



# SWINOMISH

Indian Tribal Community





**T**he Swinomish Tribe has a long-standing goal to provide all of its members with the opportunity to receive a higher education. With the success of its Casino operation, the Tribe has taken a powerful step towards achieving this goal, by providing Tribal members with economic sufficiency through job creation and employment opportunities.

This brochure describes the history of the Swinomish Tribe, our heritage as a people, our Tribal government, and the numerous social programs offered by the Tribe that are funded in part by the Casino. It also tells you about our Tribe's current and future economic development plans, about the Tribe's support of local schools, economic associations, and community organizations, and about the Casino's funding of local and national charities.

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community takes great pride in building relationships with the surrounding communities, in providing jobs, and in providing economic support for local area businesses. It is our hope that, through continued strengthening of community ties, and through ongoing development of economic growth initiatives, we will provide an economic security for the Swinomish Tribe that will ensure the survival of our Tribal traditions and guarantee the future prosperity of our people.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vince Wilbur". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Vince Wilbur, Executive Director  
Swinomish Northern Lights Casino



# HISTORY OF THE SWINOMISH TRIBE

For thousands of years, the ancestors of the Swinomish people made their homes in the Puget Sound region, in the areas now known as Skagit, San Juan, and Island Counties. Family groups inhabited permanent villages and seasonal encampments along the coast or at the mouths of rivers and streams, with easy access to water, cedar wood, minerals, food resources, and other life necessities.



The Swinomish ancestors lived in harmony with the earth, sea, and local animals. Salmon and shellfish, gathered by a variety of ingenious methods, were important staples to the diet. Modern concepts of land ownership were not recognized, although members of certain groups respected areas habitually used for hunting and gathering by other groups. Crops were cultivated and grown as needed, then gathered and eaten fresh or preserved by drying.



In the mid-nineteenth century, the arrival of European and American settlers in the Puget Sound region changed the Native American way of life forever. In 1855, the Treaty of Point Elliott established the Swinomish Reservation as a permanent home for the Swinomish, Samish, Kikiallus, and Lower Skagit Tribes. These four Coastal Salish-speaking tribes became known collectively as the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, or simply the Swinomish Tribe.



In 1873, an Executive Order signed by President Ulysses S. Grant took reservation land out of communal tribal ownership and transferred it to individual ownership, in contrast with Native American tradition of the communal sharing of land. Today, the Swinomish Tribe owns approximately 4% of the reservation land base and approximately 2,900 acres of the tidelands around the perimeter. Individual tribal members own 50% of the land base, approximately 20 percent of which is leased to non-Indians.





## TRIBAL GOVERNMENT






The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is federally recognized and operates under its own Constitution and Bylaws adopted in 1936, pursuant to the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The Tribe's regulatory authority includes land use planning, environmental assessment and regulation of land, water, and air resources, and sustainable reservation economic development.

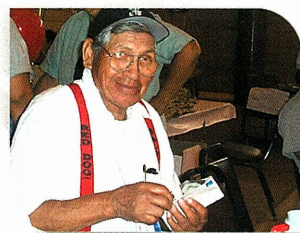
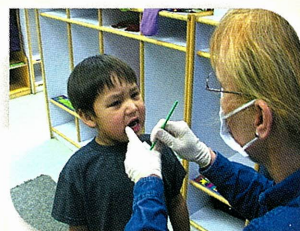
The Swinomish General Council, which includes all voting-age members of the Swinomish tribe, meets on a regular basis to address issues facing the Tribe. Every year, at the General Council meeting in February, the membership votes on the Senate election and sets the goals for the Swinomish tribe for the next year. The Swinomish Indian Senate, consisting of 11 members elected to five-year terms, is the official governing body of the Tribal Community. Principal Tribal Officers (chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer) are elected from the Senate.



## COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Tribe provides a range of social services to members of the Swinomish Tribal Community and their families. The services provided include:

-  Native Employment Works and Welfare-To-Work programs designed to help members of the Tribe enter into the work force.
-  The Title VI Seniors program, which serves meals and offers social and recreational opportunities for elders of the Tribe at the local Senior Center.
-  Family counseling and mental health counseling services.
-  The Swinomish Alcohol Program, which provides counseling services and organizes Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention projects in local schools.
-  The Health Clinic and Dental Clinic, which provide health and dental services to community members.



## HUNTING & FISHING RIGHTS

With the signing of the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855, the Swinomish Tribe reserved their rights to hunt and fish in traditional areas, both on the reservation and on public lands. These reserved rights ensured that the Tribe would be able to provide itself with food sufficient to meet the needs of its people.

The Swinomish Tribe works with the Skagit System Cooperative Fisheries Program, a state-funded program that provides salmon and shellfish management, habitat restoration, fish research and hatchery facilities for tribes on the Skagit system. The Swinomish Wildlife and Hunting program also co-manages resources for hunted and non-hunted wildlife species, in conjunction with the state of Washington.



## THE COURTS

The Swinomish Tribal Court System is responsible for interpreting and applying all laws and regulations adopted by the Swinomish Senate. Court personnel include law-trained judges, prosecutors, public defenders, specially-trained court clerks, court administrators, and probation and compliance officers. The Swinomish Court enforces tribal laws and arbitrates internal matters in a fair and equitable manner that reflects the customs and traditions of the Swinomish people. The Court is also a member of the Northwest Intertribal Court system, which provides circuit-riding judges to tribes in the Puget Sound region.

## HOUSING

Formed by Tribal ordinance in 1964, the Swinomish Housing Authority provides housing assistance, repair, and maintenance to members of the Swinomish community. Tribal homeowners can contact the Housing Authority for help in repairing their homes, installing and maintaining safe heating, water, and electrical facilities, and ensuring sanitary living conditions for themselves and their families.

In conjunction with programs funded by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Authority seeks to provide safe, affordable housing and to improve housing conditions for low-income families in the community. In the past five years, over eighty low-income homes have been "rehabilitated" through reconstruction and maintenance provided by the Authority.



## PLANNING & PUBLIC WORKS






The Tribal Office of Planning and Community Development is responsible for community planning and maintenance of the ecological systems on the Swinomish reservation. The Office of Planning develops business opportunities and economic strategies for the benefit of the Tribe and its members, while preserving the Tribe's sovereignty and cultural integrity. The Office plans and regulates land use activities on the Reservation, and coordinates with off-Reservation developments to ensure protection of historic, cultural, and archaeological resources.

The Office also provides conservation efforts to protect the Reservation's residents and its environmental ecosystems. The Office carries out cleanup efforts for toxic pollutants, manages and protects groundwater resources, monitors air quality, and coordinates efforts to conserve and protect forest, terrestrial, and tidewater ecosystems on the Reservation.











## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

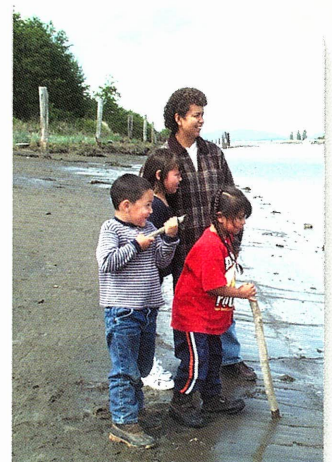
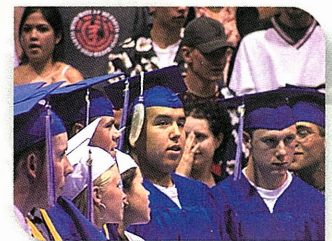
The Swinomish Tribe's Education Program seeks to improve the educational status of all members of the Tribal Community, regardless of age. The educational programs and initiatives overseen by the Swinomish Tribal Community include:

-  After-school tutoring programs for students in grades 1-12.
-  Scholarship awards to Tribal members who attend universities and community colleges.
-  Tutoring and advisement for Tribal members who plan to take the General Education Development test through Northwest Indian College.
-  Providing service to the LaConner School district through Swinomish AmeriCorps volunteers. Services provided include after-school tutoring, chaperoning and transportation for students to school dances, assistance in Native American Day celebrations, After-school Cultural Programs, and Community Cleanup Days, training and assistance for basketball tournaments and canoeing programs, and liaison services between parents and schools.
-  Providing early intervention and Head Start services for children 3-5 years of age through the Swinomish Birth-To-Six Preschool Program.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Cultural Department of the Swinomish Culture and Environmental Protection Agency (SCEPA) develops policies and programs for preserving and protecting the cultural resources and history of the Swinomish tribe. Programs sponsored by the Cultural Department include:

-  Training of LaConner school staff in Swinomish and Native American history and culture.
-  Participation in annual Native American Day festivities in LaConner.
-  Development of Lushootseed and Swinomish Language classes.
-  The Canoe Club—providing training and daily canoe practice for youth members, education programs emphasizing the importance of canoes in Swinomish history and culture, and carving, restoration, and maintenance of canoes by Master Carvers using traditional Native American methods.
-  Assistance in sending three canoe pullers to the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Australia.
-  Camp Brotherhood—Annual two-day cultural camp for youth and adults with workshops in art, native languages, canoe, and drama.
-  Sending youth delegates to the National Native Youth Conference and Sacred Earth Conference.
-  Sending staff as delegates to the National Native Prevention Conference, the National Men's Wellness Conference, and State and National DASA and Tribal Conferences.





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

In recent years, the Tribal Community has initiated numerous reservation-based economic development projects centered in and around the Swinomish reservation. These initiatives provide Tribal members with job opportunities and substantial incomes, thus allowing the Tribe to preserve its unity as a people and its native culture and traditions.



Development of the Tribe's economic district, located on the northern portion of the reservation, began with construction of the Bingo Hall in 1984. With the opening of the Casino expansion in 1994, the Tribe laid the groundwork for future economic growth. State Route 20, which connects Mt. Vernon, Anacortes, and Whidbey Island, crosses through the economic development district. In the past 10 years, traffic patterns on State Route 20 have steadily increased, giving the Tribe the opportunity to develop the land base and work toward economic sufficiency.

Income from the Casino provides the Tribe with funding for important Tribal services, including health care, housing, land acquisition, elderly care, and more. The Casino income also provides opportunities for the Tribe to expand and diversify its economic structure. Plans are currently under way to construct a gas station and RV Park near the Casino that will provide enhanced marketing and cross-promotion for all three businesses. A hotel/conference center is also being planned, which will allow businessmen and travelers from greater distances to enjoy the entertainment offered at the Casino, and will also provide a convenient stopover for travelers on the way to their final destination.

In the long term, the Tribe is continuing its plans to construct a marina in recently-acquired lands along an important waterway connecting Skagit Bay and the San Juan Islands. A master plan for future economic growth initiatives, including a Native American cultural museum, retail shopping space, and office buildings, is also in current development.











# SWINOMISH NORTHERN LIGHTS CASINO

Located on Highway 20 seven miles west of the I-5 corridor near Anacortes, the Swinomish Northern Lights Casino offers Video Gaming Machines, Blackjack, Craps, Roulette, Poker, Three-Card Poker, Pai Gow, and Fortune Pai Gow Poker, Let It Ride, Keno, and Off-Track Betting. The Casino complex includes a spacious Bingo hall, a family-style restaurant, a lounge featuring live entertainment weekly, and a Cabaret hosting concerts, reunions, and banquets.

The Swinomish Northern Lights Casino gives generously to local charities and non-profit organizations. In August of 2002, the Casino will host the first annual Northern Lights Golf Classic to benefit the Skagit Hospice Foundation. For a list of the Casino's contributions, see the insert entitled "Casino Contributions" in the back of this brochure.

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE CASINO

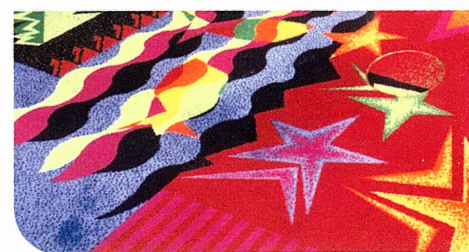
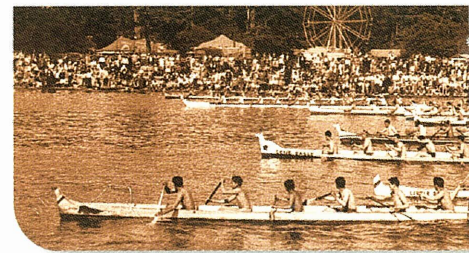
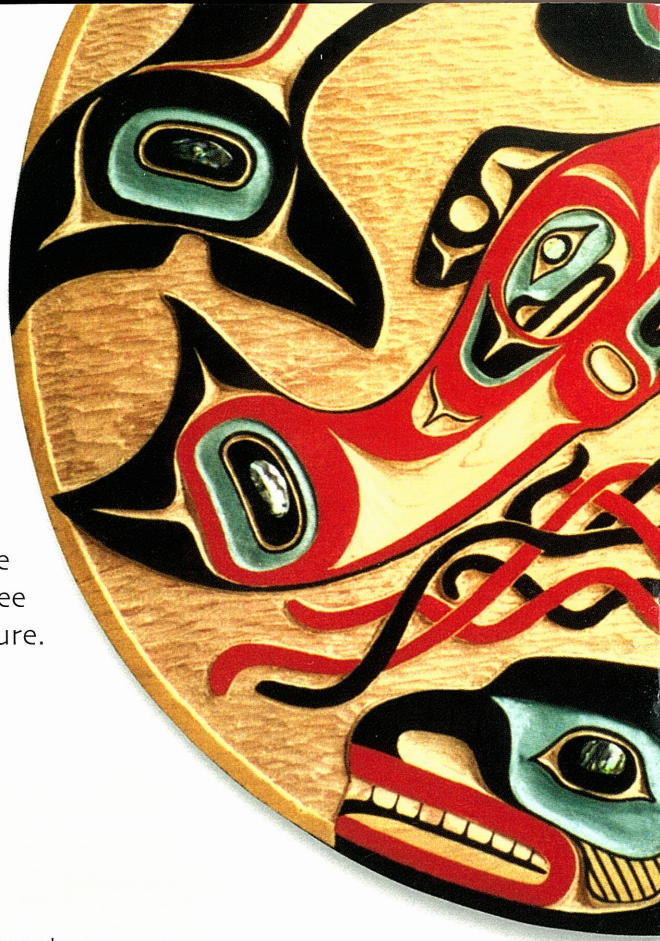
The economic benefits of the Casino include:

-  Creation of over 300 taxpaying jobs.
-  Job opportunities and training for tribal members.
-  Revenues generated from the Casino serve to provide improvements in Tribal educational programs, social services, and housing.
-  Over \$150,000.00 in charitable contributions.
-  Purchase of 260 acres to be used for further economic development.
-  Development of a Gas Station and RV Park.

## GAMING COMMISSION

The Swinomish Gaming Commission regulates the operation of all gaming activities at the Northern Lights Casino and within the boundaries of the Swinomish Reservation, and oversees the development and implementation of internal controls for those gaming activities.

The Commission works with administrative, management, and staff personnel both inside and outside the Tribe to protect the Tribe's assets, and to insure a high degree of fairness and integrity for gaming operations at the Casino. The Commission staff is also responsible for the detection, removal, and prosecution, if necessary, of patrons who would engage in illegal activities at the Casino. The Commission staff also conducts internal training programs in such matters as first aid and CPR to further ensure the safety of Casino patrons and employees.















## CASINO HISTORY

Beginning with its initial design concept and continuing with recent renovations, the Swinomish Northern Lights Casino has continually served to represent the rich heritage and traditions of the Swinomish Tribal Community. It is the Casino's mission to provide its patrons with a luxuriant, state-of-the-art casino experience while maintaining and upholding the cultural identity of the Swinomish Tribe.

Negotiations for a gaming license for the Swinomish Tribe began in 1990. A Compact with the State of Washington was signed in December, 1992. After examining its options, the Tribe chose to build the Casino next to its Bingo Hall. The Swinomish Casino opened on July 15, 1994.

In December, 1995, the Cabaret opened at the Casino as a premier showroom for Skagit County. Originally designed as a venue for Las Vegas acts and appearances by local and national bands and comedians, it is also used for wedding receptions, banquets and parties, and class reunions. In 1997-98, Tribal members took over full management operations of the Casino.

In 2002, the Swinomish Casino officially changed its name to the Swinomish Northern Lights Casino. Recent renovations to the Casino have included:

-  A one-of-a-kind 150-foot fiber-optic curtain with special lighting effects simulating the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights. A three-part show, with narration describing the scientific phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis, runs daily at the Casino, and features music composed especially for the show.
-  A state-of-the-art laser beam that enchances the Aurora Borealis show with projections of light bouncing off the fiber-optic starlight ceiling.
-  New carpeting created exclusively for the Casino.
-  The new "Starlight Lounge," featuring towering trees designed to simulate the Olympic rainforest.
-  New totem poles, reflecting the Casino's Native American origins.
-  A unique bar, "The Cave Bar," featuring professionally-crafted over-hanging simulated rock fixtures designed to recreate the appearance of a cave interior.
-  A fiber-optic starlight ceiling, featuring shooting stars and swirling galaxies.
-  A newly remodeled Restaurant, the "2 Salmon Cafe," featuring a waterfall and a foot bridge spanning a Koi-filled reflecting pond.

The Bingo Hall will also undergo renovations, including a new interior and an updated ventilation system, and will be used for large-scale events such as concerts, boxing matches, and trade shows.





# HISTORICAL TIMELINE

**1792** Spanish, British, and Russian traders and explorers arrive in the Puget Sound area.

**1830** Indian Removal Act passed to remove any tribe "residing within the states or otherwise."

**1840's** Arrival of pioneer settlers ends centuries of traditional ways of life for Native Americans. Diseases brought by pioneers, such as smallpox and tuberculosis, decimate Native American populations.

**1855** Chief Seattle signs Treaty of Point Elliott.

**1868** Catholic Church built at the Swinomish Village.

**1873** Executive Order redefines the boundaries of the Swinomish Reservation.

**1887** General Allotment Act divides the Swinomish Indian Reservation into parcels ranging from 40 to 160 acres for individual member ownership.

**1924** American Indians become citizens and receive the right to vote.

**1936** Swinomish Tribe votes to accept the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. A new tribal constitution, charter, and by-laws are adopted by the General Council.

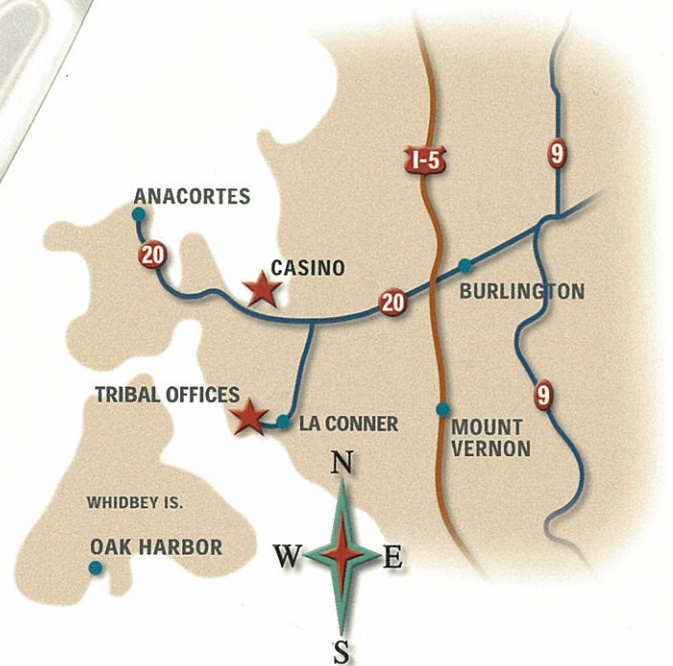
**1984** Swinomish Tribe begins Bingo operation.

**1994** The Tribe initiates new economic development projects, including the Swinomish Casino.

**2002** The Casino initiates development of an RV Park and Gas Station.









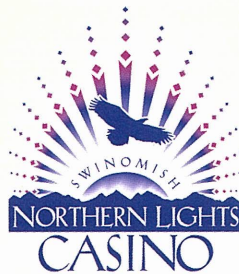
*L*et your dreams become your thoughts.

*Let your thoughts become your actions.*

*Your actions will become your behavior.*

*Your behavior will become your attitudes.*

*Your attitudes will become your destiny.*



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