

GAMING

Kickapoo Tribe breaks ground on new casino



Kickapoo tribe council members Gilbert Salazar, Boyd Ponkilla, Patricia Gonzales, Jennell Downs, and John Scott begin the groundbreaking for the new casino in Shawnee. ED BLOCKOWIAK, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By Carmen Boulton

carmen.boulton-long@news-star.com

The Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma hosted the groundbreaking of their new casino in Shawnee on Wednesday to the sounds of the song, "Take Care of Business," by Bachman-Turner Overdrive. And according to tribal officials, the Kickapoo tribe is taking care of business with the opening of their second casino.

The first phase of the casino will be open in August 2012. This temporary casino will feature 300 gaming machines and include a

snack shop and a bar.

The next phase of the casino will begin in 2013. The final casino will feature a main casino, a hotel, and a convenience store.

"This project will benefit Shawnee by bringing in more jobs, and at the same time will bring additional tourism and commerce to the city," Gilbert Salazar, chairman of the tribe said.

The first phase of the casino will create between 60 and 80 jobs, according to Che Downs, acting general manager for The Kickapoo Casino of Harrah.

After the completion of the casino and hotel, Kendall Nenaikita, director of

marketing for the Kickapoo Casino, said the jobs would be in the hundreds, but was unable to give a specific number.

"It's difficult to give an exact number until the casino is completed," he said.

After the completion of the casino and hotel, the project will be extended to include an event center for concerts, and other national talents.

"We won't start work on that until after the hotel is finished," Nenaikita said.

The casino will be located at the intersection of U.S. 177 and MacArthur Street.

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