



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Mia Tahdooahnippah
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Tino Magnatta: Hello, and welcome to another episode of GT Radio. My name is Tino Magnatta. Tonight, I have a very, very special guest. I have Mia Tahdooahnippah. She's the CEO of Comanche Nation Entertainment. She is the only female CEO of a gaming company in Oklahoma State, and she is the first CEO of Comanche Nation. Mia, welcome, welcome, welcome to the show. How are you?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I'm good, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Tino Magnatta: You're welcome, very, very welcome. So this for me is a very special show. You know I've had a lot of women on this show, a lot of great women. How does it feel to be in the position that you're in and to basically forge the way here and be the first... break the glass ceiling, so to speak?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, I'm not going to lie. It's a little scary. It can be scary at times and exciting, but scary in the terms of we're Comanche Nation, and we're really supporting our tribal members. It's a big job, but you just do it. You look forward, and we just keep figuring out how we're going to do it better and better.

Tino Magnatta: Now, how did it all come about, the position? What made you want to do it? What inspired you to get involved and take on such a task?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: The CEO or gaming?

Tino Magnatta: The CEO position.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, I got a call one day. It was from one of my cousins. She said, "Hey, you just got appointed to be the CEO." I just laughed, and I said, "Yeah, whatever." She said, "No, I'm serious," so that's how I found out. It was something that our tribal council needed, and we went from there. Again, it's one of those things that you're asked to do something, and you just do it.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you make it sound so simple. But you've been around the gaming for a long time. Tell us a little bit of that evolution. Let's go back a little bit, and tell us a little bit of your experience with the tribe and your history in the gaming.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Sure. Well, I'm a tribal member. I'm a Comanche tribal member. My husband's a tribal member. My children are tribal members. I'll mention my mom for a second. She was our highest ranking elected official, female, in the early 1990s, early '90s. When I was a child, I used to have to go with her to tribal council meetings. So we'd go to these tribal meetings, and I'd always sit in the back. But I was I guess listening. I didn't think I was listening, but I was listening because I can remember now, I mean, some of the things that had happened and just the history of gaming.

But I got started in gaming. It's kind of funny. I have one of those moms that she... Well, I had finished college. I attended the University of Oklahoma. So I'm a born and bred Sooner fan. But after I had finished, I was aimlessly wandering

around, I guess. I was just really at a point in my career where I didn't know what I wanted to do. I have one of those moms that she knows what's best for you even more than you know what's best for you.

Tino Magnatta: Of course.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, yeah. She had this great idea that I should go work in this local casino. It was for a different tribe. But I thought, "Whoa." That was not my idea of a good time. I didn't hang out in casinos at the time. But she just kept on my case. So the plan was that I got a job at this local casino, and I started as a cage cashier. The plan was is that I was going to work for a few months, and then I was going to quit, and then I would tell my mom, "Okay, I did it. There. Will you leave me alone?" Because that's kind of how me and my sister we'd kind of get her off of our case by like, "Okay, we did it."

So I started, and I loved it. I absolutely loved it just from the first day that I started. It was something about the gaming floor, the bells, the whistles, the people. I love people. I'm a people person, love to talk, love customers, loved team members. If you're in gaming, there's just a feeling on the gaming floor that it's hard to explain. It's just an energy. There's an energy about the gaming floor that's exciting. It gets you pumped up.

So I did that for a little bit. And then I transferred after a while and moved into casino accounting and did a little bit of casino accounting. And then I moved to Southwest Oklahoma and started working with the Comanche Nation. I initially started in the gaming commission and started as an internal auditor. And then I was a compliance auditor, and then I was the compliance director for about 10 years. So a lot of my gaming background is regulatory, and I really enjoyed that, and just ensuring that the nation adhered to tribal and state and local laws and regulations.

And then I made the transition to the operational side. There was a position that came open. There was a new position. And it was training and development. There was just something about that that sounded really exciting, like, "Wow. That sounds like fun." It was new, and so it was just something that we were starting to look into. So I made the jump to the operational side and worked for a little bit and then transitioned to a property general manager and then transitioned to the CEO.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you were telling me that one of the reasons why you were able to evolve it was directly related to all the people that you were touching along the way. Explain that to me a little bit because you have a lot of employees, right? One of the keys to your success is the fact that you know everybody because of all your history with the tribe and the training. Explain all that to me. That's kind of like a puzzle thing.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, yeah, that... Know everybody, I wish. I wish that were true. That's definitely a goal to be able to know everybody because I think that that's important. I think it's important that you do know all of your team. When I was in training a development, I taught a customer service class. It was all of the new hires. All of our team went through the class. I got to work with supervisors and managers and really got to know them a little bit more and got to work with team members but really got to sit down and get to know and learn their names and learn what they like to do for fun and a little bit about their families, where they're from and just to learn a little bit about everybody of all our new hires.

And that was really cool. It was really, really cool because when you transition to other positions, when I transitioned to the general manager of one of our properties, I knew everybody. I knew their names. I knew what they liked. Again, I was in a new role, and they helped me by all means. It was all of our team.

Tino Magnatta: When you started in the business back then, how did you think that the women's role in the workplace, in your workplace, has evolved since then?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Since I started... I would say that there seems to be more women in management positions. Our workforce is 60% maybe, maybe 55, between 55 and 60% female now.

Tino Magnatta: That's great.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Slowly. It'll take... Slowly.

Tino Magnatta: What do you think is the cause of the shift? How can that be improved? What are those vibes that are happening?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, I think definitely there's a shift in our societal changes where it's really uncommon that you come across anybody now that is a single income of a parent. It's hard. So equally, single mothers, they have to work. They don't have a choice. So there's that portion of it. And then, again, just it takes two people to work. I'm a mother of five, so we have a big family. I always joke and make a joke that... I always tell my husband if one of us had to quit, it's going to be him because there's no way that I could stay home with kids all day. I can't get out the door fast enough. And then I'm like, "Whoa, late. It's already time to go home," because it's another job. It's when the real job starts.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it really is. Tell me something about the keys to your success. You've been in so many different roles on your way up. Tell me some of those keys, the key ingredients that you need to make that great evolution that you've made all the way to the top.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Wow, that's tough. Success isn't... It's not a destination. It's a direction. You have to set goals for yourself. You have to write them down. For me, I have to

write everything down and just being clear on what those goals are and then to share them because then now there's an accountability factor that, "I just told everybody, so now I have to do it." So sharing your goals, and then once you reach that goal, I think you have to go back to the drawing board. You have to go back to the drawing board and say, "Okay, I've done these things. Now, I have to set new ones." So you keep moving the goal posts, per se. So I don't think that there's a key ingredient other than I truly believe that you have to believe in yourself. You have to believe in others, and you have to have a high expectation.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, you got to keep raising the bar higher and higher. Let's go back a little bit. You touched briefly a little bit about your mom. I know your mom is... I had the pleasure of meeting her and meeting you, too, for the first time recently. Extraordinary. You're both extraordinary people. I wanted to ask you a little bit. She's been such an inspiration to you. Take me back to when you were a child, and explain to me a little bit more some of the things that you experienced as a child that then transferred over into your adulthood and gave you the passion that you have today.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Sure. I'm the youngest of four, so I have two older sisters and one brother. I was born in Venezuela. My dad worked in the oil field, and so he traveled internationally. When I was young, my dad was transferred to Nigeria. So my parents just decided that it probably wasn't the best place to live, so they moved home. This is home for them. So Southwest Oklahoma is where both my parents grew up. So we moved home, back to Oklahoma. My dad he was a sailor. They say they have sailor mouths. I could tell some funny stories, but my mom might hear, so I better not. But we can talk about those later.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: He comes from a big family. My dad comes from a big family. He is one of 15. He has eight sisters and seven brothers, so he's pretty laid back. He's pretty liberal in his way of thinking. One thing I think he's always taught me is he doesn't care what other people think, and he's real clear about that. He's just one of those people. We'd push the limits together. When I was young, we broke horses together. I'd fall off and just look at him and, "You better get back on." Yeah.

So then I have my mom. I would say she's probably at the other end of the spectrum, like complete opposite you could get as far as you can on the other spectrum. We call her the Native version of Emily Post. Yeah, so she retired recently, and I think she's busier now than she ever was before. But even though she retired, she works with the University of Oklahoma. She works for the athletic department. She's their image coach, so she teaches athletes... Well, all of the athletes, she teaches them just life skills but more image. I guess, just in short, not to embarrass the university... And the national champ teams, too. If any of the national champ teams, they become national champions, they go through her class again. And she teaches them how they're going to act before they go to the White House, so she's certified in White House protocol.

Tino Magnatta: Wow. That's great.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, her teacher was the one that advised the president for many years.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah. Her passion is etiquette. She really has a special place in her heart. She really loves college-age students. That's her favorite age. She really does a lot for the Native kids, especially the ones that have attended the University of Oklahoma. She was advisor for many years to the Native students. My sisters and nieces, we grew up helping her teach classes. Over time that stuff just sticks. It's just like anything else that if you don't practice it over and over, you forget it. But we were lucky enough to have her. But then there were sometimes that we would eat dinner at home, and we would have our elbows on the table, and she would get on to us. We would tell her, "Mom, can't we just eat? Can't we just eat today?"

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it became a little bit like... But she was also a trailblazer in terms of a female in the Comanche Nation, right? She was a first, too.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: She was. In the early '80s, she was elected as the vice chair position. She was known for a long time in the tribe as... She had held the highest ranking female for about 20 years just until recently. Within the last few years, we have elected another vice chair lady.

Tino Magnatta: It's amazing. What was it about your mom, or what is it about your mom that she was able to be the only female as the vice chair? What is it about her?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: She's a people person. She's very giving. She does the right thing. She has a lot of integrity. I'm not sure. I was young when she-

Tino Magnatta: She's very well respected is what you're saying.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah. When she held that position, I don't know what she was thinking at the time, what would possess her to do something like that.

Tino Magnatta: That's funny.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: My mom and dad's family and my husband George's family, we come from big families. So all of us, we have big families. My mom's family, it's primarily girls. There's a handful of boys, but primarily it's girls. My mom was the oldest, and she took care of her brothers and sisters. My grandma worked, and she, too, was a pioneer and just making, I guess, positive change. You know, like what can we do as Native people, as women, as mothers to make a better place, whether it be in the school system or whether it be at home or in our community or for our tribe? What can we do to make it better?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, positive-

Mia Tahdooahnippah: All of them have been advocates for positive change.

Tino Magnatta: Excellent, yeah. That's where it all comes from. It starts from somewhere and just flows down. Let's talk about-

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah. And I think it was an expectation.

Tino Magnatta: An expectation of you to follow in that direction, correct?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, I think the girls definitely had higher expectations than the boys, for sure.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: It was just expected.

Tino Magnatta: What's your advice-

Mia Tahdooahnippah: It was expected.

Tino Magnatta: What is your... Yeah, it was expected, "Hey, you got to do something that raises the bar in that area." I think you blew it right out of the water. What is your advice to younger women coming up the ranks who want to achieve the same sort of things that you've achieved?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, again, going back to you have to believe in yourself. You have to believe in others and have high expectations. You have to believe in yourself. You have to believe it. You have to think it. You have to say it over and over. I'm a huge advocate for positive thinking. Unfortunately, our world is such filled with negativity and everywhere we look. So it's so important that you cut yourself off from that and really focus on what's important. My life, God's important. My family's important. And my career. My mom always said, "Where there's a will, there's a way." I live by that and believe it because it's true. If you want it, and if you believe it, it will happen.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You're just full of passion just like your mom, and that's what pushes everything forwards. It's the hope.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, drive.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: And you have to dream.

Tino Magnatta: Tell me a little-

Mia Tahdooahnippah: You have to dream. Dream big. Always have dreams. Always have goals. Write them down, like I said. And never give up. I was a working mom. I had five kids and was working on a master's degree. At the time my husband worked, and he was also juggling a professional boxing career, so it was go, go, go. But one thing that is so critical is having a support system. There was a time where we were going to move away because that's what we needed to do in my husband's boxing career to... But we really had to think hard about it because we had little kids. There was just no way that we could leave our family because they had been such a huge asset and a tremendous support. I'm talking out cousins and our sisters and our brothers and our parents. There were times where we had four kids on four different baseball teams. We can't be everywhere at one place. George's dad is always taking somebody to practice and taking somebody to a ballgame. He knows their schedules better than I do.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah. It's a big help when you have the family around. It really makes a big difference, doesn't it?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yes. I encourage you. If you're a listener, and you're a mom, or you're an aunt, you're a grandma, aunt, uncle, help those younger that are in school that are in the early stages of their careers. A lot of times, too, if you don't ask, nobody knows. So just really being there is probably the number one thing that helped both George and I.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. Now, tell me a little bit about the State of Oklahoma gaming. Where do you think we're at right now? Because a lot of people said, "There's so many casinos, a lot of competition, a lot of expansion." I mean, is it too much? Is it just enough? I mean, where do you think we're at?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: 10 years ago people asked the same question. When Comanche started, we were the only ones in Southwest Oklahoma to have gaming. For many years, we were the only player in town. So you become very comfortable, again, when you're the only player in town. But then we got competition that came along. I think competition's great because it makes you better. So it kind of has gone back and forth. They do something, and then we do something. Competition kind of... It makes both of the tribes because we equally support our tribes and happy for them that are around us. They're our neighbors. We live in the same community. We're happy that they have what they have. Equally, they feel the same about our tribe. We're happy for one another. I mean, we're all Natives. But, no, I think that Oklahoma... Well, and nationally, revenues keep growing. They keep increasing. They keep growing. Where-

Tino Magnatta: Do you think that's... No go ahead.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I think that they're still at construction. There's construction at multiple properties across the state. So they keep growing. They keep expanding. New properties keep coming up. I have yet to come across a casino that's closed.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, there seems to be enough business that it [inaudible 00:26:12] support... Do you think there's any red flags within the next 10 years with the continuing growth?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I think that no matter what market you're in you should be cautious. We were really lucky in Oklahoma to not have the housing market crash that happened years ago. We have had a state that was heavily dependent on oil. I got the pleasure of meeting Mick Cornett who was the former... I met him last week. He was the former mayor of Oklahoma City, just an incredible, amazing, amazing guy, love hearing that story. He just came out with a new book. But he was really one of the founding fathers that transformed Oklahoma City from a wheat field, and it was during the time of Oklahoma had a oil bust. So it was devastating. They transformed Oklahoma City to now downtown Oklahoma City, it's a tourist destination. I mean, I remember hanging out down there when it was a bunch of empty, vacant, abandoned warehouses.

Today, the Oklahoma City Thunder. Fast forward, and that's what they have now. They had a vision, and they've made it a tourist destination. I really think that that's what's helped the tribes because we've followed in suit. There are many tribes across the state now that have major tourist... They're tourist destinations. I mean, who would've ever thought 30 years ago that Oklahoma would be a tourist destination. But Millennials now, they're looking to leave metropolitan areas. Now, the ones that are going into the workforce, they're looking to leave some of those big metropolitan areas, and they're actually looking at coming to more rural places. They're looking at Oklahoma City. They're looking at Tulsa. They're looking at Iowa, places that are affordable and livable.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Yeah, they're looking at... Well, rural not really anymore because like you said they've grown into cities that have real culture in it now. It's really good. Let's take a couple calls, and then we can dive back into it. Hang on one sec.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Okay.

Tino Magnatta: Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Mia?

Janie Dillard: Tino, this is Janie Dillard. I was going to call in to talk to Mia tonight, see how she's doing.

Tino Magnatta: How are you, Janie?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Hi, Janie.

Janie Dillard: Hey, Mia, how are you doing?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I'm doing great. How are you?

Janie Dillard: I'm doing wonderful. Congratulations. I'm so proud of you for what you're doing for your tribe, for the Comanche tribe, and what you're doing for the State of Oklahoma. It's phenomenal to see another strong woman being in the position that you're in. That is phenomenal.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, thank you. I appreciate it. I've told people this before, I've always had great admiration and very much admired you because you've paved the way. You've paved the way and very known as... When you think of women leaders in Oklahoma, you're the first person that comes into people's minds. Again, you're a Choctaw. You do it for your people and for the greater good. When you do that, there's a purpose behind what we do what we do.

Janie Dillard: Absolutely. This is awesome listening to your story and just how your growing up with your mom. Your mom was so instrumental in everything your tribe did. I remember your mom. She is just a lovely lady. She's so instrumental in the tribes. You're following in those footsteps, too. And Mia, just don't ever, ever lose your direction. Don't ever lose your big vision because you've got it. You know, you know where our tribes need to go. Just continue. Continue that push.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Thank you. I appreciate it so much. I just try to remember every day, just looking at my family and my kids, and just try to think, "Seven generations. What are we going to have?" We have to think about that today because this is-

Janie Dillard: Absolutely.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: ... this is what my kids and my grandkids, this is what they're going to inherit, what we're going to leave them. And again, just trying to focus on... We build roads, and we build communities. And we give school supplies to the local schools. But again, this is the community in which we all live in.

Janie Dillard: And that's what's so great about our communities. I mean, our tribes are so united right now with the State of Oklahoma. As Tino knows, everything we're going through with our compacts and this-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Janie Dillard: Our tribes are so united, and they're so strong right now. We've got to keep that momentum.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yes. Yeah, it's exciting.

Janie Dillard: Yes, it is. Yes. It's scary, but it's also exciting.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: In due time, too.

Janie Dillard: It is. It is, yes.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yes.

Tino Magnatta: Some exciting times. We just need to see more and more of this stuff going on. It's just a great thing that just all this stuff is happening.

Janie Dillard: It is, Tino. I just appreciate you so much for what you do highlighting the women that's... It's working in our tribes. And the strong women that's in our tribes. It is highlighting our tribes, so it's very important that we continue to send that message every day. I so appreciate your radio station. I appreciate your efforts, too. It's phenomenal.

Tino Magnatta: Wow. Thank you. I wouldn't want it any other way. I think there's a lot of great women that are doing great things. I think there's a lot of great women in the wings that could do great things that just need the opportunity to break through. That's why we do it, you know? Send the message out there.

Janie Dillard: Absolutely.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: That's right.

Janie Dillard: Just like Mia. Mia's, she stepped out. She stepped out. She took on more responsibility. She grew. I mean, you get in gaming, [crosstalk 00:32:27] grow up gaming.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I got shoved out.

Janie Dillard: Well, you did. But, okay, maybe you need that little shove, okay.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: [crosstalk 00:32:34].

Janie Dillard: Maybe you needed it.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: [crosstalk 00:32:34]. Yes. You do, and you do.

Janie Dillard: But you didn't-

Mia Tahdooahnippah: We get comfortable in our zones.

Janie Dillard: We do. We all do. We do. So you needed that little nudge you got, and you got it. Look where you're at now. Look what you're going to do. Look at the opportunities you're going to have. Keep those eyes. Keep those eyes on that position of where you need to be and we all need to be. You've just got to keep your eyes on those positions because that's where you need to be. And you follow your direction and follow God's doors he opens for you. Just follow those, and you will not go wrong.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: And it wasn't until recently... Tino, actually, is the one that asked, really, the first questions on like, "Well, how does it feel? How does it feel?" It really was a tough question because I never thought about it, really honestly. I mean, I don't think that I've gone through any if much of my career in the gender card. It's just there's a job to be done, and you just do it. You do it because it needs to be done. Whether you pick up a paintbrush, or you mix some concrete, or you drywall. Hey, I recently just learned to weld. But you just do it.

Janie Dillard: I love it.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: You do it because it needs to be done. My mom ingrained in us, too, that, hey we live in an equal-opportunity household. And I got four boys. I ingrained that into them since the day they were born that this is an equal-opportunity household.

Janie Dillard: It is. Absolutely. You've got the right mindset, Mia. You've got the right mindset for it. I mean, you know, you just... There's the job. You just do it. You just do it. I mean, you don't wait for somebody else to do it. You just do it. So that's the right mindset to have.

Tino Magnatta: Yep. And very inspirational for so many other women, too.

Janie Dillard: Oh, yeah. Well, we've got to stay united. We got to stay together. We're all about our tribes. We're all about the betterment of our people. We are our people's future. That's where it's at. Mia is the new our people's future. I mean, she's the one now will carry the torch. She'll lead it. She'll open up the doors. She will be the one our people follow now.

Tino Magnatta: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yep. It's a great thing.

Janie Dillard: That's what's exciting. That's what's exciting in our tribes. That's what is exciting just seeing women move up into these positions. I love it. I love it. She and I connected on LinkedIn. We've got to hook back up. We've got to set down and talk sometime [crosstalk 00:35:09].

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

Janie Dillard: We want to do that. It's something we've got to do. So we're going to have to make some time for that because I'm so, so proud of you.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, that'd be great. Yeah, I can say looking back many years, really, you don't think of where you're going to go. You just keep going. Again, I think, too, when you lose sight of why you're doing what you're doing because it's for the better of the people to make a better life, better workplace, better everything, you grow at the same time. So thank you.

Janie Dillard: You do.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I appreciate all your kind words.

Janie Dillard: Yes. No, you're so, so welcome. I appreciate you so much. Tino, again, appreciate you. Hope you both have a blessed evening. It's been awesome listening to her whole interview. I loved it. It was great. So you guys have a blessed evening.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much for calling. I really appreciate it.

Janie Dillard: All right. Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Take care. Bye-bye. Well, that was a treat.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, that sure was.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: That was... Yeah, just wow.

Tino Magnatta: She's a pretty amazing woman.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Awesome. Yeah, absolutely. Yes, absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, she's something else. I remember going to a conference and someone saying, "Oh," as they were shuffling in, "Oh, Janie's speaking today." I'm going, "What's all the fuss about?" And then I heard her speak, and I was like, "Oh, okay, I get it now." I mean, I felt so inspired after her speech. She's great. Great speaker.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Right.

Tino Magnatta: And a great, great person.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: And just what she's done for her tribe.

Tino Magnatta: Oh, my God.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: And just seeing in the last 10 years the growth that they've had. Again, the people want to work there because they've developed just a great place to work.

Tino Magnatta: They want to be part of her team. Yeah, yep.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: It's pretty incredible.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: And recently, too, there's been a new group called The United Women in Tribal Gaming. That, it just really started, and then just [inaudible 00:37:19] just started with fire because so many women started connecting. Initially, I think it was going to start in Oklahoma and then kind of went on a national just because so many participants have a... just can connect, can connect to working and being a mother and some of the struggles that may come with it. But it's a great group. I heard Pam Shaw, Margaret Gray, and one of our former council members as well, Ms. [Navacoia 00:37:58]. She served on... was one of our tribal leaders, too. So just great, incredible leaders in our community that they came and did a speaking recently. Listening to them tell their story, I mean, I sat there and literally just about had tears in my eyes because it's like, "Wow, it's not just me. It's not just me that feels this way." So that's where I really felt like making a connection with working in gaming and being all the things that come with it.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Let's take another call here. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Mia?

Jack: Hey, Tino, it's Jack. Hey, Mia, how are you?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I'm good. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Hey, Jack, how are you?

Jack: Doing well. Doing well. Hey, Tino, first I want to congratulate Mia as everybody else has. It is a great pleasure to work for such a fine woman in this gaming industry. I have a quick question-

Tino Magnatta: Glad she is.

Jack: I know you guys brushed up against this. I know Tino brushed up against this, Mia. But I think that Mia has a very different approach to the saturation question of the market of Oklahoma. So I wanted her to talk about that one more time and how she's positioning Comanche Nation Entertainment to be competitive going forward.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Sure. So I have a little bit... I think that I do disagree with some people on the point of saturation. My answer is always, "Well, no, I don't think it's saturated." I kind of did touch on it. My definition of saturation is the break even. When break even occurs and when... Oklahoma hasn't reached it's full potential of customers. And the demand of products isn't less than what supply is. So is it at saturation point? No. There isn't a decline in sales and growth, and one isn't predicted at this point. Do we have to be prepared for that in the back of our

minds? Absolutely. As tribes, that's why it's so important that we have to diversify as well. On a state level and a national level, revenue, it keeps growing. In, what, 15 years, 16, it's more than doubled. I know on the national, 2018, revenues overall of all the tribes in the U.S. grew by 4%. And I think Oklahoma had the second highest growth of that.

And again, we are expanding. We're building, all the tribes. They're getting bigger and better, and they're adding more amenities and adding more attractions and water parks and targeting families and place where families can come and there's something for everybody to do. So again, it's just the Oklahoma... I spoke a little bit about the Oklahoma City project and Oklahoma being a tourist destination, so that's my take on... And too, I think we always have this fear of somebody comes along or is at that point... We've always had the fear, of course, that we're on the Oklahoma-Texas border. It's always, "Well, what are we going to do if Texas legalized gaming?" Well, we start gaming in Texas. I mean, that's a big blue ocean. I think just having that mindset of moving forward.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Yeah, exactly.

Jack: Yeah, Tino, I think that that Comanche Nation is positioned now with Mia at the helm to do even bigger and greater things than before. We have a true leader that stops and thinks. Like she says, she writes down everything. She has to see things that optic is more of a written type of deal. But you really get a person who stops and contemplates and makes her decisions based on what she knows and the input of her team around her. And I think that's a successful recipe for a huge push forward for the Comanche Nation and perspective.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I think that's huge. I think collaborating with your team is huge. It's vital for success in any business.

Tino Magnatta: Yes, it's a big thing.

Jack: Agree. 100% agree.

Tino Magnatta: Yes, it's a big thing. Great, great stuff.

Jack: Well, Tino, thanks for taking my call. I really appreciate you reaching out to me and getting this to happen. Great, great show as always. Great person to have on the show with Mia. I wish everybody the best of luck, and everybody have a great holiday.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Thanks so much.

Jack: Yep. Yeah, guys. Talk to you later.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you were talking a little bit about team building. Tell us how important that is.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Again, just having a support system, it's vital. It's vital that everybody be on the same page and just have a vision. Again, I think it's something, too, that it's equally what I promote with our children that in their team sports. You have to do your part, and you have to work together. You have to be in unison, or it falls apart. That's whether it be Little League or sports or the team that you work with at work.

Tino Magnatta: How do you go about assembling that team? It's difficult finding people that fit into the culture and do it the way you want to do things, right?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, I don't think it's how I want to do things. The question always comes down to, "What's best for the tribe? What's best for the tribal members?" We're a tribe of a little over 17,000 members. What's best for them? That's the question that should always be. I love Post-It Notes, so I have Post-Its everywhere. I have a few quotes that are just hung up around, just kind of around. I had somebody come to my house once. They're like, "Well, what does that mean?"

Tino Magnatta: Like what? Can you mention a couple of them? Do you have them around?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: You want me to go around the house and read them. Well, one of my favorites is... And it's just because we all have a purpose here on life, and it surely isn't just to take up space. Some are like, "You have a purpose, and it's not to just exist. But you have to live, and you have to have a purpose." One hangs in my bathroom, and I look at it every day, multiple times, is Romans 8:28. It says, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose."

So I really think just making sure that whatever work you're doing, you should love it. You should love what you do because when you love what you do, it isn't work anymore. I remind my team often that, "Hey, it's a choice. It's a choice whether or not you want to be here." I remind my kids of the same thing. Everything they do, it's a choice up to some point. But it's mental. So you have to love what you do. But when you believe that there's a purpose behind what you're doing, then it's easy.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, then it's not work any more. It just becomes part of your life, right?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, right. It is. It's you're integrating everything that you do. And so, I mean, for my children, when I went to work on a holiday or Christmas or Thanksgiving or a night, weekends or something, and they're like, "Where are you going?" And I'm going to work. They know that they have a direct stake in the outcome. They know that.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Exactly.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: They're little, and they know that. They understand that.

Tino Magnatta: They know. Yeah, yeah.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: They're like, "Okay."

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, she's working. She's doing her thing. She's out there working it. Right.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: And we're one of the few tribes that we do have what's called a per cap, which is a distribution to our tribal members. So a portion of our gaming revenue goes back to our tribal members. We actually are right now, just within the last few days, tribal members... Well, tomorrow, because today's a holiday. They'll actually receive their [inaudible 00:47:56]. Some of them have start receiving them last Friday. So when you work at one of our properties, and you're a tribal member, you have a direct stake in the outcome. You're a shareholder. You're a part owner. So we work in that you take pride as if you own this place because they do.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it becomes part of what inspires them to keep working at it and doing great things, right?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tino Magnatta: What do you think is the key for the future of preserving Native nations? Do you think that the tribes need to diversify their interests rather than just stick to gaming? What do you think is the...

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Oh, absolutely. I mean, I think the purpose of Indian gaming was so that tribes could be self-sufficient and, really, to provide jobs because most tribes are in rural areas. Now, they have started transforming. These rural areas are now becoming tourist destinations. We do have to preserve that, but we do have to look towards the future. Now that we've been in these businesses... Our tribe's been in gaming since 1983, 36 years, 36 years. So the tribe has some other companies.

But I really try to get my kids, and I think brainwashing them early like my mom brainwashed us really early... But to start thinking about those things, like water and resources. Those are the things that we really need to be protecting. Again, no matter what you do, coming together and being united is key for anything. So with tribes uniting and always being on the same page, everybody wins. Everybody wins. Again, we have a daycare that's not just open for tribal members but for community. We build roads, bridges, houses. We have a transit system. We have an assisted living center for our elders, an elder center, a youth shelter, fire station, police station, recycling. I mean, there's so many

things. We send our students to go to college. The Comanche Nation's actually has the highest per capita, per member for college graduates.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: So again, these are things that our community is... And then again, the employment that tribes provide. Think of the taxes and income tax that the state's getting and the community. The property taxes that when people are moving to these areas to work at these properties, everybody wins.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's just perpetual, right?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tino Magnatta: It feeds back into everything.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Feeds back into them. Yeah. Let's take some more calls here. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Mia.

Rich: Yes, my name's Rich. Hi, Mia, how are you?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: I'm great. How are you?

Rich: Great. My question for you is what do you think the strategy would be for getting Millennials into the gaming properties. Is that something that your tribe is concerned about?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Yeah, that's definitely huge. I think it's going to be something that we really do need to focus on and think about. Equally, too, I know one thing we've been faced with as an employer is balancing the multi-generations of workforce. We have now an 18 and a 70 year old doing the same position. And how you give them a message is not the same. When I get a hold of one of my sons, the only way that I'm effective to him is for me to send him a Snapchat. You know, "Get your clothes off of the bathroom floor." And I'm serious. I could tell him, yell at him, scream at him, write it down, but it is only precesses through his brain certain methods. It is going to be interesting.

The Esports, too, really kind of focusing and ... And too, I think that somewhat to a degree that gaming has somewhat followed in the video gaming technology, to a certain degree. So I think it'll be really interesting watching how we move towards a more interactive type because the Esports now is huge. I mean, it's got more viewers than NFL, NBA, all the national leagues combined into one. More viewers watching somebody play video games at the Fortnite National Tournament.

As a form of discipline, I take my son's gaming system away from him. And then when I learned about, "Oh, my gosh, did I just take his college scholarship away from him?" Because he had to go to football or wrestling practice or any other practice. He's going whether he's in trouble or not. He is going to practice. I might even tell his coach that he hasn't been listening to his mom and he needs to run a little bit extra. But now, I was thinking, "Oh, my gosh, that might be his college scholarship into college," because now they have that available at many colleges, and it's growing. Also, and not just how are we going to get Millennials into the casinos, how that world is going to change. So workforce and how we're going to get those Millennials in because that's their world now. I mean, their world it is online. It's social media. It's really interesting to study, too.

Another time my son got his game system, I came in the living room. I was like, "What are you doing?" He was watching somebody else play. That was one of the first times I'd ever learned about you can watch other people play video games. So, yeah, figuring out how we do that. But I also think that even though we get so sophisticated, and we move into technological advances, I mean, we're still human at the core. We still need other people. We still have to make human connections. There always has to be that human connection that in our facilities we're here to serve. But I do think we'll get more technological. We'll see online gaming. We'll see more of the Esports develop and more of the social-interactive games. That's kind of what my thoughts. What are your thoughts?

Rich: I mean, I have two teenage daughters, 19 and 16. I have to totally agree with you on the social media. They're glued to their phones it seems like 24 hours a day. So, yeah, definitely. I think moving into that realm and like you said watching video games. I've heard that before as well. So, yeah, with Esports and online gaming, definitely things will be changing. I think it's just an additional piece. Traditional gaming, I don't think will go away. But definitely online gaming will just I think contributes to your properties. Yeah, I mean, the other question would be I know you worked your way up all the way from being behind the, I guess it was, the cashier all the way to the top. So I guess, during that journey, is there any one particular project that you're particularly are proud of that stands out, and why would you be proud of that?

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Gosh, there's probably a few. Probably one of the most memorable in my career was selected in 2011, '12 to serve on the National Indian Gaming Commission and reviewed with 14, 15 amazing people from across the U.S. and would sit in a room and talk about the laws and regulations. It was just a group of really diverse people that were... Some of them were just such experts in their field.

And let me pause there for a second. And so when I first started in the gaming commission, it was new. We had just relatively signed the compact. So the game mix was changing, so we had nothing, really nothing. The gaming commission was building. The tribe was building the policies and regulations and all that, just figuring out a way. I'll never forget my coworker and I, we kind of laughed at the time. We were like, "Gosh, do you realize..." It was regulation that we were

forming. We would say, "Oh, my gosh, this is kind of like law. This is tribal law. We're creating tribal law." We would sometimes giggle because we weren't sure if it was exactly... I mean, we hadn't been in the industry for a really long time, so we weren't sure if it was going to work or if it was the right course. So always had that mind frame of, "Well, if it doesn't work, well, then just go back and change it and fix it."

So then going back to the first story. It was a really interesting time because we were collaborating with the government, with the United States and having discussions on what federal regulations and laws should be for all the tribes to follow. I have to say that there were some times and there were some parts that, I mean, you were in a room for a really long time, and you're really hungry. You've been on this subject for about 12 hours, and, "Okay, it sounds good." You're not for certain that it's right. So I think just drawing from that in short is that anything that you do, we don't know if it's right going with the future. I mean, we can just go and keep going. If we make a mistake, we correct it, and we just keep going. And the same thing is if you're going in a direction, and you get off course, well, you just get back on the course and keep going.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Great advice. Great stuff. Thanks a lot, Rich. We really appreciate you calling in.

Rich: Thank you. Have a great evening.

Tino Magnatta: Yep.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Mia, we have a whole bunch of callers, but we've run out of time. So we're definitely going to have to do another show sometime down the line. But thank you so much for coming on. It's been a incredible show. Like I said earlier, it's a very special moment in time with your accomplishments and what you've achieved with your tribe so far. We wish you nothing but the best of luck.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Well, thank you. I really appreciate it. I'm humbled to represent the Comanche Nation. Again, have had a great team. It is all because of our team what we've accomplished, so thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. There's going to be a lot of great things coming up. I can feel it. With your positive energy, there's no looking back.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: That's right. Forward.

Tino Magnatta: Yes. Thanks you so much for being on the show. You have a great evening.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: All right. Thank you. Have a good night.

Tino Magnatta: Okay. Goodnight. Bye=bye.

Mia Tahdooahnippah: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Bye.

Tino Magnatta: All right. What a wonderful woman. Next week... Not next week, actually, Thursday, I have Bruce McClure as the GM of Sac & Fox, great guy. Known him for many years. He's got a lot of great stories. Remember, everybody's got a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen. This is Tino Magnatta wishing you a great evening. I'll talk to you soon. Ciao.