

Casino efficiency audit gives us tools to success



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I just received a call from a tribal member who does not live in our seven-county service area. We had a long discussion about the future of our tribe and the path we are taking right now. He didn't want services, he didn't want a business deal, he didn't want an increase in anything. He wanted to talk. He voiced his concern on the current status of our tribe and he's troubled. He is in the know and has followed all communications and has strong family ties from which to gather

input. Many questions arose from our conversation: What's the tribe's strategic plan now? What is the end game for all the hype placed in the tribal paper? He assumed this kind of stuff was behind us and we had been moving on. I had to be honest and tell him, I don't know the "end game." I don't know the benefit of the attacks and allegations, I don't like them and looking back should not be in my or any elected official's plan. We have painfully learned from the past and some make choices for the future to protect us NOW. The current situation of our tribe is okay, not great but okay. Again, we have held to a debt reduction plan for the past five years and brought our debt down to about \$28.6 million (\$700 million, nine years ago). Cutting our losses and programs tightening the budgets and frugal spending has made this a reality. It is not glamorous being in a position where there is no money to increase services, increase elder payments, consider business proposals or even accommodate our units' needs is not glamorous. I feel I had

to share this as I know the only form of communication you get sometimes is the tribal paper and its very confusing and sometimes lacks ANY real evidence of a plan. In three-and-a-half years when we do have our debt obligations eliminated, we will need a good solid plan on the priorities, I'm hoping we have good solid leadership to make that happen! Question them, I do.

Good news, we recently completed our casino efficiency audit with contracted specialists/professionals who have expertise in the business of gaming. (This was one of my stated priorities). Presentation included an analysis on our Marketing and Food and Beverage departments. We received a tremendous amount of information, recommendations and most importantly the TOOLS AND DIRECTION to monitor expectations and secure accountability. We were reminded once again, front line workers are not the ones at fault for our budget and employee problems, management and leadership are! We have many good managers who need tools, clear direction, clear

expectations and consistency within their positions to prevail. Sounds kind of funny after so many years in business that this has to be said but it's the truth, we have run so long the dysfunctional way, I sure hope leadership will take hold of this opportunity to enhance our casinos, I'm optimistic and it's a priority in my position.

An update on our access to health services for DeTour/Drummond, Marquette and Escanaba: We have secured a site in the west end to begin to have clinic hours. We are awaiting the final plan for prescription pick up, lab work and items in our DeTour/Drummond area. A timeline was set for the final implementation to begin at the end of August. Director Hollowell and I have asked that members receive a notice via U.S. mail in the areas so that you are aware of the change. It took a long time and its minimal but its never the less a step forward for services.

We will be holding a Tribal Action Plan (TAP) meeting this coming Friday. The forums and focus groups are completed and

we have begun the next steps in the process. Look for a complete story in our tribal paper, the staff who have been a consistent part of this is appreciated. I will have a full report soon.

In closing, in this report I have spoke about a personal phone call from a member, updates on our health access, audit presentation and I just want to say, nothing is simple or easy when your working with a group of 13 people with many different agenda items, problems to fix, expectations to meet and, yep, some playing games. But know I have a vested interest to see us succeed! Again our position is not great but it's okay. My closing statement is going to be a quote my sister sent me, "Don't look back, you are not going that way." I truly believe with persistence and vision our tribe will be in a great position and one of which all members can be proud.

Hope to see you at the Rexton, Hessel and Newberry powwows!
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