

creating a better future for our members,” John Daniels Jr., tribal chairman, explains via e-mail. “For example, the tribe created Muckleshoot Seafood Products, an enterprise that purchases fish from tribal members and sells smoked salmon and other fish products. This business helps sustain the tribe’s treaty fishing activities.”

Otsea also says the tribe needs to expand economically. “Even with the income from the casino, there is a big gap between where the tribe is now and where it ought to be,” he explains. “Average income on the reservation is still significantly below the county’s average, and it takes a long time to make up for the past.” According to the most recent census data available, per capita income on the reservation is about 60 percent of the King County average (\$16,890 versus \$29,521). Otsea adds that decreased federal support makes further economic development imperative.

**LETTING IT RIDE**

Talk to politicians and bureaucrats, and there is little disagreement about the shrewdness or impact of the tribe. The Muckleshoots are widely seen as smart and focused, with a vision for their future. Ed Fleisher, special assistant for tribal and governmental affairs for the Washington State Gambling Commission, has called them “tough negotiators, but very fair ... they are very businesslike.”

Local politicians recognize this growing power and support the tribe. King County Council representative Patterson says, “Their political role is increasing, because they are a big provider of jobs. They are a major economic force here.” Auburn Mayor Lewis agrees somewhat, saying, “They have been a long-term promoter of our chamber of commerce, and they work with our public schools.”

However, Lewis is a bit lukewarm about the benefits to the greater Auburn economy. “The casino and the bingo hall provide jobs, and there is some benefit from the pass-through traffic, but almost all of the money is spent on tribal lands. The problem we have is that the route [to the casino and the amphitheater] is inside the city. We have no income

coming to mitigate the costs of increased traffic.” And in an oblique reference to the idea of Emerald Downs (which lies within Auburn city limits) becoming tribal trust land, he expresses some concern about the tribe’s continuing land purchases. “I have no problem with the Muckleshoots trying to buy back land on the reservation. But I have no intention of allowing the sale of any in the city of Auburn.” When asked about this, Tribal Chairman Daniels simply says, “Land acquisition has always been a top priority of the tribe, and the tribe continually is evaluating property for purchase.”

Expansion is part of what makes people like Devlin of the Citizens for Safety and Environment so unhappy. They say tribes such as the Muckleshoots enjoy an unfair advantage in business and legal circles. “Every project they come up with, they use tribal employment as the rationale. How many full-time jobs does the amphitheater create? I grew up fascinated by how Indians lived and survived. My bitterness now comes from being called names and the frustration of living next to a ‘foreign country.’ It’s bizarre. They speak the language, go to school with you, etc., but they have special rights. When you’re looking at people who have more money than you do, it doesn’t make sense.”

But Tribal Chairman Daniels rebuffs the idea that the Muckleshoots, or any tribe, can have an unfair advantage. “The tribe does not view itself as having an economic advantage any more than the state of Oregon views itself as having an economic advantage over the state of Washington or vice versa. Moreover, the tribe suffered for years from economic disadvantage. It now has the opportunity to recover from the effects of that economic disadvantage through its ability to exercise self-governance and self-determination.”

In other words, the Muckleshoots are determined to win with the hand they were dealt. **L&P**

—Bob Geballe, a former public-affairs television producer with WGBH in Boston, is a Seattle-based freelance writer. He wrote “Getting Geeky” in our April/May 2003 issue.

**Charity Begins on the Reservation**

EDUCATION IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR TIGHTLY controlled tribal wealth.

Since their casino opened in 1992, the Tulalip Tribes have allocated more than \$5 million to send members to college. The Puyallup Tribe offers complete scholarships to any post-secondary school for any tribal

member who keeps at least a 2.7 grade point average. The small 340-member Spokane-area Kalispel Tribe, which opened a casino in December 2000, sends one-fifth of its adult members to school.

The Muckleshoots are supporting 132 tribal members in college this year and have an ambitious preschool-through-12th-grade program. In addition, the Muckleshoots have

created a tribal college on the reservation, which offers a teacher certification program, continuing education classes and a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts through The Evergreen State College, and currently enrolls 39 students. And this year the tribe contributed \$5,000 to the state’s Native Indian Bar Association to assist Indians from any tribe who want to attend law school. —B.G.

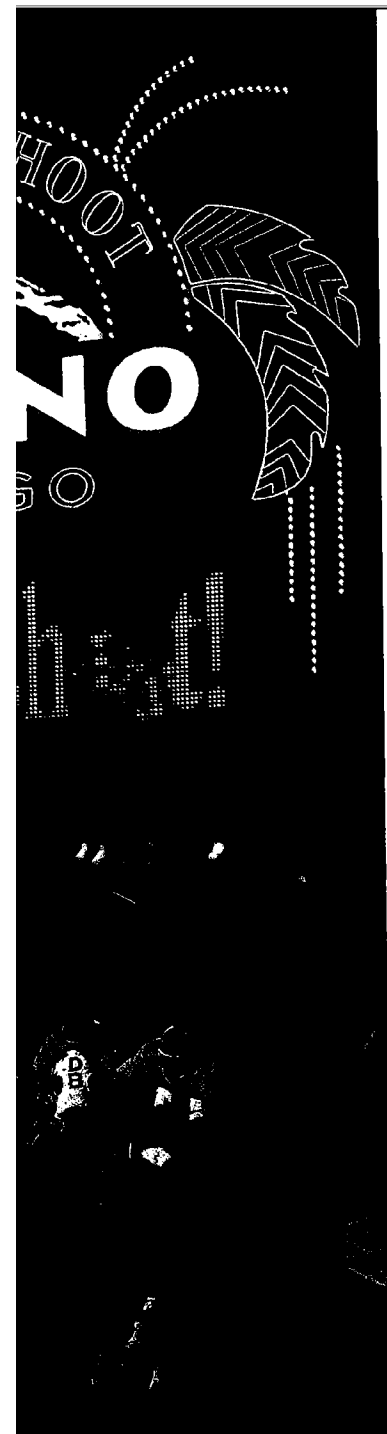


PHOTO COURTESY OF MUCKLESHOOT CASINO

PHOTO COURTESY OF EMERALD DOWNS

10. Bottom: The tribe now owns the land is.