

Sorenson: Here are the facts about elders trips



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There has been some undercurrent going on in the Unit III Elders' Subcommittee and its membership. I would like to present the facts: The St. Ignace elders did take a trip to Chicago at the end of September. The only non-Natives who attended the trip were spouses of the tribal elders. All the money in their bank account is money they have raised by putting on fish fries, having garage sales, pop can collections, cookie sales, 50/50s and other raffles. The tribe has not contributed money towards the elder's recreation fund since 2008.

This same group planned a lunch at the Grand Hotel and carriage ride on Mackinac Island. I believe someone started chaos with this, thinking the tribe was paying for elders to have lunch on the island and some people felt left out. Those who contacted me, I told them the group that has met at the center raised funds to take these types of trips. The group of elders who raised the money should be the ones deciding where and what they want to do. To make things easier, there could be a point system assigned to those who do donate or volunteer and trips would require a certain point value.

For some reason, members from other units who were not even elders decided to come to the St. Ignace board of director's meeting to get involved. From what I can see, these people are being led astray by a faction led by the chairman. I guess if you want to let the chairman humiliate you by using you to carry his

dirty laundry, that is up to you. Unit III and its elders find your behavior offensive and do not support your divide and conquer games.

There has been unrest by many with the last vote on the elder subcommittee. There was a seat that expired last September (2013), one expired in January (2014), two expired in April (2014). Letters of intent and support were submitted by four of the committee members according to them at the St. Ignace meeting on April 11. At the April 15 meeting in Kinross, one of the April expired seats was voted on and, at the April 29 meeting in Munising, the other April expired seat was voted on. At this April 29 meeting, the elder division presented new procedures that committee vacancies would be posted in the tribal paper for two months prior to being filled so all elders would be aware of the vacancy and would be voted on as a group and not as a first come, first served basis. What I am confused about and so are many of the others is the two committee members whose seats expired in September of 2013 and January of 2014 did not even come for a vote to the board until the August 19 meeting in Marquette. During this vote, I was not aware nor do I believe any board members that these seats had expired so long ago or we could have asked questions then. We had three elders pursuing two seats. All three names were put into a mug and were drawn out of a coffee mug by our board executive secretary. The two names pulled were approved by the board to be on the Unit III Elders Subcommittee.

This resulted in the chair of the committee losing her seat. Many of the others on the subcommittee and the membership are not happy with this decision. The committee no longer can choose who sits on their committee like they used to be able to do. Many of them did not know they did not have a say or a recommendation. The change in the bylaws took place before I came on the board. I have been told the reason for the decision is that the committees were not allowing new members to get on their committees. I can agree with that

for some committees that may not have many members that attend meeting to vote on these decisions such as the child welfare committee or inland hunting and fishing committee. At the monthly elder meeting we have about 40-50 elders in attendance who could vote on who they wanted to represent them.

At the elder advisory meeting in Newberry on Oct. 27, the committee was not happy with the board's decision in Unit III. I explained to them the chain of events as I listed them above. They also did not seem to know they did not have a vote on who sits on their committee. They want to be able to have a say in who represents them. They said the board does not know the elders in other units to vote on them representing their unit. They took a couple of votes for change on these items. I cannot quote them because I have not seen their minutes yet. I am not sure the board of directors will consider these votes as requests or not. The elder advisory committee is on break until March of 2015 weather permitting. To those committee members, please enjoy your holidays and stay warm this winter!

As I write this report, we have still not finished our 2015 governmental budgets or even looked at our 2015 casino budgets. Normally the casino COO had reviewed the budgets and then had made recommendations of changes to the casino managers. The Gaming Authority (board of directors) will need to possibly have the CFO review these for recommendations to the authority. It is already November and nothing has been decided. It is really frustrating to work under these conditions for board members and employees alike. Everyone needs to know what the direction for 2015 will be.

In October, we had presentations from five companies to help us turn around our casinos. The board along with our executive staff decided on the top three and we are moving forward with the number one pick. The number one pick will be contacted for further negotiations. I was very impressed with this company and feel like this could be the answer

to our prayers. As more information becomes available I will keep you informed. They seemed very motivated and big on training.

In the last two and a half years, the chairman has threatened to sue me, remove me and recently to bar me from a tribal building. I guess he feels I am a threat to him. We have seen the same behavior in the past year against two other female board members. What bothers me the most is that we have way more important issues facing the tribe and he wants to start fires and wars with people so they have to spend their time defending themselves to those who don't know them because the ones who do know them, know the truth. I despise lies and used to spend my time arguing in emails with the chairman to correct his lies but I will no longer waste my time or energy on this negativity. I have too many more important things and people to give my time to. The people who are in your community and surrounding areas know you the best. They know whether you are reliable, trustworthy, a team player, can be trusted not by your words only but also by your actions. Look back at the data following the 2012 election and see what the closest people such as units I, II and III knew. People can make up any ol' lies and try and make them stick but the truth always prevails.

I was also accused of holding a closed unit meeting. The facts are that I did not, remember until 5 p.m. that day that we had a 6 p.m. unit meeting and my kids had an appointment at 5:30 p.m. Keith was out of town and he has a key, I don't have a key to the building. I contacted one of the people who does and I never received a response. The group was waiting for me as I was 15 minutes late and they were communicating with me via cell phone and were outside the building cold. I asked if they minded if we met at the Big Boy since I could not get a key. I then met them at the Big Boy. If anyone was planning on attending the meeting I would assume they would have been at the meeting site by 6:15 and the others could have relayed the message. I apologize if anyone

who wanted to attend did not know of the change in location.

The St. Ignace Midjim has undergone some cold patching and a culvert was dug to keep the water from pooling as a temporary fix. This will not cure the problem of the puddles at the pump with the unevenness in the concrete. Hopefully in the near future the board will agree to at least a study to ease the concerns of the no votes on the board.

My son participated in the raptor camp at the Mary Murray Culture Camp on Sugar Island last month. It was his first time going. He had a great time and met many new kids from different areas. He is excited to be able to attend more in the future like the winter survival camp. Thank you to Jackie and Justin and all the other volunteers who inspired our youth that weekend. If your child has never taken advantage of a free camp on Sugar Island, you should consider contacting the Cultural Department at the administration building at 635-6050 for a list of coming camps.

In the next month or so, the Sault Tribe St. Ignace clinic will be collaborating with Mackinac Straits Health Systems to offer more services to our members. More information as it becomes available will be published. This is great news and has been a long time coming!

Don't forget to fill out your heating credit applications through your local ACFS office and also there is help from empower (True North Services). They can be reached at (855) 300-8013 or www.truenorthservices.org.

Any tribal member looking for insurance options, try contacting Heather Lester or Teresa Jedele at the St. Ignace or Hessel clinics for help with Medicaid enrollment or other insurance providers. There are some great deals out there and it may be worth your time to check it out.

As fall comes to an end and winter storms in please enjoy your family for Thanksgiving and I hope you fill your freezer with lots of wild game!

Any concerns or questions please contact me at (906) 430-0536, bsorenson@saulttribe.net, or bridgett91@yahoo.com.