JACKPOT! SEMINOLE GAMING FROM THEN UNTIL NOW

Tribal Sovereignty is the right of Indian Tribes to self-government and self-determination. These rights allow for the establishment of a government, the ability to adopt legislation, the provision of law enforcement and court systems, and the definition of membership.

The rights are not modern constructions, but existed for Tribes long before the framing of the United States Constitution. As European countries came to the New World, they dealt with Tribes as individual nations and crafted treaties for peaceful relations in North America. This mutual respect was lost, and Tribes were seen as obstacles to European expansion. For almost 500 years, Tribes have fought, both on the battle field and in the courtroom to protect their rights as independent nations.

Since the 1970s the Seminole Tribe of Florida has used the United States judicial system to open doors for increased Tribal economic self-sufficiency. The institution of gaming, specifically high stakes bingo was first introduced to the Tribe in 1971 by Chairman Howard Tommie and has gone on to become the largest source of Tribal income. Controversy over Tribal gaming has never abated, but the legal triumphs of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and their acquisition of the Hard Rock brand have opened the door for other Tribes around the country to institute gaming and reap its economic and social benefits.

Join us as we explore the history of tribal sovereignty, the gaming industry, and the increased economic self-sufficiency the industry provides in this timeline of sovereignty cases and tribal achievements.

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1731
Royal Proclamation - King George II

Indian Tribes were accorded independent nation status and all land west of the Appalachian Mountains was designated as Indian country.

1803
Louisiana Purchase

1778
Continental Congress

After the United States became an independent nation, Congress reaffirmed the 1731 Royal Proclamation as an American policy of action toward Indian tribes.

1775
Revolutionary War Begins

1823
Johnson v. McIntosh

The first of three Supreme Court cases that established fundamental Constitutional Indian law: the United States government acquired ultimate title to Indian land and stated that it could only be sold to the United States government.

1787
Northwest Territory Ordinance

The United States government was declared responsible for Indian property, rights, and liberty.

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1830
Indian Removal Act

Congress, influenced by sightings of gold within the Cherokee territory in Georgia, called for the removal of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw, and the Seminole Tribes across the Mississippi River. Within ten years, more than 70,000 Indians had been removed from their native lands.

1832
Worcester v. Georgia

The third of three Supreme Court cases that established fundamental Constitutional Indian law: established that the Cherokee were entitled to federal protection from the actions of state governments that infringe on tribal sovereignty.

1830
Plans for the City of Chicago Laid Out

1860
U.S. Civil War Begins

1831
Cherokee Nation v. Georgia

The second of three Supreme Court cases that established fundamental Constitutional Indian law, calling the Cherokee Nation a Domestic dependent nation and recognizing a government-to-government relationship between the United States and all Indian nations. Tribes answer only to the Federal Government, not the states in which they reside.

1838
Oscecola Dies

1887
Dawes Act

This act authorized Presidential surveys of Indian Tribal lands and divided the areas into acreage allotments for individual Indian families. The Act was in effect for forty-seven years, and during that time approximately 90 million acres of treaty land was lost and about 90,000 Indians were pushed off their native land.

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1889
Eiffel Tower Opens

1954
Indian Reorganization Act "The Indian New Deal"

This act effectively reversed the Dawes Act by ending allotment, encouraging tribal self-government, restoring freedom of religion and ceremony, extending financial credit, and promoting a revival of Indian language, culture, tradition, and crafts.

1906
Burke Act

This amendment to the Dawes Act eliminated the right of Indians to lease land and gave the Secretary of the Interior the power to issue patents to individual Indians classified as competent and capable which increased the exclusionary power of the Secretary of Interior.

1922
King Tutankhamen (King Tut) Tomb is Discovered

1898
Curtis Act

This legislation terminated any tribal governments refusing allotment of their lands and gave the President the authority to appoint tribal chiefs in these tribes. Tribes also faced the abolition of tribal laws, all tribal courts were abolished for the Seminoles on July 1, 1898.

1924
Indian Citizenship Act

This act was ratified to grant full United States citizenship to all Indians.

1914
World War I Begins

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1952
The First Rock and Roll Concert is Held in Cleveland, Ohio

1977
Seminole Smoke Shop

Under the leadership of Howard Tommie, the Seminole Tribe of Florida opened its first smoke shop in 1977. It gained popularity by offering tax-free cigarettes to consumers. The ability of Tribes to sell goods tax-free came about with the court case Bryan v. Itasca County. The court ruled that states housing Indian reservations were allowed criminal jurisdiction over Indian lands, but not civil or regulatory jurisdiction.

1942
Seminole Nation v. United States

The Supreme Court case that established the legal obligations of the United States to have 'moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust' toward Indian Tribes for protection of Tribal lands, assets, resources, and treaty rights.

1977
Star Wars Opened in Movie Theaters

1945
World War II Ends

1953
Termination Act

This act authorized the elimination of reservation systems including an immediate end of federal services and tax immunity, which impacted several services, including hospitals, schools, and road maintenance. In all, 109 native nations were terminated by this Congressional act and for most, termination brought on total economic disaster. A few were later "restored" to federal recognition during the 1970s.

1979
Hollywood Casino Classic

The first ever high-stakes bingo hall on Indian land opened December 14, 1979 on the Hollywood Seminole Indian Reservation.

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1981
Seminole Tribe of Florida vs. Butterworth

Broward County Sheriff, Robert Butterworth sued the Seminole Tribe of Florida over whether Florida laws could be applied to the Tribe's gaming operation. The state argued that because the Florida law instituted a criminal penalty, it should not be considered a regulatory law, while the Tribe argued that the case was an attempt by the State of Florida to limit Tribal sovereignty. The court ruled that Florida law did not criminally prohibit gaming but permitted and regulated it. Because of the precedent of Bryan vs. Itasca County, the Seminole Tribe was allowed to operate their gaming facilities in a manner they saw fit without stepping within the parameters of Florida State gaming laws.

1987
Cabazon Band of Mission Indians vs. California

The Cabazon Mission Tribe of Indians sued the State of California over the right to operate a casino. The Tribe argued that the Tribal government was not only sovereign but also a recognized non-profit organization. The State of California allowed casino-night-fundraisers for non-profit organizations and therefore, had no right to regulate their operation. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Tribe and opened even more opportunities for Tribal gaming operations.

1987
"Mr. Gorbachev, Tear Down This Wall"

1988
Indian Gaming Regulatory Act

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) grew out of the Cabazon vs. California case. The Act placed limits on how gaming can operate on reservations, as well as the types of games that can be offered in Tribal casinos. It was in this piece of legislation that formal classes of gaming were created and it explained the different means of regulation applied to each. The National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) was formed within the Department of the Interior to administer and enforce this act.

1985
Back to the Future opened in movie theaters

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