

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I have and will continue to stress the need to diversify economically. To ensure that we are able to diversify we must adopt plans and embrace opportunities outside of the realm of Casinos. In addition, The Tribe needs to ensure that its business approaches are separated from its Tribal politics.

“The Tribal Board of Directors should not be the Gaming Authority or Gaming Commission. These bodies should be comprised of an independent body that has knowledge and experience in the gaming industry. Free of politics, our casinos may once again be a potent economic force.” This also applies for non-gaming enterprises. We need to take the same approach to ensure both short term and long-term success.”

Fortunately, we have hired an Economic Development Director that is moving our Tribe forward in these areas, slowly but surely. The Tribe has added several small businesses (self – storage), lease holding, and capital financing. We are positioned to take several larger leaps in the near future.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Services cost money, it’s that simple. We cannot afford to have all our “eggs” in the proverbial casino basket. We need to diversify.

While some are content with our current revenue streams, I believe we need a proactive approach to diversifying our economic interests. There are funds out there to move our tribe forward. In fact, by taking a mere 5 minutes to search the United States Economic Development Agency, <http://www.eda.gov/>, I found the following recently awarded grants:

- February 25-29, 2008 – \$411,000 to the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, to support development and implementation of a long-term strategy for a comprehensive, entrepreneurial, and innovative effort to enhance and diversify the economy of the Red River Valley Research Corridor in Grand Forks County
- December 10-21, 2007 – \$3.4 million to the Navajo Nation, Window Rock, Arizona, to support the construction of a building in the Church Rock Industrial Park on the Navajo Reservation to house a manufacturing firm, as well as a training center and small business incubator.
- \$1.8 million to the Chilkat Indian Village, Haines, Alaska, for the construction of the Jilkaat Kwaan Cultural Heritage Center Hospitality House, a key installation for serving the tourism industry that will strengthen the local economy and create jobs.

- \$1.217 million to the San Carlos Apache Tribe, Ariz., to support construction of a small business incubator facility and provide office space for existing business in the Bylas District Plaza on the San Carlos Apache Reservation.

Have you noticed the amount, as well as the recipients that received the GRANT awards? WE COULD BE ONE OF THOSE RECIPIENTS. This was a mere five-minute search, imagine if someone actually did extensive research on the funding possibilities out there.

In the past the Tribe had many squandered economic activities. Some ventures were doomed to fail, while others were just simply managed poorly. There were, however, many steps by which we can learn to move our tribe forward.

One such step was the utilization of assistance from external expertise, in the following examples “free” expertise.

- University of Michigan Domestic Corps Internship Program (We underutilized this in the past and overlooked its true potential) – “Domestic Corps is a summer internship program of the Nonprofit and Public Management Center which places business school students as consultants with nonprofit organizations. The primary objective of the domestic corps is to enhance the professional and educational experience of students, to instill in them the ideals of corporate citizenship and collaboration, and to enable them to contribute to civic, social, and environmental organizations.” (U-M)
- Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development – “The Harvard Project offers advisory services at the request of tribal governments, other governments and organizations working with Native communities. Graduate and undergraduate students produce pro bono policy-oriented consulting reports, and Harvard Project personnel provide strategic advice on a variety of public policy issues.”
- “The Harvard Project PAEs, Policy Analysis Exercise, deal specifically with the issues facing American Indian nations or organizations working in Indian affairs. Professor Joseph P. Kalt, a member of the Kennedy School faculty, counsels the student consultants. Assisting him are Harvard Project staff members who work closely with the students. These students offer pro bono assistance on issues that concern your tribe. Most of the candidates have three to five years of professional work experience prior to attending the Kennedy School for their graduate course work.”
(<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/hpaied/>)

Imagine the possibilities:

- Used Car Dealership – builds credit, payroll methods of payment and employment (COMING SOON)
- Tribal Bank – we have vaults at five locations, ATMs up north are owned by casino, we don’t own the Banks/Credit Unions within these locations and this needs to change.
- Tribally owned franchises such as Starbucks and Cinnabuns
- Subway or Blimpie’s within the Midjim Stores

- Medical records storage
- Security consultation and services
- Surveillance installation and service
- Telecommunication installation service
- Cellular phone retailer
- Graphic/web design services
- Construction services
- 8(a) certification for Tribal Businesses

The options and opportunities are endless, we just have to be willing to open our minds, shut our mouths, roll up our sleeves, AND GET TO WORK...