

# Colony clean-up gives back to community

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The land at 2453 E. Second St. in Reno has been a lot of things.

Located across from the Grand Sierra Resort, the lot has been home to an automotive care center, a paint mixing store and a radiator shop to name a few, leaving behind contaminants in the soil as a footprint.

But now, with cooperation between the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, which owns the lot, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP), the land has been restored and is free of chemicals.

The cleanup of the contaminants, which has been an ongoing project since 2001, was made possible through federal loans and grants so the colony could fully utilize the lot as a retail site.

RSIC chairman Arlan Melendez said he is pleased with the outcome of the project, which has removed all petroleum and lead contamination in the soil left by previous tenants.

"It is a joyous time on this property," Melendez said. "One of our goals is to not only create economic



Tribune/Debra Reid

Lois Kane gives a Native American invocation at the site of a future Wal-Mart on Reno-Sparks Indian Colony land. At left is the tribe's Chairman Arlan Melendez.

opportunities but first and foremost to protect the land, water and resources."

Using a \$950,000 federal loan from the State of Nevada Brownfields Program and a \$2 million

grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, the site has officially been cleared. Melendez said the colony will be leasing out

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the property to a WalMart Supercenter and other box retail stores. Construction will start in February 2009.

Such a project marked a first for the NDEP: the first of its kind to be completed in Nevada and the first Indian-owned site in the entire Western region, said Leo Drozdoff, administrator of the NDEP.

"We are recycling land here," Drozdoff said.

Environmental surveys were needed, completed by Kleinfelder Inc., and now

after truckloads of contaminated soil were hauled out, the lot meets all local, state and federal cleanup standards.

RSIC members are excited to finally see their plan come to fruition, explaining that the development will benefit the entire community, not just the colony.

"It's going to benefit everyone," said Verna J. Nuno, secretary of the tribal council, explaining that portions of generated tax revenues will help fund the new health center down the street on the main reserva-

tion. The health center is available to non-tribe members. "We want to continue giving back to the community."

About \$600,000 of the yearly generated tax revenues from the land will be donated to the Washoe County School District, said Scott Nebesky, the planner director for the RSIC.

While the remnants of a trucking warehouse and a ranch house still need to be cleared, the biggest project that still remains is the flood wall that will run along the north side of the lot.

The flood project, which

Nebeksy said will cost about \$3 million, will begin construction in September and will prevent overflow flooding from the nearby Truckee River.

The RSIC, which has about 8,000 American Indian members in the Washoe County area, is pleased to see such partnership between all government entities involved.

"You have to do things in partnership with other people, to build good working relationships," Melendez said. "And we must protect mother earth because she is what sustains us."