

# Director Sorenson: What is it going to take?



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,  
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

I have gotten positive feedback from my last report with one hate email. This person I have no respect for as she always hates on people. She is a cousin to the founder of Sault Tribe Guide.

Their ad in the newspaper specifically states, "Productive and thought provoking conversation intended to help members and our tribe. All opinions valued." So in your opinion does calling me a big fat liar and "the bridge" fulfill that mission? So I guess because I am fat I cannot perform the job I was elected to do? To me that means all she can find fault with is my appearance, not my performance. She comes to a couple meetings a year and thinks she is intimidating us. She never says a word to our face, but is a princess behind the keyboard. Actually I think some of these people wish they could be as strong as most of the women on this board.

Here is some food for thought - I could have a peaceful, quiet life if I would agree with everything the chairperson said or did and supported his agenda. I choose to tell the truth and stand up for people who may not be strong enough to do it themselves. This is not an easy path but it is the path I must take. People may actually be inspired and say, "I can stand up to the bullies in my class," "I do not have to be in this abusive relationship," "I can make a difference!" I am a very confident and strong woman and nobody is going to change that. Matter of fact, I was not the one who ran out of the Shores Event Center during the bomb threat - I stayed with the team members until it was clear. I did not sneak out the back door during a request for a closed session with the board by a team member whose large family was present. I do not believe that any individual board member or chairperson should be conducting their own surveys and trying to use that as a board driven survey when the questions are manipulated for certain responses. I do not believe it is appropriate for the survey to be printed in the tribal paper using tribal resources. I have only heard of one winner being announced and the information such as addresses and emails are being used for campaigning. So the half the pay is actually used for campaigning, not giving back to the members.

There have been rumors that the board wanted to make the JKL staff Sault Tribe employees. This is not true, but rather a way for the chairperson to get his hands on the school's money. As

a matter of fact when he was in office before, a friend of his got a rather large payout of her contract from JKL.

Since I have been on the board there have been allegations that Joe McCoy stole \$330,000. Director Morrow asked for an investigation over a year ago. I think that if there was sufficient evidence it would have already surfaced. It keeps getting brought up so why hasn't the chairperson substantiated his accusations?

As you are aware, I was threatened with a lawsuit after a comment I made on Sault Tribe Guide in September for a question I asked. This has been brought up again after my last unit report. One of the latest posts by the chairperson is, "Look to the seated board and ask what they have done to protect jobs? I would venture to say we are moving backward with individuals like Bridgett Sorenson threatening member's jobs and executing on them." First of all, during all the years he has been employed with the tribe, on the board or as chair, he has been a part of the nepotism, favoritism and cronyism. My team members have suffered under hostile work environments because he continues to defend people, as well as board members of the past and present with their friends and families.

There is one thing I do expect out of EVERY team member and that is to come to work and do the job we pay you to do. Some people can't stand the fact that I have a lot of respect from team members because I was one, I worked alongside of them, I listened to them and I helped them. Many team members come to me and I will continue to fight for them, they are our biggest asset!

I am sure you have heard that the board is micromanaging the casinos. Well if that was the case, some people would not be in the positions they are in. I have heard the board wasted \$130,000 on the IGS audit we had done on the food and beverage and marketing departments because management already knew there were problems. So if they knew, why did the problems exist? What was being done to correct them? I was one of the board members instrumental in conducting the team member surveys to show management and the board what I already knew was going on (at least at my casino). I personally haven't seen much change and have had calls from team members at different sites asking when they can expect change. What is it going to take? I am starting to get angry when I have long term dedicated team members that hate to go to work. The morale is at an all-time low. I see the problems and I know what it takes to fix them but people have gotten comfortable with the way things are and think that they have a golden parachute.

I absolutely hate all the negativity. I am a positive, fun, easy going person. I hate having to write reports like this but the alternative is that people only hear the lies. Someone needs to correct them and I am strong enough to bring the facts. I cannot fathom why anyone would get their jollies by lying to and

about people. Don't you ever lose track of who you told what to? If people would quit lying and spinning words, we could take care of business!

On a positive note, our new HR Director, Brenda Johnson, has been here for just over a month and has grabbed the reins and began to restructure the Human Resource department. She is a true inspiration to me. She spends a lot of time on the gaming floor interacting with people. She is going to take off her HR hat and become a guest room attendant for the next five Saturdays at the Sault hotel. She is going to spend the time in training to see if the training we give our staff is enough and they can actually perform to the supervisor's expectations with that training in the time given. All managers should be coming out of their offices and take the time to fill the roles of their team members so they see things through their eyes. They can face the complaints from the customers and be short-handed. It reminds me of Under Cover Boss. During the meeting with Brenda I brought up my concern that we have promoted people because they have worked here for years and been good employees but some have been given management positions and they do not know how to manage people. Her motto is putting the right people in the right jobs. She is absolutely correct. People need to be trained and given the proper tools to do their job and if at that point they still cannot do it, they need to move on. If we want the best customer service, we need to have the best person in the position. We have businesses to run to generate revenue to provide services to our members.

We recently met with our auditors and were told that Ben Buck of the NIGC (National Indian Gaming Commission) said we are well ahead of everybody when checking our gaming commission

files. We are leaps and bounds ahead of Michigan and Wisconsin tribes. I give a hat off to Ken Ermatinger and staff for their hard work!

While meeting with our health division for our semi-annual review we discussed things we would like to see such as: having a marketing strategy to get more members to use our facilities, expand services such as walk in clinics in St. Ignace and Manistique and be able to schedule more patient visits per doctor per day. The semi-annual reviews are being recorded and can be viewed on the saulttribe.com website.

During the Great Lakes Conservation meeting, it was said that the Frazier property that we purchased last year in Epoufette has a road easement issue. We had recently received a \$610,710 grant to build a dock on this property and have begun the process which led to this discovery. We are hoping to be able to use BIA funds to build a bypass road. Unfortunately this may hinder the effort to be able to use this dock this season. Bids have also been received to build a dock at our property in Grand Marais. One of the biggest concerns for our fisherman is access to docks and places to moor their boats.

I see most if not all the candidates are running in support of the separation of powers. I ran supporting that also. Now I have concerns such as do we really want to be just like the US government? If so does that affect our sovereignty? When we had James Mills come in for training on board roles and responsibilities he was not in support of tribes having three branches of government and he works with many tribes. I believe the Chairperson is promoting the separation of powers because after the membership passed the constitutional amendment to separate the CEO and chair duties, he only has the

authority granted to him by the board. He wants the power and control.

We are beginning to lay the ground work for the 2015 budgets. The budget department is projecting a desire for an additional \$3 million in tribal support. That means that things will need to be cut to stay within our available funds. The government continues to get bigger and revenues continue to decrease. In my opinion we need to look at the next 5, 10, 20 years and come up with a plan of survival. We cannot just worry about making it through next year. We may need to make decisions that will carry us through for the next 42 months of debt elimination. We need to revitalize our businesses and facilities to make the long haul or we will soon end up with nothing but junk making very little revenue. The old saying we need to spend money to make money. We need to spend it wisely to generate more revenue. Currently we take so much out of the casinos to provide services that they cannot afford to make capital improvements to be competitive. So if we keep taking, eventually we end up with nothing. If you cut back a little on the government side to increase revenue then you can provide more in services in the future. We have to think about the future, not in the future but NOW! The choices will not be easy but need to be made. Our team members also deserve more than we can give them right now: raises, cost of living allowance, and 401k match. When will we plan to re-institute them?

A reminder that I will be giving away a \$1,000 scholarship to a member in Unit III. Please email me for an application by May 15.

Thank you for allowing me to represent you. Contact me at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, bridgett91@yahoo.com, (906) 643-2123 or (906) 430-0536.