

# Federal funding is a trust responsibility, not a hand out



**KEITH MASSAWAY, UNIT II DIRECTOR**

The focus of much of the attention for most of the tribe has been the cuts we will endure under sequestration. Let's first describe the meaning of sequestration. It means, "confiscation of property by government action."

The federal government is taking back or reducing future monetary awards and grants by 9 percent. That may seem like an inconsequential amount but the tribal government has been paring down and cost saving for over four years and there are serious problems that will occur because of this reduction. After an exhaustive investigation by our administration on how this will impact our programs, a dollar amount has been arrived at, \$1.7 million. That is more than 9 percent of our budget from the federal government and that comes from lost revenue from some grants, some impact on matching dollars and services that must be picked up by tribal dollars.

The Administration and board members have been

reaching out to our federal government and elected officials as much as possible to explain and show how deeply this reduction impacts our tribal members. I will point out just one of many arguments that we use to get our point across. I believe it is the strongest one. The obligation to the Sault Tribes funding in the federal budgets is the result of the treaties. These treaties are known as trust responsibilities. The authority to fulfill the trust responsibilities is found in the U.S. Constitution, specifically the Indian commerce clause, the treaty clause and the property clause. So, in other words, these programs and dollars are not entitlements, hand outs or race based. These treaties are agreements reached between two sovereign nations in concession of land for assistance. They should not be included in the cuts. We stress this where ever we go and we really believe it is having an effect. Is it enough to change sequestration on the tribes? I cannot say for sure but it does start them on the right path of thinking of a tribe as a sovereign nation and not just another person with a hand out.

The board has also been busy looking for ways to save money and increase the profitability of our tribe. We are working very hard to keep everyone employed and productive. Fears and rumors are always present in our work places but truly there

are no board approved plans for lay-offs or firings.

Our future plans for a Lansing Casino are still viable and moving forward. Articles that say the tribe has been stopped are false. We have stated all along that this will be fought out in the courts and that is what we are doing now. When we win this first challenge there will be many more but we have a great team and a sound approach. We will get there!

Thank you again for all the e-mails and phone calls. It means a lot, to me, to hear from you.

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