Indian Gaming  May 2015

Pam Toscano Appointed Vice President  of Food & Beverage at Pechanga Resort & Casino

Pechanga Resort & Casino recently promoted Pam Toscano to the role of Vice President of Food & Beverage. Assuming the role overseeing the resort’s second largest division, Toscano has worked in food and beverage at the casino for 20 years. She is one of more than one dozen team members still with the company since it opened in June of 1995.

“I did everything that needed to be done,” she recounts. “That included stocking shelves, emptying trash, assisting customers and a million other things. That was such a fun time, and I still have fun on the job. I love that food and cocktails bring people together to talk and celebrate.”

As the new Vice President, Toscano oversees 11 dining outlets including the 454-seat buffet, nine-station food court, as well as hotel catering, banquets and room service. One of her first major projects is supervising the renovation, enhancement and rebranding of Kelsey’s Sports Bar & Grill that began in May.

Toscano is a Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians member. “It’s amazing to see what our small tribe has accomplished in a short time span. I’m so honored to be a part of the growth and development that has allowed Pechanga to become a pillar of community and an entertainment beacon in Southern California.”

San Manuel Indian Bingo & Casino Welcomes Loren D. Gill as New General Manager

San Manuel Indian Bingo & Casino announced today that Loren D. Gill has joined the Casino to further develop their growing dedication to exceptional gaming entertainment and supporting the economic development of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. Mr. Gill, who comes with 20 years of direct gaming management experience, most recently spent the last two years at Seneca Gaming Corporation’s flagship resort in Niagara Falls, NY.

Gill received a Bachelor of Science in Business from Eastern Illinois University in 1989 and earned a Masters of Business Administration from the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University 1995. Gill has held key gaming licenses in the states of Nevada, Illinois, Louisiana and New York.

Gill joins San Manuel Indian Bingo & Casino as General Manager to continue the property’s recent success providing leadership to the many functions of the Casino, stating, “I’m really excited about the opportunity and I look forward to building off of the past success to take the casino to the next level.”

“The tribe is pleased to welcome Loren to his new post and looks forward to continued growth and success under his leadership,” said Lynn Valbuena, Chairwoman - San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. “We have every confidence that Loren will add to the 29 years of success in the tribal gaming industry.”

GLI Names Alex Bertone Tribal Development Representative for Oklahoma

Gaming Laboratories International (GLI) has named Alex Bertone as the Tribal Development Representative for the Oklahoma tribal gaming market.

In her role, Bertone is responsible for the needs of all tribal gaming regulators and operators within the Oklahoma jurisdiction.

GLI National Director of Tribal Development Russell Witt said, “We are excited to welcome Alex to the Tribal Development team. Her experience, expertise and relationships with both the operators and regulators throughout Oklahoma made her our choice to continue the level of service and support our clients need and expect from GLI.”

Bertone brings with her a depth of knowledge in Class II gaming system compliance as well as sales and development. Most recently she served as an Account Executive for Rocket Gaming Systems, where she was responsible for key accounts in Oklahoma and throughout the Southeast. Previously, she served as compliance administrator for Rocket Gaming Systems, where she was responsible for product submissions with the independent testing laboratories and tribal gaming agencies.

GLI Names Thomas Bierbach New Senior Manager of GLI Professional Services

Further strengthening its leadership team, GLI has named respected lottery risk management and security expert Thomas Bierbach as Senior Manager of its Professional Services division.

Bierbach is a highly experienced Certified Information Security Manager (CISM) and Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA) and brings more than 20 years of international technology and management experience to GLI. He is an accredited WLA Security Control Standard Auditor and
Shannon O’Loughlin Named Chief of Staff at the National Indian Gaming Commission

National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) Chairman Jonodev Chaudhuri has announced his selection of Shannon O’Loughlin, citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, as the Chief of Staff. O’Loughlin will lead the day-to-day management of the Commission operations, including compliance, finance, public affairs and the recently created technology divisions.

In addition, O’Loughlin will provide support in implementing the Commission’s priorities, which include: execution of the Agency’s oversight duties; maintaining the NIGC’s commitment to training, technical assistance, and meaningful tribal consultation; supporting a strong regulatory workforce both at the NIGC and among its regulatory partners; and continuing to strengthen dialogue and relationships with all relevant stakeholders.

“Shannon brings an extremely strong policy and law background, and she understands the importance of maintaining strong Indian Country and stakeholder relationships,” said Chaudhuri. “She has direct experience working with Indian Country, federal, and private sector management teams and has been instrumental in her work with Interior’s Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Review Committee.”

O’Loughlin brings more than 16 years of legal and policy expertise, with significant experience in Federal Indian law, Indian Nations law and policy, and indigenous peoples international and human rights law and policy. Most recently, O’Loughlin was in the private sector, heading-up and managing a large national firm’s Indian law practice group as a partner in the firm’s Washington office.

“I am thrilled to be joining the Commission and to be at the NIGC at such a vibrant and exciting time,” said O’Loughlin. “I look forward to getting reacquainted with those in Indian gaming, as well as the thousands of on-the-ground Indian gaming regulators the NIGC works with day-in and day-out, to ensure the integrity of Indian gaming.”

O’Loughlin transitioned with acting Chief of Staff Christinia Thomas on May 4. Thomas returns to her role as the Deputy Chief of Staff, where both she and O’Loughlin will continue focusing the agency on its important Indian gaming regulatory mission.

Chris Stearns Re-Appointed as Gambling Commissioner in Washington State

Chris Stearns has been re-appointed as a Gambling Commissioner by Governor Inslee. His term will expire June 30, 2021. Governor Inslee first appointed Chris Stearns as a Commissioner in May 2013 to fill in for a Commissioner who left the position early. Chris Stearns said “It is a true privilege to continue serving as a Commissioner. Gambling continues to be a hot topic and I look forward to following the evolving technology that goes along with gambling.”

In October 2014, Chris Stearns was unanimously elected Chair of the Gambling Commission by his fellow Commissioners. Stearns is from the Navajo Nation and is an attorney specializing in Indian law. He previously served four years as Counsel to the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources and was the first-ever Director of Indian Affairs for the U.S. Department of Energy.

Stearns is active in his community, serving two terms as Chairman of the Seattle Human Rights Commission and is also Vice-President of the Board of Directors of the Seattle Indian Health Board. He is a graduate of Williams College and Cornell Law School.

30th Annual National Indian Gaming Association Board of Directors Elections

The National Indian Gaming Association’s (NIGA) Board of Directors elections were held during the Annual Membership Meeting. NIGA Chairman Ernie Stevens, Jr. was reelected for his 8th consecutive term as the Chairman of the association by acclamation. Paulette Jordan was elected as Secretary.
Chairman Stevens has been with NIGA for 15 years. From 1993 to 1999 Chairman Stevens served as an elected councilman for the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. He is a former First Vice-President of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). As a respected leader in Indian Country, Chairman Stevens also serves as a long-standing board member on the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development Board, on the Nike N7 Foundation Board and is Vice Chairman of the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI) Foundation, he also serves on the Native American Advisory Board for the Boys and Girls Club of America. In 2012, Chairman Stevens was inducted into the prestigious Boys & Girls Club of America. Paulette Jordan is a member of the Idaho House of Representatives. Jordan is a native and life-long resident of Idaho, as well as an enrolled member of the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, who has been involved in local politics and community activism for years. She has served three years as the youngest elected member of the Coeur d’Alene Tribal Council.

Jordan, who holds three degrees from the University of Washington, and a Certificate of Study in Conflict Resolutions and Strategic Negotiations from The Washington Center in Washington D.C., is a strong voice and advocate of issues that matter most to the local community.

“I am humbled to be asked by our leadership to serve in this capacity,” Jordan remarked. “I love our people and the vision our leaders have laid before us. It is truly my honor and privilege to uphold this vision for our youth, our veterans, our communities and our sovereignty for the benefit of each and every one and the generations yet to come.”

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Announces Tribal Council Election Results

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians recently announced Tribal Council election results: Tribal Council Chairman Jeff L. Grubbe continues in his elected two-year term; Tribal Council Vice Chairman Larry N. Olinger was re-elected to a second consecutive two-year term; Tribal Council Secretary/Treasurer Vincent Gonzales III was re-elected to a third consecutive two-year term; Tribal Council Member Anthony Joseph Andreas III was re-elected to a sixth consecutive one-year term; and Tribal Council Member Reid D. Milanovich was re-elected to a second consecutive one-year term.

The Tribal Council elections are a matter of tribal law, and are managed privately by the Election Board. The results of the March 17, 2015 election were certified and became final on April 7, 2015 when the Tribal Council Members were sworn in.

Crowe & Dunlevy Attorney Receives Lawrence R. Baca Lifetime Achievement Award

The Indian Law Section of the Federal Bar Association (FBA) has awarded Crowe & Dunlevy attorney Walter R. Echo-Hawk Jr. the 2015 Lawrence R. Baca Lifetime Achievement Award. The highest honor given by the FBA’s Indian Law Section, this award is bestowed upon those who show excellence in Indian law, are held in high esteem in their professional arena and have made significant contributions to the field of Indian law through litigation, development of legislation, scholarship or development of Indian law students or through tribal leadership.

Echo-Hawk is a member of Crowe & Dunlevy’s Indian Law & Gaming practice group, which provides legal representation for American Indian tribes in Oklahoma. He has been a human rights attorney since 1973 and has devoted most of his legal career at the Native American Rights Fund (1973-2009) and Crowe & Dunlevy to protecting American Indians’ human rights, which include rights to culture, self-determination, religious freedom, land and natural resources.

“Throughout his more than 40-year career as a lawyer, tribal judge, scholar and activist, Walter has fought tirelessly for American Indian rights,” said Crowe & Dunlevy President and CEO Kevin D. Gordon. “We are proud to see him honored by the Federal Bar Association with this award.”

In his work with the Native American Rights Fund, he represented Indian tribes, Alaska natives and native Hawaiians on significant legal issues during the modern era of federal Indian law. He served on the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation board of directors and was instrumental in securing passage of two federal laws that respect Indian and religious freedoms and also the repatriation of Native American remains to Indian tribes.

Echo-Hawk is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Kickapoo Tribe and is admitted to practice law before the United States Supreme Court, Colorado Supreme Court, Oklahoma Supreme Court, U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Eighth, Ninth, District of Columbia and Tenth Circuits and a host of federal district courts.