

M · O · D · E · R · N · I · N · D · I · A · N

Urban
Indians

INTERVIEW

Renee Rank interviewed by Charles Hudson, guest forum editor. Charles Hudson is a member of the Mandan-Hidatsa Tribe and, like Ms. Rank, is of both European and Indian heritage. Renee Rank and Charles Hudson are both urban Indians residing in Portland, Oregon.

CH: *Renee, to start please give us a little bio of your adulthood.*

RR: I graduated from Arizona State, then moved to Minnesota and worked for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Tribe. They were one of the first tribes to go into the more Vegas-like gaming casinos. At that time, management groups would come in and work with the tribal casinos but take a 60/40 split for five to seven years. That was the only alternative for many Indian casinos. Instead, we came in and trained management, provided the overall structure, and then turned it over to the tribe. We didn't keep a portion of the profits after our contract was done and the doors to the new casino were opened. We opened Spirit Mountain, Gila River Casino, and several others.

After doing this for a while I was ready to come back to family and friends in Portland. When I got back I worked for KXL radio and Jammin 95.5. I worked there for 7 years. Then I started my current job as Marketing Director for McMinnamin's Hotels, Pubs, and Breweries.

During this period I became involved with NAYA, the Native American Youth Association and Family Center, of which I'm on the board, and I've also volunteered for the American Indian College Fund.

CH: *In this issue of Oregon's Future, we have a piece written by Dave Tovey called 'The Fear of the Successful Indian.' It relates to gaming and Indian tribes. I would describe you as a successful Indian professional. Do you ever feel that as a successful Indian you are stepping out of a box?*

RR: Sometimes I do. Sometimes, I want to show that I can achieve just as much as everybody else. I want to break the stereotype that some people may have of Indian people.

CH: *Tell me about your mom and dad's heritage.*

RR: My mom is Klamath. She grew up on the reservation in Beatty and in Klamath Falls. My dad is from Pennsylvania and he is German, Pennsylvania Dutch. He went to the Air Force Academy and they met in Colorado. My mom was actually Miss Indian America back at the young age of 18 or 19. A lot of what she spoke about at that time was termination and how termination affected the tribe and her family. My mom was able to go to college with the scholarship money she received from winning Miss Indian America, which is how she ended up in Colorado and eventually met my dad.

Prior to the mid '70s our family was a remaining member of the Klamath Tribe. We did not take the settlement originally offered through termination, but took the land instead. Klamath Falls was always our home base. (Please see the glossary entry on Termination—Ed.)

CH: *Was it hard when your family moved to Portland from Klamath Falls?*

RR: It was difficult for me to move, but it probably came at a good time, because that's when I was getting into my sophomore year in high school, and wanted to have more things to do than a small town like Klamath could offer. But, I still loved Klamath Falls. My grandmother was a huge part of our lives. She was very much a part of our upbringing. She kind of ruled the roost within our family. I remember her taking us out; we did a big powwow circuit one summer, hopped in the station wagon and went up to Cheyenne—went all over the place.

CH: *Describe how culturally connected you were in Klamath.*

RR: I remember we used to go over to the Jackson's house. I would say they were very traditional...with singing and drumming as an everyday part of their lives. This is not what I experienced

on a daily level growing up but we were always involved with the powwows and celebrations, and taught to be aware and embrace our heritage.

CH: *Have you ever had a notion to return?*

RR: I thought I might want to work for the tribe, but I'd have to live back in Klamath, and that's not something I'm willing to do at this point. I think I can do just as much by working outside or in corporate America and by increasing the awareness of Indian people and other people's perceptions of Indian people.

CH: *After the federal government terminated the Klamath, many Klamaths moved to Portland. As a consequence, since restoration of the tribe, the Tribal Council has reserved a spot for a Portland representative. Would that ever be of interest to you, representing Klamath people who live in Portland?*

RR: I think it would, but this brings up one of the issues with urban vs. reservation Indians—that question is: Am I Indian enough? Can I represent my tribe?

CH: *How do you feel if somebody says, "You're out of touch with issues down there such as the water crisis and salmon. You live up there, you're losing your Indian-ness, or you're not as Klamath as we are"?*

RR: My initial reaction is, no. I'm Klamath. That's who I am and it doesn't matter where I live. Where I live does not determine how "Indian" I am. I may not be as in touch with what's going on in Klamath Falls as the people living there, but I am in touch with what's happening up here in Portland where thousands of Indian people, including Klamaths, live.

CH: *One of the things we're doing with this issue of Oregon's Future is dealing with myths. We know there are myths held between reservation and urban Indian people. Such as all Indians who have moved to the cities are now well off, are wealthy. Or that all Indians who have moved off the reservation to the cities have lost their culture. What's your perception of people who live back in Klamath, for better or worse?*

RR: There are people in Klamath that are much better off than people that are up here living in Portland. But there are also people that are still kind of stuck in the same rut and can't seem to get out of it no matter where they live.

CH: *Didn't the Klamath get a whole bunch of money around termination? Maybe if you could address that belief about the Klamath people. Have you ever benefited by being Indian?*

RR: I think I've had opportunities, like the opportunity to be a part of a huge multicultural youth event with the Lutheran Church where I was one of the two board members to represent the Native youth. But I don't feel like I ever got handed anything because I was Indian.

When the Klamath were terminated, I'm sure the settlement allowed us, in part, to take care of ourselves. However, both my parents worked very hard and my dad had just as much if not more to do with me being able to afford to go to school. There was a perception that if you were Klamath you were rich because of the termination settlement but that just wasn't the case.

CH: *When you went to college, did you receive federal assistance, federal loan*

or grant, available to American Indian students?

RR: No, I didn't.

CH: *I also want to talk about the fact that we're not living on our reservations, and that we're mixed heritage. It's another thing to deal with as you go through life. One of the myths I grew up with is that a mixed-blood person has to fall on one side of the fence or the other—the White road or the Indian road. Was there a day it hit you that, wow, this is great, or this is kind of tricky?*

RR: I think culturally my mom's Native upbringing was a stronger influence because we lived in Klamath Falls, with my grandmother, and the views and values always around us. My dad's family was 3,000 miles away and didn't have such a culturally rich influence on us as my mom's side. I always remember my dad being so supportive of everything: he always encouraged us to be involved with our culture.

I'd have to say that in today's world, it's tricky to balance between the two cultures. There wasn't a day that all of a sudden it hit me that I might have to choose between one or the other. Ultimately, I don't think you have to choose, and you can embrace both the White and Indian sides.

CH: *Most of the tribes do use blood quantum, percentage of blood, as the mark for inclusion. That was a system that the US Government used to determine Indian-ness. Well, it's right smack dab in the middle of Indian identity, for many of us. It's going to have an effect on the legacy question—my children, their degree of blood, and how it all relates. We carry this burden, both the urban and the mixed-blood Indians.*



RR: The government brought the issue of blood quantum to the tribes. I can't help but think about it when thinking about having children. If I marry someone who's not Native, then my children's blood quantum will decrease.

CH: *What would be your remedy to that? Does it come down to making a choice about who to marry? Do you think that's fair, or do you think there's a better way?*

RR: Being Indian is not the only factor in falling in love and finding someone to spend your life with. But it's probably one of the toughest issues that I personally struggled with because it doesn't just affect me, but also my future children and their families.

CH: *We mention in the glossary of the magazine the two ways to define Indians: blood quantum and the lineage system. There's going to have to be a perpetual pool of people that are a quarter blood or more to keep membership or be recognized by the federal government as Indian. Wilma Mankiller, when asked about blood quantum and lineage for the Oral History Project responded,*

"There will always be those people who want to measure things by degrees, or a scientific method." She talked about Indian as being something within you. The better way to define Indian-ness is for us to teach each other what being Indian is.

RR: I would definitely agree with her, but I also can't help but think about blood quantum and to me it is a huge issue.

CH: *What are your impressions of Portland today, your place within a community that is said to include 25,000 Indians from many different tribes?*

RR: I don't think people in general realize that there are so many Indian people in Portland, whether it's because we don't look like stereotypical Indians or because we're so spread around the Portland area. There's definitely an urban population of Indians here though. Because of my work with NAYA, I see people all the time who want to be a part of their Indian culture in Portland. They want a safe, comfortable, central place to go. The work that NAYA does gives people this place to go, a place where they can learn about

and embrace their culture, as well as receive help with school, and help to reach their full potential.

CH: *There was a story, even when I grew up in North Dakota, about the Burnside Boys. We knew that meant that there were Indians in Portland living as street people. This has become a myth that all urban Indians are street people. You are a complete contradiction to that stereotype.*

RR: I like being against that stereotype. I like showing that Indians aren't the stereotype you may have heard about or the myth of the Burnside Boys. We can be articulate, successful, all these things that, for whatever reason, people don't think we can. I want everyone to see this and to see what a positive influence other native people can be. I feel that I can make a positive impression by working with different organizations and being involved.

CH: *Did your mother's work influence your outlook about being part of the community?*

RR: My mother always taught us to be leaders, both my parents did. I think NAYA and the college fund support the ideals that can help all of us along. With better education, there are more possibilities for us down the road.

She worked for ATNI, and she worked for other Native Oregon-based groups. She also was always involved with the church on some level. She actually taught a lot of diversity classes to the up-and-coming clergy, and through that she finally decided to become a Lutheran pastor.

(In 1953 tribal leaders in the Northwest formed the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, and dedicated it to tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Today, ATNI is a nonprofit organization representing 54 Northwest tribal governments from Oregon, Idaho, Washington, southeast Alaska, northern California, and western Montana—Ed.)

CH: *In the last couple of years, your presence has escalated quite dramatically—your involvement on the NAYA board, (Native American Youth Association) and your work with the Indian College Fund,*

Blood Quantum

Blood quantum is the portion or percentage of blood volume that comes from a particular ethnicity or family lineage. Most commonly, one-quarter blood quantum is required by tribes for membership, but some require much less because their tribal blood has become so diluted.

Tribes also may require descent from members listed on early federal government censuses in the 1800s, rolls taken at the time of **termination** in the 1950s and '60s, or **restoration lists** in the '70s and '80s. Tribes may also have additional requirements including reservation residency and enrollment deadlines. The **BIA** records the standards determined by each tribe.

The federal calculation for being a member of a recognized tribe requires a blood quantum of at least one quarter. If this is proven, an individual can become a registered member and get a CDIB (Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood), which is issued by the **BIA**. The CDIB qualifies Indians for some federal benefits independent of tribal law.

The mathematical equation to determine blood quantum is fairly simple in theory—if your parents are each half Indian you are half Indian. The issue in practice, however, is more complex; and in some cases even unfair. Many evaluations of blood quantum were originally either written down or determined erroneously. Unrecorded relations between tribes and Europeans from first contacts also compromise the precision of this approach.

Traditionally, tribes did not determine membership by blood quantum, but by custom and association. Blood quantum was often used by Europeans and White Americans to suggest they were biologically and culturally superior. According to Theda Perdue, professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, blood quantum is sometimes utilized to "privilege some individuals, to discredit others, and ultimately racialize Native societies in ways that are foreign to Native cultural traditions."

Colonial Virginia first used the concept of blood quantum in 1705 when its legislature adopted a series of laws that denied civil rights to Negroes, mulattos, and Indians.

—Jay Hutchins

and I know you through Dragon Boating. It appears that you're at a point of assuming a much greater responsibility within the community.

RR: I would say that's true. I think I've become more comfortable with moving into the next generation of Indian leaders; not as a tribal leader but as someone who can help by volunteering or getting more involved throughout the Native and non-Native community, making a positive impact.

CH: *There have been many problems, there's no question: poverty to education, to you-name-it. What do you think Indian people and non-Indian people need to do to improve things?*

RR: I refer back to NAYA again. What can I do to help? I can help this organization that is helping youth, helping families to better themselves; whether through school, through culture, the family's affairs. I can help that organization become bigger and better and help guide it to serve more people, get the kind of profile we need in order to get the money and get the attention from those higher up, to serve more and more of our people. There are urban Indians, it's just a fact of life these days—and NAYA serves them. Not everybody's going to be on the rez, it's not ever going to be like that again.

CH: *Tell us a little about NAYA.*

RR: NAYA is a place for Native youth and their families. They can receive tutoring, go to culture classes, sports programs, math and science camps, and more. It's a place that they can feel comfortable knowing that they are surrounded by other Native people—something that is not felt in

the local schools. They can also be comfortable knowing that it's a place to learn. Whether that be learning for current school classes or learning their culture as urban Indians. Same with working with the college fund. That's the next level up, after they've gone through NAYA, let's get them through the college fund, let them get to college.

CH: *It's quite clear that Indian tribes and tribal governments are emphatic about the demand for trust responsibility; that the federal government has a responsibility, a set of obligations to them. How does this extend to urban Indian people?*

RR: I definitely feel you can't have everything go back to the reservation. That's just not how our world is working now. Everybody isn't living on the reservation, so why can't we get services wherever we are?

(Please see our interview with Carol Barbero in which she explains the Trust Relationship between the federal government and the tribes regarding the services Renee mentions—Ed.)

CH: *Very well put. Trust responsibility should not stop at the reservation border, it's to the people. Can you vote for Klamath elections? Is it easy or hard?*

RR: I have voted—because now I can vote by mail.

CH: *For my tribe, I have to be there physically (1,300 miles from Portland) to vote. They do give absentee ballots if you're a college student or in the military. This is discriminatory, based on the myth that Indians who don't live on the reservation*

anymore are well-off and they don't need the same things. There's also a perception that we're boat-rockers, that we've gone out, gotten just enough education to be dangerous, and all we can do is mess up the tribal government. There are systems to exclude us from being part of tribal decision-making.

RR: It is definitely easier if you are there. It is not the easiest thing to stay in the loop.

CH: *I'm going to backtrack and ask two blunt questions. Do you think the United States Government owes you anything?*

RR: That's a hard one. My initial, gut reaction is no. At the same time, that answer is yes. If you look at all the history, the treaties, they do. But it's hard to feel like the federal government owes me, Renee, anything.

CH: *Does the Klamath tribal government owe you anything?*

RR: You know, what immediately popped into my mind when you said that, was trust. They owe me their trust. I want them to trust me to be able to move forward, to be a part of the tribe, be a part of the tribal organization, or the tribe overall.

CH: *Is that the new tribal role of the urban Indian?*

RR: Yes. We need to open up to the idea of trusting those who have the best interest of the tribal members at heart, whether they're living in the Klamath area or living in the cities like Portland. We need to not discount anyone because they are an urban Indian.

CH: *We were all aware of the derogatory stereotypes and myths about Indians. On the other hand, how do you react to that overly romanticized version of Indians, about Indians being completely in tune with nature? These are just as wrong as the other myths.*

RR: It's interesting. Probably my first reaction is that I'm happy others are aware of Indian people—sometimes that's the biggest obstacle. Even if their romanticized versions are wrong at least they make them aware of Indian people.



(L-R)
Rebecca Rank,
Renee Rank, and
Heidi Helgemo at
the procession for
the opening of
the Smithsonian
Native American
Museum.

Coyote Juggles His Eyes: Tribal Government, Private Enterprise, and Other Paradoxes

by Tom Hampson,
Executive Director ONABEN

A GROUP OF LOCAL BUSINESS owners recently organized a Chamber of Commerce at Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Like all Chambers of Commerce this group intends to work to improve the local business climate and encourage the local government to support independent small business owners. The discussion among the business owners included enough government bashing to make any business organization proud.

Like their non-Indian peers, private business owners on the reservation are often at odds with their government over issues such as regulation, competition between tribal enterprises and the private sector, and bureaucratic processes that make doing business on the reservation and with the tribe problematic. Nevertheless, as they polished off their new by-laws, the group decided to seek the tribal council's blessing for their efforts. This decision says a great deal about the unique relationship between the private and public sectors in Indian Country.

Despite the differences between self- and public employment, the business owners view themselves as inseparable from the tribal organization. This is, in part, because the business owners' success is inextricably linked to the prospects of the tribe for which they have great hopes as well as trepidations.

In contrast to the declarations of their non-tribal peers, these entrepreneurs' interests are, for better or worse, entwined with the interests of their government and the tribe. These entrepreneurs look to the tribal government for support on par with the tribally-owned enterprises. Tribal enterprises hire people and utilize private business-

es as vendors. The chamber members want a fair shot at that business.

From a non-tribal perspective this relationship seems contradictory. From a tribal perspective this paradox is the stuff of daily life. Contradictions come with the territory.

The economic relations on reservations have been characterized as socialistic. The experiences of the members of the Warm Springs Area Chamber of Commerce illustrate the fact that framing the discussion in terms of capitalism v. socialism is inadequate to describe or understand the dynamics at play.

If we are to understand the nature of tribes and their potential as developing nations and partners in our prosperity, we need to understand the nature of the interplay of the private and the tribal sector on the reservation. The relationship is best described as symbiotic—an interdependent relationship—that is underpinned by communitarian values rooted in culture and history. The business owners need and want to be supported by their tribe. And, while some in tribal leadership may not yet know it, the tribe needs the business owners. The challenge for the chamber is to prove this proposition. The challenge for the tribe is to make an expanding place for independent business owners within the tribal economy.

The challenge for the business owners is to develop effective organizations that will allow them to be successful in the market economy in and outside the reservation. Tribes and business owners are going down this path with some heavy baggage.

The Re-emergence of Native Enterprise

The traditions of commerce among indigenous peoples of the North American continent are strong. Indians created some of the most sophisticated economies and trade networks of any civilizations in history. Contact with nations from off the continent changed all that. Modern tribal governments and their economic enterprises are much like developing nations. Tribes are emerging from a long period of colonial rule to create their own economic institutions.

They have integrated new enterprises into their government in myriad ways.

As tribes assert their rights to self-determination they have borrowed freely from other institutional and development models. Tribes are adapting contemporary corporate forms and legal institutions to meet their needs much as they once did with the "Great White Father's" institutions of religion, education, and government. Only this time, the tribes are pretty much in control of the process. Tribes have learned many hard lessons about accepting gifts from the dominant culture and so they are evaluating business models with caution and changing their minds often.

They have integrated new enterprises into their government in myriad ways. Some tribes develop and manage enterprises as departmental functions. At Umatilla Reservation, the Wildhorse Resort and Casino (including the hotel, golf course, RV park, museum) is operated by one tribal department, while the Arrowhead Truck Plaza, grocery store and other enterprises are managed by another. These departments have varying degrees of autonomy from the tribal council. The new Wanapa Energy Center will be operated by a separately chartered legal entity similar in form to many tribally chartered corporations. (See J.D. Williams' article—Ed.)

Many tribes have created quasi-independent corporate entities with the express intent of separating the enterprises of the tribe from its political institutions. Warm Springs Tribal Ventures is a separately chartered economic development corporation that is structured to give its managers a great deal of autonomy to pursue economic diversification free of political micro-management.

According to Harvard's Project on American Indian Economic Development, one of the most important components of success for any tribal enterprise is the extent to which the business can be separated from the politics that surround them.

Conventional wisdom in Indian Country is that mixing business and politics is the most significant single factor in the rate of failure of tribal enterprises across the nation.

Risky Business— Complexity and Trepidation in Growing Enterprises

Tribes have always looked to their members to invest their social capital (time, energy, confidence, political support) into tribal development. Increasingly, tribes are looking outside

the reservation for monetary capital.

Investing in tribal government is not for the faint of heart, whether you are a potential joint venture partner, an Indian entrepreneur, or an elected tribal official. Tribal governance is becoming increasingly complex for elected leaders who now have the task of managing multi-million dollar enterprises. Imagine the challenges facing the tribal council member who will be judged on his or her ability to make wise decisions about resource allocation on the public sector side (where so many tribal members' jobs are at stake); and who also may be held accountable if the truck stop goes in the tank on his or her watch.

This means the temptation to micromanage is compelling, especially when things are not going well. Even the most insulated enterprises can find themselves reorganized after elections. (This was the case at Grande Ronde Reservation when their economic development corporation was pulled back into the governmental bureaucracy as a result of underperformance and political changes at the council level.)

This reality underscores the fact that given the sovereign authority of the tribal council, no corporate structure is immune from tinkering if the new council wills it so. This doesn't mean that agreements, like treaties can be broken by a new council. Tribes hold high the bars for honor and ethical standards. But, it has meant that anything not nailed down might be in play at election time. This can create uncertainty for investors, inside and outside the reservation. Many tribes interested in attracting outside investors and encouraging the development of private businesses on reservation are refining corporate structures and adopting Uniform Commercial Codes and other ordinances in order to reassure investors that their interests can be protected should the winds of tribal politics change direction.

These efforts to create certainty are good for tribal members as well. In the current environment, each tribal

member is a stockholder in their tribe's enterprises, and like any shareholders in a corporation, they have hopes and expectations that the value of their shares will grow as the corporation succeeds. The tribe's investment decisions and the ways it exercises its stewardship determine every member's prospects.

Entrepreneurship and Tribal Government

The newest economic force in Indian Country is the growing private sector made up of independent business owners who are also members of the tribe. They too are busy creating business structures and marketing plans that take the values of the market and the values of the tribe into consideration. They too must decide how much business they can afford to do on and off reservation. While they are often critical of their government, their criticism is tempered by their status as tribal members and their special interest in the future of their tribe.

For example, a river guide who is a tribal member gets most of his customers from off the reservation. Yet, he must get permits from his own government to run the river. He is often frustrated by the bureaucracy and sometimes accused of "selling culture." Yet, his business success is dependent on the tribe and other river stakeholders in ensuring the resource is pristine and offers the values his customers come to enjoy. As a tribal member, he must find a way to manage these competing interests without going crazy or broke.

The owner of a bed and breakfast and catering company does a significant book of business with the tribal government and its enterprises. She knows that if she falls out of favor on the basis of price, performance, or, god forbid, family politics, she must have enough non-tribal customers to succeed until the thing blows over.

A tribal fisher has found new customers for Columbia River salmon by vending tribal salmon in the farmers markets in Portland, but he is depen-

dent on the tribe and intertribal management agencies to ensure a steady supply of product to his nets.

Coyote Takes Out His Eyes, Juggles Them, Then Loses Them to the Crows

There are many stories in which Coyote, the trickster, removes various body parts and excretions and plays with them. He asks of them advice and counsel which they willingly give and he promptly ignores—always to his detriment. These ancient stories are parables as relevant today as they were 10,000 years ago. The tribe is often at odds with its body politic and yet inseparable from it.

At the Warm Springs Chamber meeting, one business owner characterized the tribal government as the "800 pound gorilla we all have to work

with." In the eyes and hearts of Indian people the "governing body" is more than a collection of politicians. Council members—with all their prejudices, fears, dreams, and wisdom—are the embodiment of the ancestors. The council is as conflicted as any family because it is a collection of families, clans, interlopers, and friends. The governing body is the lightning rod for the sum total of both realistic and impossible expectations of generations before, now, and in the future.

While these business owners aspire to self-reliance, they also look to their tribal government as a partner in their enterprises. As much as things have changed, they are, as they always have been, in it together. Together, in fits and starts, they are coming back. The people of Oregon can be the beneficiaries of this uneven renaissance.

Tom Hampson, Executive Director of ONABEN, has over 30 years of economic and community development experience. Tom has been a firefighter, trail crew foreman, planner, owner of a sheet metal shop, farmer, downtown manager, small business center manager, small business incubator director, organizational development consultant, and writer of stories, commentaries, poems, and songs. Tom has a B.A. from Stanford University and an M.A. in Management Communications from University of Portland.

The Fear of Successful Indians

by Dave Tovey, Jr., Executive Director, Coquille Indian Tribe

In response to a recent backlash against tribal gaming successes by publications, such as Time Magazine and the Wall Street Journal, and periodic columns by William Safire, the Tribes in the Pacific Northwest often ask the question, “Why the negative press?”

By contrast, we in the tribes have come to see our approach to the gambling industry much as we have our other governance and resource responsibilities—with caution, respect, and great honor.

It's easy for people in the media to dismiss honor when they can cite that millions of dollars are being made. But the American people have to realize that Indian people feel as though this has happened before; when the values of the external society drove it to take lands in westward expansion, and later to take our great Columbia River and its abundant salmon. More recently, many of our elders have warned that our success would attract unwanted attention from those who coveted our newfound prosperity and influence.

We are textbook examples of how to succeed in the lucrative gambling industry without compromising ethics. We were very cautious before entering the industry. Most of the northwest tribes began developing their gaming resources over five years after the enactment of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988. In the case of my tribe, the Confederated Umatilla Tribes in northeast Oregon, we surveyed our tribal members, reservation residents, and the non-tribal citizens in Pendleton, Oregon, our bordering community. We received a mandate from nearly two-thirds of all the populations we surveyed to move forward with gaming. Since then, our services and employment have multiplied, making us a respected government and the second largest employer in a rural,

economically depressed area. We have, in effect, a job for every tribal member who chooses to take it, and jobs for hundreds of non-Indians who live near our community. We are proud to offer living-wage jobs with the best benefits package in our area.

The same journalists also breezily assume that the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) is the sole guardian of safety, security, and integrity of Indian gaming. Yet, they entirely overlook our capable tribal gaming commissions, our own law enforcement agencies, NIGC's federal partners (i.e., the FBI, the IRS, the US Department of Treasury), our teams of accountants and auditors, our sophisticated surveillance systems, and—at least in Oregon—an entire division within the Oregon State Police which is funded entirely by tribal assessments from our gaming revenues.

We took to heart the gaming industry's adage, which is *to have people watching people watching people*. A

cash business such as gaming simply requires these safeguards. We challenge any other industry or jurisdiction to match our systems. So, please spare us old, worn-out arguments about level

playing fields with regard to our reservations and businesses. The field is not level and never has been.

Indeed, the entire tone of these types of articles reflects the paternalistic days of old, when White communities, from the local level all the way up to the Congressional, felt the need to solve the Indian problem. The reality is that we as tribes have only been successful in our ventures when we have planned and established our own solutions. After more than 150 years of failed federal government steward-

ship, the suggestion that these failures somehow give the ill-informed the right to condemn our current advances reflects an unspoken fear of college-educated, economically-independent Indians. One gets the sense that some would like us to remain confined to remote reservations, there to dance for the occasional tourist. Organized crime isn't frightening, but organized Indians are.

These otherwise respected publications have chosen to only examine the wealthiest and poorest of our 500 tribes nationwide. I'm quite certain any research confined to these extremes would point out inefficiencies and inequities, be it in education,

healthcare, business, government, or religion. The true story resides nearer to the center of the bell curve, where the majority of our gaming tribes are making fundamental improvements to their entire system of services, programs, businesses, and governance.

Instead of the corruption that these articles and editorials suggest, many tribes are enjoying unparalleled prosperity, a renewed sense of community, and open expectations of hope and improvement for the future—something that was not made available by current federal government policy. These successes, under any other name, would be nothing short of a Renaissance for Indian Country.

It didn't take bureaucrats and politicians concocting legislative solutions, and it didn't take years of ivory-tower academic research and study, postulating the magical answer. Indians found, quite simply, that the answer was within us.

We know that segments of the society will try to criticize our successes, reduce American treaty obligations to our peoples, and shove our legitimate jurisdictions aside, in order to continue to seek control of that which is not theirs. Many will demonize us, as American society has done with other nationalities over the course of this country's growth. We in the Northwest have a saying, *Indian Country: Where the American Dream Began*. Like America's immigrant parents and grandparents who have tasted the fabled American Dream, be assured, we are here to stay.

**We are
textbook
examples
of how to
succeed in the
lucrative gam-
bling industry
without
compromising
ethics.**



J. David Tovey, Jr. is the Executive Director of the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the former Executive Director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. He is the President of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation, and was named Oregon's Economic Development Leader of 2001.

...from the Glossary

Indian Country

Legally, Indian Country means, "All land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the United States, all dependent Indian Communities within the borders of the United States, and all Indian **allotments**, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished through fee simple titles implemented in the **Allotment** period. All land designated as Indian Country are **trust lands** and the US government holds title to them. As an extension of this authority, tribes have their own judicial systems, tribal courts, legal codes, and legal and governmental institutions except where congress has intervened.

Trust Lands

These are lands that are held in trust by the US government for Indian tribes and individuals. The federal government holds the legal title to the land while the tribal nations or individual Indian is the beneficial owner of the land. In other words the US is supposed to see that the land is managed for the benefit of the tribal or Indian owner.

Trust land is not subject to state or local jurisdiction relating to taxes, regulation, and sometimes civil and criminal law enforcement. In the case of tribes purchasing land to build a casino (for instance, in Cascade Locks in the Columbia River Gorge), the US Interior Department would have to take the land into Federal Trust to avoid state and local laws regarding taxation, zoning, and land use.

An Alternative View of Tribal Gambling

The expansion of state sponsored gambling and tribal owned casinos are realities in Oregon. EMO's opposition to state-sponsored gaming is centered on our belief that it is inappropriate for the state to promote an addictive activity harmful to individuals and families. Furthermore, we believe that our over-reliance on gaming revenues has effectively stopped tax reform efforts designed to develop a more stable and equitable tax revenue system in Oregon. We understand that not everyone agrees with our position but we continue to participate in the debate.

Today, there is a need for more dialogue on tribal-sponsored gaming and casino expansion. Due to the acrimony in many public and private discussions on gaming, it is tempting not to debate this issue publicly. However, our belief is that this would have a negative impact on tribal and non-tribal communities alike. Without the dialogue, stereotypes and

ignorance will flourish, negatively impacting community life in Oregon.

Our experience in promoting dialogues on difficult issues has taught us several lessons. First, it is important to understand and discuss the complex societal and legal contexts from which perspectives on gambling expansion develop. These include tribal sovereignty, treaty agreements, tribal and local economic development, environmental protection, and gambling addiction. Second, it is vital that the personal nature of any perspective is understood.

As tribal members know all too well, racism is alive and well in Oregon and some criticism of tribal gaming is motivated by anti-Indian feelings. In addition, many tribal members and rural communities know the full impact of poverty which can lead to support of commercial gaming as a means up the economic ladder. However, it is important not to dismiss

everyone critical of tribal casinos as racist or urban elitist, but acknowledge that many are motivated by personal experiences with gambling addiction or a belief that gambling negatively impacts the common good. Third, it is important to acknowledge that gaming and gambling are not simply innocuous recreational pastimes but big business enterprises that do not always factor in the well-being of the broader society as part of the bottom-line. The development of large, full-service casinos result in new traffic patterns and often times an adverse impact on existing businesses and neighborhoods. As such, public discussion as to the appropriateness of casinos in a community must happen.

How we approach this topic speaks volumes about our collective sense of Oregon's future.

David Leslie, Executive Director Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)

THE NATIVE VOTE

A Seat at the Table

by Russ Lehman

"Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight... If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible."

Henry David Thoreau "Civil Disobedience," (1849)

Many Native American Tribes in the US predate the original European settlers by more than 10,000 years. During that time, each Tribe had developed its own extensive and unique cultural, sociological, and geopolitical identity. The first Americans were however the last to be granted the opportunity to participate in the American electoral system: given voting rights. Without representation in Congress and without the right to vote, since the founding of our nation Indians were subject to the federal policies of allotment and assimilation, which resulted in the loss of millions of acres of lands, the removal of Indian children from their parents, and the prohibition against speaking their own language.

Similar to other population groups in the US, Native Americans may have finally attained a "seat at the table". The table, however, is still overwhelmingly occupied by constituencies with far too much sway and policymaker's too eager to listen to the well-heeled.

I would hope that Indians, like all others who are impacted by the actions of our elected representatives, be not only permitted but strongly encouraged to participate in the political

process, not only to protect their own interests but in the very furtherance of a healthy democracy.

There are two fundamental ways for eligible citizens to participate in our electoral process: directly, by voting; and indirectly, by contributing financially to political campaigns.

In most places within "Indian Country" the legal, cultural, and economic conditions have changed significantly in the last decade, creating an environment more conducive to participation in the electoral process. Many Native community leaders now report higher levels of involvement affecting elections for various non-Indian political offices, from the US Senate to county sheriffs and commissioners.

Unfortunately, media accounts sometimes perpetuate stereotypes of Native participation or revolve around political contributions of tribes, the entity through which almost all Indian contributions are made.

Tribal giving patterns are less about ideology and more about business. Despite the understandable tendency to generalize and oversimplify, Native Americans are not homogeneous, and often have interests that are in direct conflict with each other. The same conflicts of interest which occur between the states of New York and Oklahoma occur, for example, between the Onondaga Nation and the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua. Great disparities exist between Native communities from one state and/or region to another. Much of the disparity is between tribes that engage in gaming enterprises and those who do not.

The starkest difference between tribal and other givers is simply that tribes, because of gaming, for the first time have the opportunity to participate. In a participatory democracy, "access" and "influence" are essential ingredients. It has only been in recent times that these practices have earned negative connotations. The access and influence now enjoyed by a still relatively small number of tribes is

comparatively minimal when political influence on Capital Hill and in state capitals is examined.

The increased influence of the tribes must be seen in the broader context of voting participation rates. These are still significantly below many state and national averages, which have been decreasing over the last three decades. In Indian Country, turnout percentages range from 75 percent to as low as 20 percent.

Described by some as political adolescents because of their recent involvement, Indian tribes are now utilizing giving patterns similar to those of more mature political players. In 2002, for the first time tribes as a group gave more to Republicans at the federal level than to Democrats, similar to many other groups with a presence in Washington, D.C. Yet according to the Institute on Money in State Politics Project, while State House and State Senate seat campaigns have become increasingly expensive in Oregon, tribal contributions still play a negligible role.

Participation, both direct and indirect, by Native Americans in our electoral system is growing.

Notwithstanding partisan arguments to the contrary, this is indisputably a positive trend for both a long left out minority group and for our democracy. Tribes can and should avail themselves of all the tools available to increase their voice in the political process where they, more than virtually any other segment of our population, are so directly impacted by laws and policies created by our political institutions.

Russ Lehman, the Managing Director of the First American Education Project helped create the organization in 1999. As an attorney and political and public policy professional for 17 years, he has worked for state legislatures, governors, the US Department of Justice. He has worked with Indian Tribes since 1992 and is a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars on Native political participation issues.

Oregon, a Few Voting Numbers

(Source: National Congress of Native Americans, Native Vote 2004 High Density Districts report)

Total State Population (all ages): 3,582,600

Estimated eligible voters 2,600,000

Total State Indian Population (all ages): 85,667 (2.4%)

US House, District 2 entire eastern portion of state

Currently held by Greg Walden (R)

Reservations in District 2 include: Burns Paiute Colony,

Warm Springs Reservation, Celilo Village, Umatilla Reservation

Total Number of Eligible Voters: 509,602

Total Number of Eligible Native Voters: 14,296 (2.8%)

Eligible Native Voters on Reservation Land: 2,843

Eligible Native Voters on non-Reservation Land: 11,453

THE NATIVE CANDIDATE

Throwing Their Hats into the Ring

by Cherie Ike

"It's a natural progression," he said. "We've educated ourselves, we understand the political process, and it's time for us to step out. I don't look at myself as kind of a hero. There were two others who stepped out in front of me."

—John McCoy, a 59 year old Democrat and member of the Tulalip Tribes currently serving in the State legislature in the 38th District in Washington State. According to several tribal leaders, he is the fourth Native American from a Washington tribe to serve in the Legislature, and only the second in nearly a half century.

Historically, American Indian and Alaska Native voters have not participated in the voting process due to numerous factors, including a sense of disenfranchisement from the federal government, remoteness of Indian reservations, language barriers, and lack of information on the issues presented. Now, with greater populations and more resources, Indian tribes are prepared to mobilize and inspire their tribal members to vote in record numbers. It has become clear to tribal leaders and their constituencies that a strong voting base, coupled with resources to rally Native voters, translates to political power and influence over the decisions that affect them. In the 2004 elections, some communities reported that their voter participation rates were at 90%; huge compared to the average turnout of about 60% (slightly higher than the 58% who voted in 1996).

With increased voter turnout, the American Indian voice was finally heard at the polls. Both US Senators Maria Cantwell from Washington State and Tim Johnson from South Dakota have acknowledged that it was the Native vote that put them office.

Although voter registration initiatives are not uncommon during election years, the Native Vote initiative is distinguished by the remoteness of Indian reservations and vast amount of American Indians who have never been registered to vote.

But the most interesting trend emerging from the Native Vote movement is the increase of Native American candidates who are throwing their hats into the ring of mainstream politics, many after years of serving in tribal leadership positions. Many tribes and tribal organizations have identified and encouraged candidates from their own communities by pledging support or funds. The most well known Native American political figure is Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Cheyenne), the retired Senator from Colorado who served for more than a decade as a US Senator and was chairman of the Senate Committee in Indian Affairs.

In 2004 Kalyn Free, a Choctaw woman from Oklahoma, ran for Congress. She was unsuccessful in that bid but was so moved by the experience she decided to create an organization called INDN's List (the Indigenous Democratic Network), an initiative that would focus on cultivating Native American leaders who may eventually go on to run for political office. Held in Minnesota, the kickoff event was an INDN's List boot camp, hosted by a local tribe and including such speakers as Howard Dean, former Presidential candidate and current Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and comedian/radio host Al Franken.

Chairman Dean spoke to camp participants, encouraging this "silent wing" of the party to participate as candidates and voters in upcoming elections. While this was the first time such an event took place, rest assured that it will not be the last. Native Americans running for political office may be a rarity, especially in the

national political arena, but the trend is rapidly growing. While the camp was unique, if not historic according to some participants, it was certainly the first time the head of the Democratic Party spoke to a gathering of Indian candidates and operatives.

With its eleven tribes, Oregon's Native American population and candidates running for office in this state should begin mobilization efforts to empower its unregistered Native voters and energize its veteran Native voter audience.

Traditionally, tribal members do actively participate in the democratic system but mainly in the realm of tribal elections, which are viewed as being more relevant and having a more direct effect on the daily lives of the average Native American family. The obstacle for the tribal leadership and voter initiatives is achieving the same participation in county, state, and national elections.

In the last election, several Native Americans won elected office—some running for a local school board position and some more ambitiously seeking a seat on the United States Senate. However, at this time, there are no known political figureheads of Native American heritage serving Oregon on either the state or local level. With the momentum from the Native Vote 2004 initiative and INDN's List the tribes of Oregon will hopefully step up to actively support a candidate that will be accountable to tribal interests and look inward for representation from their own community.



Cherie Ike is a development associate for the Spirit of the Salmon Fund, the fundraising branch of the Columbia River Inter Tribal Fish Commission. The Spirit of the Salmon Fund seeks funding through grants, donations, and other fundraising activities to help achieve the salmon restoration and protection goals as established by the four member tribes of CRITFC. Before joining the CRITFC staff, Cherie had interned for Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) and worked for the National Congress of American Indians in Washington DC. She received her BA degree in Psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2001. Ms. Ike is a member of the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians in Elko Nevada.