

Retaining valuable team members is a priority!



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

I would like to thank those who contributed financially to the tribe's children's Christmas parties this year. I would like to say thank you to the Kewadin Shores and shipping/receiving staff for your extremely hard work — shopping, wrapping, baking, decorating, serving food, setting up, cleaning up and everything else you did to make this year a huge success! You guys make me very proud to have you on my team! Thank you to Director Massaway and our families and friends for all their support. Thank you to the Unit III elders who baked for the bake sale. Thank you to Sue St. Onge, Francie Wyers and the tribal youth for participating. Thank you Santa and DJ Jimmy! Finally, a big thank you to Trish Bunker, for once again coordinating the Mackinac Island gift distribution this year.

I believe we are moving in the right direction with the hiring of temporary Casino Executive Fred Buro. The couple of times he has updated the board on his evaluations of the various casino departments has been very impressive. He has immersed himself into all facets of the business and is focusing on the areas of immediate attention. Changes are not always welcomed and, as humans, we are usually uneasy but we must give things a chance because we all want to succeed in the end. The casinos employ hundreds of hardworking people who have lost their way and need to be heard and understood. The team

members care about our customers and want us to succeed. This is a new year and we shall stand tall together to build a better tomorrow for ourselves and our communities.

The government side has had some setbacks this year with losing long-term team members due to grants ending and "supposed streamlining." We are losing great health care professionals, especially in St. Ignace. We lost a lot of great casino team members last year with cuts. When are we going to make **RETAINING VALUABLE EMPLOYEES A PRIORITY?**

After numerous casino staff lost their jobs last year, I had talked to human resources about the possibility of an elimination of a position policy. Since this time there has been a policy review group made up of staff from all divisions of the tribe, human resources and the executive director and membership services director. The elimination policy is one of the policies that is being reviewed by the group. Some of the possible components of the policy would be keeping staff for more reasons than just their hiring preference, for factors such as length of employment, education, specialized training or skill, overall job performance and effectiveness and disciplinary record. There could also be a possibility of a team member to bump another team member.

I added this to the Jan. 6 Newberry meeting agenda and the board had a small amount of workshop time to discuss this. During the meeting it was tabled to discuss the next day. During the next day human resources presented the composition of the policy review group and the process and current policies they are reviewing. The group has the elimination of position policy on its docket for the first quarter of this year.

I think one of the difficult things to comprehend is that a team member who has been terminated for attendance issues (tardies, call-ins) has an opportunity to appeal their termination to the appeal board. A team

member who may have had no performance issues/disciplinary issues but their position is then eliminated (budget cuts or grant ends) has no appeal process. To me we have a person who may really not want to work and someone who wants to work and they are not treated equal.

When the company decides to eliminate positions or grants end there should be records kept with the qualifications and skills of those team members that are valuable to the organization so when other job vacancies occur, we can match these team members to those skills and experiences that are needed.

Honestly, I think we have many issues occurring in our workforce. I think we have people who may have been here for 10-30 years because of who they are or some who get let go because of who they are. I have seen many great people put in their resignation because they can only take so much of beating their head against the wall. Bottom line is that some people are held accountable and some are not. In order to correct the inconsistencies, managers and supervisors need to lead by example, communicate and use corrective discipline when it is needed according to policy.

Another thing that is frustrating for me and many team members is that they used to always have a person they could go to for direction, advice, questions, etc. That has been taken away. So do we want our team members to be miserable? Do we want everyone to have to communicate with Sault Ste. Marie only? We take away people who are knowledgeable team members with whom team members are comfortable and know they can rely on and make them call someone they don't know or don't get to sit with in person. Well, maybe we will send them down from the Sault certain days of the week and cost the tribe even more money! Let's chalk another one up for the low morale!!

I would like everyone who is affiliated with the tribe, whether it is members, team members, board or chair to imagine own-

ing their own business. What kind of people would you want working for you? Would you train them? Would you hold them accountable? Would you empower them? Would you require great customer service? Would you incentivize them? Would you try to retain them?

So now if we answered yes to the above questions, then we should be making decisions with that in mind. As members, this is your business, so what kind of people should the tribe employ? As team members, this is your lifeline, so what kind of an employee should you be and what kind of an employee should be retained? As board and chair, this is our responsibility to make those policy decisions.

Our communities continue to struggle with addictions and suicide. We need to put this on the front burner if it takes meeting a day a week until an action plan is established. I would like our health care staff to research grants and the feasibility of opening and maintaining our own treatment facility. Things are not getting better. The more I look around, the more I see, especially the prescription drug abuse. It is very sad to see how it consumes people's lives and the lives of the ones who love them. There are Narcotics Anonymous meetings at the Lambert Center on Friday evenings led by Cora Gugin.

Anyone needing to enroll in Medicaid or health insurance through the marketplace can contact Heather at the St. Ignace clinic or Teresa at the Hessel clinic for an appointment, (906) 643-8689. I would like to personally thank these ladies for traveling around the U.P. for the last few months enrolling our members. They have given up nights and weekends away from their families to help our members.

For those of you who may have been previously denied or put on a waiting list through Sault Tribe for child care assistance, they will be taking applications with additional funding.

When determining where a member votes, the physical

address is used, not a PO box. There have been recent changes to some members voting units and the result depends on the address you give the enrollment department.

The Pro Shop at the Big Bear is now offering 15 percent off to Sault Tribe members and, for those living in the tax agreement areas, you also do not pay sales tax. They have a great selection of hockey equipment and clothing. Call (906) 635-RINK for store hours.

The tribe's furniture store, Northern Hospitality, will be having a tent sale at the Kewadin Shores Event Center on Feb. 11-14, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., each day. There will be truckloads of furniture and they now carry appliances. Employees can payroll deduct and tribal members living in the tax agreement areas do not have to pay the sales tax. Stop in and check it out!

Reminder — if any of your friends or family members are no longer getting their tribal paper, they will need to call the newspaper to subscribe to receive a paper copy at (906) 635-6050. Elders are the only ones who will continue to receive the paper without subscribing. Anyone can also view the paper online at saulttribe.com. We had to throw away hundreds of newspapers because of bad addresses prior to this change.

This year, there were 4,921 elders who received \$563 and last year there were 4,561 elders who received \$591. The checks were cut on Jan. 8, so everyone should have received their checks by the time this issue of the newspaper is printed.

I hope everyone had wonderful quality time with their family. I enjoyed spending time with mine over the holidays. Anyone with comments or concerns, please contact me at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, bridgett91@yahoo.com or (906) 430-0536.

Just because it is on Facebook doesn't make it true. Consider the source and seek out the truth!