

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Chairman Delores Pigsley

As readers of the News are aware, the Siletz Tribe over the years has operated on the principle that our members should be free to express their opinions in the Letters to the Editor section of Siletz News. The only restriction is that they must not contain slanderous, racist or profane language.

The Tribal Council believes that the News is a valuable source of information regarding the views of our members. We have an obligation to be attentive and responsive to the needs of members. The News is a valuable means of keeping us informed of those views.

Unfortunately, some letters also have appeared in the News that contain misinformation and false allegations.

Since the News is distributed not only to Siletz members but also to others outside the tribe, however, we have been

unable to respond publicly to many of the allegations. Personnel issues are highly confidential. Financial issues may be confidential but we believe our members should receive factual information. We have used letters and the Chinook Winds Bulletin to provide confidential financial information. These are sent by first-class mail exclusively to all adult tribal members.

We trust that non-tribal readers of the News will understand that although we publish all letters, we can't respond publicly to all allegations.

We are fortunate to have hired Diane Rodriguez as our public information officer whose responsibilities include publishing the News. Diane recently coordinated the publishing of the tribe's annual report. She comes to us with a wealth of experience in the media and public relations fields and will play an important role in the tribe's public relations efforts.

At an economic development workshop in June, the Council embarked on a plan to research how some tribes gained economic success. During the past two months, teams of Council members and staff have made site visits to selected reservations whose tribes have successful economic development activities.

The host tribes were most responsive to our need to learn from their experiences. We learned a great deal from the Flathead, White Mountain Apache, and Mississippi Choctaw tribes. We will have visited the Ak Chin tribe in Arizona before the end of September.

A follow-up workshop will help determine what we need to do to be as

successful as the tribes we visited. We would have made these site visits earlier this summer, but waited until we received the authority to use the federal government's travel rates, which we received for travel to these reservations. From now on, our tribal travel outside the area will be much cheaper.

The Tribal Council has launched a project to thoroughly document the history of the Siletz Tribe. There have been misstatements made and misunderstandings about the tribe based on incomplete and inaccurate information. The results of these studies will help not only educate the general public about the Siletz Tribe, but also our own members, especially our children.

Our cultural resources staff has already assembled a wealth of information and their effort is continuing. The results of these historical studies will be reported in the News as well as in brochures and presentations that are designed for various groups, including schools.

The Siletz Tribe has had a contract with ECONorthwest, a highly respected research firm located in Portland, to conduct an economic impact analysis of the Siletz Tribe on Lincoln County. We recently received a preliminary draft of the study.

We have long known that the tribe, including Chinook Winds, has had a significant economic impact on Lincoln County. ECONorthwest's study will help document the extent of the tribe's positive impact on the county and specifically, Chinook Winds' impact on Lincoln City. The study is not yet finalized, but when it is, the results will be published in future editions of the News.

To the editor:

I am writing this letter in response to the letters submitted last month by Reggie and Lillie Butler and Clifford Case. Those letters were filled with untruths and inaccuracies, and I am writing to correct the record.

The Siletz Tribe has rehired employees or settled claims with a number of tribal member employees who were illegally fired or denied employment by the previous Tribal Council. The previous Tribal Council majority identified employees they did not like or who belonged to families they thought were "out to get them" and fired them whether there was a legal basis to do so or not.

The tribe would have paid more in damages if these cases had gone to Tribal Court rather than being settled. There was no justification to fire or not hire these tribal members. If these cases had been subject to a hearing in state court, the damages

would have been even higher and it is possible that the previous Council would have been subject to criminal charges. Your current Tribal Council saved the tribe money by settling these cases rather than wasting your money by fighting losing cases in court.

I also want to respond to Lillie's claim that the Tribal Council voted down a special payment to the elders. If you want to talk about tribal money that should have been available for tribal members, you should think about all of the money the previous Tribal Council wasted or gave away while they were in power.

Did Lillie tell you that the previous Tribal Council's lawyers were charging the tribe an average of over \$100,000 per month - a rate of over \$1 million per year? That is more than four times what our tribal attorney charges now! And most of the work that other firm did was to defend the previous

Council against being recalled!

The tribe suffered great damage to its programs while the previous Tribal Council was in charge, in terms of questioned costs and badly run programs. That mess has only now been cleaned up, and it is difficult to tell exactly how many millions were lost because of the previous Council's mismanagement of the tribe.

So when you think about money that would have been available to the elders and other tribal members, think about how much those letter writers lost for us. If anything, they should reimburse the tribe for all these losses. Now the tribe is being well-run and the money, such as for a new gaming commissioner, is being spent for necessary purposes.

Be cautious about believing what you read from the Butlers and Mr. Case!

Kristi Martin-Bayya