

Greed, anger, jealousy and lust for power has grown



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In the times of our ancestors, this month of June would be filled with excitement and joy as Mother Earth sprung to life. Everywhere, new life would be seen. There would be babies everywhere! From nests, dens, waters and wigwams, all of creation would be busy growing and adding new life to this world. After the long winters, the “powwow” season of traveling to nearby communities to visit with relatives and friends, gave us opportunities to learn, share and rejoice in the celebrations of life as Anishnaabe people.

Recently, I have seen and heard the worry from elders and young people alike, that these modern times have caused us to

lose those sacred ways — that goodness and connectedness to all things. Even though I know there are many who still have that “connectedness,” it is easy to understand why some of our people feel that way. One need only to watch the evening news to see that greed, anger, jealousy and lust for power have made our world a much more dangerous place. Acts of violence and self-destructive behaviors (example substance abuse) are more and more common and claiming more and more lives. These negative things are no longer occurring in distant places, they are occurring in our own communities and in our own homes. We must change.

There are no quick or easy solutions. But I believe that “going back” to many of our old ways, will “bring us back” to our future. Relying on funding, programs and government initiatives is not enough. We have to rely on each other and the wisdom of our ancestors to provide for our good life.

This past month, I have watched as greed, anger, jealousy and lust for power has grown. I’ve heard people blame the bad behaviors on “election time.” That is not a good excuse and I reject the notion that it is inevitable, because, during this “election time” I have seen new and young people come forward, who were not acting out of greed, anger, jealousy or lust for power. Many

young people sounded their voices, expressing their frustration with how things are and shared their thoughts on how things should be. Young people stepped up and offered to serve. YOUNG people, because they felt they HAD to.

Our young people want to be involved. When I was in the classroom teaching, my students always showed me what they needed to learn. Now, as an elected leader of our tribe, I plan to use my “teacher skills” and look to our young people who are speaking out, because I have realized they are showing me what they need to learn. It is time to teach. I will help them learn about the complexities of tribal, state and federal governments. When I can, I will be taking a young person traveling with me, so they can learn first-hand and experience tribal leadership. There will be no additional expense to the tribe for this – I will do this on my own.

It is not just a glib saying that “our children are our future,” it is a fact. I am “going back” to our old way of growing our leadership and look for a young person with an interest (a gift) for tribal leadership work. I will use my teacher skills of demonstrating (modeling), instructing and hands-on involvement. I will ask, “If you were a director, what would you do?” Early mentoring is powerful. It is an old way that

needs to be brought back and I intend to do so, and right away. In this way I will help our children become our future.

During this past month, I continued to work on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and was an invited panelist to the tribal leadership event held in Mt. Pleasant. Of course, tribal politics is in full swing and, unfortunately, it consumes a great deal of time. I have brought forward a resolution that reassigns the duties of running the day-to-day operations of the tribe to a business professional, rather than a politician. Although it is being played out in the political arena as a personal attack and a “stripping the chairman of his authority” action, it is not. It is a common sense, practical approach that serves the best interest of the tribe; it is not about the chairman’s power or authority, it is about our tribe.

In addition to all of the meetings required and pertaining to board of directors’ work, I am also working in the area of national drug courts and this month have spoken to Governor Snyder regarding developing better relationships with state prosecutors. I will be attending an NCAI conference in June that will have a focus day specific to Indian education. I am seeking to be on the State of Michigan committee regarding human trafficking (this is a growing problem

in tribal communities). Much of my travel is paid for by outside agencies, our federal school grant and other grants, rather than our tribal support dollars. It is a good way to help control costs.

June will be a very busy month, of course, with the election, and I want to share that there are numerous ways to become more informed about our tribe. If you have access to the internet, there is, of course, our tribal website <http://saulttribe.com/>, and my website <http://jmcleodsaulttribe.com>. But there are also various Facebook groups dedicated to discussions related to our tribe. Two that I recently posted to are <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SaultTribeMembers-ForBetterGovernment> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/saulttribemembersforum>. I encourage you all to explore the many ways of being an informed tribal member. Our newspaper is wonderful, but unfortunately only monthly, and these days, there is a lot going on!

Until next time, and as always, if I can be of any assistance or service, please contact me.

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