

# Shoshone Trump is on a roll

By Lee Benson

Deseret Morning News



BRIGHAM CITY — Bruce Parry doesn't much look like Donald Trump.

He wears a crew cut, for one thing. For another, he's Native American, and if there's anything Native Americans are not traditionally accused of impersonating, it's business moguls like Donald Trump.

But forget all that, because what Parry is a part of is so full of potential, so cutting-edge, than even though he's 66 he's not even thinking about slowing down, let alone retiring.

As CEO of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation's new tribal economic development corporation, Parry has taken "chief" to the executive level. To hear him tell it, the future for the tribe hasn't looked this bright since the prairie was thick with buffalo and the streams were filled with trout.

"I work a lot more than an eight-hour day and I should be retired," said Parry last week at tribal headquarters on Main Street in Brigham City. "But we're doing so many exciting things, I can't walk away."

What the Northwestern Band of Shoshone are doing, in a nutshell, is taking advantage of who they are. The tribe qualifies, according to federal Small Business Association guidelines, as a Super 8(a) company, which is like showing up at a fine restaurant and being guaranteed preferred parking and the nicest table.

Super 8(a) status enhances the ability of companies to compete for federal government contracts and is reserved for businesses owned by members of historically disadvantaged groups.

Since the entire Shoshone Nation, not just the Northwestern Band, is in many ways still recovering from a variety of long-ago land grabs and other injustices — the nadir coming at the Bear River Massacre of 1863 when some 300 Shoshone were killed in a northern Utah meadow by federal troops — there isn't much question about them qualifying as historically disadvantaged.

In the past 2 1/2 years, under the direction of Parry and other tribal leaders, the Northwestern Band has initiated contracts, or is on the verge of initiating contracts, in areas ranging from technology to translation services to construction projects to various commercial and manufacturing ventures. In the near future, they're hoping to help build a power plant and a travel plaza near the Idaho border. They also have plans to open a bank.

"We've been at this for 150 years," said Parry, referring to the tribe's efforts to assimilate into the American mainstream, "but I think we've made more progress in the last two than the first 148."

The natural question, of course, is why has it taken so long.

The answer, Parry explained, is "because we're doing what no one else is doing."

In organizing its economic development program, the Northwestern Band has followed a model developed at Harvard that stresses the need to keep tribal politics out of the way of tribal business.

"The trick is staying completely separate from tribal government," said Parry. "The tribe supports what we're doing, but it's a hands-off support with no political interference. What that means is we can do contracts instantly and create jobs almost instantly; all it takes is the approval of a three-member board."

It may sound basic and simple, but as Parry, who has a master's degree in management from the University of Utah, points out, "it's unique among tribes."

The Northwestern Band's relative smallness — there are only 466 members — has also been helpful in keeping bureaucracy to a minimum.

"We're just really getting started," said Parry, "but we're starting to make money and create jobs, which are our two main objectives. I know it's a bigger deal than just us; we'd like to drag some other Indians with us. It's all about being better educated and better housed and living better lives."

To that end, Parry noted that six Northwestern Shoshone students are in college right now, majoring in business. "In two years," he said, "five of them should have their degrees."

And then maybe the Shoshone Donald Trump can finally slow down.

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