

Causley attends tribal self governance conference



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DIRECTOR, UNIT II**

I had the opportunity to attend this year's Tribal Self-Governance Consultation Conference Communication and Education Tribal Consortium with federal partners, the Department of Interior-Indian Affairs and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Throughout the conference we had the opportunity to witness presentations from Kevin Washburn, assistant secretary-Indian Affairs, Department of Interior; Lynn Malerba, the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, chief of her tribe and chairwoman of the IHS committee; Robert McSwain, acting director, Indian Health Services, and many others.

The theme for the conference began with updates with policies and best practices for tribes' strategic plans and priorities set forth for 2015-2017. We spoke about legislative items in the works and also the priority of contract support cost and our need to advocate for full funding with the president's 2016 budget proposal including language to make funds a mandatory appropriation. Throughout the conference we had the opportunity to attend trainings and presentations of best practices other tribes are using and strategic planning efforts. I've seen other tribes in the nation adopt comprehensive programs that target their most needy members and deliver services or programs that are of priority to the people in the community. We also had an opportunity to have a round table full discussion with Robert McSwain, acting director for Indian Health Services. Many tribes voiced their concerns with the director as I gave input and spoke about our tribal action plan.

I informed the department that we are the first in the nation to plan this program and we request that, when he sees this plan at the national level, that he really take notice of what is needed for tribes and the problems we face with limited funding. Although our problems are great here at home we are very fortunate that we have a smaller community to work with and many leaders face struggles that are inconceivable. For instance, one tribe has approximately 900 miles to travel for any kind of services and hardly any funding whatsoever. The chief of this tribe explained the drug abuse, diabetes and health concerns in his area. We are very fortunate to have the systems in place that we do and with continued focus and priority on them we can learn better ways to deliver services.

Having attended this conference and the others always inspires me to do better and gives me vision. Seeing other communities and leaders struggle with such little assistance is humbling and heartbreaking. It's really overwhelming to see the need many Indian communities face and it's just as overwhelming seeing tribal leaders planning and prioritizing for the people they represent. I'm fortunate to have attended and will use the things I learned at our own table with the discussions for our communities position here at home.

I want to give everyone an update on our casinos businesses since we filled the position of temporary CEO. This last month, we have been informed that the numbers are right on track with the budget after all the changes that have been made. I know this was a real struggle for our front line workers and customers. We had been simply giving away so many free items and money that attempting a different way was tough to say the least. It has paid off; we now are on target with the expected and can build from this point effectively and with our business in mind for better practices. We now are discussing the capitol items that our business need to upgrade and become a destination for customers that is more inviting and planned to be more profitable for us. We still meet each week with the CEO, we have opportunity to give input, become updated and ask questions. I want to assure everyone that although I felt the struggle during the change, it is well worth it and I'm confident that the end result will be what we have needed. I will continue to support the changes and direction that is needed for our northern casino properties. I'm assuring you I'm not...up in the air, on the fence post or wishy washy about the need for better direction. I'm solid on the new direction and confident that the team working toward these changes is becoming empowered and accountable. If this changes, I will recognize and address within my role. Always feel free to contact me about your input with this; speaking with you always gives me an advantage that is needed for insight to our problems or lack thereof.

The board has been discussing and requesting information and factual numbers about increasing wages for the team members (this is no promise). We have discussed the small amount of team members that had not even been making minimum wage within our casino operations. This is a very small amount and last week we made the change to increase those to the minimum wage amounts. The board now has asked that we gather all information on a fair, affordable amount that we can sustain for an increase to all team members. Everyone knows I'm frugal in our spending but with the proper planning and decrease to costs and better business practices, maybe at this time we can sustain an amount. Again, all the numbers and factual information needs to be presented and I look forward to having an outcome this year in the way of

an increase. I just want you to be aware that the request is made to have the information and the discussion, in order to support we need to have a sustainable plan and anyone that knows me, knows this is what will be expected. After seeing so many other tribes struggle, try and maintain, have no business profit or programs to speak of, it's humbling to be able to have a discussion so we can plan effectively and prioritize. That's the balance for me and sometimes it's difficult — we have so many areas that need upgrade, better policies and practices, more funding, etc. I just want the message sent that you probably already know, it's a big picture, and a balance that is not taken lightly.

Once again, I want to talk about one of my priorities. At the board level we have an item at every meeting described as "board concerns" as I've spoke about in previous reports. I brought forward a resolution to have those documented and become an official part of our minutes with each meeting (this was not supported by the majority of the board). Anyway, I use that avenue every single meeting to bring up your concerns and mine for representation. When the administration speaks, it's not always my position or its sometimes completely lacking my position stance.

The last three meeting I have brought up Graymont under my board concerns, as you all know I was opposed to the path that was taken by the state and supporting our efforts to oppose at the fullest. I was at the table when we met with the DNR and other officials and I voiced our position, since the outcome I have continually requested at every meeting that we make a factual statement from us as a tribe as to the outcome, what we did to oppose and our position now. I'm still awaiting that statement and hope that in this edition of the paper you will see comments made on our behalf as a tribe. Although I feel the outcome is unacceptable I want the facts of the decision, the facts of our position and the plans moving forward to be made

to our membership. A few of the other board concerns I've asked to be addressed the past few months are closed caption for the hearing impaired (we have no idea as to how many members have his disability but I've had the request from some), semi annual reviews from all programs and departments OPEN to membership (we had this structure in place before and it's non existent now), formal follow up procedure on board and memberships concerns (reports that it's still being worked on, that concern has been on since 2012), Health Board structure and admin assistance, Indian Energy face-to-face presentation, committees listed on website, wrap around services progress, consistent reports from programs under the chair's authority, disabilities committee, veterans programs for identifying veteran members and implementing a sustainable program, powwow grounds upgrades (all powwow grounds), sign up mailer to membership for receiving the tribal paper, educating and process for tribal legal liaisons for court-appointed assistance, and, lastly, numerous individual tribal members' concerns. Again, in the past these items had been listed in the board business meetings official minutes for accountability and progress. We do have to fill out a form for each, and, at this point I feel that I should announce the main ones each report, I will also update on the outcomes, if any.

One of the other highlights since my last report was the tribal youth council's challenge to the board of directors. We participated in a "Chopped challenge" cooking with them and being judged by staff on the outcome. I won't get into how we all placed, but, I will say that the time we spent with them in the kitchen was one of my favorites in a very long time. Our team (Director Gravelle and I) consisted of tribal youth from all units. It was nice to spend time with them and I even overheard one kid say, "Wow, look at the chicken, aren't you glad we picked her!" Cannot describe how that made me feel! For those youth to know

my name, have my number and invite to call me is exactly what we need for our ways. Director Abramson and I have long advocated for our board to interact with our tribal youth councils on at least a quarterly basis (like we use to do) and having that day them meant so much. Chimiigwech to the YEA staff who organized it.

I had a very long couple of months and now we are gearing up for our unit's powwows in the communities. Hessel's powwow is Aug. 14-16 at the grounds next to the casino in Hessel, Newberry will host the Youth Empowerment Powwow on Aug. 1 at the Newberry Tribal Center, and the Newberry Community Powwow will be on Sept. 12. Looking forward to seeing everyone.

In closing, some true blessings have happened to me these past couple of months. (I'm going to get a little sappy here.) I have three individual elder's groups in my communities, some very close advisors, an amazing strong woman and friends that I made through my tenure as a board member. The support I get from all of you and my wonderful family members have seen me through struggles, obstacles and constant understanding with my role. I want to take a moment to express gratitude and let you know that throughout all this a balance has been my blessing in life, full circle is what we all strive for and in our teaching the support of family, elders and community is the most important . . . Steve and I finally married . . . I wanted to share this and say "miigwech" to all of you who helped me throughout my growing, constant understanding and learning in my position. We had a very special, private ceremony with just the two of us.

"Zaagiidiwin" is an Ojibwa word for love and I wanted to share that with you. Please contact me if you would like to discuss ideas, issues or meet.

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