

Connecting with tribal members everywhere



**JENNIFER MCLEOD,
DIRECTOR, UNIT I**

As I sit to write my first unit report, I have once again realized that I am a very blessed woman. I have so much to be thankful for and so many to whom to say “miigwech, thank you.” Miigwech to the Creator for this beautiful Anishnaabe life. Miigwech to all of the tribal members who voted for me,

entrusting me with their hopes and dreams for a better future. Miigwech to all of those wonderful people who helped me to succeed during those days and weeks when my heart was breaking, from the loss of my brother Mike.

Miigwech for the support of my family, dear friends, and especially to my husband Denny, he kept the car running and warm for me, following along as I walked from house to house campaigning (and freezing). He painted signs, circulated petitions and fliers with me, ate too much fast food, and drove to the Gaylord post office TWICE, while I continued putting stamps on postcards. I also wish to acknowledge all of the candidates who stepped up and offered to serve our tribe, especially Shirley VanAlstine for her gracious decorum during the primary tie and recount. I know that I did not make this journey alone and I am grateful to everyone who helped

me along the way.

I have given much thought to what a unit report means, and what it should do. Upon reflecting on all of the input that I have received over the past few months, I have learned that our people want to feel connected, heard and valued. And so, in this small space, I will attempt to connect, to let you know that I am listening, and to make certain that you know how much I value the input I receive. This past month has been a whirlwind of activity as a new member of the board of directors.

I have attended many meetings, a press conference in Lansing, several days of orientation, and received tons of data and information on the status of our tribe. I have listened with pride as I learned in depth about the many good things our tribe is doing to help our people. For just one example, I’ve been serving as a member of our tribe’s drug court, and have seen the

positive difference it is making. We have many good things that our tribe is doing but, for me, the most gratifying activity has been those times when our people called, emailed or met with me. I’ve been honored to listen to the needs of our tribal elders, homeless young people, tribal fishermen and frustrated members, answering their questions the best that I can. But not all of the “good things” comes as a result of “tribal government” activity. Our tribal community does many good things as well. I attended a community fundraiser and held a young woman who was grateful to our community for raising the money she needs to travel to Mayo clinic for medical care.

Clearly, there is much to be done, but working together will see us move forward as a people, as a tribe, as Anishnaabe. Please feel free to contact me: Text or phone at (906) 440-9151 or 203-6714, email at jennifer.mcleod.2012@gmail.com.

Very soon, there will be a new way for our people to connect with me. In the interest of transparency in government, I am developing a new personal website and a blog intended to provide timely information regarding my perspective on tribal issues, my thoughts concerning upcoming votes, as well as my thoughts concerning votes that I have cast. It is my hope that this website will provide another opportunity for our tribal people to participate (via online surveys, etc.), and feel that their voice matters.

One final thought, I do intend to find ways to meet with tribal members who do not reside close enough to attend board of directors meetings. I have already been invited downstate (date and place TBD) and I look forward to connecting, listening and representing the voice of our people as a member of the board of directors.

Miigwech,
Jennifer McLeod