

Trust land applications finally begin to move



**KEITH MASSAWAY, DIRECTOR,
UNIT III**

I know this is old news, but I would like to tell you how pleased we are that the tribe made sure the Wequayoc Cemetery was not allowed to fall into private hands. The tribe purchased the cemetery and surrounding house and land in mid-August. We have secured a portion of the land that

has been used for hundreds of years by our ancestors as a burial ground. The surrounding land will also remain sacred and plans are being developed to possibly use these lands, keeping our cultural heritage in mind.

We have approved many grant applications — the tribe has a very good record of being awarded the projects and money of nearly all we apply for — grants for housing, education, health, elder services and environmental, just to name a few. Grants are the main money engine of the tribe. I thank all those who put countless hours and immense care into these proposals so our tribe can prosper.

We recently approved a cooperative agreement with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan Inc. for implementation of Honoring our Children Initiative. This initiative is to improve the well being of tribal children up to the

age of 8 years old. It improves education, safe communities and good health. Contact the Inter-Tribal Council (632-6896) for more information.

Last month, we asked Ken Ermatinger, the tribe's gaming commissioner, to seek the chairmanship of the National Tribal Gaming Commission/Regulators. We passed a resolution of support and wish him the best of luck for this appointment. I know Ken very well; he has been employed longer than almost anyone else in the tribe and will do a great job for us if he, indeed, gets this appointment.

After decades of trying to get our land put into trust, the Secretary of the Interior has finally approved a pending parcel. The land put into trust is the Detention Center in St. Ignace. It may seem like no big thing, but it finally breaks a stalemate between the tribe and the Interior

Department. We have 16 or more parcels on application with the Interior Department including the very first building ever owned by the tribe, Greenough. Our oldest pending application is dated March 24, 1994. This piece of land has our USDA program on it. So you can see that the tribe has been frustrated for many years trying to get land put into trust. Maybe the dam has broke and the applications will now be processed.

We have posted for a new Elder Division director and barring any complications a new hire will already have been completed when you read this. Thank you, Sheryl Hammock, for the great job you have done for our elders and good luck in your new job.

The last item I wish to cover is our looming decision on the 2013 budgets. Dennis McKelvie summed it up very well in his last report. The ultimate bottom

line is that we receive approximately \$19 million in revenue from our tribal businesses and our 2013 budget says we are going to spend \$26 million. That is not possible and the only way to do that is to borrow money. Borrowing is not an option in my book. We already have too much debt. Fiscal responsibility lies with the board of directors and its chairman. The question then is: do we live within the actual amount of income we generate now or do we deficit spend, cut programs and employees at a later date or borrow money. I, for one, say make a reasonable budget within our means and do our job to squeeze every penny to get the most services for our members that we can.

Thank you again for the emails and phone calls. Keith Massaway, 702 Hazelton St., St. Ignace, MI 49781, kmassaway@msn.com, (906) 643-6981.