



HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Kalispel Indians or “River/Lake paddlers” as they were called by other tribes, or “camas people,” as Kalispel is translated in English, were semi-nomadic hunters, diggers and fishermen. In 1810 tribal membership numbered about 1,600 people. In 1855, the Upper Kalispels gave up their lands and moved to the Jocko Reservation in Montana at the request of the U.S.

Government. The Lower Kalispels, of which today’s Kalispel members are descendants, refused to give up their ancestral lands and continued to work toward an agreement that would allow the Tribe to remain on their homeland. They were noted for their sturgeon-nosed canoes and ability to live proficiently, on water or land, among the secluded valleys of the Pend Oreille River.

They possess a rich culture derived from the mountainous, forested lands around them and, especially, the river. Tribal life centered around the river. They used it daily for commerce and sociality. They built their winter villages beside it and established their summer camas root digging and berry picking camps in its floodplain. They took fish from it with basket weirs, nets and spears. The river continues to be very important to the culture of the Tribe.

The original Kalispel Indian Reservation is located approximately 55 miles north of Spokane in Pend Oreille County. The Reservation of 4,660 acres, established by President Wilson’s Executive Order in 1914, is located along approximately ten miles of the Pend Oreille River. The acreage is a narrow strip along the east bank of the river near Usk, Washington. In 1995 the Tribe added 440 acres of trust land adjacent to the north boundary of the reservation for a waterfowl and wildlife reserve. In 1996, the Tribe added forty acres of land in Airway Heights, which has been converted to Reservation Trust land. In addition, in 2002 and 2003 the Tribe purchased 250 acres of land adjacent to the 40 acres the Casino sits on in Airway Heights. There were 380 enrolled Tribal Members as of June 2006. The Kalispel Tribe is recognized as a sovereign nation by the Federal Government.

Today, the Kalispel Tribe is working towards many goals for tribal members and also for neighboring communities. The Tribe is committed to preserving its rich natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. The Tribe is also working to build employment and educational opportunities for its membership. The Tribe’s plans for the future include development of successful business enterprises that provide employment opportunities for tribal and community members, quality educational resources and adequate health care for members, and the preservation of wildlife habitats and cultural heritage on the Reservations.

As the Kalispel Tribe looks toward building the future there are endless possibilities. Northern Quest Casino has a positive economic impact on the Kalispel Tribe, local communities, local businesses and the community at large. The Tribe utilizes casino profits to enhance the Reservation infrastructure, support youth and elder services and create other business enterprises. One of the most exciting economic impacts is the funding and expansion of the Camas Path (formerly Camas Institute). The Camas Path provides vocational and occupational training, community services, Indian culture/history focus, basic adult education and post-secondary level courses.