

Putting the tribe and team members first



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DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

In my last report I talked about the lack of support for our team members through the Human Resource Department. At the June 23 meeting in Escanaba, I made a motion, "To direct legal and the executive director to develop a plan for consideration of an employee advocate position(s) separate from the Human Resource Department, due back within 60 days to the board of directors." The motion was supported by Director Hoffman and after much debate was passed unanimously by the board. I am hopeful we will be able to fund these positions to advocate for our most important asset of all — our team members.

Also in Escanaba, Director Causley motioned and I seconded to eliminate the random drug testing of our team members. That motion failed 8-4 with directors Abramson and Hoffman also supporting eliminating. We currently do urine tests for new team members, random swabs and reasonable suspicion tests for all team members. I supported eliminating for a few reasons. One being what team members do on their own time is not our business. Second, as long as someone is not high or intoxicated while they are on the clock, we cannot control them. When they are under the influence at work they can be tested for reasonable suspicion. Third, teachers are not subject to random drug testing but care for our most precious people. I do support keeping the random testing for safety

sensitive positions. I wish I had the exact number of drug testing that come back positive for marijuana. That is the most common drug I have seen listed on Human Resources monthly reports. In my opinion, besides from marijuana currently being illegal, why shouldn't a person be able to use that after their work day when you can certainly pick up a 12 pack at the party store and still have a job.

For some of you who don't know me, you may think I support alcohol and drugs. People who know me would tell you I rarely ever drink and do not do drugs of any kind. I believe marijuana will be legal in 2016 or close to that time frame. I support people who have a medical marijuana card in lieu of using narcotics for pain. Who are we to say that you should suffer with pain because you may have to take a random drug test? As long as we require team members to be subject to random testing, then we should be leaders and have the same expectations. I actually support hair samples from an outside company.

The resolution to amend Ch. 94—Compostion of the Gaming Authority Charter was not approved. This would have allowed board members to resign off the gaming authority board if they wanted to. The gaming authority board oversees the casino operations. My own opinion is that, as it currently is structured, this is a large responsibility of a board member. Director Hoffman says the bylaws allow for a choice to serve or not. I suggest changing the bylaws, then.

Another resolution up for a vote was for a voter registration referendum. There was a motion to refer this to the election committee, which passed. I don't know how the chair can say this resolution makes it equal for all members. How is it equal for members inside the service area to be automatically registered in the unit they reside and the members outside the service area could register in a new unit in each election? There was conversation about it being conflicting with the Constitution. Chapter

16 is also conflicting, as it calls for 100 signatures or 10 percent of the last election, whichever is greater. The Constitution says 100 signatures.

I think anybody who lives outside of the service area should be able to choose which unit to vote in that they are tied to by family, where they were born or raised or where they wish to retire. I think it should be a one-time decision not changing (unit shopping) for each election. The hard part is the person representing that unit is usually voting on things that only affect people living in the service area. I do support the idea that any registered tribal member should be able to run for the chair position because they represent everyone. Regardless, these issues should be discussed with the election committee.

Director Hoffman has been bringing the marriage ordinance forward recently. Changes such as eliminating a Michigan license and to read, "Any marriage between two people." This will be coming up for a vote but is a little behind since it is now legal in all 50 states.

We have resignations from three team members who work with the board. The assistant executive director, the executive assistant/membership liaison and the board's administrative assistant. I tried to discuss with the board that many people at the admin building were leaving or looking for new jobs but it fell on deaf ears. I am sure these won't be the only ones. I did, however, suggest that since there are vacancies, now would be the time to look at restructuring. Somehow that got spun into me not wanting the chair to have "his only secretarial support position." I love how partial facts get left out. The chair also has an administrative assistant so he does have secretarial support like all of our other executives.

We have had the threat of a casino being built in Mackinaw City since prior to my being elected. We have done nothing to prepare ourselves for this. We have not built good relationships with the businesses in Mackinaw City. We continue to put off cap-

ital improvements to the property that will be most affected. Apparently sending a shuttle to Gaylord with little to no signage was a start? Once again, we sit with no strategic plan for the casinos or our government, which relies on \$17 million of casino funding. I guess the chair may finally analyze the increase in the government operations.

With all that is going on in the workforce and limited direction for the future, now is the time to hire a CEO or tribal administrator for the government operations. When the person at the top of the administrative chain is working at the state and federal levels and serving on many committees, everything cannot be taken care of. We need someone who will be available to our workforce to move things forward. They need direction and accountability. We currently are spreading the chair too thin to accomplish all we need to do. He is the best in the political arenas so we need to hire an employee that can be held accountable for leading the governmental operations. This is nothing personal but what makes sense. The members voted for the separation and we need to operate based on that decision. There will be plenty of drama created from this proposal such as the victim mentality. "No other chairperson has brought as much money back to the tribe as I have." "Members did not know what they were voting on." It is not about any one person but what is best for the tribe. Who can argue with that?

Just as an example, the Budget Department reports to the chair. If the chair tells them to find him money for this or that or to stop up action, they will do it, he is their supervisor. We cannot discipline the chair but if it was an employee, they could be disciplined. On the government side, we have the key employee resolution so it takes seven board votes to hire or terminate them. This prevents key employees from being targeted by one individual so they can make the tough decisions to do their job.

Two of the Head Start staff and myself went to the National

Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA) conference in Sacramento, Calif., June 15-19. This is my second year testifying on behalf of our tribe. Last year, there were a handful of tribal leaders who attended and this year that number had doubled. It is still disheartening to see the low number of tribal leader participation, but like I told the federal employees, it probably is due to the fact that we see little to no change in the issues we bring forward. The issues I testified on were similar to last year and the years Director Abramson has testified. Head Start is very important to our children and needs to be a priority to all tribes and there continues to be more requirements placed on programs with little to no increase in funding. We suggested they change this annual conference to possibly coincide with other conferences such as NCAI or NIGA to get more participation.

I would like to personally thank the team members who continuously strive to increase third party revenue! You ALL are the reason the health division can operate without tribal support!

Thank you to those of you who hate getting out of bed to go to work but still continue to do it. I know you are tired and so am I of saying just hang in there because it will get better. All we can do is try and open up eyes of people on where the barriers exist. I will continue to fight for our team members and be their voice at the table. After all, the stuff under the rug is starting to show a bump in the floor!

Please take the time out of your busy schedule to attend some powwows. For a complete listing go to saulttribe.com. For those of you who didn't know what happened to your monthly newspaper, you should have received a post card in the mail to tell you how to receive them again.

Enjoy spending the summer with your family and friends!

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