

Members: The silent majority is not forgotten



**KEITH MASSAWAY, DIRECTOR,
UNIT III**

The board of directors and the chairman continue to work hard

on numerous fronts to ensure our nation is heard and respected.

We all have to pick and work on specific areas because to work on everything is impossible. The vastness and scope of the tribe is immense and there is not enough time to do it all — some board members focus on sovereignty, some on trust responsibility.

Board members also take up the yoke on the environment, our elders, our children and education. The list goes on and on but each board member tends to gravitate to their strengths.

Working for you as a director is very rewarding. I get to talk, converse and discuss a great many topics with our tribal members. That is a very important

part of my job. Sometimes we are confronted with a difficult issue.

The issue lately is a strong push for a voting unit downstate or a director for the at large membership.

Several board members went out to the membership and asked what they thought. I made some calls to outside members, some I knew and some I had never talked to before. Almost all of them were immediately upset that the board would stop them from voting in their current unit. They said an outside unit would be of little value to the entire membership at large and that a board member for the at large would be no different then the representation they have now. They wanted

to vote in the units because it gave them a connection to the homelands and their families. What they really want is to feel part of the tribe. They want to be accepted and acknowledged. They didn't demand new services, but an understanding of what is available, if anything. If they need something we can provide, they would like to know how, when and where. They asked for traditional teachings, knowledge of our history, our language and roots to our homelands. That is what I heard from the people I call the "silent majority," members who don't call directors, text, e-mail or Facebook. These members pore over our newspaper to glean anything to better under-

stand our tribe.

I say that we have not forgotten about you and you are just as much a member as anyone in the tribe. Our fiscal responsibilities are huge and our recourses are very limited; expansion of benefits is not in the near future and even a consolidation may be coming. Ninety percent of the budget is dedicated to the homeland because that is what the federal government demands.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns and thank you for all the input you have given me.

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