

The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe: Promises of the 7 Cedars Casino
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Summary: As a tribe that has historically strived to function autonomously, the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe has used legalized gaming and their 7 Cedars Casino to their most promising advantage, as a means of securing their future of independence culturally, economically and politically.

Background

The Jamestown S’Klallam community is a subcategory of the S’Klallam tribe, which is currently divided into three separate groups. The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe is remembered for their unwillingness to leave their original place of origin and move to the location of the Skokomish Reservation, as was mandated by the US government in the Treaty of Point no Point in 1855. Their resistance to remain in their home-location was faced with opposition from the white settlers throughout the late 1800’s, but their determination remained unwavering. In 1874, the tribe raised \$500 in order to purchase a 210 acre area of land that they could claim as their own, under the guidance of tribal member Lord Jim Balch- this would be a piece of land that they would refuse to surrender, even when faced with ultimatums posed by the Indian Relocation Act. They were further faced with legal obstacles in 1953 when all federally unrecognized tribes (those who refused to move to designated areas), were denied government services and during the 1970’s when their hunting and fishing rights became obsolete under the same legal ruling. Beginning in 1974 they campaigned diligently for their legal recognition, and the right to remain on their land- a battle which was won on February 10, 1981.

The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe opened the 7 Cedars Casino for the first time, in February of 1995. 7 Cedars was established, following a compact created between the tribe and the state of Washington, a set of rules and regulations were established that allowed the tribe the opportunity to open Level III gaming facilities. The compact was created, following the tribe’s participation of the “self-governance” demonstration project established in 1988- giving self-determining rights back to the tribe themselves and out of the hands of the US government. The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe was one of the initial 7 tribes in the nation, to join this “self-governance” program. By this point of time, the tribe had already established other enterprises such as the selling of fireworks in order to generate income for their tribal community. The

proceeding creation of a casino seemed an obvious choice for the tribe that had thrived on business endeavors. On November 6th, 1993 the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe had final approval of their tribal gaming ordinance and was legally permitted to open tribal gaming locations so long as they were compliant with the established agreements, which had been set forth and agreed upon between the tribe and the state (and approved under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act). With this, the 7 Cedars casino was created as a result and has continued to grow and gain revenues since its opening in February 1995. So what did the creation of the 7 Cedars entail for the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe? In what ways did legalized tribal gaming and profits from the casino influence the cultural, economic and political autonomy and overall lives for those members of the tribal community and all others who were affected?

Findings

The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe is a unique case where the use of a casino has not actually diminished culture but rather preserved it, evident by the immense revenues generated, that are placed back into funding the tribe and the local community’s best interest. According to research conducted in 2013, “Employment statistics for recent years suggest that the casino, Longhouse Market, and Dungeness Golf Course are major employers for local citizens” (Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe Climate Adaptation Plan, 2013). The official Jamestown S’Klallam tribal website further substantiates this by providing a link that promotes and lists openings for employment at the 7 Cedars Casino, available for their tribal members. With incentives such as employment, tribal members are more likely to stay on tribal lands as opposed to moving to find work opportunities, making it easier to preserve cultural practices and educate future tribal members on Jamestown culture.

Not only does the Casino offer vital work opportunities for those in the tribal community, but the revenues generated from the Casinos endeavors “must be directed to governmental services, such as health, education and economic development” within the tribe (About 7 Cedars, n.d). These revenues have helped to make possible proud communal resources such as the Northwest Native Expressions Art Gallery, the Jamestown Family Health Center, and the Health & Human Services & Social & Community Service Building. The casino website provides links to the official tribal website, as well as information about the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe- demonstrating that the casino’s desire to get its visitors familiar with the tribe’s culture and background. Additionally, the 7 Cedars Casino is home to the Cedar Bough Art Gallery where those who visit the casino are able to view authentic cultural art, created by the tribal citizens. Although the Cedar Bough Art Gallery doubles as a casino gift shop, it has not succumbed to betraying the tribe’s culture in exchange for profit or to sell Native American stereotypes. Rather, the art gallery/gift shop, states on the website to only sell and display goods that are authentic to the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe and created by tribal members. Staying true to the Casino’s dedication to the tribe and especially towards art, the casino has worked to include authentic S’Klallam tribal artistic representation within in their architecture. Guests are greeted by three hand-carved totem poles in the front of the casino, which of course, complements the carved wood interior, and exterior supports, that comprise the detailing and body of the casino. In certain locations, the floor of the casino has salmon patterns (an important food source for the Jamestown tribe) and an animal that is a part of the official Jamestown Tribal insignia. The casino clearly does not shy away from their tribal affiliation and rather, proudly embraces the culture of the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe and works to incorporate homages and education about the tribe, into the casino itself.

Noted for their generosity, in 2010 the casino alone donated \$315,000 to charity within the community and the 7 Cedars Casino Website provides a resource that can be contacted in order to send proposals for charitable contributions. The Casino more than substantiates its communal worth and cultural dedication, through its actions and money allocations. The proceeds from the casino have also enabled the tribe to educate the community about their rich culture, through the creation of an online museum that allows anyone to enjoy and learn about Jamestown tribal culture (House of Seven Generations). This is a benefit both for the preservation of Jamestown tribal culture, but also for non-tribal members, as it is a resource for information and knowledge. With the gains made possible through casino profits, the continuity of the Jamestown tribal culture is secured. These revenues not only assist the community, but also most importantly the tribe and their culture.

In more specific regards to the aforementioned economic gains generated from the 7 Cedars Casino, the compact between the tribe and Washington State details clear guidelines and regulations for how tribal casino revenues must be spent. These rules set a legal precedent that must be complied with in order for gaming to exist. In Section 7: Gaming Revenues, under the gaming ordinance for the Jamestown tribe the rules pertaining to revenues are given as follows:

“Net Revenues from gaming activities are not to be used for purposes other than: (1) to fund tribal government operations or programs; (2) to provide for the general welfare of the tribe and its members; (3) to promote tribal economic development; (4) to donate to charitable organizations; or (5) to help fund operations of local government agencies”
(Gaming Ordinance, n.d).

This portion of the ordinance dictates a broad but still clear rubric for how economic prosperity from tribal gaming must be utilized. All revenues that are not put back into the management of

the casino are meant to be used only for tribal welfare, community benefit and local government assistance. The compact itself, provides slightly more specific regulations about how earnings must be divided for example, dictating that “ the tribe hereby agrees to establish a fund for purposes of providing assistance to local law enforcement agencies, emergency services... and to withhold and disburse at least 2.0% of the net win from the Class III gaming operation for this fund.” Generally, these regulations are not terribly restrictive as to where money must be distributed (so long as it is used to benefit tribal and local community affairs), and so it is up to the tribal council to determine to which endeavors the money should be allocated.

The Jamestown tribe has used the revenues generated from gaming in order to make renovations to their local community, affecting both tribal and non-tribal members. The tribe was responsible for the construction of the Jamestown Family Health Clinic, which “serves the community at large” as well as agreeing to “pay for a Clallam County sheriff’s deputy and squad car for the Blyn area” (Jeff Chew, December 14, 2010). They have built and renovated a community library and according to tribal chairman Ron Allen, “We [the tribe] give back literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in different initiatives throughout the community” (Rob Ollikainen, August 27, 2012). The 7 Cedars website even has a section encouraging charities to send in proposals to request contributions from the casino. Tribal gaming not only has a significant and positive economic effect on the community in general, affecting both tribal and non-tribal members alike in areas of healthcare, safety and social services, but of course they also partake in economic investments to benefit the tribe specifically as well.

Through the financial gains made possible by gaming, the tribe has been able to preserve a library collection consisting of roughly two thousand items that pertains specifically to American Indian culture- most prominently featuring works regarding the history, traditional

arts, legal practices and culture of the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe. The tribe has been able to profit from and preserve their artistic heritage through the opening of a cultural museum and shop “Northwest Native Expressions”. Art created authentically by Jamestown S’Klallam tribal members is both sold and showcased, helping to share and sustain artistic culture. The revenues from gaming are not only used to further cultural aspects of the tribe but also to support their ability to maintain self-governance financially. Through casino profits, the tribe is able to invest in other areas of economic growth including: the JTK development company, Jamestown fireworks sales and the Carlsberg self-storage center- all of which are tribal operations. With financial assistance made possible from the casino, the tribe is able to provide significant tribal, community and economic services.

Generally speaking, the state and federal government have a relatively limited interaction with the affairs of the Jamestown tribe’s gaming. The tribe’s casino must adhere to certain federal regulations such as age limitations, proper licensing for employees and other general requirements- but overall the state and the tribe are treated as respectful equals. The majority of evidence of federal involvement lies within the tribe-state compact. In addition to aforementioned fiscal regulations, the compact also details federal regulations such as the denial of minors (under 18) into the casino and must comply with US government safety inspections of the building. Furthermore, the compact addresses the issue of gambling addiction and requires that the tribe work in tandem with the state gaming agency to “establish an education and awareness program for the reservation and surrounding communities.”

Gaming for the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe is operated and maintained primarily by the Tribal Council who takes charge of affairs regarding regulation, security and control relating to gaming operations. The council has delegated some responsibilities to their Tribal Gaming

council however. This group of people is placed in charge of matters related only to gaming. The TGA self-proclaims to be “the tribe’s eyes and ears at the casino, watching over the Tribe’s assets. [They] make sure that all tribal, federal, state, and casino rules and regulations are adhered to.” The TGA additionally runs financial audits of the gaming divisions, investigates criminal activity, is in charge of screening and licensing all employees and reviews gaming documents prior to state approval. The TGA enables the tribe’s gaming to function with a high level of self-governance, while still insuring compliance to state and federal regulations agreed upon between the tribe and US government.

The state gaming agency and the tribal gaming agency are required to meet quarterly to “review past practices and examine methods to improve the regulatory program created by [the] compact.” Should violations of the compact occur, the TGA is first meant to deal with the violation/violator through their legal system, before bringing the violation to federal justice. However, if they fail to administer a suitable penalty then the state does maintain the right to pursue action. In the instance of illegal criminal matters, the TGA, county sheriff, Washington state patrol and Washington State Gaming Agency are to be involved in the investigations arrests and prosecution. The compact is also clear to state that of the regulations agreed upon in the compact, nothing “shall be deemed to authorize the state to regulate in any manner the government of the tribe... including [the selection of] members of the Tribal Gaming Agency. The politics and legal details involving the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe further exemplify the reality that through the legalization of gaming, the tribe has actually been able to exert a great sense of autonomy and independence. Although they must work in tandem with the federal government at times, they actually have made the application of self-governance, more prevalent and substantial.

Conclusion

The 7 Cedars Casino and the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe are prime examples of a community that has endured and done their best to manipulate their past hardships into the best possible outcome. The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe embodies the notion that persistence and unwillingness to waiver in the face of adversity, can result in a bright future for those who value utilize the advantages they have, but yet don’t forget the background that they come from. Through the unrelenting attitude, business-savvy mentality and strong devotion to their tribal community- the people of the Jamestown S’Klallam demonstrate that monetary endeavors such as tribal casinos, can be used for the greater good: to provide employment, offer social services, promote culture, and create a stronger economy for their tribe- thus affording them the ability to focus on the insuring cultural longevity.

The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe and their gaming efforts have made a particular way of life possible for their tribe and for their local community. Without the revenues generated from the casino, it is safe to assume that many of the positive results and on-going beneficial developments would not have been made possible. The 7 Cedars Casino has given the tribe the opportunity to make themselves prosper economically, culturally and politically. The guidelines established by the IGRA may set a roadmap for how the casino’s revenues must be apportioned, but ultimately it is in the hands of the tribe to decide how to use that income in order to better themselves and graciously, their neighbours. The 7 Cedars Casino, existing as the tribe’s prominent means of economic advancement may not be ideal for all in the eyes of the tribal (or non-tribal) community and there may be some who don’t approve of its implications. However, it can’t be argued that that the casino has helped to achieve a certain economic security that has made a substantially positive effect on those who are affected by its success.

The Jamestown S’Klallam tribe has effectively used their relations and agreements with the state of Washington, in order to utilize gaming as a means of establishing income, while still preserving their autonomy. As their past has reflected, they have not been a tribe that willingly accepts a loss of independence. Then, as their current legal policies and politics regarding gaming demonstrate, they still refuse to settle for any legal implication that may infringe on their rights to self-governance. Judging from their strong-willed past, observations made in regards to their compact, and through an understanding of their current tribal government surrounding issues of gaming- it would certainly make sense that they people have made no sacrifices to their independence and rather, have used gaming policies to their greatest advantage.

Although it will take the test of time and further studies involving the personal sentiments of individuals within the tribal community regarding the state of the tribe in relationship to the casino, it is apparent that overall the tribe has done their best to have the 7 Cedar Casino fulfill the promises it has held for autonomy and tribal-sustenance. Through the benefits that the creation of the casino has provided culturally, economically and politically- the Jamestown S’Klallam tribe has thrived and continues to prosper to their fullest potential. Through the 7 Cedars Casino, they are better able to be as their self-proclaimed title asserts: the “strong people”.

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