



NEW CONSTRUCTION

# A FUTURE IN

BY KRISTA REINER

The past, present and future of the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians have recently converged with the opening of the Red Hawk Casino near Placerville, Calif. The 278,000-square-foot facility features more than 2,000 slot machines and 75 table games, six restaurants, four bars, a gift shop, and more than 3,000 lighted and covered parking spaces.

The prominent hillside on which the property resides has served as a major physical landmark for the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians for decades. Now, as guests arrive at the Red Hawk Casino, its unique beauty immediately awes them. "Stunning views of the Sierra Nevada foothills greet patrons as they approach the property, from the procession up the hill to the porte cochere and the views of the surrounding region from inside the casino," said John Boggs, senior associate at Baker Barrios Architects, one of the key design firms involved in the project.

While the location of the casino is culturally significant for the Tribe, it was one of the most challenging aspects of the casino's design. "The building wraps around a section of a steep hill in the Sierra Nevada foothills, so the footprint of the building is very dynamic, which created challenges to just about every aspect of the project, from site circulation to construction means to interior footprints," Boggs noted.

Thomas Hoskens, vice president of Cunningham Group Architecture P.A., the lead architect on the project, also noted another challenge that the location presented: site access from Highway 50. "The site needed a new highway interchange to access the property," Hoskens explained. But the challenges didn't stop there. Contractors Rudolph & Sletten also struggled to penetrate the serpentine rock subgrades found on the hillside while trying to lay the property's elaborate foundation.

However, these challenges also created many unexpected design opportunities. "Instead of designing the resort to a particular theme, we used cultural metaphors and interpreted them in a modern building vernacular," Hoskens said.

Through interviews with Tribal Elders and analysis of the site, the design team was able to create a project that is unique to the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians. "Our design philosophy is 'Every Building Tells a Story™,' and through our process, we believe Red Hawk tells the story about the Tribe's vision and their beautiful land," Hoskens added.

Comprised of key players from Baker Barrios and the Cunningham Group, the design team met with Lakes Entertainment (which developed and managed the project) to develop, program and master plan the



# FLIGHT: Red Hawk Casino

resort. Then visioning sessions were scheduled with Miwok Elders and the Tribal Council to help identify and distill the cultural elements that the Tribe wanted to include. From these design meetings, the team identified three main cultural references: the Miwok Winter House, the adjacent rivers and Native basket patterns.

At first glance, the exterior of the Red Hawk Casino begins to tell the story of the Tribe's heritage through shapes, materials, textures and design. "The front façade of the casino is a blend of stone, architectural precast concrete and synthetic stucco, and is capped off with a glue-lam roof structure that carries on the symbolism of the tribal Miwok Winter House," said Hoskens. "The other three sides are made up of a metal panel system that again carries on the patterning of the 'basket full of blessings' symbolism."

"The historic Miwok Winter House is symbolized through the curved wood found in the entry porte cochere and entry roof," he continued. "The porte cochere waterfall is symbolic of the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers where the Tribe lived for many years. The native basket patterns in the shape of a V again symbolize a 'basket full of blessings,' and this pattern was used liberally on the exterior wall graphics

and in various light fixtures."

Even the interior of the casino echoes the essence of the Tribe's connection to the natural world and the significance of the basket patterns, water and the Winter House. "We brought the outside into the gaming floor by using stone on the column bases and low walls, wood clad columns and crown moldings, and colors and textures from the surrounding landscape," said Ken Rhyne, director of special projects for Baker Barrio Architects. "We wanted patrons to say 'Wow!' when first entering the gaming space, and we did this in two ways because there are really two front doors: the entry at the porte cochere and the entry from the parking deck into the elevator lobby."

"The highly illuminated dome shape at the porte cochere entry was inspired by studying an acorn cap with its shape and textures. Acorns are very important to the Tribe," Rhyne added. This acorn-inspired dome is adorned with color kinetic lighting, which changes color and hue 24 hours a day. From the dome, an ever-changing sky—from dawn to dusk and overnight—leads the eye down the 140-foot procession to the escalators.

Suspended directly above the escalator is a magnificent custom

chandelier centered in a basket-patterned ceiling. "The chandelier consists of hundreds of red-tailed hawk feathers carved from glass and is illuminated by color-changing LEDs, which helps create a unified series of experiences from the porte cochere to the second level restaurants and the non-smoking gaming floor," Rhyne said.

"At the second front door adjacent to the elevator lobby, patrons are greeted by another circular ceiling element that houses an eight-foot diameter chandelier of brilliant red-tailed hawk feathers carved from glass, bronze and acrylic that pay respect to the namesake of the casino," he continued. Again, basket patterns surround the ever-changing colors of the feathers.

On the gaming floor, natural colors and textures of the surrounding areas blend together to help unify the design. "The carpet pattern is influenced by the Tribe's traditional gaming sticks and gaming baskets," said Rhyne. "The large expanse of ceiling throughout the gaming floor is softened by cove lighted coffers, while the perimeter soffits undulate and take patrons from one space to another, giving the space a sense of movement and vibrancy."

Through the dedicated efforts of the entire design team, the Tribal Council, Tribal Elders and Lakes Entertainment, Boggs can easily say, "This project is only about *this* site and *this* Tribe. It simply wouldn't fit any place else." And that's exactly where Red Hawk Casino plans to stay.

Photos courtesy of Cunningham Group Architecture and Baker Barrios Architects, photographed by Peter Malinowski.

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**KEY PLAYERS**

- Owner: .....Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
- Developer/Manager: .....Lakes Entertainment Inc.
- Architect:.....Cunningham Group Architecture P.A.
- Contractor: .....Rudolph & Sletten
- Interior Designer/Cultural Values: .....Baker Barrios Architects
- MEFPF: .....Michaud Cooley Ericksen
- Structural: .....Reigstad & Associates
- Civil: .....Gene E. Thorne Associates Inc.
- Landscape Architecture: .....Melchert Walkky Inc.
- Architectural Lighting:.....Schuler Shook Inc.
- Signage: .....Eslick Design Associates Inc.
- Audio Visual:.....Shen Misom & Wilke Inc.
- Food Service: .....Premier Restaurant Equipment and Design Co.



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Recently opened **Red Hawk Casino** in Placerville, California

