

Spotlight on the Northwest

This month, we spoke with two Washington State tribal chairmen about the issues most important to them with regard to their respective tribes, casinos, economic development ventures and community outreach. Here is what they had to say...

**Leonard Forsman, Chairman
Suquamish Tribe & President of the
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians**
Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort in
Suquamish, WA
clearwatercasino.com
suquamish.nsn.us



Leonard Forsman

KEY INITIATIVES: The Suquamish Tribe is focused on meeting the health and housing needs of our members. This year, we are building out the new campus for Chief Kitsap Academy, our tribal school – the school cafeteria has just opened, and we are planning the construction of a new gymnasium.

We are in the process of redeveloping an expanse of waterfront land that recently returned to tribal control after 50 years.

The first phase involves building two new parks – one on the waterfront and the other linking the Suquamish Museum to the Veterans Memorial in the center of town. A new clinic and additional tribal housing are also in the works for that area.

We continue to advocate for the restoration of the Salish Sea, the protection of the endangered southern resident orcas, and the recovery of shellfish and fin fish populations. And, as always, we are actively involved in the protection of treaty-reserved fishing rights.

On the gaming side, Port Madison Enterprises (PME), the tribe's business arm, is just wrapping up a five-year expansion. One focus of gaming over the last two years has been increasing the turnover of slot machines to keep the floor fresh. In 2018, the number of slot machines increased by 25 percent. We strive for a four to five-year cycle on machines.

WINNING FORMULA: Port Madison Enterprises is committed to reinvestment in the casino property. We believe in keeping the casino experience fresh and updated to keep the market advantage and give our customers something to look forward to.

The Suquamish Tribe has a policy of hiring skillful, committed managers to operate tribal businesses, while retaining oversight by and accountability to our tribal community. Both the board of Port Madison Enterprises and the Gaming Commission are appointed by Tribal Council. Tribal members are also increasingly promoted to leadership positions as they acquire skills and qualifications and are mentored by PME managers.

Our business managers closely track changing economic conditions, regulations, court rulings, legal issues, and new developments in successful approaches to human resources.

LOOKING AHEAD: Port Madison Enterprises is exploring increasing electronic table games and developing sports betting. PME is also in the midst of revamping our casino Food & Beverage service. We are closing the casino's Longhouse Buffet and opening a new food hall that will offer a variety of food options. The Salish Kitchen Food Hall & Refreshments, our new dining destination, will feature an Oyster Bar, Sandwich and Salad Bar, Street Taco Bar, Pizza Station and Asian Station. In addition, the Gift Shop and Sunset Bar will be remodeled to include coffee, ice cream and pastries.

OUTREACH: Suquamish tribal leaders are frequently called upon to speak at local, regional, and national events, and to participate in conferences and gatherings. State and local government officials, and many community leaders, consider themselves friends of the Suquamish Tribe.

In terms of philanthropy, the Suquamish Tribe has donated nearly \$6 million since 2007 to local and regional nonprofits, in addition to the many ways we support Native organizations and projects. This funding comes from Port Madison Enterprises, employee donations, and via the tribally chartered Suquamish Foundation. Our philanthropy focuses on education, health and fitness, alleviating poverty, and environmental protection.

The Suquamish Foundation holds two annual events: Time to Gather, which is a fundraising gala and auction that focuses on Native art and experiences donated by our businesses and by community members; and Sovereign Styles is an annual fashion show featuring Native fashion and wearable art.

William Iyall, Chairman Cowlitz Indian Tribe

ilani in Ridgefield, WA

ilaniresort.com

cowlitz.org



William Iyall

KEY INITIATIVES: The Cowlitz Indian Tribe has developed a comprehensive plan to guide services to all Cowlitz Members. This includes increased access for all tribal members to healthcare, first by providing support to elders for their Medicare premiums or other critical health and wellness needs, as well as planning for improved health benefits for members. We value our elders

and members, and it is our intention to serve all. We must continue to exercise our sovereignty to maintain and restore our inherent rights in our homelands, to preserve, protect, recover and grow tradition, culture, and language to preserve our cultural identity.

The continued strong performance of ilani is demonstrated in solid growth, the many popular headlining entertainment in our Meeting and Entertainment Center, and the celebration of ilani's second anniversary. ilani's operating and financial performance paved the way to a favorable restructure of all debt, providing a new window of opportunity for a bright future for the Cowlitz Tribe and the long-term success of ilani. Current master planning of our reservation will lead to robust future growth via expanded amenities and services for our tribal membership and our guests at ilani. Many thanks to Kara Fox-LaRose, President and General Manager, who leads our operations team. ilani is poised for even greater success as we continue to expand our operation with our latest development project car parking structure. We are breaking ground for the parking garage in July, followed by continued master planning discussions for further expansion of our business and government operations that will lead to another major triumph for the strength and fortitude of the Cowlitz people.

WINNING FORMULA: On March 2, 2015, the Bureau of Indian Affairs signed the deed for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's reservation to be taken into trust. The tribe's initial reservation provides the same opportunities other federally recognized tribes have with the right to exist as a sovereign entity to self-govern and to determine our own economic, cultural and collective future. After 160 years, the final decision of the federal government provided the Cowlitz with a land base in Ridgefield, WA.

Located on the 156-acre Cowlitz Reservation, ilani,

developed by the Cowlitz Tribe and Salishan-Mohegan (a partnership that includes Mohegan Gaming & Entertainment management team, one of the world's foremost gaming and entertainment developers and operators), is the region's premier gaming, dining, entertainment and meeting destination. With nearly 400,000 total sq. ft., ilani includes 100,000 sq. ft. of gaming space with more than 2,500 slots and 75 gaming tables; 15 different restaurants, bars and retail outlets; and a 2,500-seat meeting and entertainment venue hosting nationally recognized performances.

LOOKING AHEAD: Like ilani, Cowlitz Crossing, our new Gas Station and C-store that recently opened on our second anniversary, is an integral part of our community and has created more jobs and opportunity for economic growth in our region. This amenity offers convenience to our guests, community and passersby, and will generate revenue that can be invested back into creating opportunity and self-sufficiency for the Cowlitz people. It will serve as a community gathering space, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With its state-of-the-art design and quality products, Cowlitz Crossing will be a welcoming place for travelers to stop, rest and refuel. The tribe also operates the Cowlitz Tobacco Outlet on the reservation as one of the many businesses the tribe operates.

OUTREACH: The Cowlitz Tribe Education and Arts Fund supports charitable activities in Clark County from gaming revenues from the tribe's gaming and entertainment facility, ilani. Nonprofit organizations benefitting the community surrounding the tribe's reservation will be considered for distribution of the funds. The Fund will be managed by a five-person board with staggered elected terms comprised of: two tribal appointees, two Clark County appointees, and one member selected by the other four. The tribe also supports local taxing districts including local schools, roads, libraries and the local port.

Additional community contributions for public safety and non-profits are outlined in the tribe's compact with the state. ♣

