

## The Benefits of Indian Gaming

Gaming remains one of the strongest generators of revenue for Native American tribes, funding infrastructure, social programs and paving the way for economic self-sufficiency. In this month's Tribal Leader Roundtable, tribal leaders from across the nation share their history in the Indian gaming industry and the benefits gaming has brought to their communities.

### Chief J. Allan, Chairman Coeur d'Alene Tribe

The Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel in  
Worley, ID  
[www.cdatribe-nsn.gov](http://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov)



Chief J. Allan

*Year First Gaming  
Operation Opened: 1993*

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe has dramatically improved the lives of its membership and the entire reservation community through its gaming operations. Before gaming, life on the reservation was extremely rough. We all struggled to put food on the table and survive. Many of our members had to leave the reservation and take jobs elsewhere.

Today, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe employs more than 1,600 people through its various government and business operations. We're running the tribe like a Fortune 500 company, but it is not ours. We're doing this for our kids. I am proud that every tribal member who wants a job has a job. We've recently conducted an economic impact study and the tribe's contributions to the northern Idaho economy is in excess of \$300 million.

The tribe's philosophy of giving back to the entire community is a constant in everything from our schools to our medical and wellness center. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe has donated nearly \$14 million toward schools across Idaho since 1993. The tribe volunteered to donate five percent of its casino revenues to education from the beginning.

The tribe's commitment toward education is paramount. We're using gaming revenues to educate the people. Currently, the tribe has nearly 100 members enrolled in college and professional technical classes. Our elders knew that gaming was a means to an end. We are taking those dollars and reinvesting them in the people and businesses to grow to get us over the next mountain.

In the last five years, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's financial successes have opened political doors as well. Building these

relationships with local, state and federal officials means problems are headed off at the pass. We've also been able to secure federal grants. The tribe has secured more than \$20 million in federal stimulus money over the last year and half.

Most recently, the tribe received word it will receive \$12.3 million in funding to build a fiber-optic network on the reservation. This project will bring high-speed Internet to homes and business operations, allowing further economic development and education opportunities. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe's future is extremely bright and it's all because our elders understood the importance of gaming and what it could mean for our people.

### Marge Anderson, Chief Executive Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Grand Casino Mille Lacs in Onamia,  
Grand Casino Hinckley in Hinckley, MN  
[www.millelacsojibwe.org](http://www.millelacsojibwe.org)



Marge Anderson

*Year First Gaming  
Operation Opened: 1991*

Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley have taken us from poverty and despair to hope and progress. The Mille Lacs Band made a conscious decision early on to invest gaming revenues back into our community. These revenues have built clinics and assisted-living facilities in every part of the reservation, funded scholarships for band members, and supported Ojibwe language and culture programs that help us preserve who we are as a people. Casino revenues have also helped us build more businesses, employ more people, and create a stronger regional economy.

The Mille Lacs Band has grown as a nation in so many ways because of gaming, and neighboring communities have also shared in the growth. From natural resource protection to new housing development, gaming has made progress in rural East Central Minnesota more possible than ever before.

**Vincent Armenta, Tribal Chairman**  
**Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians**  
Chumash Casino Resort in Santa Ynez, CA  
[www.santaynezchumash.org](http://www.santaynezchumash.org)



Vincent Armenta

*First Gaming Operation  
Opened: 1994*

There are many obvious economic benefits of Indian gaming that have helped tribes and their communities, but many people don't realize that there are additional benefits that go far beyond economics.

In our case at the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, we have certainly enjoyed the fact that our gaming facility has placed us

solidly on the road to economic self-sufficiency. As the largest employer in the Santa Ynez Valley, we know that Indian gaming has also helped our local economy. However, the gains we have made in areas outside of the financial world are equally rewarding.

One example is the significant progress we have made in the educational arena. Prior to Indian gaming, less than a handful of our tribal members were able to pursue higher education goals. Today, thanks to revenue from our Chumash Casino Resort, we established a generous scholarship fund that has helped our tribal children take educational paths that were not previously available to many of our tribal members. We currently have more than 100 tribal students attending colleges, universities and trade schools throughout the country. In fact, our Education Director, Niki Sandoval, was the first tribal student to obtain her Ph.D. through the tribe's scholarship program. She serves as an excellent role model and exemplifies the opportunities available to our tribal children today.

Another exceptional benefit of our Chumash Casino Resort is our ability to provide quality health care for our tribal membership. Our gaming revenue helped build the Santa Ynez Tribal Health Clinic on our reservation. Our clinic not only provides health care to our membership, but also offers affordable health care to those residents in the community who otherwise would not be able to afford it.

While Indian gaming has helped our tribal government enhance our many tribal programs, including culture, education and health, the non-tribal community in our region has also greatly benefited from our success through our philanthropic endeavors. We established the Santa Ynez

Chumash Indians Foundation to build partnerships in the community and collaborative to make our community a better place to live and work. To date, our tribe has donated more than \$13 million to local non-profit organizations, schools and programs.

I am pleased with the success of our tribal casino and proud of how we have utilized our gaming revenue to build a better community, both tribal and non-tribal.

**Brian Cladoosby, Chairman**  
**Swinomish Indian Tribal Community**  
Swinomish Northern Lights Casino in  
Anacortes, WA  
[www.swinomish-nsn.gov](http://www.swinomish-nsn.gov)



Brian Cladoosby

*First Gaming Operation  
Opened: 1985*

The Swinomish Northern Lights Casino is located on beautiful Fidalgo Island in Anacortes, Washington. We are a full-service casino featuring electronic gaming, table games, keno, poker and bingo. What began as a small bingo operation in 1985 has grown into one of the county's leading employers with more than 275 employees. The year 2009 was the year that we

imagined it would be. An economic challenge is what we were expecting, and an economic challenge is what we got. We were able to experience positive growth in revenues and we were grateful for the loyal patronage.

Swinomish gaming has always been a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Our goal is to have the best public services for membership and gaming provides desperately needed funds to support those activities. Gaming has been the answer to many prayers for what our community of 800 members living on a 10,000-acre reservation could be. We view gaming as economic development that sustains the need for services within our community.

Prior to gaming, our leaders struggled to provide services with federal government grants and contracts and a variety of economic endeavors. Funds were limited and the needs were great. Today, the needs are still great, but we have made tremendous strides. Over the years, dedicated tribal management, prudent leadership and sound fiscal policies produced steadily increasing revenues in a highly competitive environment. We have five tribal gaming operations within thirty miles of our facility, some much closer to major population

centers than we are, so we have to be scrappy and creative.

Gaming proceeds have allowed tribal leadership to invest heavily in the tribe's well-being. Our gaming revenues support member needs such as education, health services, social services, infrastructure, and treaty right protection. Like many tribes, we have been forced to use gaming proceeds to replace reduced federal funding and meet increased service costs in order to ensure members receive adequate services.

We also have worked hard to diversify our economic development efforts. A gas station, convenience store and RV Park near the casino draw a diverse clientele to augment casino client recruitment efforts. We have built an off-reservation hotel resort property and have two condominium buildings.

None of these things was possible until gaming. The federal government never had a Marshall Plan for Indian Country. Their plan for us was welfare. Welfare sapped our pride and fostered a generation of dependency. Now, for the first time, we are able to provide many of the services our parents and grandparents only dreamed about. We have a long way to go, but there is a new spirit of hope and optimism in our community these days. Self-government and self-sufficiency are powerful medicine for our people.

Rather than provide per capita payments to members, 100% of our revenue goes to support services. We also contribute to other needs within the Skagit Valley. Perhaps it's worth mentioning that, contrary to popular belief, not every tribe owns its casino outright, not every tribe pays per capita to its members, and all tribes are not the same. It all depends on the tribe and its needs.

### **Diane Enos, President Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community**

**Casino Arizona at Salt River and Casino  
Arizona at Talking Stick Resort in Scottsdale, AZ**  
[www.srpmic-nsn.gov](http://www.srpmic-nsn.gov)

*First Gaming Operation Opened: 1998*

The traditions and history of our people, the Pima and Maricopa, tell us that both tribes have always lived in the Southwest. As farmers, our ancestors built elaborate canal irrigation systems in the Salt River Valley, ensuring our survival. Today, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has several diversified holdings and an economic base that also ensures our survival.

With two distinct backgrounds and cultures, our community is comprised of the Pima, "Akimel O'odham" (River People), and the Maricopa, "Xalychidom Piipaash" (People Who Live Towards the Water). We are two tribes who come from two cultures, but are united to one home. We understand that through gaming, our community can provide essential government services and fund critical needs for our 9,100 members.



Diane Enos

We are fortunate that gaming has been good to us. It provides good job opportunities for our people and residents throughout the Valley. More importantly, gaming revenue has enabled the community to invest in itself. In the last 10 years we've built an elementary school, a high school campus, and an early childhood education center. Scholarships have been funded. Medical care has improved. We have seen the completion

of a new correctional facility, police and fire substations, brand new community centers, a state-of-the-art government office complex, a dialysis center, as well as a memorial hall for community members.

We have improved our infrastructure with upgraded roads, water and sewer systems, pump stations and renovations to our ranger station, repository, energy conservation measures, and security systems. Communication needs have greatly improved with new telephone lines and data communication systems installed throughout the community.

We can also provide home loans and help our members start their own businesses with grants, as well giving them sound financial education through Salt River Financial Institute, a non-profit serving the community. Through gaming, we also provide the state of Arizona with philanthropic contributions with hundreds of millions of dollars to support education, emergency and trauma care, wildlife conservation and economic development through tourism.

Gaming has provided us with opportunities to jump-start and diversify our economy with other revenue generators. This is important because as a sovereign tribal government we do not have the same tax base as other Arizona municipalities and we do not receive shared revenues from the state. Our new projects will ensure more revenues to the community.

Our newest venture, Talking Stick Resort, a 498-room resort, will open in phases starting in April. With luxurious accommodations, the resort will feature 100,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, a state-of-the-art spa, and a cultural arts center. The resort will open adjacent to our new Casino Arizona complex, which features several upscale restaurants, entertainment lounges, a showroom and a wide variety of gaming options.

We are also embarking on a new project: a \$100 million spring training facility for the MLB Arizona Diamondbacks and Colorado Rockies. The 11,000-seat facility, scheduled to open in early 2011, will be the first professional sports facility ever built on Indian land. These projects will help ensure our community's mission to provide quality, essential services for our members, and to ensuring economic sustainability for our

people. We will continue to preserve our traditions, values and teachings, and through gaming we can also help ensure a prosperous future.

**Kevin Leecy, Tribal Chair**  
**Bois Forte Band of Chippewa**  
 Fortune Bay Resort Casino in Tower, MN  
[www.boisforte.com](http://www.boisforte.com)

*First Gaming Operation Opened: 1986*

In a magazine profile a few years ago, a reporter likened the Bois Forte Reservation of the pre-gaming era to a Third World country, complete with shacks for homes and almost no jobs. Those days are over. For more than two decades, Bois Forte has been reinvesting our business revenues in our reservation and our region. Rather than use casino profits for per-capita payments, we fund programs, services and infrastructure that can benefit all of our band's members.

Our early projects were often small. At my first annual State of the Band address in 2005, I was proud to announce three



Kevin Leecy

safe, new playgrounds for our residential neighborhoods. Since then, our projects have become more ambitious as our confidence and capabilities have increased. The list is long, so here are a few highlights: more homes; a remodeled and expanded school; bigger scholarships; new health and dental clinics; better roads; wellness centers; and an urban office to serve band members who live in the St. Paul/Minneapolis metro area. Recently we

started work on a new \$12 million community and government services facility, the largest tribal construction project in our history.

Casino revenues have also helped us move beyond just casino revenues. The Bois Forte Reservation Tribal Council has long recognized the need to diversify the band's business holdings and develop new ventures in order to provide the strongest mix of jobs and a healthy revenue stream for tribal government programs and services.

In the past few years, we have expanded our casino and hotel operation, Fortune Bay Resort Casino; built a nationally acclaimed golf course, The Wilderness at Fortune Bay; acquired a commercial radio station, WELY *end of the road radio*; a small manufacturing business, Powerain Manufacturing, Inc.; and added a convenience store, the Y Store. We have improved marketing of our world-famous Nett Lake wild rice, [www.nettlakewildrice.com](http://www.nettlakewildrice.com); built another store, Nett Lake Store; and built an Express Lube and car wash facility, the Y Express Lube. And we are persistently pursuing a biofuels demonstration facility in the emerging market of renewable energy. Having some financial "eggs" in the retail basket has helped us weather the economic downturn and its effect on gaming.

Bois Forte's businesses have become a powerful economic engine for northern Minnesota. Fortune Bay is the region's largest non-mining, non-medical employer, with an annual payroll of approximately \$12 million plus nearly \$3 million in benefits. And each year, Fortune Bay injects more than \$32 million into the area's economy.

Perhaps most important, our business success has given us greater credibility and clout. Policymakers at the local, state and national levels are more cognizant of our rights and more respectful when working with us. Our young people have a better understanding of what it means to be a sovereign nation, including both the privileges and responsibilities, and we are building a better future for them.

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## E.T. “Bud” Moran, Tribal Chairman Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

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Polson, Gray Wolf Peak Casino in Evaro, MT  
[www.cskt.org](http://www.cskt.org)



E.T. “Bud” Moran

*Year First Gaming Operation  
Opened: 1997*

The tribal gaming operation brings jobs and some revenue in for the tribes. Gaming is not our largest revenue maker for our government. Timber and a hydroelectric-dam lease still provide more income than gaming. CSKT also operates a power company and a suite of electronics companies.

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to Montana with Class II machines that pay more than the state-operated Class III machines, which cap payouts at less than \$1,000. We’ve had a winner who with one spin of the reels earned more than \$500,000 on a single bet. Our gaming operations are located near the north and south boundaries of the reservation near the population centers in Kalispell and Missoula.

## Delores Pigsley, Tribal Chairman Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

Chinook Winds Casino Resort in  
Lincoln City, OR  
[www.ctsi.nsn.us](http://www.ctsi.nsn.us)

*First Gaming Operation Opened: 1995*

The most positive aspect of gaming is how it has allowed us to improve our tribal members’ current lives and the futures of our children, grandchildren, and beyond. Gaming has brought a relatively stable source of revenue and employment to the tribe and local community.

The benefits to the tribe have allowed us to expand or enhance tribal-member services, including the development of additional housing for our tribal members through land acquisition and expanding the tribe’s medical services. Gaming has also provided the tribe growth opportunities and an expanded business portfolio. We have been able to diversify our economic base through the purchase and operation of



Delores Pigsley

businesses as well as commercial real estate. Our operations include Northwest Maritime, a company that helps keep waterways open for water traffic, two RV parks, a restaurant, a printing company and our newest venture, Siletz Technologies, which tests computer software – to name a few.

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and Chinook Winds Casino Resort have always been very strong supporters of the local community - this has been extremely evident during the recent economic downturn. Through adding a hotel and golf course to the resort we have been able to provide employment opportunities to tribal members, and others, who may not want or be able to work in a casino environment. The tribe and casino are not only the largest employers in the county, but serve as an attraction for tourists in a community that is dependent on the tourism industry.

Over the years, through donations and giving, we have played an integral part in the improvement of police and fire protection through new equipment, improved schools through land acquisition for expansion, and better health care for all. As an example, over the last five years the casino has donated over one million dollars to charitable organizations, as well as supported local businesses, through purchases of more than 21 million dollars in Lincoln County and over 165 million in purchases in Oregon. Those numbers do not include tax, license and city services. Gaming has allowed us to strengthen our tribe, the community, and brighten the future for both.

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## Buford L. Rolin, Chairman Poarch Band of Creek Indians

Wind Creek Casino & Hotel in Atmore, Creek  
Casino Wetumpka in Wetumpka, Creek Casino  
Montgomery in Montgomery, AL  
[www.poarchcreekindians.org](http://www.poarchcreekindians.org)

*First Gaming Operation Opened: 1985*

Gaming has afforded us opportunities to preserve our past, improve the quality of life for our tribal members, establish the tribe as both an economic and political force in the state, and lay the groundwork for generations who can come home to good jobs and a good quality of life.

Gaming revenues have enabled us to provide scholarships



Buford L. Rolin

to any tribal member who wants to further their education. Our new museum, which will open in September, was built with gaming revenues. And, of course, our gaming operations fund essential services: housing; police and fire protection; elder and childcare; health care and even health insurance.

For me, our ability to provide health insurance is one of the most positive outcomes of our gaming businesses. For most of my career, I have worked on Indian health care issues. I know that wellness programs and early detection can make a crucial difference in both preventing and treating serious illnesses. So, I believe health insurance will make a significant difference in the health of our tribe for generations.

Gaming has also changed dramatically how Alabama

sees us, its first citizens. In January 2009, we opened our beautiful Wind Creek Hotel and Casino in Atmore. It is a stunning facility built in the middle of what was once a soybean field. And in many ways, I see Wind Creek as a symbol for what our tribe has been able to accomplish, thanks to gaming. No longer do people just drive by Atmore on I-65 – now they drive to Atmore.

Our tribe's economic impact is felt across Alabama and the region. Our gaming operations produce more than 1,450 direct jobs and another 6,200 ancillary jobs. These employment opportunities have allowed people to stay in their homes and continue to keep their families together during the recession.

Before gaming, our role in Alabama's history was barely recognized and we were an unknown entity to our state's legislators. Today, thanks to the success of our gaming operations, we are an economic engine for Alabama and we are a recognized political force within the state, as well.

What has gaming done for us? It has given us a quality of life today and an ability to preserve our heritage. But, perhaps most importantly, gaming has made our tribal lands a place to build a future. ♣

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