

# Question: When will common sense prevail?



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DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

Unfortunately the campaigning has already started, so we are in for a long year of craziness. The chairman's last report has all kinds of legislation being brought forward and already on the meeting agenda. All I can say is, it is easy for one person to add anything to the agenda and make yourself look good, especially when you don't have to vote on it unless there is a tie. You can promise the moon and sit back and say I tried to bring all of these wonderful things forward but the big, bad board wouldn't go for it. These are not actions of a good leader. The campaigning is so obvious, back on committees that were resigned from, attending elders' meetings since the last election, twisting of facts to create hysteria to then look like the hero when it doesn't happen.

There are a few things that bother me, such as conflict of interest. We have people voting on things that they should not be. I actually cannot believe how often it happens. I do not feel that I need to call a conflict; I think it is an individual person's responsibility to abstain.

Another problem I have is the hiring of people's relatives. Somehow, people believe if you have a level of supervisory between the supervisor and his/her relatives, that is ok. How can it be? If that

supervisor disciplines the other supervisor's relative, that supervisor will get the backlash from their supervisor. I would never want my relatives working in the same department as me if I was a supervisor. There are enough jobs in different areas of the tribe where you shouldn't have to work with a person's family. This obviously creates morale issues but it is the way we have always done it and look how that is working for us!

I want to let the membership know about the 2 percent liability each casino has to pay in lieu of taxes to their local units of government. I personally believe the liability charged to that casino should be the amount that stays in that community. That was the intent of the 2 percent liability but it is being used to garner votes instead. I will give you numbers to show you:

**(PLEASE SEE TABLE,  
ABOVE, RIGHT)**

There are 2 percent long term agreements in each area with some under contracts. Some of these agreements were made years ago and others recently. When it comes to any long-term agreement, the full board needs to vote on whether to approve. Once all of the long-term liabilities are paid in each cycle (spring and fall), then the remaining amount is divided among the five units to split evenly. So each time one of our Unit III long term agreements have expired, that money is either put in another area or split between all five units. You can see that Unit III is getting the shaft. For the spring cycle, we have \$205,706 in requests and \$51,635.45 to be able to give away. If we actually received what our actual liability was, we could benefit our community a lot more.

I just got back from a self-governance conference in Reno, Nev., with directors Abramson and Causley. It was a very eye opening conference. There are many members who think our tribe is so bad off, but after listening to the various other tribes, we are very fortunate.

CASINO	ACTUAL LIABILITY 04/01/14 – 03/31/15	ACTUAL YEARLY PAID	DIFFERENCE
Hessel	\$ 54,133.48	\$144,229.70	\$ 90,096.22
Christmas	\$136,115.82	\$206,239.70	\$ 70,124.18
Manistique	\$180,054.47	\$190,229.70	\$ 10,175.23
St. Ignace	\$545,572.76	\$219,129.70	<b>(\$326,443.06)</b>
Sault Ste. Marie	\$629,659.98	\$785,717.70	\$156,057.72

Some tribes have no water or roads. Some have to travel 200-600 miles for medical treatment. Many of these tribes are located on the west coast. A few very disturbing facts discussed were the national suicide rate is 2.5 times higher for Native Americans. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for males 15-24 years old. Also, drug related deaths have doubled in Indian Country from 2000 to 2008. We as tribal communities have our work cut out for us.

One afternoon we had a listening session with Robert McSwain, the acting director of Indian Health Service. Tribal leaders were invited to sit at the table and voice their concerns with issues in their communities and then the floor was open to the public. Many of the tribes concerns were access to health care and being so far underfunded.

After the listening session, there was a tribal caucus with moderators Lynn Malerba, chief of the Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut and chairwoman of IHS Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee, and W. Ron Allen, tribal chairman/CEO of Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe and chairman of the DOI Self-Governance Advisory Committee. The tribes and legal staff discussed knocking down doors to get support for legislation prior to the next election. The tribes want contract support costs to be a permanent part of the yearly budget.

There are 566 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. and 350 of those are self-governance tribes. When self-governance started there were only 14 tribes with 14 compacts and there are now 87

compacts.

At the April 14 workshop, there was more discussion on the St. Ignace Midjim with the manager recommending we start a feasibility study soon due to the issues of the current location and the uncertainty of a proposed move. The planning and development department worked on finding this free feasibility study and located a firm that specializes in these types of studies with excellent experience in the industry and in Indian Country.

The break even analysis for payback on a new store in St. Ignace would be 14 years, 47 years for a Hessel Midjim and 25 years for a Manistique Midjim. At the same time, the housing director came forward with a sketch of a possible mixed-use travel plaza (gas station, retail and residential) on the property of the old casino. This included the elders apartments and an elders/community center also on that property. The housing director was questioned and criticized for bringing these sketches forward. God forbid if someone thinks outside of the box or takes some initiative. The biggest problem is that it is being considered for Unit III. We have the longest waiting list for housing, we have a dysfunctional Midjim, and the Housing Authority has money for economic development and it makes sense.

So now I am told that it is too late for the feasibility study because of the games at the board table and now, at the May 5 meeting, it is on the agenda to repair the old building for \$266,000 without replacing the tanks. Now we will waste the money to tear up all the concrete and parking lot when we do replace the tanks. Wow, so much for doing

what is best for the tribe. A free feasibility study and due diligence goes out the window because we don't like Unit III. Common sense doesn't exist.

At the last elders' meeting in Unit III, I told the elders what was going on with our Midjim and asked for their support if this was still an issue when the board meeting was going to be held in St. Ignace on June 9. Later that day, there was an email sent out to the board saying a board member was campaigning at elder meetings. I guess asking them to support our area is campaigning. I think it was the fact that I told them the truth that we had maybe six votes and the chairman did not support it. He wanted the feasibility study money to be spent on business plans for the enterprises instead.

I will stand up for my unit and what I think is right for this whole tribe as long as I am alive. I am tired of people sticking their nose in our unit and disrespecting our elders when they have no idea what is going on nor is it any of their business. We have a great community and your actions will not weaken us!

Congratulations to all those who are graduating this month and taking the next step in your future! For those attending college — there are many things people can take away from you, but your education is not one of them! For those joining the workforce — your work ethic will define you and can make or break future promotions.

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