

## Northwestern Band of Shoshone thinking big

Posted: June 25, 2004

by: **Mark Fogarty** / Today correspondent

SALT LAKE CITY - The Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation has embarked on a highly ambitious economic development project designed to build up from nothing to a multi-billion dollar venture in just a few years.

The tribe also hopes to buy 9,000 acres of land near the Idaho-Utah border to create a new homeland and give its 450 members, scattered beneath the Wasatch Mountains from Pocatello, Idaho to the Salt Lake City area, the opportunity to relocate there.

The Northwestern Band has a diversified strategy that includes construction, technology, renewable energy, a resort, a power plant, a financial institution and a travel plaza.

The construction and technology projects are off the ground and have won contracts from the federal government that will allow them to get up to \$800 million in federal projects if they demonstrate they are qualified. The rest are in development, according to the executive director of the tribe's economic development corporation.

"We're going to get it done," said Bruce G. Parry of the tribe's ambitious plans. "It seems to grow daily." Already achieved are \$600,000 construction contracts from the Ute tribe to build a water storage facility and the Air Force.

In addition, the technology venture, NWB Technology, has been awarded a \$1.2 million contract from the U.S. Department of Justice for translation services.

NWB recently was awarded the "Best Rural Technology Newcomer" award by the Utah Smart Sites Program, which cited them for their DVD creation skills and client relationship management.

NWB Technology also has received a \$200 million Indefinite Demand, Indefinite Quality contract from the Department of the Interior. This means the company can receive up to \$200 million worth of contracts if they are qualified to do them. Ivan Wongan is the chief executive of NWB Technology.

The firm has also received a \$600 million contract from the Department of Defense for potential technology or construction projects it can win.

Parry said the resort development plans are well along and that the tribe is just about to purchase 350 acres to develop the site. Financing has already been arranged, he said.

The land purchase would be part of a plan to buy 9,000 acres of land and put them into trust status, creating a real reservation for the tribe (it currently has a reservation of 184 acres). Parry said the tribe, which has offices in Pocatello and Brigham City, Utah had surveyed its members and found that 25 percent indicated they would be willing to move to a new homeland.

That project alone could employ 1,500 people and be a major stimulus to a depressed local economy, Parry said. Other projects the firm is looking into include a renewable energy project to turn granola into bio-diesel fuel.

Parry is a former state director of Indian Affairs. After his retirement from state government, Parry said the economic development corporation, which is set up to be independent of the tribal council, was begun two years ago under the impetus of himself and Wongan.

Parry would also like to get involved in outer space industry and said his firm is in discussion with Northrop Grumman on two projects, one of which involves environmental and weather monitoring from space. (The other is a digital security system.) He would also like to get involved in consulting, especially mentoring other tribes to look at the kind of diversified economy the Northwestern Band is trying to develop.

Jon Warner is chief executive of the entertainment division, which includes the resort, power plant, financial institution and travel plaza. Mike Devine is chief operating officer of the EDC.

Parry hopes that housing development will be a part of the new reservation. The tribe currently is developing 10 housing units for members in Ogden, Utah and has already built about 18 others.

Key to the success of NWBEDC are stable governance, mentoring partnerships with private corporations, and state cooperation and support, Parry feels.