

Director Sorenson: August alive with culture



**BRIDGETT SORENSON,
DIRECTOR, UNIT III**

August was a busy month filled with weekends of powwows. Lana and I attended the youth powwow in Newberry where about a dozen children experienced their first regalia.

The youth then came into the circle to announce where they were from, their names and their Indian names. It was a very joyous day. The volunteers and all the youth education staff did an awesome job preparing the children to one day lead and organize powwows of the future.

The Hessel powwow is one of my favorites and it was sweltering hot. Their new bathrooms were finished and operational and their MC stand was repaired. There were many more food vendors than in past years. There is always so much community spirit at this powwow. Next year, they need to invest in a sprinkler or pool though (smile).

St. Ignace has had history week the third week in August for the last few years with events at both the Fort de Baude Museum and the Museum of Ojibwa Culture, and the Rendezvous at the Straits Powwow on the weekend. I was, unfortunately, not able to spend much time participating this year as I have in the past. I was able to make it to the grand entry on Friday at the museum grounds and was able to participate in the blessing of the clans the Friday prior. My hat goes off to all the groups of volunteers that it takes to make this week



One of the Museum of Ojibwa Culture's new clan signs

such a success and learning experience for everyone.

If anyone is in the St. Ignace area please stop at the Museum of Ojibwa Culture and see their new clan signs along the outside of the museum. They were a year in the making and were constructed in Pickford and are metal and the descriptions are all written by local Sault Tribe member Sue St. Onge. The building of a new longhouse is also underway on the museum grounds. Sault Tribe members Tony Grondin and Perry Neuman are working the project.

On Aug. 3, there was an honoring our veterans ceremony at the Wequayoc Cemetery. Tony Grondin led the ceremony as Russell Rickley was the fire keeper and Mukwa Giiziik was the host drum. An eagle circled during the ceremony. There were about a dozen veterans who were honored and their family members were presented with a gift.

Director Massaway and I grilled burgers, brats and barbecue chicken for our Unit III elders on Aug. 28. The elders provide salads and desserts and we provide the meat. We had a very nice turnout and enough leftover food so nobody had to cook dinner.

During the luncheon, staff from the detention center came and delivered fresh produce grown at the detention center by the youth. Elders were given brown paper bags and could choose fresh vegetables to take

home. Thank you to Officer Wallace and Maintenance St. Andrew for providing this to our elders. This is another great program that teaches kids how to plant and harvest a garden.

Our first meeting of the month was in Kinross and was mostly business as usual. There were only eight board members present so nothing could be added to the agenda because it requires nine votes. Some audience members came because they thought we would be voting on the removal petition but we could not add it to the agenda and the outside counsel's opinion did not arrive until after the five-day notice to be on the agenda.

Our second meeting took place in Marquette on Aug. 18. There was much hype around the removal petition that started with the membership portion of the meeting and was discussed for about another hour by the board during the actual meeting.

The board voted to send the decision for removal to a hearing board. We needed to set a date, time and place of the hearing. The board voted to have the hearing in Munising on Sept. 29 at 8 a.m. We also had to appoint someone to facilitate the process of the hearing board so we voted to appoint our general counsel, John Wernet.

The hearing board will consist of three outside attorneys who have no prior dealing with Sault Tribe. There will be preference given to attorneys who are Native American and have experience with tribes and Native American law backgrounds.

The board also approved a new bereavement policy. In the past, team members could take three days of paid leave for a death of a family member. In the event of a first cousin's death, they received one paid day and it was under the bereavement policy. A few years ago, the policy was changed and had two policies, bereavement and funeral leave. This allowed for up to three days of leave that could or could not be paid depending on your situation and your supervisor, which was titled,



St. Ignace Elders Picnic was held Aug. 28

Funeral Leave. The bereavement policy then covered your time off by using vacation, sick or personal time or a leave of absence. The changes were confusing and frustrating to the team members. Effective Sept. 1, the policy will be bereavement policy and allow for the three days leave. There will no longer be a funeral leave policy.

The policy review group has been working on these changes for months and it almost was tabled at the meeting. There are many other policies that hopefully get voted on in the near future.

Our tribe has many great programs and services for our people and many, many dedicated team members who help facilitate them. We tend to always hear or see the negative more than the positive. Our tribe is far from perfect but there are many great things that people do not always know that happen or are available to members. I look forward to the day when we can work together for the betterment of the entire tribe instead of all the backstabbing, bullying, vindictive behavior that clouds people's judgment.

It is that time of year again when we should be going over budgets for 2016. The budgets are due to the Budget Department in June and the board should be seeing them by Aug. 15. It is the same ol' song and dance; the chair will be calling special meet-

ings the last week of September to push the vote. I guess it is time the board puts forward resolutions stating when budgets need to come to the board because under the chair's administrative authority, he isn't facilitating the process, more like stopping it up. Another reason why he cannot be running the day-to-day business of the tribe and be on several national committees and be great at everything. He is great at the national level, so let someone manage the day-to-day operations of the tribe so we, too, can move forward when we need to.

He accuses the board of micro-managing but he will not allow us to have meetings without him cannot see budgets until he wants us to, cancels meeting with staff we ask to meet with and "uses his authority" to stop up anything because he can.

The next St. Ignace board of directors meeting is scheduled for Oct. 20, unless it gets changed due to the NCAI conference in San Diego, Calif.

The Unit III meetings are always held on the third Monday of the month at the McCann school at 6 p.m. unless it falls on a holiday.

Thank you for all your support and questions or concerns. Please contact me at bsorenson@saulttribe.net, bridgett91@yahoo.com, or (906) 430-0536. Have a great beginning to the fall season!