



By Krista Reiner

The Fire Inside: THE SENECA ALLEGANY CASINO & HOTEL

"Listen well, Mohawk. Your clan spirit has heard your prayer. Tonight you will learn a great mystery that will bring help and gladness to all your people."

— *How Fire Came to the Six Nations, or The Tale of Three Arrows*

Southwestern New York is home to some of the most breathtaking natural beauty in the world, as well as one of the most dignified Indian Tribes in the country, the Seneca Nation of Indians. With the majesty of the Allegany Territory's Enchanted Mountains as its backdrop, the spirit of the Seneca Nation invokes both awe and inspiration in those who visit. With the help of experts at JCY Architecture, the Seneca Nation now offers more to the world than just the spectacular natural beauty of its territory — it proudly presents a luxurious entertainment facility that echoes its extraordinary character, tribal legacy and native artistic expressions: the Seneca Allegany Casino & Hotel.

Not far from its foremost entertainment property located in Niagara Falls, N.Y., the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel (also planned and designed by JCY), the Seneca Allegany Casino & Hotel is tucked among the foothills of the Allegany Mountains in Salamanca, N.Y. "We allocated approximately 320,000 square feet to develop a full-service casino; a 212-room luxury hotel complete with three new restaurants, a full-service spa and salon; an indoor swimming pool; and appropriate back of house, office and support space. The project is connected to our original casino facility, which now houses additional support space, a separate Poker room and a 400-seat international buffet," Philip Pantano, director of public relations and public affairs for the Seneca Gaming Corporation, said.

For Phase I of the project, JCY designed a temporary casino facility to generate capital for the building project as quickly as possible. During Phase I of construction, planning began for future phases, as did work on Phase II: a 1,850-vehicle parking garage and surface parking lot expansion.





Phase III was the permanent world-class casino hotel, which was finished less than 18 months after groundbreaking. Currently, the project is in Phase IV. During this phase, JCJ is renovating the Phase I temporary casino into a large-scale events center that will provide much-needed entertainment space for the facility and the entire community. "The first phase, which was the [Seneca Allegany] start-up facility, was 125,000 square feet, to which we added another 320,000 square feet. Right now, we are in the process of renovating Phase I into a meeting conference center, which we should complete within the next eight months," Scott Persing, AIA, LEED AP, principal and senior designer for JCJ's Hospitality Practice, said.

Because JCJ has worked with the Seneca Nation of Indians since 2000, the company is familiar with the goals and mission of the tribe and its gaming corporation. This made the design process seamless and synergistic. Christie Pezzetta, associate and senior interior designer for JCJ's Hospitality Practice, played a key role in implementing and organizing the casino design. Pezzetta said: "The primary inspiration for the design of the casino and hotel lobby was The Tale of Three Arrows, or How Fire Came to the Six Nation. In the story, on the sixth night of Three Arrows' voyage into the mountains, he was visited by a clan spirit that told him, 'Listen well, Mohawk. Your clan spirit has heard your prayer. Tonight you will learn a great mystery that will bring help and gladness to all your people.' On that night, a storm ravished the mountainside, and Three Arrows witnessed two Balsam trees rubbing together with friction, and a fire started. After witnessing this, Three Arrows knew what the mystery was and brought fire back to his nation.

Think of us as a Natural resource.

CASINO CITY PRESS PUBLICATIONS
*The world's most trusted Gaming Almanacs,
 Directories, and Subscription Services*

CasinoCityPress.com **Casino City Press**

"Some of the ways we interpreted that story are: Immediately as you walk in from the porte-cochere you are greeted with very, very tall spaces. The hotel lobby has extremely high ceilings, and we really tried to emphasize height to give it a big sky type of feeling to mirror the incredible landscape. Walking into the casino space from the hotel lobby, the first thing you notice is the enormity of the space, which makes you feel like you're outside where Three Arrows was.

"We used reflective cobalt blue metal ceiling panels in the casino so it would feel like being outside under the night sky. It's very reflective, festive and sparkly. It reflects a lot of the energy from the casino and the game play." JCJ also designed the property to have smooth transitions. Pezzetta explained: "On the casino floor around the gaming tables, there are very tall, mountainous columns similar to the columns on the exterior of the building. So you get a nice transition from the interior design to the exterior design."

Along with the theme of expansive space, the property also subtly suggests the nation's ties to fire, again alluding to The Tale of Three Arrows. "Right away there is a lot of torch light and glowing, warm colors that

invoke the idea of fire. In the hotel lobby, there is a very large, very welcoming fireplace that says, 'here is one way you can enjoy the benefits of fire,'" Ji-Yong Sung, LEED AP, associate and senior interior designer for JCJ's Hospitality Practice, said.

Pezzetta added: "On the inside there are mountainous columns that have flashes of torch light and backlit panels on the side, so it almost feels like you are in a very festive outdoor space surrounded by fire. Around the perimeter of the enormous casino space is a combination of spirals and turning, curving, windy soffits on the ceilings that portray the wind and the storm. In the middle of one of the big spiral soffits, there is a lightning strike element that changes from yellow to orange to red, right as it strikes the center of the bar — a very strong stormy-looking entertainment bar. But once you go in, the bar is very tranquil and welcoming. It's a nice resting place from the sometimes overwhelming action of the casino floor."

There were some obstacles during the building process, obstacles that have plagued the Seneca Tribe throughout history. "The weather was a huge obstacle. Our construction began in October 2005 and carried on

through March 2007. ... Our crews had to erect the steel frame for the hotel facility during the winter of 2005/2006. Once the frame was complete, they had to enclose the entire facility in glass — work that lasted through the winter of 2007, which just happened to be one of the coldest winters in the past 20 years," Pantano said.

The resort, owned by the Seneca Nation and operated by its wholly owned Seneca Gaming Corporation, employs more than 1,400 people, providing the area with a wealth of jobs. There are also plans for more expansion. "Here we are about a month and a half after the grand opening of the casino, and we're already talking about expansion. Master Plan and Phase V efforts are scheduled to begin shortly," Persing said.

The Seneca Allegany Casino & Hotel is a magnificent structure with a modern design that uses natural materials in sophisticated ways. Invoking the historic spirit of the tribe through the use of Seneca myths, wampum belt patterns, art work and earthly elements, JCJ has helped the Seneca Nation of Indians and its Gaming Corporation build another successful entertainment facility for all to enjoy.

Building From Another Perspective

pentabldggroup.com | 702.614.1678

Hank's Fine Steaks & Martinis,
Green Valley Ranch

PENTA
THE PENTA BUILDING GROUP, INC.

KEY PLAYERS

Owners/Operators:

Seneca Nation of Indians/Seneca Gaming Corporation

Owner's Representative/Program Manager:

Seneca Construction Management Corp.

Architect:

JCJ Architecture

Designers:

Brian L. Davis, AIA, LEED AP, Principal and Design Principal; Scott Persing, AIA, LEED AP, Principal and Senior Designer; Christie Pezzetta, Associate and Senior Interior Designer; Ji-Yong Sung, LEED AP, Associate and Senior Interior Designer; and Jim Uriyu, Senior Designer. All are part of JCJ Architecture's Hospitality Practice.

Project Manager:

William M. Dow Jr., RA/PP, Principal, JCJ Architecture's Hospitality Practice

Project Architect:

P. Warren Sieber, RA, Associate and Project Architect, JCJ Architecture's Hospitality Practice

General Manager:

Gus Tsivikis

CEO/President:

Brian Hansberry