

Tribal budgets continue to be a major focus



**JENNIFER MCLEOD,
DIRECTOR, UNIT I**

Aaniin, Anishnaabek, it has been a good and busy month.

Budgets continue to be a major focus, as we work to find ways to improve business profitability and efficiency.

Our federal, state and local economies are still soft and this impacts tribal operations everywhere. But, I remain hopeful that we are on the right path and although improvements may be small and slow in coming, I believe that things (at least those that are within our control) will get better.

There is no way to know what the federal and state budgets will end up being but, for now, we have received some substantial new grants in the areas of health and have won federal recognition for our work regarding climate change. The chairman of our tribe has worked hard for us at the federal level and I believe it will result in other opportunities for us.

In addition to my work at the board level, I have been focusing on the children in our community and was invited to spend a day with the children of Rudyard Area Schools in celebration of Native American Heritage month

(see picture below). The blessings of children are immeasurable, and it is in their honor that I give the following gifts.

My three gifts reflect the preamble of our Constitution: to perpetuate our way of life and provide for the welfare and prosperity of our people.

In order to perpetuate our way of life, I am giving to all of our people an opportunity to learn our language.

I have an online language “classroom” where anyone who has access to the Internet can go and learn at their own pace. It’s not fancy, but it does include a couple of games as part of the learning. I’ve used this in my classrooms and know it is effective. A new feature has been added, and now language learners will be able to HEAR the language spoken! In the past, you needed to be a part of a live classroom, but now you can learn anytime you choose! The voices you hear will be the voices of our people! From children to elders, you will get to hear our language spoken by many voices and practice in your own home any time you choose!

Just email me at jennifer.mcleod.2012@gmail.com and I will send you the instructions and password.

My second gift addresses the prosperity of our people.

I am working with a local

school principal to select a tribal student who is at risk of not finishing high school. There are so many challenges and difficulties some of our youth face and I am going to get involved! A female high school student will be selected and I will provide a small stipend to her for completing her homework every week. I will also take her with me to meetings such as MAST and United Tribes so that she can see tribal leadership in action! I will work as her mentor and help provide support, guidance and perhaps even tutoring. Tribal children have a high rate of dropping out of school and I am going to help one girl make it through.

The third gift will take a bit longer to put into action, but it is already in motion.

I have heard stories about our people who need help, but then are disqualified from “programming” because they make a



dollar or two above the income guideline, or they live outside of our seven-county service area. A family could have ZERO income due to a recent job loss, but because of previous earnings they are above income guidelines and get no help. Or, a family that doesn’t live within the federally prescribed seven-county service area learns that they are not eligible for services. This is not acceptable to me.

I know that our tribe’s strength is not found in the federal grant dollars, but in the hearts of our people. So, this third gift, from heart to heart, will eventually address the “welfare” and well-being of our people. The gift is a non-profit organization that will raise funds to help our

people. It will be independent of tribal politics and federal and state program restrictions.

Is it important that we always remember that we ARE Anishnaabe and that we will always BE Anishnaabe. I have seen the generosity of our people and I know that, working together, we can help each other, it is OUR way. We walk the good path of Bimaadiziwin together.

With the offering of these three gifts, I give you all a prayer for blessings from the one who created us all.

Shawindekaa (Many blessings),

Jen

(906) 440-9151

jennifer.mcleod.2012@gmail.com.