

Prescription drug abuse issue is not forgotten



**Lana Causley, Unit II
Sault Tribe Board of Directors**

The board has a full schedule of workshop items, including those I requested — CEO discussions, strategic planning and employee policy review, along

with our continued Lansing project meetings with the membership. You will have an opportunity to vote on the Lansing project in an upcoming referendum and I hope that you have contacted the chairman, your representative or researched the factual information on our website and at meetings. Please call me anytime to discuss or ask questions — you will get the straight talk and plans for this project.

I attended the annual Midwest Alliance for Sovereign Tribes conference in Washington this past week. We discussed many concerns our tribes face collectively. We drafted and submitted resolutions or legislation to representatives. We educated and spoke to key governmental officials about increasing

Indian Health Service funding (we are still at only 56 percent of need.) We especially asked the Special Diabetes funding be re-authorized in the future. Transportation funding, mining issues, land in trust concerns and many reports were heard at the conference.

One serious agenda item that stood out for all the Midwest tribes was the rise in prescription drug abuse. I know many who will read this feel hurt for our loved ones and friends they know are struggling. Tribes have reported the numbers for prescription narcotics in their health clinics are increasing monthly at a very rapid pace. In one example, Vicodin went from 500 to 6,000 IN ONE MONTH!

I have discussed this concern

with our health director numerous times. Tribal members have asked me to keep it a priority issue. (Some are even taking it upon themselves to take action on their own in their communities! Miigwech, CAC and TLC!) After speaking with our health director, at this point we have within the health division a “controlled substance committee,” an interdisciplinary committee with medical and behavioral health staff who review controlled substance and prescriptions as well as “patient contracts.” I would like to discuss with our staff a real and solid plan to monitor the prescription drug distribution within our tribe in order to keep a handle on the increase or decrease. This is one of the areas that is very hard to talk about but

a priority needs to be set to assist our members. I will be working on this and have my mind set that we put together a team of staff and members who know the issues and assist in combating the increasing numbers, the need for additional counselors, administrative monitors, and services — things all the Midwest tribes are looking toward.

We sometimes get so caught up in the financial issues, national tribal issues and politics these struggles with our membership are overlooked. I WON'T forget.

As always, please contact me and I will be attending the regular scheduled elder meeting in our areas for monthly reports.

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