

Generations to come affected by what we do now



**CATHERINE HOLLOWELL,
DIRECTOR, UNIT II**

My intention in this unit report was to update you on the upcoming "Review of the Constitution" scheduled for Nov. 8, 9 and 10. I support constitutional reform and I'm looking forward to finally getting down to the serious and substantive work at hand.

I've spent the last month listening and gathering input from our tribal citizens and attempting

to get the review documents into their hands so they can evaluate the implications before us.

I've conducted my own personal research starting with the selected papers of Felix S. Cohen, and working through the occasional papers generated by Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government's American Indian Development Project, and University of Arizona's Native Nations Institute, to name a few.

Since 2008, I've taken the time to study and read everything published by other tribal nations who have exercised their self-determined right to create their own constitution.

I've reviewed our own tribal documents, from the original resolution calling for a constitution convention, to the subsequent tribal actions that bring us to the current "review."

I've done this study in order to be as best prepared as I can, to

humbly carry out the responsibilities you have entrusted to me.

And so it was with much frustration that, on the eve of the "review" I read over the weekend, these public comments from our chairman:

"Our tribal founders, ancestors, forefathers and mothers or Nokomis - Mishomis would be ashamed that our current board has languished over this project. They would look for leadership to see who is leading our path forward and who is merely making excuses.

"Personally, I find it immoral for any elected board member to sit on this document. We spent over \$400,000 and nearly 7 years and have nothing to show for it!

"There are six board members up for re-election in about a year and half. Watch the score board and let's send those packing if they work against a new constitution!"

These words smack of intimidation. For the chairman to call on the names of our dead ancestors and loved ones, in order to strong arm a preferred outcome to the constitutional review process, is beyond disrespectful on so many levels.

Rather than fostering a healthy and vigorous dialog on each of the provisional amendments within the document, he has chosen to portray board members who take seriously their duties as "immoral" or "against the constitution" and calls into question the integrity of the board.

I call upon our chairman to stop with this type of rhetoric that poisons the process, undermines governance and dishonors our loved ones. I doubt that any of our ancestors would condone our chairman's penchant for raw, bully tactic politics.

And, with all due respect for the amount of money expended,

that in and of itself is not reason enough to move forward on a document that we will have to abide with for generations to come. A poorly written constitution can bring ill tidings to an Indian community and generations of horrific problems to the people and the governing bodies of our tribal nation. If the constitution is worth doing (and I believe it is), then it is worth doing right. And no amount of pre-emptive brow beating is going to force me to rubber stamp such a profoundly important foundation document, without the due diligence it deserves.

I can promise you this: I will remain committed to constitutional reform until the project is ready to be voted upon — however much time that entails. I promise not to rubber stamp anything that is not ready for your ultimate consideration.

Chi Miigwech.