

Focusing on truths — two sides to every story



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This month's report will be focusing on truths. I really can't fathom why anyone would want to go around and spread lies, partial truths or spinning what actually happened or was said. An example would be if I said, "Jack did not show up to work today" You might think fire him, or that maybe he quit. What was not said is that Jack was hospitalized. There are two sides to every story but unfortunately you may be getting only part of the one side of the story.

It has been said that I want to fire people out of retribution. I am not that kind of person who retaliates. My 10 years working for the tribe had a few bumps along the road but, for the most part, was a very enjoyable time in my life. Now that I am a member of the governing body it makes sense to try to improve the things that I saw and continue to see and point them out and hold that chain of command accountable.

I was involved in a dispute with the chairman on Facebook towards the end of September. Something I typed was not keeping up with what my mind was saying. If someone read the post slowly they would realize it does not make sense as typed. I apologize to this team member for what has been construed. I DID NOT say to fire this person. Do I think people need to be accountable? Absolutely! This conversation ended in the chairman threatening to sue me for a statement that I made regarding him. Threatening to sue me will not make me cower, it will not make me change my values.

It has been said that I breached confidentiality with the casino team member surveys. The surveys were anonymous, were kept in envelopes and opened by the

whole board and chairman. I did photo copy a small percentage of them to make sure that there was no funny business. The chairman merged the documents and that is when I realized along with other directors that all the information was not there. There is a serious conflict of interest on his part for merging the document when the surveys contain information about his family member (I am not suggesting anything on the relative). I did not need to do the surveys to know what was going on, I lived it, and I have a great relationship with the team members that I think threatens people.

Recently it was stated that I had a team member from my unit who was terminated and that he supposedly talked to me and I sat on his appeal hearing. I can tell you this much, anytime a team member contacts me I specifically say, I cannot talk to you because I am or may be on your appeal hearing. The funny thing is that the person he is implying that happened with I did not even know he was terminated. I did sit on an appeal the day he implied this happened and it was not even someone from my unit.

It is being stated that at our last meeting we shut down membership issues specifically because at large members were in attendance. We were behind all day and wanted to get the meeting started. We opened the meeting and voted to wait until the end of the meeting for membership issues. The whole process is not easy especially if you are running behind because on one hand you have staff that have been waiting to present and members in the audience who may have come to hear these presentations and resolutions and then you have members that may just be there to address the board, either way someone has to wait. Every member that had a concern was heard by the board that night.

In my 1.5 years on the board, the chairman has left four meetings before we were finished. After looking at past video recordings, this also happened during his last term.

As far as the resolution for Livestream that I presented, my goal was that when videotaping our meetings the tribe should own the information. It should be done by an employee of the tribe and be viewed by only Sault Tribe members. I really do not

understand a valid argument to those stipulations. The entertainment manager is a salaried team member, attends the meetings and has new capable equipment so the membership will still be able to watch the meetings. For those who do not realize what is happening is all for politics and campaigning. Some people like to grandstand for a camera. I have no problem as an elected official being videotaped. When the parties involved are not neutral and using it as a tool for campaigning it is wrong. I don't think that people realize that by allowing the world to view our meetings we are only harming ourselves. The information is our member's business and no one else's.

The next election cycle is almost six months away. The chairman requests a \$50,000 travel budget. Projected for 2014 we are \$71,000 in the black for a multi million dollar organization. His travel is included in the board budget. Directors have asked him for the past six months or so to do his own budget for travel. Every time the item comes up there is no supporting documentation. There should be X amount of trips to D.C. or other cities, X amount of hotel stays, X amount of mileage, X amount of meals. This is just a guide which would be helpful to make a decision on. The board voted on Dec. 2 to approve a \$10,000 budget. In my personal opinion, I believe the money will be spent on the meetings around the state, post cards, room rentals and food and beverage. Put the pieces of the puzzle together, travel budget, statewide meetings (with fewer than 10 members per meeting in the U.P.), election six months away. There has been little or no commitment to attend the monthly elder meetings in our units unless there is a picture and a check to be presented. The new request is for election information, hence the calling of a special meeting on Dec. 10. The original request was denied by the enrollment and election committee chair and now our team members are being threatened of insubordination if they don't comply. Thankfully, the Enrollment Department and Election Committee report to the board as a whole.

The casino COO has presented the board with their 2014 budgets. This came up for a vote on Dec. 2. I told the COO that

I could not and will not support this budget until he trims some fat off the top. We need front line team members to serve our customers. How do you save money? By cutting 10 front line workers or a couple top heavy positions? In the year and half we have been presented with positions that people are holding that are not reflective of actual performance or skill set. The casinos need an overhaul. The plan has been to continuously cut with no plan for increased revenue. Some people say the board micro manages too much, some say the board needs to take action. I believe that we have staff that is responsible to manage our businesses but if we don't get moving in the right direction, the board will be making necessary changes.

The tribe is in an ugly state right now. Tribal members, team members, board member's and their families are being threatened and bullied. I do not condone this behavior. The board has met and has been advised of freedom of speech. While I may partially believe that, I guess I am naïve or something to think that just because we have the freedom of speech someone would threaten, lie or bully anyone. This creates a hostile work environment which I do believe was a reason we lost the 7+2 case. Members have stated that the directors need to work with the chairman; I was very much on board with that during my first six months or so until I witnessed these behaviors. Has anyone considered that the person claiming to have a degree or qualifications in leadership would actually lead and work with the 12 of us? An example would be for me to try to divide my kids against each other and bully them. Do they respect me? Do they want to work with me? The funny thing is that the vast majority of the board works together. We do not need to be friends, we just need to come together and compromise to move forward. I can disagree with my fellow directors on a resolution and move on. The key here is to move on!

I suggest for someone that is relatively new to tribal politics to read archived newspapers on the Sault Tribe website, past video taped meetings and past meeting minutes to shed some light on the truth.

On the Dec. 2 meeting agenda

were constitutional amendments that have not been discussed by the board during a workshop. These were a separation of powers, at large representation, right of initiative, recall and a bill of rights. I really get disgusted when items are added to a meeting, especially of this importance, when the board has not had the opportunity to discuss the items prior to a vote. Members see our agenda and may want to be present for a certain discussion or vote on an item and we table it because we have not had the opportunity to discuss it as a group. When it comes to constitutional change we need to go into our communities and talk to our members and get their input. I believe the Chairman is afraid he is losing support and wants to hurry up and pass laws so he can try and get more support with new board members. He has continually stated who his favorite is and most recently said she is the only one worth keeping. What do you think about that statement? Is your representative working for you? My job is for the Sault Tribe not one person's interests.

I recently had one of my at large members email me that she was very much upset with me. She claimed I have come out against things that would be helpful time and time again. Nothing specific was mentioned so how do I know what you wanted me to support nor to ask what my reasons may have been about what I was supposedly against? I have been accused of not fighting for all members? What does that mean? When I vote it is for the best interest of Sault Tribe. I cannot offer much other than conversation for support to out of service members. It was also stated I have become very dark and that I am ready to fight all the time. I am a very passionate person who likes to have fun and does not like to be around negative or dramatic behavior. When you are constantly defending yourself, your members, your team members and your co-board members from lies, threats and bullying behavior, I believe you are ready to fight. I will fight for what I believe in and will not back down from anyone, but I am not a fighter until you put my back to the wall. The last thing is I am truly sorry that out of area members feel like they are the

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stepchildren.

I cannot express enough that I use the analogy of my son living with me and I provide and am there for him, he moves to college and I am not right there for him and cannot provide for him any longer. It is not as though the tribe has kicked you out of the tribe. The U.P. is the homeland that we currently own and run our businesses and services from. I know it is not always easy, but the door is always open for our family to return home to a place we can take care of them. The key to being able to branch out our operations and services will be a downstate business venture with

sustainable growth.

I have confidence that our tribe will move forward in 2014. The board is grabbing the reigns and will be making those tough decisions to turn our casinos around. We will be working on strategic planning, paying down our debt and future economic development.

I wish every one of our members a safe and happy holiday season! Thank you for having the confidence in me to represent your interest.

Here is to great things in the New Year!

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