



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Letisha Peterson
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Tino Magnatta: Good evening and welcome to another episode of GT Radio. My name is Tino Magnatta. I have just the most wonderful guest tonight. She has quite a story, I think you're going to enjoy listening to all the adventures that she's been through. Welcome to the show, Leticia Peterson.

Letisha Peterso: Good evening.

Tino Magnatta: Now, I heard you guys had a powwow over the weekend. Tell me a little bit about it. It's been a little while since you had the pow wow at your casino, right?

Letisha Peterso: Yeah, yeah. We actually had, we brought back our Legends Casino Pow Wow. We haven't had our pow wow in, I'd say, gosh, about eight or nine years. We were asked by our oversight committee and our membership, travel membership, to bring it back online. So this is our first year back online. We started planning months ago, of course. This is pretty much our largest event of the year. We had a great turnout, we had people from all over the country even into Canada come out for our event.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, its amazing. I've been to the pow wow, it's just the most amazing thing. A lot of the people that are listening have probably never been to a pow wow. Tell us what a pow wow is, people are very committed with the word, but I don't think they know the meaning behind it and what it is. Can you describe to our listeners what exactly takes place?

Letisha Peterso: Sure. I'll tell you my version, and of course there's going to be people that have different versions, but I grew up going to pow wows. My family has always participated, my mother she was really well known in our area, so I grew up and my father was a silver smith, so we traveled a lot to pow wows over the years. So the way I would explain an event as a pow wow, I'd say it's pretty much a gathering of people, we have a lot of tribal memberships all over the country, come and participate in dance, and I think it's evolved over the years. I think it's gone from what we call a traditional pow wow to more of a competitive pow wow, and it could mean a lot. A lot of people invest their lives into it, they travel, they travel across the country, they travel across maybe just even close in their region.

But it's a gathering of people, they come together, a lot of times there's kind of ceremonial type grand entries where it's an opening to the event, it's participating to show pow wow regalia that people wear. There's different types of dances within the event of the evening. They usually last for two or three days. If it's funded, usually sometimes they'll have like competition pow wow type events where you can compete against other dancers for a place in their event.

So it's pretty exciting, and we were really happy to bring it back.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's sort of a coming together and it's kind of like a whole big family coming together and having not just a party but a celebration of your heritage and all the great things about Native Nations, right?

Letisha Peterso: Yeah, most definitely. I mean if you really look at the history of the different dances, they come from different parts of Indian Country. You have meanings and explanations behind outfits, you have people who have regalia that get carried on from generation to generation, and again, there's certain things that I think people, when you grow up in it, and you get to see it becomes a family. You have an extension of a family in different parts of the country that you go visit, and you get to see, and you get to watch your children grow up together. It's definitely something I think in Indian Country, people feel very comfortable when they go to a pow wow. They get to see not only the dance, but they get to see their family, they get to eat good food. It's a really great community based event.

In our area it's a big deal, so we're pretty excited to be a part of it.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, and you said it's been eight or nine years since you've had it there, right? So that was even a bigger deal.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah. We went offline for a bit. I think when we had our Legends Pow Wow, we were starting to become very well known, we had a lot of attention because we had some spotlight dances, and we had a lot of people coming, again, from all areas of the US and into Canada, and we were getting established. But with the expansion and everything that was happening on our property, we had to make choices and we ended up putting a pause there. We usually had our pow wow back in August of every year, we maintained the same date, so when we came back online and we looked at the pow wow's calendar, we decided to go with May, because it's our anniversary month. So we just celebrated 21 years in the casino. So we chose our anniversary month.

Tino Magnatta: Wow, what a milestone.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah it was huge. So it's really exciting.

Tino Magnatta: So speaking of milestones and just going back in time, tell us a little bit, you were born on the res, right? Tell us a little bit about growing up on the res and how it was?

Letisha Peterso: Okay. I'm actually from the reservation I work for. I grew up here on the Yakama Nation reservation, and I could say that my experience here growing up on the res have been ... I've been fortunate. I was raised by a good solid family, I have a pretty good understanding of my culture because my mother, my grandfather, various generations of teachings have been passed down to me. I grew up here right in Toppenish, Washington where actually our casino is at. Our land base in our tribal right now, the Yakama Nation is about 10,500 members. Growing up,

it was just a big part of who we are and our cultures. It's really deeply rooted here in the valley.

My experiences growing up, I went to a normal, regular high school, elementary all the way through high school, and then probably about my sophomore year, had some things that happen in life, and I ended up going to the tribal school to kind of catch up on my credits, and I ended up staying there and I ended up graduating from our private, Yakama Nation tribal school way back in '97. So I was able to graduate from there, and I stayed in the valley. I had a young family, I was a young mother at a young age, and I stayed in the area and I went to our local community college and resided still here on the reservation, and I eventually finished my bachelors degree. I would travel to Ellensburg, Washington and so, I'd be on the road at a minimum, two, two and a half hours depending on the weather. I would travel every day and commute to the university in Ellensburg, Washington where I finished my degree, because I had to be near my reservation.

Tino Magnatta: Great.

Letisha Peterso: I love the reservation. I haven't left. It's a part of who I am, I'm raising my children here. I married here. So, yeah, I'm invested.

Tino Magnatta: Really cool. A lot of people don't know this, but the Yakama Nation was a pretty enterprising nation, even before gaming. They had a lot of stuff going on. Tell us a little bit about what they had, they had businesses going on.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah. I would say before the Legends, we opened up our casino back in 1998, but prior to that, the Yakama Nation actually has a very large land base. We have forest land that we maintain and manage. We own a good portion of Mt Adams here in the north west, and we were able to open up a large log mill. We have the Yakama Forest Products that we run, and we're able to kind of maintain and manage our own lands. We have a forestry division from the very beginning, even a reforestation program, all the way through the entire process of milling it and selling it out across the US and even across the world.

So we have a pretty big investment in our forest land, maintaining our forest land, and keeping it. We also ventured into land enterprise. We have a flourishing, pretty solid company that's been running a lot longer than Legends Casino. We, at one time, owned a juice factory, and at one time we even owned a furniture factory. For one reason or another, things changed, and we don't own those companies anymore. We even owned, it was the Yakama Sun Kings, it was like a semi pro basketball team we owned here in the Yakama Valley.

Other than that, we also opened up some newer entities here on the reservation. We have an entity of Yakama Power, we have a Yakama Nation Networks, we even started an Ag division recently. So we've dabbled in a lot trying to maintain and manage our own land. We have a lot of fishing. Fishing

and forestry is huge here. So we have an entire division dedicated within our Yakama Nation that actually run and manage all of our resources. So.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah. It's huge.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Good stuff. What kind of lessons did you learn from your parents?

Letisha Peterso: Well, you know, I was, again, raised here on the reservation, and my mother actually comes from, it's a band of the Yakama Nation down near The Dalles, Oregon on the other side of the Columbia River, and it's the YM Band, and that's where my mothers from. My grandfather actually he was chief of that area. So the investment my grandparents made into my mother, my mother was actually very well known in our community. She was the first Miss Yakama Nation. So living under the shadow of somebody like that, she'd travel a lot. At that time they used her royalty as ... they were the ones that would be ambassadors to the Yakama Nation, they would travel with the council people. She was a big part of the process when we got our mountain back. And so growing up under that, including my grandfather and my grandmother, I learned quite a bit.

And on my dads side, I have a beautiful, my grandmother she married into the Hispanic culture, and the Mexican culture here in the Valley. So I got a piece of that as well. So growing up, being a part of what I call two worlds, my parents were really, really ... they ingrained in me the importance of being able to balance what I call two worlds. So being able to understand my culture with the combination of balancing that out with being educated and living in mainstream society.

It was a really important factor in my life, my mother was very supportive, but she said there's a time and place, and when it's time for you to be a part of your traditions and your people then that's your priority. I try to keep that balance. It's not always easy in the capacities that I run today, but it's really important and it's a big part of who I am.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you're very interesting, you were in a ... when you talk about women in the workforce, one of your first experiences working was in a male dominated area. You worked at the mill, right?

Letisha Peterso: Yeah. I actually worked for Yakama Forest Products for about six years. I started in the sales office. Of course, I never worked in a lumber mill before and at that time it was a male dominated industry. And I can say that it was quite an experience. It was a good experience. It helped me gain some great sales skills, but at that time, and since then it's evolved, similar to the gaming industry. At that time, it was very dominant to male. I'd go to trainings, there was a lot of investment in me as a young tribal member. I was able to travel and meet

different people, but in the six years that I worked there, it was dominant. And it wasn't always easy.

But I always took that more as a challenge, and I was fortunate to have very strong support from the people I work for. I worked under very solid management at the time, and I gained a lot of skills in a very short period of time. And I was able to, I felt very good about my abilities and my opportunities, but again it was being brave enough and being strong enough to hang with that. And like the gaming industry, it's a very well oiled machine, the gaming industry and the lumber industry. It was quite a great experience, one of my most favorite experiences in my career.

Tino Magnatta: Now you were probably the only woman working in all those departments. What are the qualities that you need to have to be able to do that, because a lot of people that will be listening were also the only women at the table and managed to work through that. What advice can you give women that are working in those kind of environments?

Letisha Peterso: I would say my advice would be to know who you are, and to be able to maintain that strength within whatever comes your way. If you're always looking for the negative, if you're always looking for what's going to hold you back, or if people are going to try to hold you back, you're putting up your own obstacles. But being open minded, open hearted, and being strong in your own personal morals and belief systems, and don't be afraid to take that risk of learning something new and keeping the drive and of course maintaining your integrity and ethics as you're doing it, I think all play into your success. And I think in any industry you're going to have challenges. If it's male dominant or not, maybe it's a political factor. Maybe it has to do with your background or experience or your education.

Whatever challenges bring, if you're confident, and if you understand and gain the knowledge that you need to do the job, stepping up to the plate is the biggest thing. Being able to be confident. Being able to keep moving, even when it feels like it's muddy. I think a lot of times people hold themselves back when they look at, either maybe it's too much work, or too many people are going to be against me.

I experienced that this weekend. At this pow wow, my team, we were so busy. Everybody had their place, everybody had their part. But when somebody needed to get something done, we all collectively pulled together. We ran out of parking and so I'm out there with the flaggers, with our marketing director, literally picking up rocks and getting them out of the way, because people would trip. And one of my relatives drove by and jokingly said "Wow sister, you're so devoted, I can't believe you're out here picking up rocks, you're the general manager." And I stood up and dusted my hands off and I said "You know, I wouldn't have gotten this far if I wasn't devoted and dedicated to my job, and out here with everybody else."

Again, I think it's being involved, being driven, and not being afraid to jump in and go for it. So that's my advice.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Why do you think you were the only woman at the table, and why have you been able to be successful in that environment?

Letisha Peterso: Well when I entered, I guess the first experience I had was when I was at the lumber mill. Great people, male, female, they're all great people so there's no discredit to them at all. But when I got into the management level, it was pretty much male. And being at that table, being there and maintaining the knowledge to keep up with everybody at that table, because similar to my entrance to the gaming industry, I had no prior lumber industry. I came out of college, I worked some jobs here and there but I didn't have that forestry element in my background, or it was pretty slim.

So working my way up into opportunities and facing challenges, and getting to that table. When I sat at that table, I accepted that I belonged at that table. I made a lot of mistakes, just like anybody when they enter management. There's things that I wish I would have done differently, but I learned from them, and I continue to keep my mind and my heart open to want to understand things, want to learn things and to learn from other people, learn from people that I work for, their mistakes. And being able to accept and acknowledge my own mistakes, I think I'm at a point now where I tell new management that. I say "You're going to make mistakes."

Going back and reflecting on those things, acknowledging them, is going to make you a better manager. So being the only female at the table, being so young in my career at the time, I can say that my being the female at the table I think it was challenging, but I had so many other challenges at the same time. And so, again, just being ready to work. Being ready to validate to yourself why you're sitting at that table in the first place. That personal reflection of who you are as a woman, as a manager, as an enrolled member, sitting there and knowing your worth and knowing your value to what you have to offer.

Tino Magnatta: Tell us a little bit about your journey to the GM position?

Letisha Peterso: Okay. That's a good one. So like I said, I worked for the lumber mill for about six years. I really enjoyed it, but it was time to try something different and I moved on, and I actually worked for a local radio company, a cluster here in the Yakama Valley and I did that for about a year. In that timeframe I had a good friend of mine that worked at Legends Casino. Personally, I had no interest in coming to work at the casino. For some reason it just wasn't on my radar in any way. And he just kept saying "Hey, I think this would be a great industry for you. Hey, there's an opening coming up. Hey, we have a keys to success program." Which I'll explain in a minute or two.

But he kept prompting to kind of tell me I belonged here. So finally, about a year into my time working for the radio station, an opportunity came up here at Legends, they have a keys to success program where they look for tribal members who have the ability to step into a training position to become a full time director, or manager. And at the time that I entered the program they had an opening for the machines department, the slots department, to become an assistant slot director, to run our revenue department, our machines department.

Mind you, I had no idea the magnitude of that department, nor did I understand what slots really meant, other than I knew what a slot machine was. So the program is a two year program, promoted by the Yakama Nation to help tribal members become leaders or directors in management capacities within the organization. So I went through a regiment interview process. I had to interview by a full panel of directors. I had to do a presentation. They gave me a scenario. It was a little bit odd, I've never experienced this level of a process. And I ended up getting down to the final, and then they finally selected me.

The gentleman who actually hired me within the department by the time I got to the casino had left, and he went to go work for another casino here in Washington, and I entered the property with no direct report, and mind you I've never ran a slot department. And so, I hit the floor running, I was going really hard. So in two years I ended up gaining what I needed to know in knowledge. If you're not educated they support you in that, but I had education. If you don't have management skills, they provide that. I already had that component as well. So I think I had a little bit of an easier transition into a director role, and I became the director and I ran that department for about eight years.

After about eight years of running the department, which I truly loved and enjoyed, we went through quite a bit of turnover at the general manager level. And it was at the point where I was at a crossroads on whether I wanted to stay with the company or do something about it. And to be honest, I had no interest of becoming a general manager. That wasn't really ... it really wasn't on my radar, I wasn't interested. I was really happy with the role I was playing here in the casino. I was good at it. And I was pretty comfortable. But I'd seen so much of a need for change in leadership, because I worked for so many different people, good people, they weren't horrible, but for various reasons they had to leave our company and I decided to step up to the plate.

So I went up against, I don't know, from what I was told, I wasn't a part of the actual interview paneling, but I went up against about 60 applicants, down to 30, down to 23, down to 19, down to 8, down to 3. And then, they made a selection. And at that time, I can't even say that I was the selection that anybody necessarily understood, because they couldn't understand how somebody with no prior general manager experience could outscore 30 year veterans in the industry. And so, there was doubt and concern because the Legends Casino is the number one revenue generating entity of our Yakama Nation.

So I went through two huge sessions, standing at our tribal council table, basically explaining to them, re interviewing with them and making them comfortable with the decision. Ultimately it was their decision to bring me in as the general manager. You would think it would be the opposite being I'm a tribal member, but they did the right thing. They wanted to make sure I was the right fit and the right person. So, I've been the GM for a little bit over two years, I ended up stepping into the role right as we opened up the hotel side, because we did a complete expansion, we added 200 room hotel, we expanded our gaming floor, we added new food courts. So we had a huge expansion project that I swear felt like it lasted a lifetime, but we finally did it. And it's been great.

Is it challenging? Yes. Do we have more to do? Yes. But I feel really good about it, and I think the first year it was run, run, run. That second year I felt like I settled in a little bit, of course we're still running, but it's been a great opportunity.

Tino Magnatta: Do you think that if you were a man that experience would have been different? You would have been put under just the same amount of scrutiny?

Letisha Peterso: You know, I can't speak for all enrolled tribal members here in the Yakama Valley, but I know growing up in my upbringings that in our tribe, we have very distinct roles and responsibilities. And you're raised to know and understand those responsibilities growing up. So I always remember a conversation I actually had with my father in law, he's not with us anymore, but I remember this conversation because it was burned into my heart. He was just saying what he knows. And I remember him telling me that women did not belong on the tribal council table. And he said that's not their place. And he explained the why.

In our culture, the women stand behind the men and support them. They stand behind the man and give that behind the scenes support, and the male in our tribe are the decision makers, the chiefs, they're the ones up front. I don't know if you're married, but when you're at home, you know who the real boss is.

Tino Magnatta: Yep.

Letisha Peterso: Same kind of idea.

Tino Magnatta: Absolutely.

Letisha Peterso: And when I heard that, I understood it and I wasn't offended by it. And so when I went through this general manager process, one of our tribal leaders told me, when I was interviewing and I was going through the preliminaries he said "You know what you're getting into." He said "You know how it is within our tribe, and you're a female." And I go "Anybody else would be offended by that, but yes I understand." And the reason I understand is because I was raised here and I understand it. And I do feel it. Sometimes it upsets me, but at the end of the day I understand and I know and I can acknowledge and move forward with it,

because I understand it. And I think if it's not embedded into you, or if you're an outsider coming in, you're offended by those things, but if you know the reason why, you're able to move forward, and I still took the role, I still took the responsibility. And is it harder? I'd say yes, it is harder. But I accepted it.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. It's interesting, what we're talking about right now because even though the sort of odds were stacked against you because of your gender, you still managed to push through. One of the key things that you said was, did I agree with it? No. Did I understand it? Yes. And by you understanding it, your reaction to it wasn't one of rage, right? It was one of understanding. Am I correct there?

Letisha Peterso: Yeah. When I'm faced with those moments, it's one of those things where I acknowledge and surprisingly, even the same traditional man that sits at our council table, he's the exact same person that will get up and support me when I need it. And again, it goes back to knowing who you are, knowing your role, obviously knowing your position and what you're there for, and representing yourself in the right way. I think in a way, I have an advantage because I'm a tribal member. Sometimes it doesn't work for me, but other times it does, because when I'm at that table, they don't have to explain things to me because I already know, and again, I think it goes both ways.

Being able to stand there and being strong enough internally is important, but do I go home and I think and over think things? Of course I do. And I think no matter what, who you are, what your background is, male or female, you will have those moments, and it's being able to uphold and maintain who you are in the important times to be able to stand up to those situations, like I said, understand it and accept it, acknowledge and move forward. And that's what I try to do.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's pretty amazing what you've accomplished. What are some of the obstacles that you've had to overcome when you took on this role?

Letisha Peterso: From a business standpoint, we have obstacles because our location. If we're talking from a business standpoint, we are a dry reservation, so we actually do not serve alcohol here at our property. I would say that's a challenge. Tribal employment is an important factor to our casino because we actually open up our casino with two intents. Of course, one, make revenue, but two, equally if not more important elements to hire tribal membership. So currently we've tried to maintain a level of tribal membership. Out of 800 plus team members, 51% of our tribal employment is Yakama. And we have 68% tribal affiliated. So we're investing into our tribal membership, also while being a very good neighbor and to our surrounding communities because our actual reservation is checker boarded. So we have elements of city of Toppenish, the Yakama County, so there are unique elements to our area, but we have a big drive of tribal employment and tribal development. So challenges in that aspect, from a business standpoint, have been something that we're working towards improving.

On a personal level challenges, transitioning in from a director level to a general manager level, it took me a little bit to get people to understand my management style. To understand why and how I got into the role and the position. And I think that my background and my relationships prior to me transitioning into that role, it was a good thing, and it also was a hard thing. So I've had to face all of that. Overall, northwest tribal gaming in Washington, very very strong gaming industry. We've definitely have been fortunate in our area and growth, increased revenue. We've been very fortunate in that aspect. So I don't know if that answered your question.

Tino Magnatta: When you think about the future, what do you see not only for gaming but for the Native Nations, what do you see in the future?

Letisha Peterso: I think that we are going to see a huge growth across Indian Country, Indian gaming. We're already seeing it. People are transitioning into resorts, integrated casinos. Having a lot of opportunity and growth within tribes becoming huge players, having multiple casinos. And I think that you're going to see more and more of that. I think we've got to be careful not to over saturate it, but we have to be able to be stronger and I think that we're building reservations back up. I think it's important for tribes to understand that they shouldn't put all their eggs in a basket. I'm proud of our Yakama Nation because we're able to dabble into, we have a power company, we have the Yakama Nation Networks, we have a land enterprise.

Not relying solely on a casino I think is an important element to growth and maintaining. When things shift and maybe the gaming industry isn't as strong as it needs to be, that we have other resources and other entities that we can turn to. I think you're also seeing evolution of people growing, not just women, but people growing and learning the trade and understanding it. Growing up in the trade, and I think becoming more business minded, and being able to run our own properties. When I first started in the gaming industry, there was a big flood of various people that came through from Vegas that kind of flooded into the Indian Country and the casinos. And today you're seeing a mix of it, and I think that's good business. People are bringing different elements, either working for a reservation, and I'm not talking tribal non-tribal, I'm talking experience. So they're gaining experience in Indian gaming, and we're starting to see that movement.

It's a huge industry but everybody knows everybody. So I think if anything, it's going to grow and it's going to evolve. As you bring in other elements, sports betting, online gaming, and all of the various opportunities we have I think all of that is going to be a part of our future. So yeah, it's exciting.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's exciting stuff. What do you think makes Washington so special in terms of gaming, and not only that, but there seems to be a collaborative spirit in Washington. What makes Washington seem special?

Letisha Peterso: Well, I would say that we've all entered into a industry here together, and we all support each other, and it's the weirdest thing, because you have people that come from outside and they just can't understand Washington, why do you guys talk to each other, our vendors tell us that. They know that I can pick up the phone and call Angie at Clearwater. They know I can pick up the phone and talk to Kevin at [inaudible 00:38:22]. We have conversations, we talk about the regulations, we talk about trying to support a common cause to improve the industry for us here. Everything is built for Washington, it's tribal lottery, and so a lot of times we're behind in a sense, because we don't get all the upgrades everybody else gets. We don't get all of the new machines, and the things that everybody else gets.

When I go to the gaming shows, to NIGA to G2E, my section is a little tiny piece of the entire IGT footprint, or the size of the gaming footprint. They say "Oh here's your Washington piece." And that's starting to evolve. Our space is starting to get bigger. We're starting to get product firsthand. It's a strong industry, and I think it's starting to evolve. I remember going to OIGA a few years ago and I remember I went to the ... I was slot director then. I went to Aristocrat and I said "When are you guys coming to Washington?" And they said "What are you doing in Oklahoma?"

I said "I'm looking for a variety of games, and I want to know why you're not in Washington yet." And they're here. So, again, I think we're a strong market and it's starting to show. At one time we were limited, and I think that's why we get along so well, because we were in the battlefield together. We were trying to get things to Washington because we wanted to be competitive and it's really a great place to work, I would say. And you can ask any vendor. They'll tell you "Yeah, they talk up there." Because we do.

Tino Magnatta: Yes, it's really fantastic. Should we take some calls?

Letisha Peterso: Sure.

Tino Magnatta: Hello this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Letisha? Hello, can you hear us?

Rogelio: Oh, sorry about that. Hey, it's Rogelio in North Dakota, hi Letisha.

Tino Magnatta: How are you Rogelio?

Letisha Peterso: Hello.

Rogelio: Good. Good, good, good. Sorry, I'm still in the office and I looked down and I realized I was still on mute. I'm like how come they can't hear me? Sorry about that.

Tino Magnatta: Where are you Rogelio?

Rogelio: I'm still in the office, still in North Dakota.

Tino Magnatta: You're at Dakota Magic, right?

Rogelio: Yep. Yep. At Dakota Magic. Letisha, you talked about the future of Native Nations and what you see in Indian gaming, and you've accomplished a lot. I congratulate you on that and I'm very proud to see a tribal mem, especially a woman, grow up the ranks and really help out their tribe and their casino. What is next for your future at Legends, what do you see yourself doing next in the years to come?

Letisha Peterso: Well, thanks for calling in. I would say, to answer your question, as far as Legends Casino goes, I'm just coming up on my, I'm past about ten and half years here at Legends. I worked for my tribe for over 16 years now. And I would say that my future, I'm anticipating being a big part of this casino growing, adding a second, a third site to the Yakama Nation Casino properties in Washington. I'm hoping that I'm going to be a big part of that.

In addition, I think it's an important element to add opportunity. I mentioned earlier, we're a dry reservation, in a lot of ways that's challenging. So one of the things that I'm hoping to do is to be able to communicate to the Nation that they could make a decision, the decision is not mine, I'm one voting member of the tribe, but at the same time I want to be the expert in my field of expertise to be able to provide them information so that they could make a good decision. Again, I think making decisions, having the knowledge and having that supporting research and information to be able to help our tribe move in the right direction is going to be a big part of what I hope in success of my future.

If it turns out that it doesn't work out for me here at Legends, I'm very confident, comfortable that I'll end up where I need to be. I'm very blessed in regards to my time that I've had with the casino. It's not very often you hear people that work five to ten years at any one property, and I feel fortunate to have that.

Rogelio: That's amazing.

Letisha Peterso: But at the same time, I'm open and I understand things change. Maybe the tribe will go in a different direction and things will change for me.

Rogelio: You mentioned you gave advice to other women and tribal members that could be coming up through the ranks, I heard that earlier, what ... this might be a little difficult to answer, but besides a good impression, what other impressions would you want to leave for future tribal members of your tribe and specifically women in your tribe? What message do you want to give to them?

Letisha Peterso: I think if you're any young tribe member, male or female, I think when you show up, it's very random, I call it pulling the tribal card. I find that in my successes

and I worked for Central Washington University, like I said I worked for other entities outside of the Nation, showing up and knowing your value, knowing your worth, and presenting it and being humble and being able to show a skill set and being confident in that, I think is an important element. But as a tribal member, I think it's equally important to show up and not to rely on that tribal membership to become a leader, or to become a management. I've had tribal members work for me that pull that card, and I said "You know, I have the same card as you do."

And being able to have the understanding that you have to work for where you end up. When opportunities come and you see that opportunity, that you leave entitlement at the door, because if you're really there for the right reasons and you want to be there to improve your tribe, you step up to the plate and you work hard. If anything, I don't know anybody else's tribal experiences, but we're not always nice to our own tribal members, and here at Yakama, definitely it's challenging at times. Again, I feel fortunate, and being able to work hard and to be the leader, it's different from just being a manager. You need to learn how to be the leader because I still see everybody that I work with when I go out to a pow wow. When I go out into the community, I know all the families. So I still have to get out of my house and go do stuff, I have to go shopping on the weekends.

Rogelio: It's the love of the tribe and the job, right?

Letisha Peterso: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rogelio: Yep, great.

Letisha Peterso: So I don't know if that answered your question. I hope it did.

Rogelio: Yeah it did, it did. Alright, well thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Great questions. Thank you so much Rogelio. Have a good evening.

Rogelio: You too.

Tino Magnatta: He had some great questions. Hello, good evening. Do you have a question for Letisha?

Hati: I certainly have, good evening Tino and Letisha, this is Hati from Southern California, Temecula. How are you guys and ladies?

Letisha Peterso: Hello.

Tino Magnatta: Fantastic.

Hati: I'm so happy when Tino has female leaders on the show, and he's very good at balancing that, thank you so much, Tino, because that's when I bring out my popcorn and my pina colada and really enjoy the insights. So, Letisha, I'm really passionate about innovating young leaders and women in tribal gaming, so I was so excited to hear your insights. I wanted to know from you, you spoke about making mistakes as you went up your career path from sales to HR to machines and slots, what do you feel, maybe if you could make two top common mistakes that you see women specifically in gaming make that hinder from them achieving those higher top positions?

Letisha Peterso: I would say, my own personal experiences, I would say the mistake that I've seen and the mistake that I've seen whether it's something I've dealt with or something I've seen other women deal with is we try to I guess oversell ourselves in the sense that we're always trying to prove ourselves. We're always trying to make sure that we give the laundry list of our accomplishments, the laundry list of what we can do, and I think that the difference that I've seen in a male versus a female is a man kind of shows up and they own it. They get to the table, they know they belong there. And I think that confidence level, that a woman needs to maintain that confidence level, and I've seen it, and I've seen great representation of that. And I think that there's been times that when you're challenged and you think of things and you overthink things, because I don't know if that's something that all people do or just what women do, I know I've done it, we get to that point, we get to that opportunity and you can see it-

Hati: [inaudible 00:49:02].

Letisha Peterso: If you don't have that confidence, if you don't have that perseverance to get through it, it's maintaining that professionalism when you get there. I don't want to say don't show your weaknesses, because you still need that human element, and I think sometimes people think that you have to be hardcore, but it's different for a woman. You have to be able to still maintain your professionalism and you still have to be approachable. And having that balance when you get there is important.

I think the other part of it is, again, being able to show up and do the job. If you know what you're doing and you're confident in what you're doing, and you're open minded and open hearted, then you'll find that balance. So that's what I think.

Hati: Those are two great ones, thank you, and what would you, you mentioned it went down to three applicants. What do you feel was the differentiating factor when you got that GM position that made you stand out from the other two applicants, what was it, apart from being tribal of course, what do you feel they saw in you?

Letisha Peterso: You know, at the time I applied for the job, and the people that were working here that interviewed me, they actually did various panels. So I didn't get scored just by other directors, I got scored by our oversight committee, and I also got

scored by other tribal entity general managers. So they brought other Yakama Nation entities in to take me through the grinder. And I would say what stood me apart from other people, one is I have the heart. I have the drive, I have the understanding of what it is to be a leader and I think that we see a lot of people go from one property to another and not understand the dynamics, not understand the people, not understand the processes, and I think I had that already, because I knew what I was signing up for.

Hati: Right. You were ingrained in the culture.

Letisha Peterso: Yes. And of course, there's improvements that were needed and that's why I was applying for the job. But at the same time, I wasn't disrespectful to the position, I wasn't disrespectful to the current situation of the company I was applying for, and I was really dumbfounded how I could outscore, and I didn't find that out right away, I found that out after. And I've met a few people who've applied for jobs here, and they would have been great fits for us. But at the same time, for one reason or another, at that point in time I was selected, and I think again it goes back to I'm a hard worker.

If I can see what the Nation's asking for, and I try to get it, I'm going to make that goal and it's going to be something that I can share with our team, we're going to pull together a plan, and we're going to try to move in that direction, and I keep telling my team, I'm going to walk. I'm walking this way, and this is where we're going.

Hati: Absolutely.

Letisha Peterso: If you're going to help out, this is where we're going. And I gave them the plan.

Hati: I love it. I love it, thank you so much. Thank you for all your encouragement, and thank you Tino. Have a good evening.

Letisha Peterso: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you.

Letisha Peterso: You too, have a great one.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much for calling in, appreciate it.

Hati: My pleasure.

Tino Magnatta: Great stuff. Great questions. Great questions.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: There's a lot of strength you need to have. Like you said, the men come in and they own it, right? There's never any doubt. This is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Letisha Peterson?

Speaker 5: Evening guys, [inaudible 00:53:13], how are you?

Letisha Peterso: Hi, hey how's it going?

Speaker 5: Great, great. I'll have to admit, I've never been to your property. I kind of looked you up when you were talking to kind of get a feel for it, and the first thing I saw is you have War coming in concert, and that kind of warms my heart.

Letisha Peterso: (laughs).

Speaker 5: Brings back a lot of memories.

Letisha Peterso: Oh yeah.

Speaker 5: You seem to get quite a few of them. First question I have, you have an 18 plus casino, right?

Letisha Peterso: Yes.

Speaker 5: Are there any things you do to attract the 18 to 21 year old crowd, because I'm not really used to seeing ... I don't interact with a lot of casinos that are 18 plus.

Letisha Peterso: So our property has been an 18 and over casino, primarily because we don't serve alcohol, so we're allowed to open up that element of the market. I can't say that we ... there are certain things that we try to do to draw in that customer, that customer at that age and at that time don't necessarily have the money, the disposable income to come to our property. So it's not a huge factor to our bottom line and our revenue. But they are still our clientele and our customer base. So, a lot of times they gravitate and they start at those table games. They're coming here for that social element.

It's funny because every person I know that turns 18, their big goal is to come to Legends Casino and gamble. And I think it's just hilarious. They want to press the button or they want to play the card game. For this property, in our area there's not a whole lot going on in our area, so the entertainment value that legends brings to our community, I think is a natural draw. We're not in a large city, there's not a whole lot to do, in that 18 to 21, 18 to 25 range, so we see a lot of people come down and enjoy our property. Adding the hotel element, they're able to enjoy our property. We have a brand new food court, so again, we're 24-7 so people come down and they enjoy our property for those areas.

Speaker 5: Like a right of passage, 18 plus.

Letisha Peterso: I would have to say yes. People talk about it. I've gone to ... I have teenage kids that have become adults and that's one of the first things. It's funny because usually they don't understand what I do for a living, and then they get here and they're like "Whoa, you mean you run all of this?" They've never been to the property or they didn't understand what I do, and it's just amazing to them. So some of them come to work for us. We have a lot of young people that come out of high school that come to work for us because we allow them to. They're coming to have their first job here at our casino.

Speaker 5: Yeah.

Letisha Peterso: Right of passage.

Speaker 5: Did your kids all of the sudden say you're really cool?

Letisha Peterso: I would say my kids' friends think I'm cool. I don't know if my son or my daughter do.

Speaker 5: Oh there you go.

Letisha Peterso: I'm more of the "Mom I want to go to a movie, I need my phone bill paid" kind of mom.

Speaker 5: Did you notice an uptick in Portland and Seattle customers when you built your hotel, or is that still pretty local?

Letisha Peterso: You know, it's been an interesting ride with bringing our hotel online. Because if you don't know ... if you're in Washington, you've heard of Yakama, but unless you reference yourself as Yakama, we're in Toppenish. So unless you know where Toppenish is, it's been a challenge to get people to come through our area. But when they get here, they're completely thrown by how much we have going on here in Toppenish, Washington.

We've had a lot of returning customers out of, we have a tri cities market, we're kind of between us and Wild Horse, we share tri cities. Yakama's pretty large. And then if you pull from Ellensburg or even Wenatchee in Washington, we have a pretty big draw. What we're fortunate as far as the Yakama Nation goes, is we have a huge land base as far as tribal lands. So once we decide to pull that trigger, we're going to be a force to be reckoned with in our market, we just need to keep moving in the right direction. I'm hoping to be a part of that.

Speaker 5: Oh great. Is there any leverage you can use, like being close to the Cascade Mountains? Or are you doing it?

Letisha Peterso: I would say that we would have a great draw if we could use our own. We own our own mountain, but our Nation has decided to keep that as closed, so we actually have closed gates to our mountain, you have to go through guard gates

for it. So I think they've chosen to preserve that. But as far as Washington, if you look us up, if you look up Yakama Nation and you look up the land base, the reservations really small. But if you look up the seated land base, our land actually goes all the way up into central Washington, Wenatchee, through various big areas, all the way down to the Columbia river. So there's a lot of opportunities, and if we wanted to build something and take advantage those, those are definitely available to us.

Speaker 5: Great, yeah. I appreciate you educating myself and others on this. I had no idea, this is great.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah, thank you.

Speaker 5: All right, thanks guys, have a good evening.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much, have a good evening, bye bye. Alright, Letisha, what a great show, I really appreciate you coming on. Some of the things you said about the whole gender struggle and all that is really inspiring, and I think that a lot of people on the show are going to walk away with a lot of enthusiasm about that. I really appreciate you being on the show.

Letisha Peterso: Yeah, well thank you so much for having me. I appreciate all your time and you guys do a great job with collecting and providing information and it's been fun. I wasn't sure how this was going to turn out so I'm going to have to go back and look at some of your other broadcasts, I'm excited to see that.

Tino Magnatta: Oh yeah. I think we're over 90 episodes now. So we've got 90 hours of shows, and yeah there's some great shows in there. So many great people, it's been quite an experience. I'm really ... got a lot of gratitude for being able to talk to all these people, so I really appreciate you being on the show tonight, and I hope we'll have you on again.

Letisha Peterso: Yes, thank you so much, and you guys have a great evening.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you, have a great night.

Letisha Peterso: Okay, alright, bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye. Great woman, incredible stories, especially when it comes to the gender and how she coped with that, how strong she is. Next week, I have Nancy Mays. She's the director of marketing at Gold River Casino, Lenape Entertainment. And you're going to hear some great stories. I'm glad I have a lot of women back to back on the show, they just have some great stories, you're going to hear some great stories from Nancy. One time I think she worked on naval ships and she was the only woman on there, she has a great story about that. Anyways, remember everybody has a story to tell, you just have to have time to listen. I hope you have a great evening and we'll see you next week.