

# Time to take on changes and challenges head on



**DJ HOFFMAN**  
DIRECTOR, UNIT I

As we near the end of 2015, the tribe has faces many difficult decisions to make. It is time that the tribe takes these corrective actions to ensure the financial health and prosperity of our tribe and its enterprises.

## CASINOS

It has been over 11 months since the Gaming Authority authorized hiring a temporary Casino Executive Officer. The premise of this temporary position was based upon an RFP issued in August of 2014 which stated:

*Temporary Overall Management of Gaming/ Hospitality Operations with the ultimate goal of assisting with selection of a permanent Chief Executive Officer of Kewadin Casinos.*

Policy dictates that temporary positions shall not exceed six months; it has been over 11 months since the temporary position was hired. Some have argued that we need to let people do their respective jobs and help the tribe move its casinos forward. First, the temporary position was brought in to assist the tribe in selecting a permanent CEO for its casinos. Second, we are not moving forward.

In those 11 months the casino revenues have continued to steadily decline, as well as the



tribal tax revenues that are earmarked for membership services. In a year-to-year comparison (2014-2015) though September, revenues are down over \$12 million and year-to-date tribal tax payments are down over \$1.7 million.

For the Nov. 17, 2015, meeting of the board of directors, multiple board members have co-sponsored a resolution to finally post the position of chief executive officer of Kewadin Casinos. The position is a key employment position, approved in the 2015 Casino Budgets. Hiring of this "key employee" requires seven votes of the Board of Directors. Under the tribe's adopted personnel policies, all positions must be posted.

While members of the board will once again argue that the resolution will send the wrong message to the temporary Casino Executive Officer, my concern continues to be the message of not following policy, adopted by tribal resolution, and what it conveys to the membership and our employees as a whole.

## HUMAN RESOURCES AUDIT

The Sault Tribe Board of Directors recently approved a resolution to audit the performance of the tribe's Human Resource Department. Human Resources is the central hub for all employment related actions: pre-employment, hiring, discipline, retention and termination. As a tribe, we need to ensure that these areas are performing in an optimal manner and in accordance with adopted policy to ensure that all employees are treated in an equitable manner. The audit will address the strengths and weaknesses within the department so that they may be assessed and addressed.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The tribe has a large list of candidates for the Economic Development Director position. To be clear, the board has only been provided qualifications (no names) regarding potential candidates.

In an effort to ensure that the tribe hires the most qualified candidate for this position, I have proposed the following to the board:

— I have suggested that a committee be formed to conduct an initial round of interviews with all of the qualified candidates.

— I have also suggested inviting experienced community business leaders (tribal and non

tribal) to sit on the initial panel, as well as members of the board, to provide the board with their recommendations of the three to five most qualified applicants to be considered by the board for a second round of interviews.

It is my hope that the Economic Development Director will be able to move our businesses in a more profitable manner, as well as lead the charge towards new business development and diversification. I am also hopeful that our corporate charter, approved by the BIA, will one day be utilized. This would afford our tribe with the opportunity to develop and maintain businesses free from the meddling of politics, thus ensuring that they have a chance to be successful and provide revenues to tribal services.

The most successful tribes in America run their businesses through their corporate charter. Examples include Seminoles Inc. and Ho Chunk Inc., and hopefully one day Sault Tribe will share in this success.

One thing is perfectly clear, the need for diversification is essential to our tribe's long term economic survival.

## JKL BAHWETING SCHOOL

The gymnasium continues to progress nicely. At this time, the roof has been completed and the

final sides of the building are being installed. By the time this report is published, the contractors will be inside the building working on the dry wall, electrical and flooring. I am extremely pleased with the progress on such an incredible project for our tribal and community children within JKL Bahweting School. While at times it may appear that the tribal board does nothing more than "argue, fuss and fight," it is projects such as this that provide a glimpse to the type of productivity that can be found in working together. Once again, I would like to thank the board for supporting this project and looking out for the future of the school and its children.

I will continue to push forward with members of the board that wish to be progressive.

I will also continue to work with members of the Board to ensure that we become innovative in our approach to economic diversification, membership services, and stepping out of the non progressive box that we appear to be confined to.

Sincerely,  
DJ Hoffman

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