

PUBLIC EDUCATION RELEASE – Preserving the Future of Gaming for the Yakama Nation

By: Yakama Nation Gaming Commission

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The Yakama Nation is experiencing a time of substantial financial stress. Compound the current struggle with our ongoing challenge of high unemployment and unacceptable poverty rates and a highly volatile, extremely stressful condition results. As available funds decrease, tribal program budgets are cut and departments are downsized, thus increasing unemployment, poverty and overall tribal welfare. As more and more individual tribal members struggle to support their families, they turn to the Nation for help. That help can be made available in many forms: per capita payments need based living expense assistance, jobs, job retraining, education assistance etc...

With the current financial struggles facing the Nation and revenues earned by other tribal enterprises continue to decline, the Legends Casino has become the primary funding source for the Nation's government. This resource must be protected in order to secure our future as a sovereign, resilient Nation. It is primarily for this reason that the Gaming Commission strives to uphold our integrity and serve the Yakama Nation by preserving the future of our gaming activities.

It is the Yakama Nation Gaming Commission's responsibility to ensure that the Legends Casino is operated in a manner consistent with federal, state and tribal laws and regulations. We work diligently to ensure rules and regulations are followed and gaming revenues are protected against theft or embezzlement. Additionally, by not adhering to federal laws, Legends Casino could be subjected to severe sanctioning, ranging from substantial fines to a federally ordered closure of the gaming facility.

Fortunately, this worst-case scenario is unlikely to occur; however a more likely, but still substantial threat is that the Legends Casino's ability to earn revenues could be adversely impacted due to unfavorable public opinion and perception. A common misconception of Indian Gaming is that it is a breeding ground for corruption and is not sufficiently regulated. It is our responsibility to make sure our community has faith and confidence in the Nation's gaming operation. They must be assured that all gaming activities are operated fairly. Without this confidence, our patrons would choose to spend their entertainment dollars elsewhere, thus adversely impacting the casino's bottom line.

On a broader scale, the aforementioned misconceptions have resulted in hasty, inadequately informed legislatures attempting to pass new laws that would have a significant and adverse impact on the Nation's ability to operate gaming activities and/or may significantly increase the costs associated with operating gaming. It is our responsibility to make every effort to educate non-tribal communities and our membership of the reality of Indian Gaming and correct the misconceptions that are currently present.

To summarize, the Nation and all enrolled members depend on the Gaming Commission to protect its most substantial asset. If we fail in our responsibilities, we not only fail the government, but we also fail our community, our families and ourselves.

However, as we continue to succeed and improve our organization's ability to execute our regulatory responsibilities; we are preserving the future of gaming for all members of the Yakama Nation.