

Under discussion: improving the tribe's Constitution



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

On Sept. 4, we had our board meeting on Sugar Island and had a day of heated discussions about the proposed "new constitution." The resolution that passed in 2005 stated, "The BOD has identified the need to strengthen and improve the Constitution for all Members of the Tribe." We went from an 8-page constitution to a proposed 22-page one. It is my understanding that it was not to write a whole new constitution. I agree we need to make some changes and that this should have been worked on during the past six years, but it was not and then was thrown to us at this meeting to vote on it going to a secretarial election.

Bob Menard was present at

the workshop with some of the elders stating they support it but I later found out by attending a Unit III elder luncheon that many have not even read it. I provided 50 copies to my elders and asked them to read through it and highlight any questions or concerns and we can address them before we make any major decisions.

During the workshop and meeting there were about five members of the Constitution Committee that had negative comments or qualms and one admitted that it was a good document in theory but was not written with cost in mind. There were comments of attorneys involved who fluffed up the document. The committee was formed with 29 members but the final document was finished with about nine members.

The board ultimately decided to form an ad hoc committee comprised of board members, elders and past Constitutional Committee members to work on the project within the next 90 days. When meetings are scheduled in your area, please plan on attending so your voice will be heard and your concerns addressed.

On Sept. 17, Denny, Aaron and I attended the Great Lakes Conservation Committee meeting held in St. Ignace. Some of our fishermen want a commercial license but we are at the limit of available licenses. The commit-

tee and chairman came up with a letter to mail to license holders who have not had any fishing activity to see if they would be willing to allow someone to fish their license with or without the fisherman having to pay a lease fee or percentage. Hopefully, this will help those who desire to fish commercially.

On Sept. 18, Aaron, Joan, Darcy, Denise and I met at the old Munising Tribal Health Building to see how it has been holding up and I am happy to report it is still in really good shape and we may try to use it as a cultural center for west end tribal members.

We had our board meeting at the old Lincoln School (new health center), which the tribe has completely renovated, and they did an awesome job. It is a beautiful building. During the meeting we had intense conversation on passing the budget with a proposed \$3.5 million deficit for 2013 without proposed capital expenditures of an additional \$3.5 million. The board passed the resolution with the contingency that we will balance the budget by Oct. 15. We will be meeting with all department heads and division directors to review their budgets and see what things we need and what things we want that could possibly wait another year. I hate cutting things and I know some of our buildings need some capital

improvements. We need to really work on creating more business and diversifying.

On Sept. 21, I helped the Unit III elders with a tailgate fish fry at the McCann School. They raised over \$600 from that, a bake sale and a 50/50. They were very happy with the fundraiser and fun was had by all. It is a great place to hold a fundraiser during football season so I think there will be more in the future.

On Sept. 24, the board had parliamentary procedures and Robert's Rules of Order training provided by James Mills, who has worked with many tribes across the United States. At 2 p.m. we walked over to the judicial building to meet with U.S. Attorney Patrick Miles Jr. Many of our agencies were present to introduce themselves and what their roles are within the tribe and the services we provide.

On Sept. 25, we continued our training with James Mills and at 10 a.m. went to the grand opening and blessing of the Lodge of Bravery in Sault Ste. Marie. The building is beautiful and will be a safe haven for women who have been victims of domestic abuse. Lori Jump, Joni Talentino and their staff members worked hard to complete this project.

On Sept. 26 and 27, I attended training at the Big Bear made possible by a three-year grant awarded to Tribal Court. The grant is to help the tribe imple-

ment a tribal action plan for alcohol and substance abuse. All agencies within the tribe were present and discussed the problems in our families and community and how we want to work together to combat this crisis. The group came up with a vision and mission statement and formed an advisory board that will again meet with Fox Valley Technical Training at the end of October to continue this plan. I am very excited to be a part of the advisory board.

We have a deadline of Nov. 1 to purchase the property of the proposed Lansing **BOUTIQUE** casino so we have been trying to work on concerns to move this project forward.

Some good news is that the ballot initiative to allow eight non-tribal casinos in Michigan failed, so we will not be seeing this on the November ballot. We also finally received trust status on the Juvenile Detention Center in St. Ignace and continue to work towards getting our other properties into trust.

My office hours are set for Fridays from 9 to 11 a.m. at the old Lambert Center building. I will be canceling Oct. 26 to attend the tribal action plan training in Sault Ste. Marie, but members can call or email me for an appointment:

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