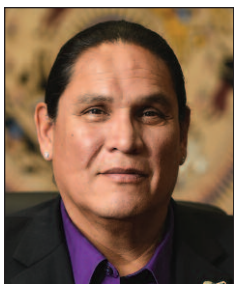


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## ***Celebrating 100 Years of the Native Vote and Native Voices***

by Ernest L. Stevens, Jr.

June 2nd, 2024 marked the 100-year anniversary of enactment of the Indian Citizenship Act, which granted all Native Americans citizenship and the right to vote. Enacted four years after the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, America's first inhabitants were the last to be granted voting rights.

The need for the Indian Citizenship Act stemmed, in part, from the U.S. Constitution and its acknowledgement of the fact that Indian tribes are separate distinct sovereign governments, and individual Indians are members of those governments.

Article 1, section 8 of the Constitution sets forth the enumerated powers of the legislative branch of the federal government. Clause 3 of that provision – often referred to as the Commerce Clause – provides that Congress shall have power “To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.”

Likewise, Article 1, Section 2, clause 1 of the Constitution, provides that “Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.”

This infamous provision, known as the “three-fifths compromise,” was an agreement between the Northern and the Southern states at the Constitutional Convention. The states agreed that slaves would only be counted as three-fifths of a person for purposes of determining representation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The provision is less well known for its “excluding Indians not taxed” phrase, which essentially acknowledged that Native Americans were not considered U.S. citizens, and thus had no right to vote in federal or state elections.

Shortly after the United States Civil War, Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution was modified by the 14th Amendment. Ratified in 1868, this historic amendment extended citizenship and voting rights to formerly enslaved people. However, Section 2 of the 14th Amendment maintained the phrase “excluding Indians not taxed.”

It's important to note this time in history. The year 1868 marked the beginning of the federal government's allotment and forced assimilation policy that sought to destroy the governing structure of Indian tribes, strip tribal governments of their lands, and authorized taking Indian children from their homes – placing them in boarding schools where they were forbidden from speaking their language or practicing their religion.

More than a half century later, Congress enacted the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, also known as the Snyder Act. That law provided “That all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: Provided that the granting of such shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.”

While many view the extension of citizenship and voting rights as a benefit to tribal governments, some tribes view the Citizenship Act as a unilateral act of Congress that was an extension of the government's attempt to assimilate Indians.

Others view the law as providing Native Americans a vote and a voice in American politics. The right to vote meant the right to have a say in who will sit in Congress. For nearly 150 years, Congress enacted laws that abrogated Indian treaties, implemented the removal policy that led to dozens of Trails of Tears, and enacted the above-mentioned allotment and assimilation policies. All of this and more was done while American Indians had no vote, and no voice in federal or state elections.

The Indian Citizenship Act held potential for positive change. Despite passage of the Citizenship Act, many states continued to deny American Indians voting rights for decades. For example, Native citizens living on Indian lands in the State of New Mexico were not able to vote until 1962. Even today, exercising the right to vote is an ongoing struggle in Native communities throughout the U.S.

In recent decades, the Native vote is playing an outsized role in federal and state elections nationwide. In 2000, the Native vote in the State of Washington is credited for ousting former Senator Slade Gorton, an outspoken anti-sovereignty voice in Congress.

The Native vote will again play a pivotal role in the 2024 presidential election. The Indigenous population in seven of the top 10 closest state electoral races for President in 2016 and 2020 exceeded the candidate's margin of victory. For example, former President Trump won the State of Arizona's 11 electoral votes in 2016 with a 91,000-vote margin (1.5%). In 2020, President Biden flipped Arizona, taking those 11 electoral votes by a razor-thin margin of 10,457 votes (0.3% margin).

The population of Native Americans in Arizona is more than 430,000 (6%), far above the margin of victory in the last two presidential elections. Similar circumstances exist in the traditional battleground states of Michigan, Minnesota, and Nevada. The potential Native vote in emerging swing states of Minnesota and North Carolina also exceeds the most recent margins of victory in those states.

The Native vote will also impact the contest for control of



the U.S. Senate. The potential Native vote in five of the ten most competitive Senate races far exceeds the recent winning margins in Arizona, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, and Wisconsin.

Elections clearly have consequences. The most consequential outcome of the 2024 election could be the ability of a President to nominate and U.S. Senators to either confirm or reject up to three new Supreme Court justices.

It is difficult to overstate the role of the U.S. Supreme Court in the lives of those living on Indian lands. In 2022, the Court rolled back more than a century of precedent, holding that state governments have criminal jurisdiction on Indian lands in the misguided *Castro-Huerta* decision.

In 2023, the Court upheld the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act in the *Brackeen* case to the great relief of everyone in Indian Country. However, the Court left open the question of whether ICWA violates the Constitution's equal protection clause. A similar case winding its way up to the Supreme Court, *Maverick Gaming, LLC v. United States*, involves a commercial cardroom in the State of Washington, which claims that the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act is based on "race and ancestry." Indian Country is united in denouncing these lawsuits as dangerous and destructive.

These attacks serve to highlight the importance of the upcoming election. The Native American vote is our voice and our power to ensure that policymakers are held accountable. To help energize the Native vote this past fall, the Indian Gaming Association's "My Vote WILL Count" campaign held stops throughout Indian Country, recruiting young warriors to organize their communities.

Exercising our voting rights not only empowers our people and advances our future, but it also serves to honor the sacrifices of our ancestors who fought to protect tribal sovereignty and our way of life. Your vote will ensure that we send people to Congress who will work with Indian Country to protect tribal sovereignty and put judges on the federal bench who understand federal Indian law. Our power at the polls will determine whose voices will guide Congress for the next two

years. Indian Country's vote will count. We can, and we will make a difference. ♣

*Ernest L. Stevens, Jr. is Chairman of the Indian Gaming Association. He can be reached by calling (202) 546-7711 or visit [www.indiangaming.org](http://www.indiangaming.org).*

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## Spotlight on Gaming, Goals and Legislative Issues

*Five tribal leaders share how gaming revenues have benefited their tribe and community, the initiatives and goals for their gaming enterprises, and legislative/political issues of concern. Here is what they had to say...*

**Rodney Butler, Chairman**  
**Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation**  
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Rodney Butler

**BENEFITS OF GAMING:** The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation's (MPTN) gaming operations generate significant gaming revenue for our tribal government, which provides essential services to our tribal members and extended community. Such services include health clinics, a pharmacy, and health plans for our employees, whose competitive benefits include a 401(k) with employer match, disability insurance, childcare reimbursement,

tuition reimbursement, and paid meals. We also provide direct and indirect jobs for over 6,000 Connecticut and Rhode Island residents – approximately six times our tribal enrollment.

For our tribal community, we provide healthcare, education, scholarship and cultural programs, childcare, and early childhood and after-school programs. Likewise, we provide an array of government services, including but not limited to: fire, police and emergency dispatch, public works and utilities services, social services, and housing. We also have a tribal court system and regulatory bodies overseeing gaming, building and environmental permitting, historic preservation, zoning, food safety, and employee rights.

Since 1992, both of Connecticut's federally recognized tribes have generated over \$9 billion in direct funding to the state, which is distributed to municipal governments and to the state's general fund. Likewise, taxes assessed on our off-reservation properties make the MPTN among the largest taxpayer in our neighboring towns.

We also collaborate with state and local governments and non-profit organizations to provide various services off-reservation, including our United Way partnership, Mystic Aquarium sponsorships, and mutual aid agreements for fire and emergency services, among others.

**GOALS & INITIATIVES:** MPTN's mission statement is our Tribal Council's north star: "The ultimate goal is to protect and advance the sovereign rights of the tribal nation in order to build

and preserve a cultural, social and economic foundation that can never be undermined or destroyed." Through our various economic development initiatives and other endeavors, the health, welfare, and safety of our tribal family, along with the protection and preservation of our culture, are paramount.

Foxwoods Resort Casino strives to be a leader, not only in Indian Country, but across the gaming and hospitality industries, offering a first-class and unique integrated resort experience for all of our customers. Now, more than ever, we are well-positioned to appeal not only to casino patrons, but also to customers of all ages through a broad range of attractions and offerings. We are likewise excited for what lies ahead for one of our newest ventures, Wondr Nation, our online gaming entertainment company. Wondr is enjoying great success in leading our iGaming efforts in Connecticut and remains keenly focused on using emerging technologies and trends to create new and exciting experiences for our players. The future is bright.

**LEGISLATIVE:** Dual taxation continues to burden tribal governments as they struggle to enhance and diversify their economies and is an affront to tribal sovereignty and self-determination. We are actively pursuing a range of solutions to address state and local government taxing authority over on-reservation businesses. Prohibiting these intrusions is the only pathway for tribal economies to reach their full potential and for tribal governments to have a real opportunity to fully meet the needs of citizens.

**Ricky Sylestine, Chairman**  
**Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas**  
Naskila Casino – Livingston, TX  
[naskila.com](http://naskila.com) / [alabama-coushatta.com](http://alabama-coushatta.com)



Ricky Sylestine

**BENEFITS OF GAMING:** Gaming revenues through our Naskila Casino have become a significant economic driver for our tribe. The number one way it has benefited the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas has been through job creation. We have been able to generate hundreds of new jobs for our tribal members and surrounding communities. Our casino has also provided us





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with revenue that enables investments in healthcare, education, housing, and infrastructure. Revenues derived from gaming have also empowered our tribe to reduce dependency on outside resources and foster a sense of self-sufficiency and sovereignty, which will hopefully lead to an improved quality of life.

**GOALS & INITIATIVES:** The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas has several short and long-term goals. Economic self-sufficiency by reducing dependency on external resources is extremely high on our list of goals. I would say diversification of revenue streams, community development projects, cultural preservation, workforce development and community engagement are also on our list of goals for our tribe and Naskila Casino.

**LEGISLATIVE:** We are always monitoring legislation that could affect our tribe in any way, whether it be gaming, healthcare, environmental, education, etc.

### **Glenda Nelson, Chairwoman Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria**

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Glenda Nelson

**BENEFITS OF GAMING:** Revenues associated with our gaming enterprise have provided numerous benefits for our tribe and surrounding communities. Since we opened our casino in 2019, we have been able to provide over \$3.5 million to non-profits and organizations in Butte, Yuba and Sutter counties. We continue to develop and use our Enterprise Community Fund to improve lives and increase opportunity for all.

Importantly, our tribal revenues continue to provide opportunities for Enterprise Rancheria tribal members. Our human services programs are creating pathways to self-sufficiency through payments supporting education, professional trade job training and childcare, allowing our tribal members to achieve positive outcomes for families and individuals. In addition, our tribal housing program and associated financial assistance allows for our tribal members to have safe and reliable homes.

Finally, gaming revenues have allowed us to further our efforts of professional governance as an organization and plan for future generations.

**GOALS & INITIATIVES:** Tribal Council worked hard to develop a multi-year strategic plan built on a foundation of our core values: culture, trust, innovation, integrity, empowerment, sustainability, and community. Our strategic focus areas are workforce development, philanthropy, economic development, environmental and cultural resources, community infrastructure and healthy and safe communities. Associated with those strategies are specific initiatives that allow our tribe to remain focused on the future, making better lives for our tribal members and communities we share.

**LEGISLATIVE:** Generally, we are focused on all matters that impact Native Americans. Specifically, we support federal, state and local initiatives that provide a clear pathway and/or funding to achieve energy sovereignty, higher education, jobs, and the ability for federally recognized tribes to maintain their tribal member support systems. Human services programs, specifically health, are key to reduce addictions and promote rehabilitation and behavioral health services for Native Americans.

Regardless of federal or state leaders, or majority parties, it is important that Native Americans continue to have the support necessary to navigate barriers for health and wellness, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation for generations to come.

### **Jeffrey Stiffarm, President Fort Belknap Indian Community** Fort Belknap Casino – Harlem, MT [fortbelknapcasino.com](https://fortbelknapcasino.com) / [fortbelknap.org](https://fortbelknap.org)



Jeffrey Stiffarm

**BENEFITS OF GAMING:** Contrary to popular belief, fewer than 15 percent of Indian tribes operate prosperous casinos. Although the Fort Belknap Casino does not issue per capita or payouts to tribal members like larger casino tribes do, the casino revenue has attributed to sustaining the gaming operations, sustaining employment/jobs for tribal members locally on the reservation, and for charitable purposes such as traditional powwows, Natives in various athletic events, health and educational community events, and entertainment.

**GOALS & INITIATIVES:** Fort Belknap gaming has potential to generate future revenues to allow local tribal government/leadership to fund essential community services or local infrastructure projects, or at the very least, avoid spending cuts.





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The tribal government/leadership has recently considered supporting and endorsing horse racing on the reservation and recognizes horse racing as an integral part of Gros Ventre and Assiniboine heritage and culture.

**LEGISLATIVE:** Fort Belknap's primary focus is on particular issues faced by the Great Plains, including Montana, Wyoming, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota. Our Fort Belknap Gaming Commission offers interdisciplinary perspective on tribal gaming, incorporating law, political and public administration.

### Ben Barnes, Chief Shawnee Tribe

Golden Mesa Casino – Guymon, OK  
[goldenmesa.com](http://goldenmesa.com) / [shawnee-nsn.gov](http://shawnee-nsn.gov)

**BENEFITS OF GAMING:** Even with the economic downturn during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, revenues from our Golden Mesa Casino in the panhandle region have



Ben Barnes

enabled us to revive and expand our higher education awards. Through this program, we grant financial assistance to Shawnee citizens seeking post-secondary education or technical and vocational training. Several years ago, we were forced to shelve this program because our original funding source dried up. Since reinstating and expanding the program less than two years ago, we have awarded over \$1.5 million

to 422 Shawnee learners through the program.

Gaming revenue has also given the Shawnee Tribe means to implement a dozen additional citizen services and programs, such as burial assistance, elder care assistance, school clothing and extracurricular activities assistance, and a workforce entry and reentry support program.

**GOALS & INITIATIVES:** We are committed to the sustainability of our citizen service programs. We'll continue developing and adding to the initial programs the team has developed, but we never want to be in the position where we must cut back a program that citizens have come to count on ever again. Our team intentionally rolls out programs with conservative benefits so the program can become more robust over time. Beyond that, a significant portion of our gaming revenue is held in investments, and another is dedicated to growing our business enterprises for the same reasons. We never want our citizens or future citizens to go without.

**LEGISLATIVE:** In 2020, we had to sue the federal government after the U.S. Treasury erroneously used a formula that set our tribal population at zero, which resulted in us receiving no CARES Act funding. Our tribe wasn't the only one impacted by this error. Other tribal leaders and I couldn't decide which error hurt us more – the lack of funding to remediate the adverse effects of the pandemic or the perpetuation of the idea that Shawnee people no longer exist. Issues surrounding tribal sovereignty and our ability to assert our sovereignty and rights are always of particular concern to me. Having a fund that we can draw on in times of emergency is critical to us, and I'm grateful that our business development team supports that.

At the local level, we are banding together with other tribal nations to assert our sovereignty and government-to-government relationship with the State of Oklahoma on tobacco compacts, gaming, and how the state and tribal tag systems and public safety offices work together. ♣

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# A Collaborative Culture in IT is Essential to Protect Your Property

by Andrew Cardno

The evolving landscape of cyber threats demands not only advanced technology, but also a unified approach in how your IT department collaborates internally with selected vendors, and importantly, with other tribal gaming entities. Cyber threats range from ransomware to social engineering attacks, each designed to exploit the weakest link in your security chain. Often, this vulnerability lies in inadequate communication and collaboration, both of which can be fortified through a concerted effort not just within your tribal IT, but across tribes and with external vendors. With cyberattacks, the number one thing you have to do is get everybody involved in an open and collaborative manner; any hint of blame or fear of liability will inhibit this.

### Case Studies: Insights from Industry Incidents

Reflecting on incidents like those that impacted MGM Resorts and Caesars Entertainment last year, it's clear that different response strategies can lead to vastly different outcomes. Caesars chose to pay a \$15 million ransom to the hackers to restore their systems and prevent the release of the stolen data. MGM, on the other hand, refused to pay the ransom and it spent weeks, along with tens of millions of dollars, restoring systems and operations in the midst of heavily disrupted business.

While the full impact on each of these commercial giants from last year's cyberattacks is unknown, both have faced some level of significant damage regarding financials and consumer trust. However, MGM made the correct decision in refusing to pay the ransom.

### Preventing Future Cyberattacks Through Tribal Collaboration

These examples of commercial cyberattacks underscore the necessity for robust, proactive partnerships and the benefits of a united front in cybersecurity efforts. Well-funded cyber criminals will continue making casinos their target as long as they keep getting paid, but there is something your tribal resort organization can do to prevent the tribal gaming industry from continuing to be a target: never pay the ransom, ever, under any circumstances.

Additionally, develop and nurture strong transparent relationships with other tribal IT departments. Regular meetings, shared cybersecurity drills, and collective crisis management exercises should be the norm. This inter-tribal collaboration not only strengthens your tribal business, but also fortifies the entire tribal resort network against cyber threats.

To further enhance inter-tribal collaboration, embrace a

model where tribes share insights, resources, and best practices regarding cybersecurity. This can include shared training programs, collective purchasing agreements for better cybersecurity tools, and regular forums discussing emerging threats and innovations.

Furthermore, consider establishing joint cybersecurity initiatives that serve multiple tribes. These can include setting up a shared cybersecurity monitoring center or developing a rapid response team that assists tribes during a cybersecurity incident. Such initiatives enhance the capability to manage and mitigate risks more effectively and efficiently.

### Benefits of Inter-Tribal Cooperation

Cooperating with other tribal IT departments can lead to significant benefits, such as:

- **Enhanced Knowledge Sharing:** Leverage the collective expertise to stay ahead of cybersecurity threats.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Share the financial burden of advanced cybersecurity tools and resources.
- **Stronger Negotiating Power:** Collaborate on vendor contracts to obtain better terms and more robust security commitments.
- **Faster Incident Response:** Utilize a network of support that can be mobilized quickly in the event of an attack.

Moreover, collaborating with other tribal IT teams will not only increase your organization's preparedness for cyberattacks, it will further deter cyber criminals from targeting tribal resorts. It may not stop the criminals overnight, but if tribal nations continue to outright refuse to pay ransoms and continuously put forth collective efforts in fighting off attacks that do happen, Indian Country has the power and solidarity to eventually keep the hackers from bothering to try attacking tribal resorts. After all, time is money and cybercriminals want the easiest and biggest payout they can get, so they'll move on to the next easy target if hacking your tribal resort is too hard, let alone your resort plus your inter-tribal IT alliance joining you in the fight.

### Strengthening Vendor Collaboration to Combat Cyber Threats

In addition to fostering inter-tribal IT collaboration, building stronger alliances with selected vendors is crucial in enhancing cybersecurity defenses. When IT groups face cyberattacks, these relationships can provide critical support,



acting as extensions of your own team's capabilities. When you tell your vendors that a breach has occurred at your property, the last response you want is finger pointing as they think about what strategy to employ. You want as many allies as possible ready to join you on the cyber battlefield and fight off the hackers without fear of fault.

To build this type of camaraderie with your vendors, instilling a culture of collaboration at the core of your IT team is essential. This involves more than just regular communication; it requires establishing trust and a shared commitment to mutual security goals.

By cultivating a collaborative relationship characterized by open lines of communication, shared objectives, and mutual reliance, vendors become more than service providers; they transform into trusted partners in your cybersecurity efforts. This strategic partnership not only enhances your ability to respond effectively to cyber threats, but also contributes to a stronger, more resilient cybersecurity posture across your tribal gaming operations.

### Preventing Bureaucracy from Getting in the Way

Cybercriminals are acutely familiar with organizational processes, procedures, and policies. Often, these are not difficult for them to acquire, and they can use them as tools to exploit vulnerabilities within a system, as was the case in both the MGM and Caesars social engineering attacks. This underscores the importance of fostering a collaborative environment where team members are encouraged to exercise judgment and make sensible decisions rather than blindly following a preset protocol. Much like the adage from warfare, where no plan survives contact with the enemy, a policy or procedure must be adaptable when confronted with a cyber threat.

The rigidity of some processes can ironically make an organization more vulnerable. An example of this is seen in overly cumbersome procedures that don't actually protect systems, but instead make them more complicated, and by extension, easier for hackers to navigate. By understanding the processes thoroughly, attackers can find gaps and weak points to exploit.

In contrast, effective cybersecurity relies on discretion and the capacity to adapt quickly – qualities exemplified by leaders who prioritize sensible cybersecurity practices without making them public. Such an approach avoids the pitfalls of rigidity and promotes a culture where collaboration and good judgment lead to more secure and resilient systems. This not only helps in actively thinking through and defending against potential threats, but also ensures that cybersecurity measures enhance rather than hinder organizational processes.

### Strengthening Cybersecurity Through Strategic Collaboration

The collaborative spirit across tribal IT departments and with selected vendors is not just beneficial – it's essential for

safeguarding tribal gaming enterprises from the increasing threat of cyberattacks. By fostering a culture of shared knowledge, mutual trust, and proactive partnership, tribal gaming organizations can significantly enhance their cybersecurity defenses. If somebody has made a mistake, the defenders need to know about it. This united approach allows for quicker adaptations to threats, a broadened scope of vigilance, and a more cohesive response during crises. Ultimately, through such strategic alliances, tribal gaming entities not only defend their own operations, but also contribute to a broader security posture that can deter cybercriminals over time. By embracing collaboration as a cornerstone of cybersecurity strategy, tribal resorts can secure their operations and ensure that the gaming industry remains resilient against the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats. ♣

*Andrew Cardno is Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of Quick Custom Intelligence (QCI). He can be reached by calling (858) 299-5715 or email [acardno@quickcustomintelligence.com](mailto:acardno@quickcustomintelligence.com).*



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### Labor Shortage and Recovery

by James M. Klas

Indian gaming came out of the pandemic with a labor shortage of historic proportions. While the labor problems actually started before the pandemic, the closures and subsequent “great resignation” aggravated them beyond anything previously experienced. Declining labor force participation, reductions in the availability of foreign labor, underutilization of some labor force segments and lack of competitive wage rates all drove the problems. As a result, casinos could not fully reopen all of their facilities for all of the hours the demand would support due to lack of staff. The good news is that the underlying problems are diminishing and labor availability is beginning to improve. The bad news is that there is still a long way to go.

Coming out of the pandemic, there were nearly two jobs available for every one person seeking a new job nationwide. More jobs than potential employees actually first appeared in April of 2018 due to declining labor force participation. However, the problem accelerated coming out of the pandemic due to people reevaluating their career choices or moving to other jobs after pandemic closures temporarily cut off their prior positions. Another factor was the hard stop on the flow of foreign-born workers into the country for public health and political reasons. Foreign workers are particularly critical to rural resorts and their surrounding economies.

As of April of this year, the labor force participation rate had recovered all the way up to 62.7 percent from 61.3 percent in early 2021 (it was lower still due to closures in 2020). Nevertheless, it is still below the rate at the end of 2019 of 63.3 percent. Those gaps may not seem large, but every one-tenth of one percent change equals approximately 270,000 potential workers. That means the 0.6 percentage point gap between 2019 and today equates to over 1.6 million fewer people working or looking for work.

The recovery in participation also hides a problematic underlying pattern. The recovery has been fueled entirely by foreign born workers. There are now 4.3 million more foreign-born workers in the labor force, while U.S. born workers are actually still down by 185,000. Foreign born people of working age in the U.S. are much more likely to seek work than people of the same age born in this country. Figure 1 shows the labor force participation rate for different classifications of people of working age. As the table shows, participation by foreign born people of working age is nearly four percentage points higher than for U.S. born people of the same age.

Figure 1

#### LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES

|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| U.S. Born    | 62.0% |
| Foreign Born | 65.9% |
| Disabled     | 24.5% |
| Overall      | 62.7% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The table also highlights another seriously under-utilized segment of people of working age, the disabled. Only 24.5 percent of disabled people of working age are participating in the labor force at present. The disabled category does not include those who are incapable of any labor due to the magnitude of their disabilities. Of those who have the physical and mental capacity to work in some form, less than one in four seek work at present. Every percentage point of increase in labor force participation amongst disabled adults would result in 310,000 additional potential workers. Target Corporation and many other companies have long shown that disabled workers can be successfully integrated into both front-of-house and back-of-house positions.

Despite the partial recovery in labor force participation due to the increase in foreign-born workers, the number of jobs available is still greater than the number of workers looking in all but five states. Nationally, there are still over 1.4 jobs available for everyone seeking work, better than two, but still a serious problem. The map in Figure 2 shows workers per available job for each state in the country.

The improvements to date have come at a cost, literally. The average hourly wage rates for gaming industry employees have increased significantly over the past five years. The average wage for all occupations in the U.S. is up 22.4 percent from 2019. However, the average wage for foodservice workers is up 29.3 percent. The average wage for gambling service workers is up a whopping 55.2 percent. The average wage for hotel desk clerks is up 25.6 percent. Beyond the need to increase wages, employers have also found the need to enhance benefits like vacation and PTO, health insurance, meals and uniforms, training and educational support, and opportunities for promotion.

As casino managers have reached the practical limits of pay and benefit increases, other initiatives have moved to the forefront. Offering greater flexibility in scheduling can help combat one of the main lifestyle detriments, with pay



differentials to recognize/reward less popular shifts. Less obvious, but as important, is the broader work environment. Back-of-house areas are traditionally undersized and under-designed, making the jobs less attractive. More than just improved locker rooms, breakrooms and employee meals are needed. Storage space, distance from storage areas to actual usage, workspace, lighting, employee parking and ingress/egress and other physical facility factors can affect job satisfaction. Cross-training and utilization can also fill short-term holes and increase variety and satisfaction in the work environment.

When it comes to technology, automation usually comes to mind first. Automated cashiering systems, automated hotel check-in, automated retail cashiering and even automated food and beverage ordering have already moved from the realm of demonstration projects to workable everyday solutions. The hottest topic in technology, AI, also has a role to play. Attempts to use AI to assist in finding, contacting, performing

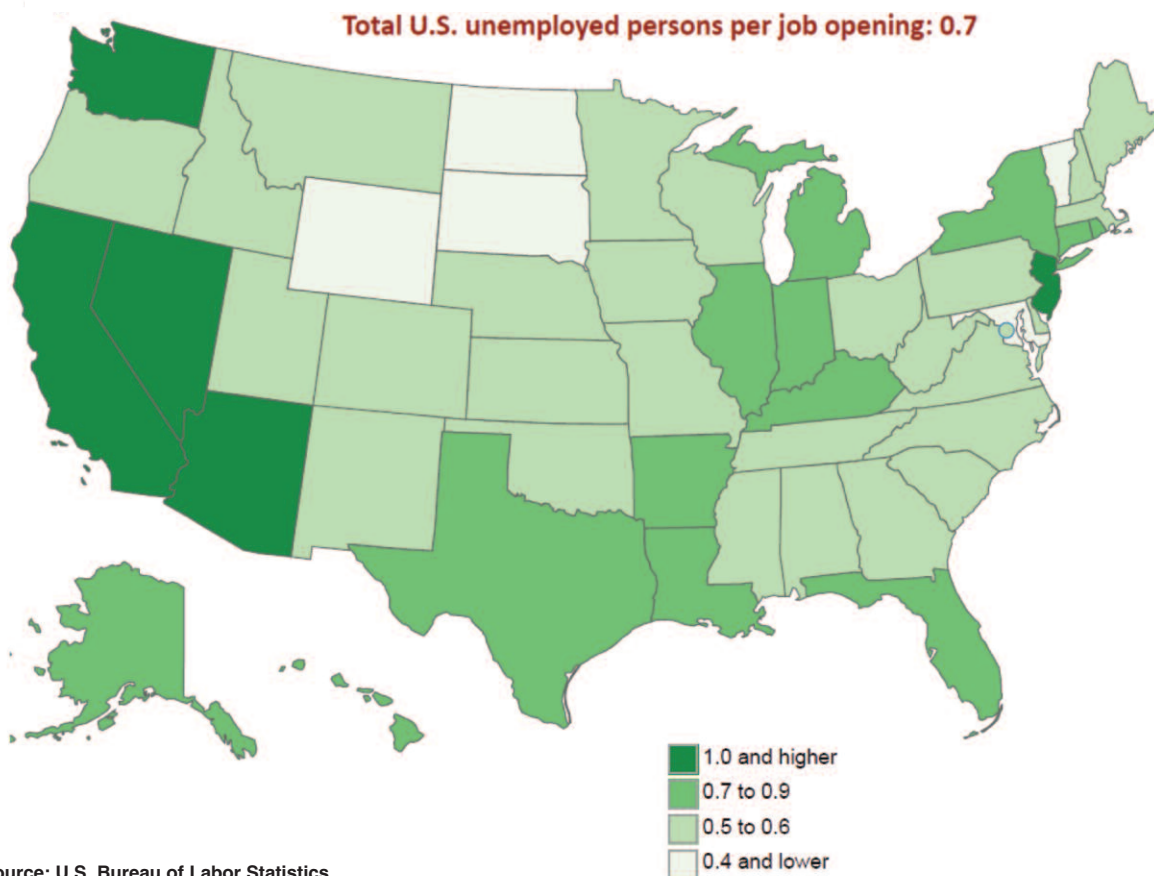
initial screening and even determining areas of greatest need or potential for employees are expanding, and learning as they go.

There are many reasons for optimism in Indian gaming, including improved labor availability, albeit at a higher cost. Current trends suggest additional improvements will be incremental, but ongoing. The next phase for casino staffing will be recovering service standards and consistency lost to pandemic and post-pandemic staffing challenges. Operators fastest out of the blocks with firming up their service offerings will have the advantage. ♣

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**Figure 2**

**Number of unemployed persons per job opening by state, Jaunary 2024, seasonally adjusted**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics





## Access to Capital in Indian Country is Available Despite Higher-Rate Environment

by Jarrod Compton

*"A banking relationship built on trust is particularly crucial when navigating through the rough patches that any business faces."*

After years of near-zero rates, the U.S. has experienced one of the fastest rate-hiking cycles that we've ever seen, making borrowing money more expensive for everyone. While the Federal Reserve is expected to slowly start cutting rates later this year, the resulting Federal Funds rate will likely still be considered restrictive, meaning that this new financial landscape won't go away anytime soon. But rest assured, there's no shortage of access to capital – it just looks a little different and costs a little more.

### 2023: A Shift in Lending Practices

In 2023, banks generally became stricter about lending money for multiple reasons. First, the cost of capital for financial institutions has grown. The Secured Overnight Financing Rate was higher than 5% at the time of this writing. In this higher-rate environment, loans cost more for borrowers, but financial institutions also must pay greater interest on deposits, which has greatly impacted the threshold standard return profitability that banks need to maintain when deploying their capital.

Additionally, some banks also tightened their lending standards out of concern that borrowers may struggle in the overall economic environment. After all, borrowers were not only contending with more expensive debt costs, but also higher prices all around due to inflation. No one wanted a situation where many borrowers would suddenly be unable to pay their loans, causing a rise in defaults.

Since then, the situation has changed dramatically. Yes, the rate environment isn't as favorable for borrowers as when rates were near zero, but the capital is still there. In fact, for credit-worthy customers, capital is pretty accessible in today's environment.

### Defining Credit Worthiness for Tribal Businesses

What does it mean for a tribal business to be credit-worthy? One factor is having strong, consistent cash flow streams and stable liquidity. Another is maintaining a trusting, long-lasting relationship with a financial services provider. Although many people underestimate the power of the latter point, access to capital can be challenging if you don't have that type of relationship with your banking partner. A banking relationship built on trust is particularly crucial when navigating through the rough patches that any business faces.

It's a lot easier to deal with the downtimes if you have a close relationship with a financial services provider as you navigate conversations when access to capital is needed to grow the business.

### Does Your Bank Meet Your Current Needs?

At the same time, it's important to keep in mind that not every financial institution can meet your business needs. This is especially true for tribal businesses, as borrowers in Indian Country can be in rural areas. As a result, they might have a relationship with "Bank X" that fits their everyday deposit needs – but cannot fulfill their needs for a large sum of capital or other ancillary solutions, should those needs arise. Tribal businesses need a financial institution of scale that is committed to Indian Country and can help their businesses grow.

Financial institutions that have a holistic platform of solutions are also less beholden to a threshold standard return profitability. Since they're not primarily depending on deposits for capital, but also can rely on other sources of income such as fees – these institutions are also less impacted by the high-rate environment. As a result, they are able to provide favorable access to capital and can proactively educate customers about the options they have to earn interest.

### A Buffer Against High Rates

A holistic financial institution should have the knowledge and breadth of services to help tribal businesses survive and thrive in any environment. Take credit, for instance. With rates having risen so high, actively engage in conversations on how to mitigate the higher cost of capital. Fortunately, interest rate swaps and fixed-rate hedging instruments can help lower the cost of capital based on the inverted yield curve. For example, with interest rate swaps, you can lock in a fixed rate lower than a floating rate based on rate expectations. This is an entirely new rate environment unlike any we've seen in recent history. It seems different and sometimes challenging for borrowers because it is. Lean on financial experts so you don't have to navigate it alone. ♣

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## Spotlight on Recent Projects in Indian Country

### Bergman Walls & Associates

#### Elwha River Casino Port Angeles, WA

#### Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

*Project: Casino Resort Expansion*

*Completed: June 2023*

For the Elwha River Casino expansion in Port Angeles, WA, the tribe's goal was to not only double the size of the venue and enlarge the gaming area, but also provide easily adaptable spaces for a variety of uses to better serve their existing customers and attract new ones. As the expansion area was limited, flexibility of the spaces was key. A new approach from the road was also established and front entry to reorganize the functionality of the facility and traffic flow onsite. The existing entrance was also maintained and elements from the original entry were used to design the new entry.



Elwha Salish Winds patio

In BWA's 12,000+ sq. ft. expansion, spaces were programmed to provide maximized space engagement, including a new 2,000-seat capacity flexible ballroom and meeting space, and a new multi-function restaurant and lounge space that includes a platform for live entertainment and dancing. On nights when entertainment is scheduled, the restaurant can transform into a nightclub venue after dinner. The covered exterior dining area doubles the capacity of the restaurant and entertainment area, and features fireplaces and radiant

heat in the ceiling. The adjacent traditional salmon bake structure was designed to resemble a traditional tribal cedar hat and constructed of natural materials and serves as an event and teaching space for the tribe and guests. The tribe constructed a metal fire pan that is placed in the center during salmon bakes and can be removed so it can be used for other functions.

Another of the tribe's project goals was to not only make its newly expanded venue more functional, but



Traditional salmon bake structure



educational as well, with opportunities for patrons to learn about Elwha tribal culture. Among the property's unique features are tribal artwork and subtle Elwha tribal elements incorporated throughout the design, and signage throughout the facility that includes the tribe's traditional language. The design elements help promote the tribe's cultural traditions and showcase the pride the tribe has in their property.

For the casino property, which is nestled in the heart

of the pristine Elwha River Valley, design inspiration (including the color scheme) also comes from its surroundings and scenic backdrop. Light fixtures in flowing shapes resemble light reflected from the river; other light fixtures feature artwork depicting a tribal dancer, designed by a local tribal artist. The soffit around the gaming area features die cut metal salmon, masks, and other traditional tribal motifs, and natural materials including wood and stone are featured throughout the venue.

## Cunningham

### Spokane Tribe Resort and Casino Airway Heights, WA

#### Spokane Tribe of Indians

*Project: Entertainment Venue and Hotel*

*Completed: Summer 2024 - Hotel;*

*November 2023 - Spokane Live*



Photo by Emma Fiess

Spokane Live features a rustic industrial vibe, an upper mezzanine for enhanced capacity, and a memorabilia-adorned L-shaped bar, setting it apart from the adjacent casino and hotel.

Cunningham is collaborating on an economic development plan with the Spokane Tribe of Indians to create an integrated resort on a 145-acre site. With a sportsbook and casino expansion completed, the latest phases expand the resort's amenities with a live entertainment venue and new hotel.

A key element in the tribe's efforts to diversify their program offerings, Spokane Live is a dynamic entertainment venue that functions as a bingo hall by day and an electric concert venue by night. The venue has a capacity of 1,800 for seated acts and 2,000 for general admission standing shows.

Featuring reclaimed wood floors and a rustic, industrial vibe, Spokane Live's aesthetic intentionally sets it apart from the adjacent casino and hotel. A mezzanine level increases capacity and provides a unique vantage point, while an L-shaped feature bar, adorned with memorabilia from past performers, adds charm and a sense of legacy.

A dichroic rainbow window offers views into the casino



floor, creating a sense of connection between these two active spaces. The entryway, adorned with lighting fixtures that evoke backstage vanity mirrors, flows directly into the gaming floor and is placed next to a bar with visual motifs that reflect the tribe's traditional clothing patterns, embedding cultural elements into the design.

The resort's new hotel is an integral part of the tribe's master plan and helps turn what was once a small tribal casino into an expansive complex that can compete with larger establishments and attract a broader clientele.

Designed to foster a warm and inviting environment filled with meaningful references to tribal culture, the hotel prominently features the unity of the three Spokane tribal bands and the significance of the wild horses. This can be seen in a gallery feature wall that showcases tribal artifacts, key tribal elders, and one-of-a-kind artwork from tribal members.





The hotel's entryway evokes the flowing motion of water, welcoming visitors with warm wood tones and curved architectural lines.

Design elements throughout the space draw inspiration from the region's natural beauty. In the lobby, wood slats on the ceiling and columns, as well as a feature wall, represent the Spokane Falls, a significant landmark in downtown Spokane. The lobby also features a three-sided fireplace crafted from basalt stone, a recognizable natural material in the area. Basalt stone slabs from a local quarry are also used in an outdoor water feature beneath the hotel's port cochere.

The hotel's entryway evokes the flowing motion of water, welcoming visitors with warm wood tones and curved architectural lines. On the façade, metal panels and vertical wood elements are reminiscent of the tribe's traditional tule mat material – providing both visual texture and cultural depth.

The region's geography is also reflected in the guestrooms and suites – hues of purple represent local huckleberry vegetation, blue symbolizes Spokane's rivers and falls, and caramel tones evoke the agricultural landscape of wheat and hops. Designed by Cuningham specifically for the hotel, bespoke throw blankets feature a visual motif used in the tribe's beaded bags. Native artwork from tribal members is also prominently displayed, while industrial elements such as blackened metal in the lighting and furniture pay homage to Spokane's historical significance as a railway hub during the fur trade.

By strategically locating the hotel to the west of the casino and connecting it to the existing restaurant, the space can be expanded in the future to include additional rooms and a parking garage. The hotel's meeting rooms and indoor pool open up to a landscaped courtyard, which is also planned to be connected to a walking path featuring cultural touchpoints in a future phase of the design. Opening to the public this summer, the hotel stands as a testament to the Spokane Tribe of Indians' commitment to cultural preservation and economic growth.

## HBG Design

### Eagle Mountain Casino Porterville, CA

#### Tule River Tribe

*Project: Casino, Food & Beverage, and Event Center  
Completed: May 2023*

Celebrating its first full year in operation, the Tule River Tribe's relocation of its Eagle Mountain Casino from the original reservation location to a more accessible and visible site in Porterville, CA, represents a significant milestone in the tribe's history. Driven by a blend of strategic, economic, and site motivations, the casino relocation became a transformative initiative that unlocked new opportunities for community growth and market differentiation through cultural integration. Featuring architectural and interior design by HBG Design, the new Eagle Mountain Casino is well-positioned to capture vast market opportunities from local customers and traffic traveling between Fresno and Bakersfield.



Drawing from unique regional elements and the tribe's rich cultural heritage, the design team at HBG Design set out to create an entertainment escape with an authentic





Hairy Man carving by Bill Farmer, Tule River tribal member

sense of character that connects people to place. The new Eagle Mountain Casino provides over 100,000 sq. ft. of amenity features that include 1,750 slots, 20 table games, multiple dining venues including the Ember center bar, the Redwood Taphouse, The River Steakhouse, the Acorn Diner, Yokuts Coffee House, and the Cedar Food Court, as well as a 2,000-seat event center. These amenities not only enhance the casino's entertainment appeal, but also address community wishes, such as meeting a need for a large venue space that could cater to sporting and entertainment events.

Inspired by relaxed lodge aesthetics, the casino's design expression exudes a sense of comfort, approachability, and hospitality. The tribe's indigenous homeland is where the Great Sequoia tree grows. The Sequoia's canopy, trunk, and roots became inspirational elements to link the story of the tribe's

culture and heritage to the design aesthetics – from the arrival experience to the art, patterns, and imagery within. Soaring vertical features recall the majesty of the Giant Sequoia and the Golden Eagle. Entry water features and flowing forms recall the winding Tule River and organic curves of nature.

Inside, guests are greeted by a grand redwood carving of the tribal Big Foot pictograph, known as “Big Foot Hairy Man,” symbolizing the tribe's deep-rooted traditions. Carved by Bill Farmer, a Tule River tribal member, the material for the Big Foot carving came from a giant redwood that had fallen across one of the roads on the Tule Reservation.

Historical tribal basket patterns adorn custom pendent light fixtures, ceiling soffits, and custom terrazzo floor medallions, serving as a wayfinding guide toward the entertainment offerings within.



Ember Center Bar

The Flight of the Butterfly and Quail Tufts is a prominent Tule River tribal motif that intertwines through the casino culminating at the Ember Bar ceiling soffit with a silhouette mountain design that mimics the regional landscape. The vertical Ember bar design represents the elements of wood and fire, symbolizing hospitality, a place where the community can gather, relax, and socialize.

The HBG Design team has worked alongside the Tule River Tribe since 2015 in the design and delivery of the new Eagle Mountain Casino. Throughout the process, Tule River stakeholders immersed HBG designers in tribal culture and heritage research and graciously embraced conceptual storytelling as it extends into the architectural and interior design aesthetic. This personal integration creates a one-of-a-kind, memorable experience for Eagle Mountain Casino guests.



Redwood Taphouse



### R2Architects & R2Interiors

#### Paragon Casino Resort Marksville, LA

##### Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana

*Project: 3 Hotel Tower Renovations/Upgrades*

*Completed: September 2023*

The renovations and upgrades to Paragon Casino Resort's three hotel towers was part of an overall property goal to improve the property's three existing hotel towers – Atrium Tower with 200 guestrooms and suites, North Tower with 117 guestrooms and suites, and the South Tower with 214 guestrooms and suites. R2A and R2I was retained in late 2017 by the Tunica Biloxi Tribe, the owners of the Paragon Casino Resort, to prepare the master plan, design and documentation to renovate, improve, and modernize the three hotel towers and other public areas in a phased approach spanning over six years.

The tribe's goal for the project was to update the look of the three hotel towers' interior spaces – improvements were to the living areas in



orchestrated with the property and construction manager, Descent Construction, to keep the property open for business with minimal interruptions while always maintaining a safe environment.

The Atrium Tower was first to be upgraded, followed by the North Tower, with the South Tower renovations and upgrades representing the third and final tower to be upgraded. The South Tower project was successfully completed achieving all the property's goals in 2024, thus marking the conclusion of the multi-year and phased major improvement to the hotel towers.



the rooms and to the bathrooms, as well as the corridors and related public areas. The upgrades included new carpet, woodwork, custom lighting, paint, tile, custom furniture, drapes, and AV.

The modernization of the bathrooms in the South Tower was to make them brighter, create more spacious showers, and upgrade the interior finishes and plumbing fixtures. In the typical guestrooms, the plumbing in the showers was reworked, tubs were removed and replaced with spacious walk-in showers, and new glass swing doors were repositioned to make the entry and egress from the shower more user friendly and safer for guests.

The design was carefully planned and





## Coushatta Casino Resort

Kinder, LA

**Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana**

*Project: New High Limit Lounge*

*Completed: June 2024*



fixtures with hundreds of red and translucent blown glass globes that glisten and catch the light.

Walking into the space, guests will find a room with high limit table games to the left, 102 high limit slots in the room to the right, and directly ahead, a beautiful bar and lounge area exclusively for high limit players. The bar and lounge can be closed off for events with sliding glass enclosures that create an intimate atmosphere to relax, sip or play at one of the seven bar top games. The surrounding vignette seating includes both high back upholstered chairs and tufted couches wrapped in rich, moody hues.

Every detail has been thoroughly thought out and



The Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana expressed the need for updated finishes and increased visibility for their High Limit Lounge. One of TBE Architects' specialties is developing spaces that are intuitive and inviting, yet also invoke wonder and awe for casino guests.

As visitors enter the new Coushatta high limit area through a 12 ft. high glowing white marble arch, they will immediately be dazzled by what lies ahead. Each step across a bespoke floor covering features the garfish, a heritage symbol for the Coushatta Tribe. The composition is displayed with warm deep tones of red, yellow, and orange. Designed in-house by TBE Architects' talented teammates, this detail weaves and glides through the entire space. The new high limit area includes multiple custom light



creates a cohesive look in this luxurious space. High limit guests will notice the new ebony upholstered gaming chairs and more custom glass chandeliers overhead that complement the sculpted ceilings. Setting this space apart from the gaming floor, an enclosure creates intrigue with brass screens allowing guests in the casino to catch glimpses of the beauty within, and unique wall coverings that add to the refined aesthetic.

This elevated high limit gaming space is part of a larger project and partnership between TBE and the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana. ♣



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## WinStar World Casino and Resort and HBG Design Celebrate Property's Largest Single-Phase, Non-Gaming Amenity Expansion



Located in Thackerville, OK, along the Texas/Oklahoma border and near Interstate 35, WinStar World Casino and Resort attracts visitors from Oklahoma, North Texas, and the bustling Dallas metro area just 90 minutes away. This strategic positioning has contributed to WinStar's impressive growth by tapping into the vibrant urban market of one of the country's fastest-growing regions.

In response to increased market opportunities, WinStar completed its largest single-event, non-gaming expansion in the property's 30-year history. The expansion represents almost 20 acres of event, pool, hotel, and spa amenities, all opened over the past year.

"The new 6,500-seat Lucas Oil Live, the 304-key Spa Tower and WinStar Spa, and the five-acre Cascades pool complex were all driven by the market and guest preferences," said Jack Parkinson, President of WinStar. "Our goal is to create a well-rounded resort environment directly responsive to our market of traditional gamers and our guests seeking immersive non-gaming resort experiences."

Started as a bingo hall in 1994, the property was expanded in 2003 and renamed WinStar Casino. Gaming plazas and amenities have evolved throughout the years. Owned and operated by the Chickasaw Nation, WinStar has emerged as a global hospitality and entertainment leader, offering over 10,500 electronic games, 100 table games, and over 1,700 guestrooms, earning the title of "The Biggest Casino in the World."

"Our strategic branding partnerships, like with Lucas Oil, and our 15-year design partnership with leading national hospitality and entertainment design firm, HBG Design, have helped shape WinStar's innovative evolution and market-centered mission," said Parkinson.

### ACM-Nominated Lucas Oil Live - The Crescendo of Entertainment and Design Excellence

"Country music continues to be a focal point of WinStar's renowned performance lineup at Lucas Oil Live," Parkinson explained, discussing the resort's nine-time nomination as an American Country Music Awards 'Casino of the Year - Theater.' "It's an honor being recognized among the industry's top venues, and Lucas Oil Live provides an even more enhanced event experience for our customers."

"Drawing inspiration from the rebellious spirit of rock and country music, Lucas Oil Live's recognized design exudes 250,000 sq. ft. of vibrancy and energy," said Rob Jurbergs, Principal Architectural Designer at HBG Design. "With a state-of-the-art audio-visual system and an amphitheater-style seating capacity for over 6,500 people, this venue sets the stage for unforgettable performances."



From the animated LED-lit concourse and theater walls mirroring the rhythmic flow of music, to the exterior's angled glass offering an unobstructed view of the thematic soundwave design motif, every element was crafted by HBG Design's team to amplify the concert's energy.

"An exclusive club seating level with a private lounge has a full bar and kitchen, ensuring that every aspect of design enhances the guest entertainment experience," added Jurbergs. "This VIP experience is strategically positioned at the median of the hall, providing eventgoers with the ultimate vantage point for concert events."

Lucas Oil Live introduced Session House Gastropub for pre- and post-event dining. The casual venue is positioned to connect and transition the event center excitement into the





resort's more serene Spa Tower and WinStar Spa amenities. "Our new wellness amenities are equally as popular as our event center," said Parkinson.

### WinStar Spa – Rejuvenating European-Style Wellness Experiences

The luxurious new 230,000 sq. ft. Spa Tower, and its 26,000 sq. ft. European-style WinStar Spa, have emerged as a sought-after destination for wellness enthusiasts as a hallmark of modern leisure design.

"The WinStar Spa features a growing trend in spa design – more communal experiences," said Landon Shockey, Lead Interior Designer at HBG Design. "The VIP Party Suite is popular with groups desiring a private spa lounge experience with dedicated food and beverage service."

Separate women's and men's lounge/locker rooms feature sophisticated color and material palettes, ice fountains, and a steam room and sauna. The spa is also designed with three couples massage therapy suites, one with private soaking tubs and a digital shower.

To provide a greater experience for groups and couples, WinStar Spa incorporates an amenity-rich coed aqua thermal area with a pool-sized European hydrotherapy tub, an ambient experience shower featuring color-changing lighting, a sauna, and an ice lounge. "The hydrotherapy tub has integrated touchless technology and active water massage stations throughout to provide guests with a variety of relaxation experiences," said Shockey.

### Cascades – A Vibrant Oasis in an Expansive Outdoor Retreat

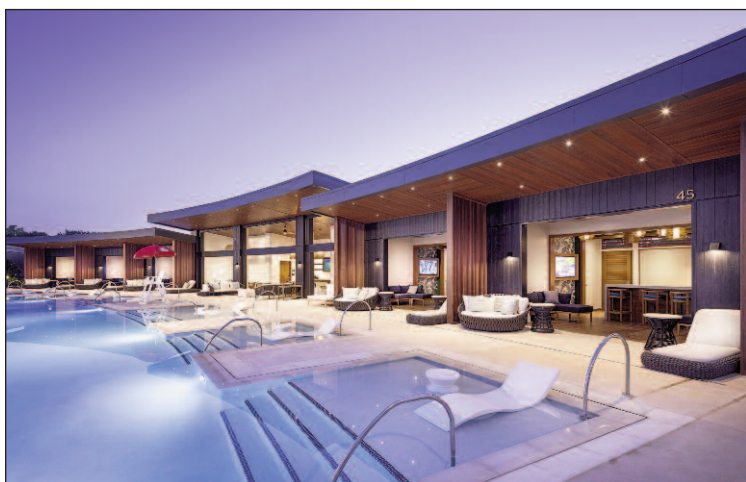
Spanning over five acres, Cascades pool complex adds another dimension to WinStar's allure.

"The design of Cascades is formed by a series of six wading and lounge pools flowing around semi-private cabanas, chaise loungers, and seven architecturally significant cabanas and bar pavilions," said Jurbergs. "The organic, curvilinear shapes of the pools were inspired by the ocean currents

and naturally shaped archipelagos."

Set within lush landscaping and winding pathways, a multi-level site design creates zones of personalization and exclusivity. The ground-level pool experience is maintained for all ages. "On arrival, guests can arrange cabana or chaise rentals, which are appointed a dedicated server," said Parkinson. Wading pools with in-water loungers, 10x10 cabanas, daybeds, and abundant greenery create an ideal setting for daytime visitors. "Guests have been thrilled with Cascades as a daycation getaway amenity," added Parkinson.

The upper tier is reserved for ages 21+ and VIP-only casino guests. The Cascades upper tier prioritizes aspirational VIP experiences and comfort, featuring an angular main bar structure clad in white marble effect tile and a vibrant vertical green planter wall. Premium cabanas and a central VIP bungalow offer exclusive amenities like a private kitchen and dining area, a reserved patio, and a private pool entry. "Wood effect architectural wall panels and soffits, black metal fascia, and copper metal accents achieve a cohesive, contemporary architectural look," said Jurbergs. "The architecture also integrates passive cooling via wood slats and sloped roofs."



"Every amenity has been thoughtfully positioned to maximize sunlight and water access and lounging while offering ample shaded space for social interaction," added Jurbergs. "All of the new amenities offer exceptionally guest-driven design."

Parkinson agrees. "Our relentless focus on creating these unforgettable experiences and unparalleled amenities at Cascades, Lucas Oil Live, and the WinStar Spa reflects our unwavering commitment to exceeding guest and market expectations. The ACM nomination and other national attention that has come our way with this expansion project is a testament to our customers and our collaborators, and to the vision and continuous innovation that is taking place in front of and behind the scenes." ♣

*For more information about WinStar World Casino, visit [www.winstar.com](http://www.winstar.com). For more information about HBG Design, visit [hbg.design](http://hbg.design).*



## Gila River Resorts & Casinos Celebrate 30th Anniversary



Gila River Resorts & Casinos is celebrating its 30th anniversary commemorating an incredible milestone for the Gila River Indian Community. What started as a humble one room casino with 200+ slot machines, has transformed into a booming organization becoming the largest gaming enterprise in the state of Arizona.

Opening in the summer of 1994, a mission and vision was created to help fill an economic void for the Gila River Indian Community. With the legalization of gambling in the state of Arizona, opportunity was on the horizon to bring much needed support for the community. With unsure expectations of what the future could hold, Gila River Gaming Enterprise embarked on the opportunity of a lifetime.

Three decades later, Gila River Resorts & Casinos is a gaming powerhouse operating four properties including Wild Horse Pass, Lone Butte, Vee Quiva and Santan Mountain. The resorts at Wild Horse Pass and Vee Quiva are Four Diamond accredited and offer spectacular amenities from rooftop fine dining to gorgeous pools. All four locations are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, offering a combination of slots, live table games and BetMGM Sportsbooks. The Wild Horse Pass location has an entertainment venue, The Showroom, which features A-list entertainment as well as the only indoor Topgolf Swing Suite in the state of Arizona.

"We are humbled and proud to reach such an incredible milestone," said Kenneth Manuel, CEO of Gila River Resorts & Casinos. "Over the

past thirty years, we have expanded the gaming rules and created thousands of jobs. Every person that has ever been a team member has contributed to the success of the enterprise. Not one person could have accomplished this alone, but as a team, we have accomplished tremendous growth and prosperity for the enterprise and the Gila River Indian Community."

Through growth within the enterprise and community, came growth across the state. This evolution caused major visibility through partnerships with the Arizona Diamondbacks, Arizona Coyotes, Arizona Cardinals, Phoenix Suns and ASU Athletics. This allowed for messaging and branding to be shared

with people who may not have been previously exposed to the gaming enterprise. These key partnerships current and former, helped grow the gaming and hospitality audience in the local market.

Additionally, Gila River Cares was created to continue that brand awareness through philanthropic giving. Funds are distributed annually to nonprofits across that state that support communities in need.

"I am proud to have grown up in the Gila River Indian Community and I have seen firsthand how the community has benefited from gaming," said Manuel. "It brings me a lot of pride and joy to see the success we have accomplished. I am grateful for the incredible mentors who took me under their





wing to help me along my journey to become CEO. I owe my success to so many people who were instrumental in my development which resulted in the tremendous economic impact on the community.”

With aspirations of continued the growth, the enterprise was rewarded for all of their hard work making a name for themselves in the gaming industry. With accolades such as *Ranking Arizona's* top casino for 2024 to *Newsweek's* best overall casino outside of Las Vegas for 2024, there are no signs of slowing down for the enterprise. ♣



For more information about Gila River Casinos, visit [www.playatgila.com](http://www.playatgila.com).

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## Paragon Casino Resort Celebrates 30th Anniversary

Paragon Casino Resort celebrated three decades of entertainment and success with its team members, tribal citizens, and casino visitors during a commemoration weekend. Casino and tribal leadership welcomed visitors, tribal citizens and local and state officials for a 30th anniversary ceremony. Attendees heard from Paragon General Manager and Tunica-Biloxi Vice Chairman Marshall Ray Sampson, Sr. on the casino resort's history and legacy as Central Louisiana's premier entertainment destination.

"Paragon Casino Resort has always been and will continue to be the entertainment heart of Avoyelles Parish," said Sampson. "For the past 30 years and the next 30, our greatest pride is bringing joy to the community and all its visitors. We are grateful to those who paved the way for our success and are eager to begin the next 30 years with a reinvigorated spirit."

Tunica-Biloxi Chairman Marshall Pierite welcomed special guests, including representatives from Governor Landry's office, who presented an official proclamation from the state after learning about the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe's rich history in the Marksville area. Paragon's Assistant General Manager recognized 30-year employees who have seen the destination grow and expand over the years. Also acknowledged were Tunica-Biloxi Councils from 1991-1995, 1994 Economic Development Corporation & Board and the 1994 Gaming Commission.

"It is always an incredible feeling to gather with our friends



and loved ones," said Chairman Pierite. "When we gather for an occasion like Paragon's 30th anniversary, you can feel the excitement and pride in the air. Paragon has been a driving force for economic development in the parish and has employed a great number of tribal members over its 30-year history. It's one of our best accomplishments as a tribe, and we congratulate them on their success."

Thirty years ago, in 1994, the doors first opened as Grand Casino Avoyelles and was instantly Central Louisiana's largest luxury gaming resort. Since the beginning, Paragon strived to provide an economic boost for Marksville and Avoyelles Parish throughout its tenure hiring thousands of residents, contributing \$32 million to the Avoyelles Parish Police Jury and securing more than \$5 million in donations to the local community.

Paragon Casino Resort has seen a lot of change over the past 30 years. Most recently, the resort completed an extensive

renovation of 531 rooms, upscale suites, hotel corridors and its lobby. Upgraded rooms for guests feature new paint, lighting and carpeting along with fresh furniture, fixtures and window treatments. The sprawling casino floor currently features over 30 tables including a high limit room, live poker, sports betting and 1,000 modern slot machines.

Thirty years ago, Paragon Casino Resort first opened its doors to entertain residents of Avoyelles Parish and beyond. Since then, Paragon has remained steadfast in its mission to provide a premier gaming experience to visitors while also giving back to the Avoyelles Parish community it calls home. ♣

For more information about Paragon Casino Resort, visit [www.paragoncasinoresort.com](http://www.paragoncasinoresort.com).







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## C2G 2024: Education, Innovation and Engagement Take Place at Inaugural Event

Prairie Band Casino & Resort, owned by the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Mayetta, KS, hosted the inaugural Class 2 Gathering (C2G) conference on May 6-8, 2024. The conference was a success with many Class II slot and bingo operators, manufacturers, and gaming commissioners visiting from over 20 states.

“A year ago, we had a vision to host a Class II gaming conference that would include operators, regulators, and suppliers from across the country,” said Chris Garrow, Director of Gaming for Prairie Band Casino & Resort. “I am proud of the Prairie Band Casino & Resort team for their hard work and dedication to making this vision a reality.”

On Monday, May 6, the opening ceremony began with a performance from the Royal Valley Native American Singers and Dancers. The group is composed of young people from kindergarten to twelfth grade. In addition, the Little Soldiers Drum group, comprised of tribal members, performed alongside the dancers.

On Tuesday, May 7, the presentation of colors was made by the WE-TA-SE American Legion Post 410. Joe Mitchell, Prairie Band Potawatomi Gaming Commissioner, led the group in prayer in his native language. Other notable members of the Prairie Band Tribe in attendance included Gaming Commissioners Joseph “Chago” Hale Jr. and Rey Kitchkumme; Tribal Council members William Evans, Lorrie Melchior, Wade Pahmahmie, Zach Pahmahmie, and Tony Wahweotten, Jr.; and Board Directors Corey Mzhickteno and Jona Rupnicki.

Tuesday’s education agenda had several general sessions and breakout sessions focused on panel discussions of tribal workforce development, regulatory updates, and data and gaming analysis from Brooke Fuimara, Co-Founder and Co-Chief Executive Officer of OPTX.

“I have been more impressed with this conference than I have with many others regarding Class II,” said Erik Isner from Sycuan Casino. “I believe it has started a real conversation regarding bingo play, cross play, and the theoretical spend of a bingo player. This conference has a real chance to grow and impact many Class II gaming establishments from all over.”

During lunch, attendees were also joined by Dan Schrementi, President of Gaming for Incredible Technologies, who provided an overview of Class II bingo rules and slot methodology in the creation of regulatory approved games.

On Wednesday, additional sessions included topics on loyalty programs, resiliency, and the expansion of Everi in Class II products with the purchase of Video King by Tim Richards, Executive Vice President of Strategy and Digital Gaming for Everi. Nick Ippolito, CEO of Casino Player



Daniel Rivas (center), Paragon Casino Resort, with Darren Klein and Ashley Fuller of Midwest Bingo.

Development gave insight into the player development world and knowledge about player worth and frequency. Closing remarks were by Bill Marsh, Prairie Band Casino & Resort General Manager.

“Overall, the conference was a wonderful experience,” said Marsh. “We gained a lot of insight into what other properties have done successfully and had the opportunity to see new avenues to market to our players.”

Prairie Band hosted an evening event for all attendees to network at the Topgolf Swing Suite and newly opened outdoor pool. Attendees enjoyed a closest-to-the-pin competition for prizes, food truck, and DJ. During the final evening, Aries Technology showcased its Coin Pusher and The Claw machines by inviting all attendees to play these games on the casino floor, and each attendee had a chance to win prizes. Exhibitors were present for attendees to visit during breaks, before and after sessions, and during evening events throughout the conference.

Video King and Planet Bingo held user workshops on Thursday for attendees to learn directly from the vendors about products and services. “This conference was well thought out and excellent,” said Pam Rathbone from Chesapeake Amusements. “I learned a lot of new ideas to take back to my property and I’m excited.”

C2G brought together casino and gaming professionals, vendors, and experts in the field of Class II casino gaming from the traditional bingo hall experience to the slot floor. The conference combined education paths, showcased current innovations, plus had engaging events for attendees. ♣

*Mark your calendars for the next Class 2 Gathering hosted by Prairie Band Casino & Resort to be held June 2-4, 2025. For more information, visit [www.class2gathering.com](http://www.class2gathering.com).*



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### Ribbon Cutting Held for Lakecrest Casino and Hotel

Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby led ribbon-cutting ceremonies for Lakecrest Casino and Hotel, located minutes from Lake Murray in South Central Oklahoma. Governor Anoatubby said the project continues the Chickasaw Nation's commitment to provide opportunities to grow area tourism and the economic footprint as it attracts visitors from across the region and outside of the state.

"The Chickasaw Nation is always seeking ways to positively impact our citizens and our communities, and the new Lakecrest Casino and Hotel will do just that," said Governor Anoatubby. "We are known for a long history of entrepreneurship and community building, a tradition we carry each and every day, as we celebrate the completion of a project that will benefit many here in the Ardmore area and many more across the Chickasaw Nation, and beyond."

Located on State Highway 70, two miles east of I-35 exit 29, Lakecrest combines modern amenities with a friendly atmosphere to create a full-service resort experience just five minutes from Lake Murray. The dynamic development features a 70,000 sq. ft. casino with more than 1,000 electronic games and eight table games, along with a boutique, coffee shop, restaurant and bar. The 89-room hotel also includes a picturesque resort pool, business center and conference space. The property's RV park has 20 slips and includes Wi-Fi, electrical hookups and online reservations.

"Lakecrest is a perfect getaway for people seeking a change of scenery with an added element of excitement," said Chickasaw Nation Secretary of Commerce Dan Boren. "Building on our capabilities in providing choice entertainment, retail and



Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby (center) is joined by tribal elected officials and leaders, as well as Carter County and Ardmore dignitaries, to cut the ribbon and officially open Lakecrest Casino and Hotel.

hospitality experiences, we believe Lakecrest will be a destination location attracting visitors from Texas, Arkansas and surrounding states."

The Carter County development is anticipated to have an estimated \$3.7 million annual payroll as it employs approximately 450 people in full- and part-time roles. Studies conducted on the Chickasaw Nation's behalf estimate a total economic impact on the regional economy in year one of about \$102.4 million, including construction. A five-year economic impact is estimated at about \$307.6 million.

"When we look at this property, we see more than just the fun and entertainment, or the peace and relaxation of luxury accommodations," said Governor Anoatubby. "We see employment and the creation of hundreds of new jobs. We see the positive economic impact on the economies of Ardmore and Carter County. Most of all, we see the multitude of ways it will directly contribute to meeting our mission to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people."

### Mohegan Sun Unveils Hold & Spin Slot Zone in Casino of the Sky

Located between the Star Bar and the recently updated Sachem Lounge in Mohegan Sun's Casino of the Sky is an all-new Hold & Spin Slot Zone, featuring 250+ slot machines with the hold and spin bonus feature. The feature occurs when certain credit symbols trigger a bonus round where rewards can multiply quickly. Slot machines inside the Hold & Spin Slot Zone at Mohegan Sun include: Dragon Link (Aristocrat); Dollar Storm (Aristocrat);



Ultimate Fire Link (Light & Wonder); Dragon Train (Light & Wonder); All Aboard (Konami Gaming); Cleopatra (IGT) and others. In total, Mohegan Sun is home to more than 50 Dragon Link games – the most in Connecticut.

"Slots that feature the Hold & Spin Bonus are very popular, for longtime players and newcomers alike," said Jeff Hamilton, President & GM of Mohegan Sun. "Creating this hub that



offers hundreds of these fun games only made sense.”

The Hold & Spin Slot Zone is a casino floor redesign with convenience in mind. The zone sits near other popular attractions at Mohegan Sun, including the Michael Jordan-owned Mexican restaurant, Sol Toro, Vista Lounge at Wombi Rock and Sachem’s Lounge, which recently completed a major renovation. The most recent addition to the Hold & Spin Slot Zone at Mohegan Sun is Huff N’ Even More Puff, made by Light & Wonder.

Guests playing hold and spin bonus games are seeking to

get special symbols during regular spins. On a game like Dragon Link, a player would need to spin at least six orbs to trigger a bonus round. Players can then collect as many coin symbols as possible within this bonus round. Based on a player’s credit and denomination selections while playing, bonus money can add up fast on hold and spin games. Grand jackpots can be won when players get 15 orbs in the bonus round, or when one of the orbs stops and displays “grand.”

In total, Mohegan Sun is home to nearly 4,000 slot machines across Casino of the Earth and Casino of the Sky.

## Catawba Nation Breaks Ground on Permanent \$700 Million Casino Resort

The Catawba Nation recently celebrated the beginning of construction on a more than \$700 million permanent casino resort in Kings Mountain, NC, about 35 minutes from downtown Charlotte.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, Catawba Nation Chief Brian Harris was joined by other Catawba leaders; Cleveland County, city of Kings Mountain and other government officials; and leaders from companies partnering with the Catawba to work on the project. Catawba Nation cultural dancers and drummers performed during the ceremony, attended by about 400 people, including many tribal members.

“This groundbreaking represents not just the physical construction of a building, but the realization of a dream, the embodiment of hard work and dedication, and the celebration of our rich cultural heritage,” said Harris. “For too long, the Catawba Indian Nation has faced challenges and barriers to economic development. But today, we are breaking ground not just on a casino, but on a path toward empowerment and self-determination. The development of this casino is a significant milestone for the Catawba Indian Nation and the residents of Cleveland County and the city of Kings Mountain as it symbolizes our ability to come together and create opportunities for economic growth and prosperity in a way that is deeply rooted in our traditions and values. This project is a testament to our resilience, our commitment to self-sufficiency, and our determination to build a better future for ourselves and our future generations. The casino will also serve as a source of pride and cultural preservation – a place where our heritage is celebrated, where our traditions are honored and where our stories are told.”

Harris also thanked those who have contributed to making the casino a reality, including tribal leaders and members, architects, contractors and investors. In addition, he thanked the Cleveland County, city of Kings Mountain, and federal and state leaders who have supported the Catawba Nation’s efforts to develop the casino resort in its ancestral lands in North Carolina.

Construction has begun on the project, design plans are now finalized and initial financing is in place for the project after the



Catawba Nation finalized the private settlement with its former developer, Sky Boat Gaming, in early May, removing the firm from any interest in the project. The Catawba Nation in February also purchased from Sky Boat land around its temporary casino, including the parking lot and additional property that may be used to support resort amenities and experiences.

Work has also been completed on two key infrastructure projects for development of the permanent casino resort that were funded by the Catawba Nation: doubling the size of the Dixon School Road Bridge over I-85 near the casino entrance and installing new sewer lines near the casino.

Delaware North, which has served as a consultant to the Catawba Nation on the project since 2019, is expected to manage and serve as developer of the permanent casino resort once the contracts are approved by the National Indian Gaming Commission. SOSHNY Design is serving as architect and Yates-Metcon, a joint venture of Yates Construction Co. and Metcon Buildings & Infrastructure, will serve as general contractor for the project.

During construction, the Catawba Nation will continue to operate its temporary casino, which opened in 2021 and features 1,000 slot machines, electronic table games, a retail sportsbook and restaurant. The temporary casino is set to add 12 live table games and 56 additional slot machines in early summer, along with additional surface parking.



The permanent casino resort, which will be about two million sq. ft. at full buildout, will be completed in two main phases.

**Introductory Casino** – This phase will be constructed at ground level with 1,350 slots/ETGs, 12 table games and a restaurant with 40 seats that will include a sportsbook area with 30 self-service kiosks. In addition, supporting back-of-house space for surveillance, security, the cage and part of the first two floors of the parking garage (1,600 spots) will be completed above the ground level. Upon opening, estimated for early 2026, the introductory casino will replace the current temporary facility. Employment will be at about 420 positions, which is 20 more than what is anticipated when the new table games area in the temporary casino opens this summer.

**Full Casino Resort** – Construction will then begin on the 400-room hotel and the remainder of the casino complex,

which will be stacked above the ground floor. The hotel tower will be a separate structure that is connected to the casino complex to maximize the patron experience. The casino complex will feature three levels of parking (floors 2-4), an entire floor devoted to back-of-house operations and offices, and the main casino floor and restaurants on top.

At full buildout, the main casino complex will be approximately two million sq. ft. and feature 4,300 slots; 100 table games; five restaurants, including a steakhouse, Italian restaurant, marketplace buffet, cafe and grab-and-go outlet; a players lounge; and six bars, including a center bar and sports bar.

There is no estimate at this time of when the main casino complex and hotel will be completed. After the main casino complex opens, the introductory casino will become the smoking section of the casino. Upon completion, the casino resort will employ an estimated 2,200 team members.

### Expansion Upgrades Coming to The Hotel at Black Oak Casino Resort



Black Oak Casino Resort has announced the details of a major renovation and expansion project at The Hotel. On track for a summer 2025 completion date, this substantial update includes the addition of 48 brand-new suites, a complete overhaul of the existing 148 rooms, an updated hotel exterior, and the construction of two all-new aquatic facilities.

Black Oak Casino Resort is owned and operated by the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians. Moorefield Construction was awarded the bid for this expansion and Steelman Partners has designed the new look for The Hotel.

“The Hotel has been the premier lodging choice for visitors to Tuolumne County since we first opened it in 2013, and we are excited to share this next phase with the public,” said Ty Day Jr., Chair of the Tuolumne Economic Development Authority Board of Directors. “This expansion and renovation reflects our desire to provide Black Oak Casino Resort guests with the ultimate luxury experience in the Sierra Nevada.”

The new exterior design of The Hotel will combine a sleek,

modern look with the natural scenic beauty of Tuolumne. This update will also connect The Hotel to the gaming area and create a grand, dramatic new lobby that will serve as the main shared entrance to both buildings.

“We were honored to work on this project as The Hotel at Black Oak Casino Resort provides such a positive impact on the local economy in Tuolumne County,” said Mike Moorefield, President of Moorefield Construction. “This expansion and renovation will solidify The Hotel as the best place to stay for families looking to escape their everyday routine and make memories that will last a lifetime.”

“Steelman Partners is thrilled to embark on the design journey to expand and revitalize the Black Oak Casino Resort in Tuolumne,” said Paul Steelman, CEO of Steelman Partners. “Situated near one of America’s most cherished landscapes, Yosemite National Park has been a profound inspiration for our design process. With this rich backdrop in mind, we are committed to crafting a resort experience that seamlessly integrates with its stunning surroundings, offering guests an immersive and unforgettable retreat amidst nature’s grandeur. We are confident that Black Oak Casino Resort will emerge as the signature destination in this breathtakingly beautiful setting, setting new standards for luxury and harmony with the environment.”

One of the two new pools will be adults only and include a pool bar, brand-new large hot tub, outdoor television screen and a stage for live music. The other will be designed for children and include a splash zone, slides, and various other water features. These will complement the recently opened Elevate jump center that features trampoline jumping, dodgeball, a Junior Jump Zone for small children, Ninja Course, axe throwing and numerous multi-sport simulator screens.



## Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Unveils 25,000 Sq. Ft. Casino Floor Expansion

Harrah's Cherokee Valley River has opened its casino floor addition, representing a significant milestone in a \$275 million expansion project. Spanning 25,000 sq. ft., the extended casino floor features a curated selection of gaming options. Players can now try their luck at one of the 300 new slot machines or eight additional table games.

Further enhancing its gaming lineup, the expansion also introduces the highly requested World Series of Poker – Poker Room. With a lavish design and upscale ambience, poker enthusiasts and casual players alike can enjoy a range of cash games with favorites like Three Card Poker and Texas Hold'em. The poker room is open Sunday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. and Friday and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m.

Additionally, guests can enjoy Harrah's Cherokee Valley River's new 22-seat casino bar located on the expanded floor. Offering nine of the latest bar-top video games, eight beer taps, bar seating and lounge seating, the casino bar is open daily from 9:00am to 2:00am.

"We are ecstatic to reach this milestone in our expansion process and unveil the expanded gaming floor, which represents the culmination of months of hard work and dedication both



from our internal team members and general contractor, Robins & Morton," said Lumpy Lambert, General Manager of Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino & Hotel. "Every detail of the casino floor expansion was selected to ensure memorable experiences and we are confident that our new amenities and offerings will exceed our guests' expectations."

## Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa Opens New Restaurant – Carvers on 19



Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa has opened Carvers on 19, its newest dining experience, located on the 19th floor in the former McGill's restaurant location. Carvers on 19 offers a newly renovated and redesigned aesthetic reflecting Tulsa's historic Art Deco architecture while retaining the acclaimed menu. The restaurant's opening promises guests a newly refined and elevated dining experience in an upscale setting.

"We are continually striving to elevate and enrich the guest experience," said Martin Madewell, General Manager of Hard

Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa. "Carvers provides an elegant atmosphere reminiscent of 1920s luxury while maintaining its beloved menu selections, and we are excited for guests to enjoy it."

The restaurant's rebrand to Carvers on 19 accompanies the newly renovated space, speaking to its tradition of tender, flavorful steaks cooked to perfection. Retaining the same, award-winning menu, the restaurant continues to feature the fan-favorite chilled seafood tower and its sumptuous selection of prime cuts of steaks. It also continues to offer chef selections such as smoked chicken, lobster and king salmon, along with its extensive selection of beverages and expansive wine offerings.

"Our menu has become synonymous with Tulsa's culinary landscape," said Chef Daniel Wade. "We are delighted to continue serving our guests their favorite dishes in an exquisitely renovated environment."

The restaurant's warm and rich aesthetic features are complemented by Art Deco accents, a nod to Tulsa's architectural history set against its panoramic views. The remodel project, which began in March, was designed by WorthGroup Architects & Designers, based in Denver, CO, and was completed by Tulsa-based Candor Building Solutions.



### Choctaw Landing Hosts Grand Opening Celebration



Choctaw Landing, the Choctaw Nation's newest 100-room luxury resort and casino, located in Hochatown, OK, recently held its official grand opening. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton presided over the ribbon cutting and celebration, which included around 300 attendees.

"Any time you can bring our culture and our history together, along with economic development for our tribal members and the citizens of this area, it's a great day," said Chief Batton. "We broke ground down here two years ago, and to see our grand opening today and all the things we're going to be able to bring to McCurtain County, it's exciting. I love that we're seeing our culture and history displayed here and that it's an economic boost to this area. Hopefully people will learn about Choctaw Nation here more than ever before."

In honor of the special occasion, Choctaw dancers and singers performed, and attendees participated in traditional Choctaw activities like flint knapping, weaponry and pottery. Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnell was one of many state officials in attendance. His speech highlighted the impact Oklahoma's sovereign nations, such as the Choctaw Nation, have had on the tourism industry in Oklahoma.

"You are leading the way in economic development," said Pinnell of the Choctaw Nation. "Oklahoma is Oklahoma

because of our 39 sovereign nations. This is Native America. In Oklahoma, our tourism industry is the third largest industry in the state because of our sovereign nations."

The opening of the \$238 million Choctaw Landing resort was a major boost to the local economy, creating more than 400 jobs in Southeast Oklahoma. It will have an estimated \$95 million economic impact on the region.

The resort includes: 100 guest rooms with 15 suites; three conference rooms and more than 4,300 sq. ft. of meeting space; one hotel restaurant and three outdoor dining/bar options; resort fitness center; pool area with nine cabanas, two hot tubs and three fire pits; outdoor amphitheater with seating for 125; casino with 600 slot machines and eight

table games including roulette and blackjack; and mercantile with gifts, groceries, a deli, a Starbucks and a 24-pump fuel station.

Incorporating the Choctaw culture throughout, Choctaw Landing has partnered with more than 20 Choctaw artists from around the country to create original artwork for the resort. There are 40 pieces of artwork in public spaces, two large exterior sculptures, including an interactive steel sculpture showcasing Choctaw dancers, will be installed during the summer and 600 pieces of artwork located throughout guest rooms.

To celebrate these artists, Choctaw Landing has developed an art hike to provide guests with a fun, interactive and educational look at the Choctaw art featured throughout the resort. Using advanced AI technology, a digital twin of Choctaw Chief Gary Batton will guide visitors as they learn about the culture, art and history of the Choctaw Nation.

"From the planning stages years ago, we knew that we wanted to bring something to this community that brought culture first and foremost," said Heidi Grant, Senior Executive Officer Over Commerce. "Culture was prevalent in the design and development stages. We were very considerate about the nature and community aspects and how we could fit and complement this area."

### Sky River Casino Announces Expansion Plans

Wilton Rancheria and partner Boyd Gaming Corporation formally announced and outlined expansion plans for Sky River Casino, which first opened on August 15, 2022. Located off of Highway 99 in Elk Grove, future expansion plans for Sky River Casino include an expanded gaming floor, additional high limit room, a 300-room state-of-the-art hotel, luxurious spa, spectacular outdoor pool, and an innovative meeting, event and entertainment space. As an architectural highlight, a dramatic hotel atrium ceiling will allow for breathtaking views of the sky

above – one of many features that pay tribute to the tribe's close connection to nature. With work planned to begin on a new parking structure this year, the expansion plans will roll out in two construction phases:

Phase 1 expansion plans include a multi-story, 1,600 space parking garage and enhanced valet service area with a new porte cochere. Phase 2 expansion plans include: a 300-room state-of-the-art hotel; outdoor pool; day spa; multi-use event and entertainment space; 400 additional slot gaming options; and an additional,



elevated high limit and VIP gaming area.

While timing is subject to change based on construction, availability of materials, and weather-related variables, Phase 1 is expected to be completed by summer 2025 and Phase 2 by early 2027.

“We are very proud of what we have created – and continue to imagine – at Sky River Casino,” said Jesus Tarango, Wilton Rancheria Chairman. “With these expansion plans now firmly in process, the future is even brighter for the Elk Grove community, greater Sacramento area, and for generations of Wilton Rancheria people – the only federally recognized tribe in Sacramento County. I want to thank the tribal elders and citizens of Wilton Rancheria for their support. We would also like to gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support extended by the city of Elk Grove, Sacramento County, and our state leaders, along with the incredible reception by an amazing and welcoming Northern California community.”

Wilton Rancheria currently possesses nearly 140 acres of land, including Sky River Casino and the parcels surrounding it. This includes 77 acres of the tribe’s traditional Rancheria land, which was recently put into federal trust with plans to develop tribal services and preserve its great cultural legacy.

“These expansion plans for Sky River will continue to set new standards of excellence for casino experiences not only in the Sacramento area, but throughout Northern California



and beyond,” said Michael J. Facenda, Sky River Casino President. “Once we have a world-class hotel, event space and other highly desirable amenities, we will offer a destination of appeal to guests who will travel in search of elevated experiences that are highlighted by lively gaming and entertainment, amazing culinary options, upscale overnight accommodations, and relaxing environments.”

Currently, Sky River Casino employs approximately 1,600 team members. With these expansion plans, approximately 200 new job opportunities will be created to accommodate the new offerings, amenities, and experiences.

## Gold Strike Casino Resort Opens Next Level Lounge



L-R: Mike Tamburelli, Cherokee Nation Entertainment (CNE) Vice President of Commercial Gaming Operations; Shane Robertson, Gold Strike Executive Director of Gaming Operations; Jennifer Provenance, CNE Vice President of Corporate Casino Marketing; Tim Branham, CNE Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer; Dean Rubin, Gold Strike Senior Vice President and General Manager; Craytonia Collins, Gold Strike Vice President of Hospitality; and Doug Hall, Vice President of Sales, Aristocrat Gaming.

Gold Strike Casino Resort celebrated the opening of its Next Level Lounge powered by Aristocrat Gaming, its newest

gaming experience. The Next Level Lounge offers guests an elevated experience, featuring the latest in modern electronic gaming options along with a freshly renovated aesthetic.

Located on the second floor of the casino, the lounge enhances Gold Strike Casino and is equipped with 45 of the newest games to choose from.

“The Next Level Lounge is more than a destination – it is an experience,” said Dean Rubin, SVP and GM for Gold Strike Casino Resort. “With its array of new and thrilling gaming options, guests are in for a treat. They won’t want to miss the opportunity to engage in this newly renovated space.”

The Next Level Lounge features the charm of a freshly renovated aesthetic, with new decor where players can relax and enjoy their enthusiasm for electronic games.

“We are incredibly excited to partner with Gold Strike Casino Resort to bring our top-performing game portfolio to Tunica,” said Kurt Gissane, Chief Revenue Officer for Aristocrat Gaming. “Guests will now be able to enjoy their favorite Aristocrat games, and some new ones, in one location that’s sleek and modern while also feeling right at home. We are looking forward to sharing this experience with everyone who walks through the doors.” ♣



## CLASS III

### Aristocrat Gaming

Phone: (702) 270-1000  
aristocratgaming.com

#### JACKPOT CARNIVAL EXTREME™

2023's Slot of the Year, Jackpot Carnival, is back in an all-new extreme version: Jackpot Carnival Extreme™. This thrilling new Class III game is both



a player-selectable multi-denom game and a multi-game starring the player-favorite titles Buffalo™ and Power of 88™. Jackpot Carnival Extreme is exclusively available on the groundbreaking King Max™ cabinet. The grand SSP progressive jackpot starts at either \$10,000 or \$20,000 and can be linked to the original Jackpot Carnival games. There are three fun bonuses that take the entertainment to the extreme.

The new Extreme Clown Bonus is the next generation clown feature with two levels and multipliers up to 50x. The new Extreme Hammer Bonus takes it up a notch with the extreme hammer symbol pushing cash-on-reels prizes up the multiplier chart 2-14 rows up to 50x. Plus, players will enjoy the Classic Buffalo free games with multipliers or Power of 88 free games with big stacks of reveal symbols.

### Everi

Phone: (512) 334-7500  
everi.com

#### EVEL KNieVEL LEGEND™

Everi brings the larger-than-life daredevil Evel Knievel to the amazing



world of slots in Evel Knievel Legend™. The nostalgia of Evel Knievel as a cultural icon of the 70s is front and center in this licensed theme, complete with his recognizable red, white, and blue motif. Loyal stepper players will appreciate frequent base game events triggered by reel symbols, symbol-triggered progressives, and an exciting respin feature. The game's thrilling wheel bonus will boost players' chances for even bigger wins. Evel Knievel Legend is available on Player Classic Reserve™, which builds on the success of the Player Classic Signature™ with a sky-high design, stunning side lighting, and an optional merchandising wall that amplifies light to create an immersive experience.

### IGT

Phone: (702) 669-7777  
igt.com

#### TIGER AND DRAGON™



IGT's new Tiger and Dragon™ slots offer an action-packed experience that

will captivate players and bring a new level of entertainment to the casino floor. Available in two base games, Multiplier and Cash On Reels™, the theme features three unique bonuses: Tiger, Dragon, and the combined Tiger and Dragon Bonus. The game also introduces an entirely new lock, respin and reveal bonus featuring money ball symbols with credit values that can combine. In another new game mechanic, when gong symbols on the reels land in the same row, monetary winnings are revealed. Adding to Tiger and Dragon's game-play excitement are the "up arrows" that appear on reels and increase credit values. Elevating the experience, the game's Tiger Bonus presents win opportunities on a 3x5 reel matrix, and both the Dragon Bonus and the combined Tiger and Dragon Bonus advance the reels to an 8x5 reel matrix for big win potential. Tiger and Dragon is a vibrant game with unique merchandising options, vivid graphics, and LED signage and is available on IGT's PeakCurve™49 cabinet.

### Konami Gaming

Phone: (702) 616-1400  
konamigaming.com

#### ALL ABOARD™ PANDA PENNIES™

A jolly, round panda bear has paraded onto one of the world's most popular new slots series: All Aboard. Konami Gaming's All Aboard Panda Pennies is a fresh base game in the series, arriving with an ever-playful panda wild symbol. Panda Pennies features giant symbols across all middle reels during the free games, patterned after All Aboard Piggy Pennies—a long-time player favorite and debut base





game in the series. Any three-coin trigger symbols award five free games, where giant train symbols, giant wild symbols, and giant pictures symbols can catapult free game wins into new heights. In addition, the giant train symbols increase odds at the signature All Aboard credit collection feature. Available on Konami's award-winning Dimension 49J and big-screen Dimension 75C, All Aboard Panda Pennies can compatibly combine on a bank or pod with any other All Aboard base games for ongoing player attraction.

## Light & Wonder

Phone: (702) 897-7150  
lnw.com

### ULTIMATE FIRE LINK™ DOUBLE EXPLOSION™

The fireball-slinging monkeys are back and bigger than ever in Ultimate Fire Link™ Double Explosion™ on Light & Wonder's impressively large Horizon™ cabinet. This title follows up the successful Ultimate Fire Link™ Explosion™ and hosts the famous Fire Link Feature™, a hold- and-spin feature with unlocking rows as players land more and more fireball symbols with their credit values awarded when the feature is over. Another return is the Wheel Feature, a standout attraction in the previous title that can award players with a Fire Link Feature, a Double Fire Link Feature, free games, or the jackpot values shown. The Double Fire Link Feature is a new add in this exciting update to the franchise. Landing the Double Fire Link Feature gives the player two arrays to



play in, exciting players as they see fireballs cascading down the reels. The free games in Ultimate Fire Link Double Explosion use the fireball symbols to award credit values to the player and have a chance of dropping in extra free games on top of the five you start with.

## Zitro USA

Phone: (702) 835-6404  
zitrogames.com

### GONG SERIES



Unleash the dragon's power in Zitro's captivating new slot adventure, Gong. As players strike the ancient gong, a magnificent dragon rouses to life. Its fiery breath, a dazzling spectacle, illuminates the path to hidden treasures promising eternity, abundance, and luxury. The Gong family of games delivers an immersive experience with its innovative Bonus Central Link mechanic. The core gameplay revolves around a central symbol, with players collecting blue symbols to enhance their value. Adding to the thrill, the gong symbol replicates the central symbol's value for increased payouts. Unlock the dragon's power by activating the Dragon symbol, which further enhances the experience by collecting all active prizes on the bonus screen. Mega and super progressive jackpots can be won with just one symbol, with values adjusting based on the player's chosen denomination.

Additionally, achieving 15 symbols triples the value of the central symbol. With its unique mechanics, captivating theme, and the potential for big wins, Gong promises to be a thrilling addition to casino floors.

## CLASS II

### Aristocrat Gaming

Phone: (702) 270-1000  
aristocratgaming.com

### POP! POP! GOLD!™

The nostalgic fun of a carnival comes to life in the all-new Pop! Pop! Gold!™ game from Aristocrat Gaming. This game was created exclusively for Class II markets and connects to the exciting, new linked bonus program Frenzy Jackpots Link™. Pop! Pop! Gold! is available on the HelixXT™ and MarsX Portrait™ cabinets and is a 3x5 20-lines game with low volatility and frequent feature frequency. A \$10,000 SSP grand jackpot start-up adds to the fun. Players will also be entertained by four features. In Pop! Pop! Gold Respins, players can respin reels to cash-on-reels prizes that increase with every spin. In Wheel Wins, players spin the wheel for credit prizes or the jackpot. With Prize Pop, players are seeking to match three pick bonuses to win credit prizes or the jackpot. In Cash Carousel, players collect escalating cash prizes from horses each time one appears.



## Everi

Phone: (512) 334-7500  
everi.com

### CHA-CHING! PARTY™



Cha-Ching! Party™ is the highly anticipated next iteration of Everi's hottest theme, Cha-Ching!™. Cha-Ching! Party features an incredibly wide bet range and an innovative no-reel mechanic where players adjust volatility in a fast-picking base game.

Candles light on party cake accumulators to trigger all-new bonus features, including the Wish Bonus, Five Spot Bonus, and Jackpot Bonus. Cha-Ching! Party is available on the Dynasty Sol™ for-sale portrait video reel cabinet that is optimized for a more incredible gaming experience and the Empire Flex™ cabinet.



## IGT

Phone: (702) 669-7777  
igt.com

### SAMURAI 888™

Players will enjoy a new spinoff from the popular Samurai 888™ family for the Class II market with Samurai 888 Spin 'Sakura' and 'Kenji.' Unique to the Samurai 888 Spin game is a wheel feature, which can be activated before every

other feature and award credit prizes, extra free games, jackpots, and upgrades. During the base game, when a green, red, or purple coin lands on the reels, the corresponding coin boost modifier, jackpot modifier, or reel boost modifier with an expanded 6x5 matrix is activated, and free games may be triggered. If all three coins appear together on the reels, the free games bonus will trigger with all modifiers active in a thrilling mega feature.

One of the four jackpot levels can be awarded when the jackpot modifier is active and the treasure chest symbol lands on the reels. Available on the PeakCurve™ 49 cabinet, Samurai 888 Spin is a 25-payline, 98-credit cost-to-cover game.

## Light & Wonder

Phone: (702) 897-7150  
lnw.com

### JOURNEY TO THE PLANET MOOLAH™

After much anticipation, the Mural™ cabinet is entering Class II and is launching with the next installment of the Light & Wonder franchise featuring our favorite dastardly dairy delinquents, Journey to the Planet Moolah™. With cascading reels, space adventures, and baby unicows, this true persistence title is all about capitalizing on the screen real estate that Mural provides. The cascading reels have returned and are used to lead players to the Journey Feature, which triggers if a player triggers a cascade effect at least four times in a single spin. This launches players to Planet Moolah for free games and potential credits and multipliers by crashing into them during the flight. While on Planet Moolah, playing those free games, players will also have a chance to trigger the Planet Wheel Feature, which gives extra bonuses. Even better, if a uicow shows up in the wager that triggers the Journey Feature, the player gets to play their free games in Cowtopia, the center of Planet Moolah. This new installment features an absolute zoo of different cows with different effects attached to them. It needs to be seen to be believed. 🍀



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## Calendar of Events

### JUNE

June 17-19, 2024  
Washington Indian Gaming Association  
**Northwest Indian Gaming  
Conference & Expo**  
Tulalip Resort Casino  
Tulalip, WA  
washingtonindiangaming.org

### AUGUST

August 12-14, 2024  
Oklahoma Indian Gaming  
Association  
**OIGA 2024**  
Oklahoma City, OK  
oiga.org

### SEPTEMBER

September 16-18, 2024  
Indian Gaming Association  
**Indian Gaming Mid-Year Conference  
& Expo**  
Tulalip Resort Casino  
Tulalip, WA  
Email: [indiangaming@clarionevents.com](mailto:indiangaming@clarionevents.com)  
Call 202-546-7711  
[indiangamingtradeshow.com](http://indiangamingtradeshow.com)

September 16-19, 2024  
TribalHub  
**25th Annual TribalNet Conference  
& Tradeshow**  
Westgate Las Vegas  
Las Vegas, NV  
Email: [contactus@tribalhub.com](mailto:contactus@tribalhub.com)  
Call 269-459-9890  
[tribalnetconference.com](http://tribalnetconference.com)

September 23-24, 2024  
NAFOA  
**NAFOA 2024 Fall Finance  
& Tribal Economies Conference**  
Hilton San Diego Bayfront  
San Diego, CA  
Email: [info@nafoa.org](mailto:info@nafoa.org)  
[nafoa.org/conference](http://nafoa.org/conference)

### OCTOBER

October 7-10, 2024  
American Gaming Association  
**2024 Global Gaming Expo (G2E)**  
The Venetian Expo  
Las Vegas, NV  
Email: [inquiry@globalgamingexpo.com](mailto:inquiry@globalgamingexpo.com)  
Call 888-314-1378  
[globalgamingexpo.com](http://globalgamingexpo.com)

### SAVE THE DATE - 2025

### MARCH

March 31 - April 3, 2025  
Indian Gaming Association  
**2025 Indian Gaming Tradeshow  
& Convention**  
San Diego Convention Center  
San Diego, CA  
Email: [indiangaming@clarionevents.com](mailto:indiangaming@clarionevents.com)  
Call 202-546-7711  
[indiangamingtradeshow.com](http://indiangamingtradeshow.com)

### MAY

May 2-4, 2025  
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation  
**Class 2 Gathering (C2G) 2024**  
Prairie Band Casino & Resort  
Mayetta, KS  
[class2gathering.com](http://class2gathering.com)

Email event information to  
[editor@indiangaming.com](mailto:editor@indiangaming.com)

## INDIAN GAMING E-NEWS

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## Indian Country Mourns the Passing of Ernest L. Stevens, Sr.

Ernest Stevens, Sr., a dedicated advocate for sovereignty, self-determination, self-governance, and Native rights, passed away on Saturday, June 1st, at the Anna John Resident Centered Care Community facility in Oneida, WI. Born in 1932, Ernie Stevens, Sr. was a prominent figure in the Indian political activism during the 1960s and 1970s.



A U.S. Marine Corps combat veteran of the Korean War, he served four years and earned the rank of Staff Sergeant at 19 years of age. Stevens was recognized for his service and dedication, receiving accolades such as the Korean Unit citation and the Korean Service medal with three battle stars. During his time in Korea, he was part of the well-known conflict, the Frozen Chosen. The Marines who fought there are known as “the chosen few” where nearly 2,500 of the U.S. forces died, some froze to death. The wounded totaled 5,000 and 8,000 suffered frostbite.

Stevens’ illustrious and impactful career includes serving in numerous leadership positions, including as Executive Director of the Los Angeles Indian Center, the Institute for Community Anti-Poverty Corporation, the Inter-Tribal Council of California, the Indian Action Project in Arizona, and the LA Human Rights Commission.

Coming from humble beginnings, Stevens began a profound rise to national recognition at a time of great change in Indian Country. He remained a charismatic figure to many tribes, Indian leaders, and Indian people, particularly in Arizona, where his early professional years left a significant imprint. He held a bachelor’s degree in Business Economics and a Community Fellows Program certification from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

In the mid-1950s, Stevens moved to Los Angeles, where he found great struggles and challenges as a young man fresh out of military service in his country. He would meet Joe Vasquez, a man who would become one of his closest friends in life in the professional and political world. Vasquez picked up Stevens and got him back on his feet. Together, they would work throughout Los Angeles and Indian Country, helping people, promoting Indian business, and moving Indian Country forward.

In the mid-1960s, Stevens moved to Tempe, AZ, and worked as the Executive Director for the Indian Action Project and with tribes in the economic and community development arena. While in Arizona, he was invited by the Ford Foundation to participate in an exchange program that sent him to New Zealand, along with nine other Indian men, to tour Maori native communities and exchange ideas and develop recommendations

concerning health, education, housing, socio-economic, economic development, and governance and language issues. This exchange program brought 10 Maori men to Indian Country, and upon completion of their assignment, they all met in New Zealand to debrief and deliver their joint report. Their work would be considered a model and standard for Indian Country and the Indigenous people of New Zealand. His accomplishments and unwavering commitment to Indian Country did not go unnoticed, as evidenced by the Leon Grant Spirit of the Community Award bestowed upon him by the Phoenix Indian Center in 2017.

In 1969, Stevens accepted the position of Executive Director for the Inter-Tribal Council of California, where he is still well-known and revered among California elders for his work. Here, he was recruited by the late Louis Bruce, former Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and he became an integral part of a team of 11 Indian men who would change the course of policy. While at the Bureau, Stevens would serve as Development Director, Community Development Director, and Acting Commissioner. Several key issues initiated and implemented at that time were the concepts of contracting and Indian preference. He played a pivotal role in shaping Indian policy, advocating for tribal self-determination, and significantly contributing to the advancement of Indian Country.

During his tenure at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Stevens would be elected First Vice-President to the National Congress of American Indians and served as the Executive Director of the American Indian Policy Review Commission, which led to him being confirmed to serve as the first Staff Director to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. While serving as Staff Director for the American Indian Policy Review Commission, Stevens would lead a staff of over 200, primarily young and educated Indians, to research, compile, and deliver the most comprehensive study regarding Indian Country since the Meriam Report in 1928.

Stevens would later work as the economic development director for the Navajo Nation. Upon returning home to Oneida, he would fulfill his duties as an elected Councilman on the Oneida Business Committee and later as the Senior Manager of the Development Division for the Oneida Nation. Stevens was then recruited to participate in a one-year Community Fellows program in Boston at MIT. Upon his return and while serving as a consultant for Oneida, Stevens suffered a debilitating aneurysm that left him unable to continue his work.

He left a lasting imprint on those he encountered. Whether through his leadership roles in various organizations or his involvement in policymaking at the national level, Stevens, was a driving force for change and progress in Indian Country. He was a visionary leader, a devoted advocate, and a beloved community member. Stevens’ indelible mark on Indian Country will forever be remembered and cherished by all whose lives he touched. ♣



## Colista Matsaw Appointed CEO of Shoshone-Bannock Casino Hotel



Colista Matsaw

The Fort Hall Business Council has selected tribal member Colista Matsaw as CEO of Shoshone-Bannock Casino Hotel. She officially began in her new role on May 23, 2024.

“Colista brings over 25 years of invaluable experience in the gaming and hospitality industry to her role as the CEO,” said Fort Hall Business Council Chairman Lee Juan Tyler. “She embodies a commitment to excellence, innovation and honoring our tribal heritage. We are pleased that we have a tribal member that has succeeded in her educational efforts and exceeds the necessary experience to be successful for our tribes.”

Matsaw’s journey in the gaming industry began as a Keno runner at Sandia Casino in New Mexico. After returning home to Fort Hall, Matsaw held various positions with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes gaming operations, including in the security and cage departments, and eventually assumed roles as the Gaming Machine Director, Interim CEO and Executive Hotel Director.

For the past three years, Matsaw has operated her own consulting business and served as a statewide business advisor for the Idaho Women’s Business Center’s Idaho Connect Program. In addition, she was a Programs Coordinator with the Oweesta Corporation, a Native-owned non-profit organization dedicated to serving Indigenous communities across the U.S., including Hawaii and Alaska.

As CEO, Matsaw is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of staff, guest services and providing leadership and strategic planning to all departments in support of the operation’s service culture. She will also be responsible for ensuring compliance to all tribal and federal laws, regulations and ordinances as they apply to the gaming industry.

“I am humbled and honored to serve in the capacity as the CEO for our tribe’s gaming operations,” said Matsaw. “We have been in business for over 30 years, and I believe with the proper leadership we have the team members to get us to the next level of success that our tribe is capable of. I am eager to step into this role and lead an amazing organization for the benefit of my tribe, community members and Indian Country.”

## Steven Doyle Appointed CEO of Comanche Nation Entertainment

Comanche Nation Entertainment has named Steven Doyle as its CEO. Doyle previously served as the company’s CFO.



Steven Doyle

Doyle now oversees Comanche Nation Entertainment’s six gaming properties throughout Southwest Oklahoma, in addition to its travel plazas, smoke shops and quick stops. The properties include Comanche Red River Hotel and Casino in Devol, Comanche Nation Casino in Lawton, Comanche Star Casino in Walters, Comanche Spur Casino in Elgin, Comanche Cache Casino in Cache and Comanche War

Pony Casino in Devol.

“As I step into the role of CEO for Comanche Nation Entertainment, I look forward to leading this dynamic organization into its next chapter of growth and innovation,” said Doyle. “This is an opportunity to collaborate with our talented team and further enhance our commitment to delivering exceptional gaming experiences. Together, we will continue to advance our position as a leader in the tribal gaming industry.”

As CEO, Doyle is responsible for hiring and supervising Comanche Nation Entertainment’s management team, developing and implementing policies and procedures, managing budgets, overseeing operations and ensuring compliance with all relevant laws and regulations governing gaming operations.

Having worked with tribal, non-tribal and some of the industry’s largest gaming operators, Doyle brings more than three decades of experience to his new position. Prior to assuming the role of CEO, he managed the company’s financial operations, including budgeting, forecasting, analysis, investor relations, and operational efficiencies, among others.

## Michael Schrader Appointed GM of Little River Casino Resort



Michael Schrader

The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians of Little River Casino Resort has named Michael Schrader GM of the resort.

“I am happy to announce Michael as the new General Manager for the resort,” said Larry Romanelli, Ogema of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. “He has a strong background in the casino resort industry [and] was at one time, a team member of the resort.”

Schrader has widespread experience serving in leadership positions throughout the country, including more than 20 years of Native American casino and resort experience. His background also includes business management, security and surveillance, compliance, and eight years in the U.S. Navy.

“I am excited to be back at Little River Casino Resort,” said Schrader. “I feel I have come full circle with my return and am quite grateful the Ogema has entrusted me with this

crucial endeavor. I am lucky to have walked into an organization with a solid and knowledgeable executive team and the friendliest team members in the world. I have great expectations we will continue to uphold a high commitment to excellence, growth, and success.”

### Timothy Morrissey Appointed Director of Gaming Ops at Casino Del Sol



Timothy Morrissey

Casino Del Sol has appointed Timothy Morrissey as Director of Gaming Operations. With a career spanning over ten years in the gaming and hospitality industry, Morrissey brings a wealth of expertise to his new role.

He joins Casino Del Sol from Magnolia Bluffs Casino & Hotel in Natchez, MS, where he served as Vice President and General Manager. Prior to his role at Magnolia Bluffs, Morrissey was General Manager at Saratoga Casino in Black Hawk, CO, where he spearheaded the integration of new casino and hotel assets into Saratoga Casino’s corporate ecosystem. Prior to Saratoga Casino, Morrissey was Senior Operations Director at Royal River Casino & Hotel in Flandreau, SD.

“We are thrilled to welcome Timothy Morrissey to the Casino Del Sol team,” said Kimberly Van Amburg, CEO at Casino Del Sol. “His extensive experience and proven leadership in the gaming industry make him the ideal candidate to lead our gaming operations to new heights.”

As Director of Gaming Operations, Morrissey will oversee all aspects of the gaming operations at Casino Del Sol, including strategic planning, revenue optimization and guest experience enhancement.

“I am honored to join the team at Casino Del Sol and excited to contribute to the continued success of this renowned property,” said Morrissey. “I look forward to collaborating with the talented team here to deliver exceptional gaming experiences for our guests.”

### Tom Malloy Appointed VP of Marketing for Jamul Casino

Jamul Casino has appointed Tom Malloy as Vice President of Marketing. Malloy joins Jamul Casino with more than 30 years of experience and will oversee all aspects of the Jamul Casino marketing identity. His focus will be on the tribe’s goals of community involvement and guest expansion particularly with the addition of Jamul Casino’s highly anticipated hotel tower, opening 2025.

“All of us here at Jamul are delighted to welcome Tom as our new Vice President of Marketing,” said Mary Cheeks, President and GM of Jamul Casino. “His vast experience and innovative approach will bring dynamic new strategies to our marketing efforts surrounding the casino, as well as the



Tom Malloy

opening of our new, luxury hotel tower in 2025.”

For over 30 years, Malloy has spearheaded a variety of companies in their marketing approaches. He began his career as an advertising agency executive, focusing on technology and healthcare before entering the gaming industry in 1998 as Director of the Gaming Division at R&R Partners in Las Vegas.

Since 2000, Malloy has acted as an internal marketing leader for several casinos, both tribal and commercial, across the country, including MGM Resorts International, Table Mountain Casino and Potawatomi Casino Hotel. Malloy most recently served as Vice President of Marketing at Gun Lake Casino in Wayland, MI.

“I’m very excited to join such an esteemed and highly regarded team of operators,” said Malloy. “I’m grateful to both tribal leadership and to Mary Cheeks for giving me this opportunity.”

### Robert Dearstine To Lead Marketing at Muckleshoot Casino Resort

Robert Dearstine has been appointed Executive Director of Marketing at Muckleshoot Casino Resort. Previously, he served as the Executive Director of Resort Operations. Dearstine played a pivotal role in the planning and execution of Muckleshoot Casino Resort’s luxury hotel build, overseeing the final design, seamless technology integrations, and comprehensive staff onboarding and training across various departments, including the call center, valet, bell desk, concierge, housekeeping, and gift shop. Before joining the company, Dearstine held prominent roles at Seminole Classic Casino, Seminole Casino Coconut Creek, Route 66 Casino Hotel and Station Casinos.



Robert Dearstine

“I am truly honored to step into the role of Executive Director of Marketing at Muckleshoot Casino Resort,” said Dearstine. “Having previously led the resort operations team, I’ve witnessed firsthand the dedication and passion that defines this organization. I’m excited to apply my experience and vision to further elevate our marketing initiatives, enhance our brand presence, and continue delivering exceptional experiences to our guests. It’s an exciting time for Muckleshoot Casino Resort, and I look forward to contributing to our ongoing success.”

“Robert Dearstine’s appointment as Executive Director of Marketing signifies an important milestone for Muckleshoot Casino Resort,” said Tim Perkins, CEO Muckleshoot Casino Resort. “His proven track record of leadership and



innovation, combined with his deep understanding of our operations, make him an exceptional fit for this role. We are confident that under Robert's guidance, our marketing efforts will reach new heights, further solidifying our position as the premier destination in the Northwest."

## NIGC Appoints Sharon Avery As Acting Chair



Sharon Avery

The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) has announced the President's appointment of Associate Commissioner Sharon M. Avery as Acting Chair of the agency. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland recently appointed Avery to a three-year term as Associate Commissioner. Avery will serve both as Associate Commissioner and Acting Chair until a presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed Chair is

in place. As Acting Chair, Avery has the same statutory authority to lead the agency and take official actions as a Senate-confirmed appointee.

"I am humbled the administration has entrusted me with the distinguished opportunity to serve as the NIGC Acting Chair," said Avery. "In this capacity, and to the best of my abilities, I will diligently execute my duties and responsibilities designated by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act to continue the agency's regulatory oversight of tribal gaming facilities without disruption, until a permanent Chair has been confirmed."

Avery is an enrolled member of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. She has been with the NIGC for over four years where she has served as an Associate General Counsel in the NIGC Office of General Counsel. Before joining the NIGC, Avery served for more than 10 years in the legal department for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. Most recently, she served as the tribe's General Counsel for Tribal Operations.

## TBE Architects Announces New Leadership Structure

TBE Architects has announced a restructuring of its leadership team. After 42 years at TBE Architects, Rich Emery, Design Principal, is stepping out of his role as



TBE Architects executive team, from L-R: David Nejelski, Vice President; Rich Emery, CEO; and Luke Jumper, President.

President and taking on the title of CEO; Luke Jumper, Senior Project Manager, has moved into the role as President; and David Nejelski, Creative Director, completes the executive team as Vice President.

"With rapid developments in new technology and trends, we felt like the timing was right to introduce in a fresh perspective to our leadership team," said Emery. "One that can take our abundant history of designing casino resort properties and lead it towards a bright future."

Emery began at TBE in May 1982, and over the course of his career, worked his way up from the production floor to his role as President. Working alongside co-founders of the firm, Barry Thalden and Charles "Chief" Boyd, Emery's dedication and hard work have been instrumental in shaping the company's success partnering with tribal and commercial projects for over 53 years. As CEO, Emery will continue to oversee project progress and will focus on mentoring the next generation of leaders.

Jumper's visionary acumen and strong leadership will benefit his new role as President. Fully immersed in the daily responsibilities, Jumper will lead the firm towards continued growth and success as its President.

Nejelski completes the executive team with his talent for designing spaces that capture the essence of culture and heritage while inspiring casino guests to stay and play longer. He recently celebrated 30 years at TBE Architects and, as part of his additional responsibilities, will be dedicating more time to client-facing opportunities. ♣



SEPTEMBER 16 – 18, 2024  
TULALIP, WA

## Bluberi Celebrates Opening of New Las Vegas Headquarters



Andrew Burke, CEO of Bluberi Gaming (center), officiates an unlocking ceremony at the company's new corporate headquarters alongside Nevada Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar (far left), Clark County Commissioner Michael Naft (far right) and Bluberi leadership.

Bluberi celebrated the grand opening of its new 84,881 sq. ft. corporate headquarters in Las Vegas with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The event, held at 6355 W Maule Avenue, Suite 120, marked a significant milestone in the company's growth and expansion across North America.

The ceremony featured speeches from Bluberi CEO Andrew Burke, Nevada Secretary of State Cisco Aguilar, and Clark County Commissioner Michael Naft, who officially proclaimed May 30th as Bluberi Day.

In celebration of the company's most successful game brand, Devil's Lock®, the event featured an "unlocking ceremony." Bluberi also partnered with Goodwill of Southern Nevada for a donation drive to support local charitable efforts. Attendees enjoyed office tours and local food trucks as part of the celebration.

Bluberi's employs 200 team members across five offices located in Las Vegas, NV; Reno, NV; Drummondville, QB; Moncton, NB; and Austin, TX.

## Chukchansi Gold Honors Long-Standing Team Members

Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino is honoring 50 team members for their years of service. Among the honorees, seven team members are marking a decade of service, while 11 are commemorating 15 years with the resort. An incredible 32 team members are celebrating their 20th anniversary in 2024, adding to the 109 team members who reached this milestone last year.

In recognition of their loyalty and hard work, each of the 20-year employees will be awarded a \$5,000 bonus on their anniversary. Chukchansi Gold is also awarding a range of other

gifts to commemorate the anniversaries including F&B credits, additional paid time off, commemorative pins and trophies, and well-deserved raises.

"We are deeply grateful for the unwavering dedication and commitment of our long-standing team members," said Christopher Mavroudis, Director of Human Resources at Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino. "Their passion and hard work have played a pivotal role in our success, and we are honored to celebrate their milestone achievements."

The anniversary celebration not only acknowledges the remarkable tenure of these employees, but also underscores Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino's commitment to fostering a culture of appreciation, respect and growth within its workforce. Chukchansi Gold's employee programs are one of the many reasons the resort has been named the People's Choice Best Place To Work year after year. In addition to competitive wages and bonuses, Chukchansi Gold team members receive \$47,500 to \$62,800 in benefits, including medical, dental, vision, 401K with employer match and immediate vesting, life insurance and paid time off. Employee perks include free and discounted meals in the team dining room, holiday gifts and raffles, and discounts for Chukchansi Park.

## Lac Vieux Desert Northern Waters Casino Partners With IGT PlaySports

The Lac Vieux Desert Northern Waters Casino & Resort has partnered with IGT PlaySports via a new services agreement. In addition to now leveraging IGT PlaySports for a range of trading-related services, Northern Waters has powered its sportsbook with IGT's platform and self-service betting technology since 2021.

"IGT PlaySports is Northern Waters's ideal technology and services partner as we roll out the next era of sports betting entertainment to our customers," said John McGeshick, Lac Vieux Desert Northern Waters Casino & Resort, General Manager. "IGT PlaySports' comprehensive, turnkey solution has streamlined our sportsbook operations and positioned us to more keenly focus on our guests and ensure they have the best possible fan experience."

"The IGT PlaySports team is excited to expand our relationship with Northern Waters to include trading advisory services," said Joe Asher, IGT President of Sports Betting. "In servicing 36 sportsbooks across North America, the IGT Trading Advisory Team is adept at helping operators maximize the returns of their sports betting offerings while enhancing player loyalty and engagement."

As part of Northern Waters' sportsbook enhancements, the casino plans to deploy IGT's PeakBarTop™ cabinets with Total Gaming™ software. The hardware features Game King® video poker, slots, keno and sports betting from a single device and wallet. ♣



## Wilton Rancheria Places 77 Acres of Land in Trust

Wilton Rancheria has signed 77 acres into federal trust, safeguarding a place for the tribe to protect and celebrate their culture for generations to come. Wilton Rancheria, the only federally recognized tribe in Sacramento County, now has 113 acres in federal trust.

“Today is a historic step in our journey to reclaim our home and reunite our communities,” said Jesus Tarango, Wilton Rancheria Chairman. “By placing this land in trust, we preserve a space for future generations to gather and thrive. I’m filled with pride as I reflect on the many people who have made today possible, and for the bright future of Wilton Rancheria.”

Landless tribes often have members spread across the country, making it difficult to have centralized health and housing services and stay united as a community. The newly reacquired property is located along Green Road and will be used to re-establish cultural and ceremony areas for the tribe, including an arbor, as well as housing an elder’s center.

“It’s always a good day when we can restore tribal homelands for the benefit of tribal citizens,” said Amy Dutschke, Regional Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Pacific Region.

This land is part of the original tract that was purchased from the Cosumnes Company, which formally established the Wilton Rancheria in July 1928. Thirty years later, the Rancheria Act terminated federal trust responsibilities to 41 California Indian tribes, including Wilton Rancheria. As a result, the tribe lost its federal recognition in 1964. Following a hard-fought legal battle led by tribal elders, the tribe’s federal status was restored in 2009.

The federal government established the trust process in an effort to help tribes regain lost lands and promote tribal self-determination. There are currently over 56 million acres of land held in trust by the federal government.

## Supreme Court Affirms Federal Support for Tribally Run Healthcare Programs

The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that the 1975 Indian Self-Determination Act (ISDA) mandates the Indian Health Service (IHS) to reimburse tribal nations for the expenditures of revenues collected from third-party payors such as Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers. This ensures that tribal nation healthcare programs operate on equal footing with IHS-run programs, as intended by the ISDA. The Court consolidated *Becerra v. San Carlos Apache Tribe* and *Becerra v. Northern Arapaho Tribe* and held that the ISDA and the ISDA contracts require the tribal nations to collect revenues from third-party payors and spend that

revenue to further their respective healthcare programs. As a result, the costs to tribal nations of spending these revenues on further healthcare services must also be eligible for contract support cost reimbursement from IHS.

“Today’s decision is a victory for tribal self-determination and tribal sovereignty,” said National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) President Mark Macarro. “This ruling ensures that tribal nations administering healthcare services to their citizens and communities do so with the full funding to which they are entitled under federal law and contracts with the Indian Health Service.”

“Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination Act with the purpose of empowering tribal nations and ensuring that tribally-run healthcare programs would be on equal footing with those run by the Indian Health Service,” said John Echohawk, Executive Director of the Native American Rights Fund (NARF). “This decision honors the commitment Congress made to tribal nations’ rights to self-determination.”

“Nearly 50 years ago, Congress enacted the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act to promote tribal sovereignty,” said U.S. Senator Brian Schatz, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. “The law allowed tribes to enter into self-determination contracts and take over their healthcare services from IHS, with confirmation that the federal government would reimburse their incurred costs. And today, the Supreme Court affirmed IHS’s responsibility to cover all of these costs, including contract support costs. This decision is a huge win for Indian Country, and a powerful reminder of the federal government’s trust and treaty obligations to tribal nations.”

“I am encouraged by this ruling, as it affirms tribal self-determination under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and recognizes that adequate resources are critical to addressing the unmet healthcare needs of Native people,” said U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. “I have seen firsthand how self-determination improves the delivery of Indian healthcare in Alaska and across the nation. I will continue working to ensure the federal government fulfills its trust responsibility to Native peoples.”

*Becerra v. San Carlos Apache Tribe* and *Becerra v. Northern Arapaho Tribe* affirm the Ninth and Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals’ wins by the tribes, making these victories applicable nationwide. Both tribal nations sued to ensure full contract support cost reimbursement from IHS related to the direct healthcare services they provide on their respective reservations. This decision follows two previous rulings by the Court that under ISDA, tribal nations are eligible for contract support costs because they incur overhead and other costs to run their healthcare programs that IHS-run programs do not. ♣

## **Interior Announces \$71 Million To Electrify Tribal Homes With Clean Energy**

The Department of the Interior announced the availability of \$71 million in funding through President Biden's Investing in America agenda to help tribal communities electrify their homes. This investment is a critical step toward the goal of electrifying all homes in Indian Country with clean energy sources and advances the Biden-Harris administration's work to reach a carbon-free electricity sector by 2035. This is the second round of funding from the Office of Indian Affairs' Tribal Electrification Program, part of an overall \$150 million investment from the Inflation Reduction Act.

"As the Interior Department implements this new program, we will continue to support tribes as they work to develop their electricity infrastructure and help meet our shared clean energy goals," said Secretary Haaland. "Through President Biden's Investing in America agenda, we're providing reliable, resilient energy that tribes can rely on, and advancing our work to tackle the climate crisis and build a clean energy future."

The President's Investing in America agenda is deploying record investments to provide affordable high-speed internet, safer roads and bridges, modern wastewater and sanitation systems, clean drinking water, reliable and affordable electricity, and good paying jobs in every tribal community.

"Funding from the President's Investing in America agenda will bring electricity to homes in tribal communities that have never had it; it will have a fundamental and significant impact on businesses, communities and families," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. "The Tribal Electrification Program is important for providing tribes a much-needed boost to their efforts of closing the access-to-electricity gap in their communities."

Tribal nations across the country have their own unique energy and electrification-related needs and implementation capacity. The Tribal Electrification Program is meeting the unique needs of individual tribal communities by supporting collaborative and community-led planning and implementation.

Through this funding, the program will provide financial and technical assistance to tribes to connect homes to transmission and distribution that is powered by clean energy; provide electricity to unelectrified tribal homes through zero-emissions energy systems; transition electrified tribal homes to zero-emissions energy systems; and support associated home repairs and retrofitting necessary to install the zero-emissions energy systems. The program will also support clean energy workforce development opportunities in Indian Country.

## **President Biden Expands Tribally Sacred Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument**

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland recently applauded President Biden's 13,696-acre expansion of the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in Northern California's Inner Coast Range. The new designation protects a striking 11-mile-long north-south ridgeline that is sacred to the Patwin people and hosts a mosaic of rare natural features supported by the area's unique geologic and hydrologic features. The presidential proclamation also permanently renames the ridgeline, previously known as "Walker Ridge," to Molok Luyuk, which means Condor Ridge in the language of the Patwin people.

"Locally led conservation efforts are at the heart of what we are advancing in the Biden-Harris administration," said Secretary Deb Haaland. "Molok Luyuk is sacred to the tribes who have long advocated for its protection and maintain a deep connection with this land and thanks to President Biden's leadership, it will now be protected for future generations."

Lands within the monument have sustained Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. In recognition of the importance to the Patwin people, including the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, the Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and the Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians, the proclamation directs the Secretary of the Interior to explore co-stewardship agreements within the expansion area, including for educational efforts regarding the history of the tribal nations.

The Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and

U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, was originally established by Presidential Proclamation on July 10, 2015, to protect its rich biodiversity, including relic prairies, riparian habitats, and species endemic to California, such as tule elk. In addition to holding important significance for tribes, the monument provides essential habitat for threatened and endangered fish and wildlife, is home to exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities, and is invaluable for scientific research.

In September, Secretary Haaland, Bureau of Land Management Director Tracy Stone-Manning, Congressmen John Garamendi and Mike Thompson, and leaders from the State of California, BLM and Forest Service visited Molok Luyuk to hear directly from the community on proposals to expand the existing national monument to include existing BLM-managed public land. A public meeting was held in December 2023, and demonstrated strong local support for the expansion.

"President Biden has lifted up the voices of tribes and the local community, honoring collaborative conservation for a place that deserves protection," said BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning, "Molok Luyuk will undoubtedly become one of the treasures of the monument, and we look forward to working with the tribes to manage it."

Now encompassing more than 340,000 acres of public land, the national monument is subject to valid existing rights. The monument designation applies to existing federal land managed by the BLM; it does not apply to or affect tribal land, private, state or local government property. ♣



### Tachi Palace Raises \$37,000 for Casa of Kings County in Charity Golf Tournament



Tachi Palace Casino Resort hosted the 21st Annual Charity Golf Tournament at Lemoore Golf Course benefiting Casa of Kings County. The day included breakfast, food and beverage samples throughout the course, and dinner. Consisting of local and non-local California tribal casino representatives and casino vendors, 160 golfers participated. On the course, challenges included closest to the pin, longest drive, and guess the distance. The tournament concluded with a closing ceremony and raffle prize drawings.

"We are very pleased with the wonderful turnout for our 21st Anniversary Annual Golf Tournament," said Michael Olujic, General Manager of Tachi Palace Casino Resort. "All of the golfers enjoyed a fun-filled day, as well as the opportunity to raise funds for a very worthy cause in our local community."

Casa for Kings County, also known as Court Appointed Special Advocates, is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for the best interests of abused and neglected children within the Kings County foster care system. By training and supporting community volunteers, Casa provides a consistent, caring presence for these children, ensuring their voices are heard in court and their needs are met. This critical work helps to secure safe, permanent homes and brighter futures for vulnerable youth.

"I would like to thank Tachi Palace Casino Resort for the recent donation of \$37,201.16 raised for Casa of Kings County through their charity golf tournament," said Maritza Lemus, Executive Director of Casa of Kings County. "This generous contribution will significantly impact foster children in Kings County as we recruit and train more volunteers to serve as their advocates. Having a caring advocate means they are more likely to succeed, thrive, and have hopeful futures."

### Stillaguamish Tribe Donates \$488,546 to Local Fire Departments

The Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians presented three checks for a total of \$488,546 to local fire districts to support their community. The donations were presented to Snohomish County Fire District #22 (\$168,546), Island County Fire District #1



Camano Island Fire & Rescue (\$170,000), and Skagit County Fire District #15 (\$150,000).

The donations will fund initiatives at each department to help them better serve residents in emergency situations. The financial support will be utilized to purchase essential equipment, and improve overall response capabilities, ensuring that the communities are well-prepared for emergencies that may arise.

"The Stillaguamish Tribe is deeply committed to supporting the local community and enhancing public safety," said Eric White, Tribal Chairman. "These donations reflect our ongoing dedication to ensuring that our local fire districts have the resources they need to protect and serve our residents effectively. We believe in building strong, resilient communities, and we are honored to contribute to critically helpful causes."

### Cherokee Nation Contributes \$476,000 to 136 Oklahoma Rural Fire Departments



Whitehorn Cove Fire Department was one of two departments recognized as this year's 2024 Volunteer Fire Department of the Year by the Cherokee Nation.

The Cherokee Nation is contributing nearly half a million dollars total to 136 Northeast Oklahoma rural fire departments. Each of the 136 fire departments is receiving \$3,500 as part of the tribe's contributions.

"These 136 rural fire departments are invaluable to our Cherokee communities," said Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. "The brave men and women who serve on these departments leave their homes and their families to help save lives and property of people they have never even met."

We don't always see first-hand the wonderful acts of courage and sacrifice they make through their service, but we know firefighters are selfless. Their efforts each day leave a lasting impression on the Cherokee Nation and the communities in which these men and women live. The Cherokee Nation and our communities owe a debt of gratitude to them, and it is an honor to know the Cherokee Nation is continuing to invest in these departments each and every year."

The tribe's annual contribution helps support volunteer fire departments, which otherwise rely on fundraisers, membership dues and the help of their community's residents to maintain their vital operations.

"All throughout the Cherokee Nation our volunteer fire departments are doing their best to keep all of us safe," said Cherokee Nation Deputy Chief Bryan Warner. "They never know when that next emergency call might come, and the need for a firefighter to respond and help doesn't consider whether that firefighter has been working hard all day or whether they have a family event to attend at that moment. Regardless, when those calls for help come in, volunteer firefighters stop what they are doing and go. They are a blessing to our communities and I'm proud we continue to honor them for their service each year."

During the event, Chief Hoskin also marked the one-year anniversary of Cherokee Nation's largest contributions to first responders in Cherokee history, the 2023 Cherokee Nation Public Safety Partners Grant. Under that \$13 million program, every first responder agency across the tribe's 7,000 sq. mi. reservation was eligible for \$50,000 grants from the \$13 million one-time grant fund that closed last fall.

Disney Fire Department and Whitehorn Cove Fire and Rescue were both recognized as this year's 2024 Volunteer Fire Departments of the Year.

### 25th Annual Pechanga Charity Golf Classic Raises \$200,000 for Local Charities

For three days in May, Journey at Pechanga golf course filled with more than 350 golfers partaking in the 25th annual Pechanga Charity Golf Classic, raising \$200,000 for four Southern California charities. The charities – Riverside University Health System Foundation, SAFE Family Justice Center, Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton, and the Kee Cha-E-Nar Corporation – will equally divide the proceeds, supporting a variety of important missions.

The Temecula-area tournament has grown from one to three days over the last 25 years, and has hosted many sports celebrities and other notables, all who take their best shots for great causes. The charity event has become one of the most in-demand tournaments in the region. In addition to golf, players experienced delicious food and drink offerings from sponsors throughout the unique 18 holes Journey at Pechanga.

For 25 years, the Pechanga Charity Golf Classic has brought together tribal and gaming industry leaders to support local

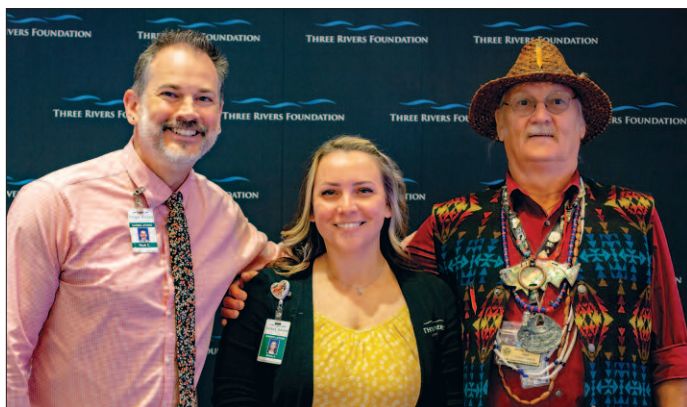


Representatives from the Pechanga Tribal Council, Pechanga Development Corporation, Riverside University Health System Foundation, SAFE Family Justice Center, Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton and Kee Cha-E-Nar Corporation.

Southern California charities. Through the years, the event has raised more than \$2 million to help causes that aid veterans and their families, seniors, at-risk youth within the community, domestic violence survivors, as well as tribal families, among others.

"Every year I look forward to seeing our community come together to support these invaluable service organizations," said Ken Perez, President of the Pechanga Development Corporation. "For 25 years now, Pechanga has had the honor of hosting this annual tournament and supporting our neighbors with important resources and services that help our community thrive."

### Three Rivers Foundation Donates \$720,000 to 95 Local Non-Profits



L-R: Rich Colton, Three Rivers Casino Marketing Director; Shelby Erickson, Three Rivers Casino HR Director; and Chief Doug Barrett at the grant award luncheon.

Three Rivers Foundation, established by the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians as the charitable arm of the Three Rivers Casino Resort, has announced donations of over \$720,000 to support the missions of 95 non-profit organizations across Oregon. The Three Rivers Foundation distributed funds to a diverse range of non-profits in sectors ranging from healthcare and education to combating food



insecurities and enriching the lives of children.

"It makes my heart feel good," said Chief Doug Barrett, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. "It's just awesome that we can help these folks make an impact on their organizations and their communities."

Non-profits in Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lane, Lincoln, Harney, and Multnomah counties were awarded funding. Each received between \$5,000 and \$40,000 to continue providing services for Oregonians. All organizations gathered for a luncheon at Three Rivers Casino in Florence, where they were awarded their grants.

The foundation requests applications at the beginning of each year and will continue to award impactful grants each year.

## Paragon Casino Donates \$5,000 to Louisiana Association on Compulsive Gambling



Paragon Casino Resort presented a check for a donation of \$5,000 to the Louisiana Association on Compulsive Gambling (LACG). The donation was made as a testament to Paragon's efforts in providing support for organizations that benefit the surrounding communities.

"Paragon Casino Resort has a responsibility to enhance the well-being of our communities and it's a responsibility we hold close to our hearts," said Marshall Ray Sampson, Sr., Paragon Casino Resort General Manager. "We are honored to do our part and give back to those around us, helping in any way we can to make sure our friends and neighbors are well taken care of."

The donation was presented to Don Pledger, LACG Executive Director, and his staff, by Lonnie Bridges, Sr., Paragon Casino Resort's Training Director. Bridges is also a board member of LACG and a former president for the organization. The financial contribution will be used to bolster LACG's initiatives and programming, enabling them to provide vital assistance to individuals and families affected by problem gambling, substance abuse or related mental health concerns.

"This type of contribution symbolizes Paragon's unwavering commitment and support," said Bridges. "Financial gifts like

this allows LACG to keep fighting the good fight and help those who need it most through comprehensive treatment and helpline services."

## Jackson Rancheria Supports Employees With Scholarship Program



Employee Alisha Powers recently earned a Business Certificate with the help of the Jackson Rancheria Scholarship Fund.

Jackson Rancheria is sharing the success of its employee scholarship program, designed to support the educational ambitions of its employees. The Jackson Rancheria Scholarship Fund provides up to \$5,000 to employees pursuing classes, certificates, or degree programs through Amador College Connect and one of its four community college partners.

The Jackson Rancheria Scholarship Fund is administered by the Amador Community College Foundation. The program's impact can be seen in the story of employee Alisha Powers, who recently earned a Business Certificate with the help of the scholarship.

Employees of Jackson Rancheria Casino Resort who have completed at least 90 days of employment and are seeking education in an area of study specific to their position, department, or career path are eligible to receive the scholarship. Participants can enroll in courses through one of Amador College Connect's accredited community college partners and will meet with an Amador College Connect representative to discuss educational goals. Scholarship funds can be used for tuition, fees, and books.

"At Jackson Rancheria, we are committed to investing in our employees' future," said Crystal Jack, CEO of Jackson Rancheria. "Our scholarship program aims to empower our employees, support their professional growth, and help them build a brighter future."

## Seminole Hard Rock Tampa Celebrates 20 Years With \$400,000 in Donations

In celebration of its 20th anniversary, Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tampa surprised 20 local Tampa Bay charities with checks in the amount of \$20,000 each for a grand total of \$400,000 to support their endeavors. Community leaders, tribal members and Hard Rock executives came together to commemorate the milestone and reinforce its core motto to "Love All-Serve All."

"Having been a major economic force in the Tampa Bay area for the past two decades, it's our privilege to give back through this initiative," said Steve Bonner, President of Seminole Hard Rock Tampa. "Love All-Serve All" is more than a motto to us;



it's our guiding principle. Through our philanthropic efforts, we continue to invest in the community by advocating for important causes that are making a real difference in countless lives every day.

The 20 area charities each receiving \$20,000 include: Best Buddies Tampa Bay; Big Brothers Big Sisters Tampa Bay; Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay; Bullard Family Foundation; CASA; Children's Dream Fund; David A Straz Center for the Performing Arts; Florida Aquarium; Glazer Children's Museum; Habitat For Humanity of West Pasco and Pinellas; Hispanic Family Research Cultural Center; Humane Society of Tampa Bay; Junior League of Tampa; Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful; Make A Wish of Southern Florida; St. Joseph's Hospitals Foundation; The Centre for Women; The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay; The Spring of Tampa Bay; and Zoo Tampa. ♣

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