

# Tribe opening state's largest casino

Norman, Oklahoma – Riverwind, to become the state's largest gaming casino, is on schedule to be completed and operating in mid-July.

The 219,000-square-foot casino, just across the river from Norman on Highway 9 West, will be the 18th gaming facility owned and operated by the Chickasaw Nation. Chickasaw Nation officials said Riverwind is 80 percent built. More than 950 of the 1,874 employees needed to run it have been hired.

The Chickasaws have been staging job fairs to attract the necessary number of workers.

“We need to hire 184 people a week to reach our goal” before the July 17 opening date, said Linda Dalton, Chickasaw Nation chief human resources officer.

Dalton said Riverwind job openings are varied, ranging from cashiers, cooks and housekeeping personnel to service technicians and ticketing clerks. Officials say most positions will be part-time, with pay ranging between USD 7 and USD 9 an hour.

Riverwind construction began last July. It will include 2,200 electronic gaming machines, more than 70 blackjack and poker tables and a 77-seat off-track betting lounge. There will be a 1,500-seat theater for concerts, a 300-seat VIP mezzanine, two restaurants, a food court and an event center. The Chickasaws are building a sewer plant and 2.1 million-gallon water tower capable of accommodating thousands of visitors a day.

Gaming is not the only industry engaging the Chickasaws. They have leveraged funds over the years to build and acquire a growing range of media, manufacturing, hotel and resort

enterprises.

Among Chickasaw Nation holdings are two radio stations in Ada, a newspaper in Newcastle, a world renowned chocolate factory in Pauls Valley and a metal fabrication manufacturing plant in Marietta.

A sand and gravel company in Love County provides building materials for Dallas-Fort Worth Airport and north Dallas.

A Chickasaw Nation company north of Oklahoma City is a contract manufacturer of homes for military bases. The company employs 1,200.

Winstar, an upscale gaming and resort complex, is being developed on the north edge of the Dallas metroplex. Chicaza, a 1,400-acre resort, is being built near the state lodge on Lake Texoma.

The Chickasaws own Bank2 in Oklahoma City, with total assets of USD 90 million. Bank2 recently signed an agreement to acquire AllNations Bank in Calumet from the Absentee Shawnee Tribe.

A 4,300-acre working ranch is included in the Chickasaw Nation's assets. The Chickasaws even operate their own utility authority that purchases electricity to sell to Chickasaw Enterprises and export power to other users.

For 20 years, Chickasaw Enterprises has grown exponentially under the leadership of tribal Gov. Bill Anoatubby. The number employed in Chickasaw businesses has grown from about 300 in 1997 to more than 5,000 today. The Chickasaws operate on an annual budget of USD 350 million.

Nearly 7,000 will be working for Chickasaw Enterprises when the Riverwind Casino comes on line next month.