

TIME TO MOVE FORWARD!

ENOUGH PETTY POLITICS AND DYSFUNCTION



Selfie taken at "My Brothers' Keeper" Initiative Update at the White House.

Aaron A. Payment, MPA
Tribal Chairperson

Representing All Members Everywhere

Ahneen, Boozoo, Negee:

Congratulations to the new and returning Tribal Board Members who were elected by the people last month. Some believe elections set up a systems of winners and losers. When a race is close, it is hard to determine which platform and which agenda should prevail. Instead of declaring victory and relegating the opponent and their platform to a losing venture, I suggest we take the good ideas from all candidates and incorporate them into a revised Tribal Strategic Plan. If this were done, we would all win. Below is a picture of Tribal youth and future leader Tomantha Sylvester at the Soo Powwow. Our goal should be to provide a better future for our Tribal youth. They deserve better than the petty bickering and power grabs they have witnessed in our government.



Tomantha Sylvester at Sault Tribe Powwow

One prevailing item that most candidates campaigned on was that of creating distinct and separate branches of government. In the past, we had a Chairperson who was extremely autocratic. As a consequence, Members grew intolerant of this type of control. During my first term, much of the oppositional defiance expressed at the Board level was due in part to a repudiation of this type of control.

With the assertion of an all powerful Board, we simply switched dictators. This is not meant as an insult, so I hope it is not taken that way, but an elected board of directors is a lay group; no experience or qualifications are necessary to serve

other than a commitment to serve. One of our *Seven Grandfather teachings* is *humility*. What I have seen over the years with some Board Members is the belief that since they were elected (whether with a large margin or a by just a few votes) they must be expert in all areas. This "emperor wears no clothes" approach leads to a lack of perspective and humility with which public servants should serve.

The Chairperson position is different. This is a position that should require advanced education and/or executive level administrative experience. While Members may have voted in 2010 to repudiate the administration at the time or the previous hang-over of dictatorial control, when I ran in 2012, I made it clear what I had to offer in terms of my qualifications with my advanced education, my experience as an executive manager at the highest level in ours and another tribe's government, and my commitment to public service for American Indians (see list to the right). As such, I believe this is why I garnered nearly 57 percent of the vote and won in all units both inside and outside of the service area. For a minority faction of the Board to continue to try to thwart or undo the "will of the people" is a contamination of the democratic process. The Members expect me to serve over the administrator and whether it is through "oversight" or "management," the people of the Tribe made their choice. The lingering minority faction needs to GET OVER IT. I believe an incumbent just lost their seats due to this "oppositional defiance." Others who continue to fight the will of the people would do well pay attention as they could just as easily find themselves to be one-termers come 2016.

IS THE TALK OF HEALING JUST TALK?

Watch closely to see what direction we move in. Are we going to move forward in a positive direction and "heal" as some like to suggest? Or will the pettiness continue by trying to dismantle the authority of the Chairperson position? Will we dumb it down to just chairing a meeting to clear the path for an incumbent Board Member to serve? One argument used by the minority faction is that we need to separate the politics from the business operations. First, I do not operate our business, I oversee our government and services operations and have

balanced the budget every year I have been Chair. There is no valid argument here. Next, to eliminate the one stop gap (the Chairperson) from administrative oversight, is to completely prostitute the government to the will of 12 elected lay people. While some have advanced qualification and/or governance experience, governing by committee never works. The danger is that managers have to continuously look to see whose favor they have to gain in order to retain their jobs. This leads to abuses of authority and threats and intimidation of our team members, which diminishes our capacity to operate effectively.

THERE IS SO MUCH MORE WE CAN DO!

The petty power grabs send a message to the outside world that our government is unstable and not worthy of the opportunity to operate a casino in a major market. It suggests to investors that we are arbitrary and capricious with respect to our businesses operations. With the referendum support of the people behind our gaming expansion projects, I have said that all the stars have to align if we are to succeed. I believe I have effectively communicated our cause with the federal government, but, the instability implied through the petty resistance by a few, puts this all at risk.

I am not inflexible, but I will fight to uphold the will of our people. I agree that we need to dialog on what authority the Chairperson position should have going forward and to then hold a REFERENDUM to invite the Members to decide. I support hiring a management company to turn around our declining casino revenues and to oversee our enterprises and development of future ventures. However, I have proven my ability in governance and oversight of our services administration, rep-

resentation to the Federal government and treaty rights implementation. I draw the line at any attempts to dismantle this.

In addition to the last election outcome for Chair, a survey I conducted in this paper shows that the vast majority of our Members did not understand the vote to take the CEO function out of the Chairperson's office with nearly a landslide interested in repealing this amendment.

CONFUSING VOTE

Director McKelvie has clarified that he believed the amendment was not what was work-shopped by the Board and was changed without warning just before they voted. He shared with me that this was just to take the CEO title out but that the administrative oversight would continue. The compromise when I returned to office was to hire an Executive Director (who functions as CEO) who would report to me. Some argue that I should not be an employee, and, as such, I cannot supervise. The fact is, I



Proud of my Cousin Jimmy Young at the Sault 4th of July Parade!

am not an employee (unlike my predecessor, I receive no benefits like Social Security or retirement contributions, and no vacation or sick time) but there is no prohibition in Tribal law to disallow me from supervising our governmental heads as demonstrated by the Tribe's General Counsel drafting up and the Board voting unanimously (when I was elected) to delegate these authorities to the Chair.

Finally, rather than play the minority faction game of threatening to dismantle the authority of the Chair position, I suggested they simply do whatever they are going to do so, "We the People" can hold a referendum, and take this decision way from the Board in order to truly move forward.

Committed to Public Service for American Indians:

Aaron A. Payment, MPA (Bii-waaga-jiig)

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OBJECTIVE While serving as Chairperson to my Membership: to apply my unique skill set, advanced education, employment experience in higher education and K-12 education, policy and public administrative expertise and government service to enrich the lives of others.

EDUCATION **Doctoral Candidate – Educational Leadership**
Central Michigan University – 3.98 GPA (Dissertation Phase)
Master's Educational Administration
Northern Michigan University – 4.0 GPA (S2015)
Master's Educational Specialist
Northern Michigan University – 4.0 GPA (S2015)
Master's Public Administration
Northern Michigan University – 3.72 GPA (1991)

Doctoral Studies, Political Science '92-'95
Michigan State University – 3.4 GPA (completed 23 credits)
Bachelor's of Science: Sociology
Northern Michigan University – 3.2 GPA (1988)
G.E.D. Recipient (1982)
High School Drop Out – Earned G.E.D. at 16 years old

PUBLIC SERVICE My life has been spent in public service. I have testified in the U.S. Congress (House and Senate) nearly a dozen times and through countless consultation exercises. My public service / appointments are listed below:

EDUCATION RELATED SERVICE

- JKL Bahweting Amishimabe PSA Charter (past President)
- JKL Fiduciary Committee (past President & current member)
- Natives in Higher Educational Advocacy Council (past)
- Minority Affairs Council of Michigan Universities (past)
- NCAI Education Subcommittee
- LSSU President Search Committee (2014)
- LSSU Native studies Strategic Planning Task Force (1993)
- LSSU Faculty ('94-'96)
- Sault Area Schools – Native Retention Task Force (1999)
- Northern Michigan University (past): Alumni Board, Human Relations Advisory Board, Affirmative Action/ EEO Committee, King-Chavez-Parks Visiting Professor Committee, Search Committees for Vice President of Academic Affairs & Minority Services Director, and advisor and founding Member of the NMI American Indian Science and Engineering Society Chapter

TRIBAL RELATED SERVICE

- NCAI Vice President – Midwest Region
- Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes Vice-President (VP)
- United Tribes of Michigan VP
- Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan VP
- HHS Secretary Tribal Advisory Council
- HHS Health Research Advisory Council Co-Chair
- IHS Contract Support Costs Workgroup
- Tribal Vice Chairperson (past)
- Kewadin Gaming Authority Chair
- Sault Tribe Gaming Commission Chair
- Sault Tribe Gaming Expansion Committee Chair
- Sault Tribe EDC Chair (past)
- Sault Tribe Housing Commission (past)
- Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority & Executive Council
- Inland Treaty Negotiations Team (past)
- Sault Tribe Constitutional Review Adhoc Committee (past)
- Sault Tribe Strategic Planning Committee (past)
- Sault Tribe Cultural Committee (past)
- Sault Tribe Service Data Project Team (past)
- Sault Tribe Health Access Exploratory Task Force
- Tribal Action Plan Substance Abuse Planning Group
- MI Tribal Legislative Task Force (past)

GENERAL RELATED SERVICE

- Chippewa Luce Mackinaw Community Action Board (past VP)
- War Memorial Community Care Clinic Board
- Chippewa Dialysis Board of Directors (past)
- MSU - Michigan Political Leadership Board and Presenter
- Michigan Political Leadership Inaugural Class (1992)
- MSU – Building Strong Sovereign Nations Group (past)
- Michigan Native American Fellows Program (1991)
- Lansing Indian Center Board (past)
- Natives American of Marquette Incorporated Board (past)
- Nokomis – Mishoumis Volunteer Executive Director (past)
- Delta Sigma Phi – Deputy District Governor (XXIII), Rush Chair, Pledge Educator, IGC Rep, Social Chair (past)

HONORS

- 2013 Sergeant Shriver Achievement Honoree
- 1999 NMI Distinguished Young Native American Alumni
- 1994 Mid-West TriO Achiever
- Delta Sigma Phi – Zeta Tau Chapter Distinguished Alumni
- LSSU Cross Country (2 yrs. Varsity) Academic All American
- Long Distance Runner for 29 years

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WATCH SAULT TRIBE BOARD MEETINGS ON LIVESTREAM: <http://new.livestream.com/TOSSABCS2>