

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

## Council Sponsors Informal Sessions

I have often commented in my chairman's reports on how important it is for the Siletz Tribal Council to communicate with federal, state, and local governments—entities that we must deal with on many critical tribal issues.

At the federal level, the understanding our legislators have about our projects and issues is essential. After all, we get their support to accomplish our objectives based on their understanding of these issues from our perspective. That's why we make it a point to visit with our legislators whenever we are in Washington, D.C.

But less formal interactions also are essential in building bridges. That's true not only at the federal level, but at state and local levels as well. We need to be able to interact with each other as people, not just as government officials.

With this in mind, the Siletz Tribal Council sponsored two events last month to help promote communications on a more personal, informal basis. One was a get-together with Congresswoman Darlene Hooley on Aug. 15, at Chinook Winds.

We not only learned about her field offices in Salem and Oregon City and about the services they provide, but also had an opportunity to interact with her field staff who manage them. At the same time, Darlene and her staff had a chance to interact with our council members and the general managers of the tribe and Chinook Winds, get acquainted with us, and learn about issues from our perspective.



*Chairman Delores Pigsley*

The other event was an informal dinner gathering of tribal and local government officials and community representatives, which we hosted on Sept. 5 at Chinook Winds.

Tribal Council members, staff, attorneys, and consultants had a chance to interact informally with our three county commissioners, several members of the Lincoln City Council, and other city, county, and community representatives. It was a lively, enjoyable evening with lots of great food.

Such occasions help us see each other not just as government officials, but as people, and that helps set the climate for us to more constructively deal with critical tribal issues. We will continue to sponsor these worthwhile affairs.

## Other Important September Events

Two other important events took place during September. We were proud to host the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians from Sept. 17-20 at Chinook Winds. The November issue of Siletz News will include details of the results of that conference.

The other event was our Seventh Annual Run to the Rogue, an event that has very significant historical meaning and value to the Siletz Tribe. On behalf of the Tribal Council, I want to express our thanks to the many dedicated people—not only council members and tribal staff but volunteers—who have made the Run to the Rogue the success it is today.

## Status of Other Tribal Programs and Services

We have successfully concluded negotiations on our self-governance compact with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with funding levels pretty much as they were last fiscal year. We still have a few details to work out with the bureau, including issues involving the Forest Management Trust Fund. We are scheduling a meeting to iron out details with the bureau's Office of Trust Services.

The General Assistance Program that involves extending services to non-tribal Indians and the additional personnel costs that this entails is another issue that we are addressing. This is not, however, a compact issue.

As for acquiring more land around

Chinook Winds, the Siletz Tribe was successful in acquiring 12 additional acres adjacent to our casino and convention center from owner Mark Hemstreet. This land has been completely developed for needed additional parking at this time.

## Concluding Remarks

I cannot conclude my chairman's report without commenting on the subject of letters to the editor.

Our editorial policy is a very liberal one. As any reader of Siletz News can see, we publish any and all letters written by our tribal members. Our only exception is our refusal to publish "any letter or any part of a letter that may contain profane language, libelous statements, personal attacks, or unsubstantiated statements."

This policy gives the letter writers free rein to write just about anything they want. Sometimes they are complimentary of the Tribal Council, sometimes very critical. But I appreciate the fact that our members take the time to express themselves and offer what oftentimes are very helpful criticisms and suggestions.

Unfortunately, some letters written to Siletz News offer nothing but negative comments, often distorting the truth for political purposes. Many of you have called and complained about those letters. Our policy, however, allows members to express their opinions.

My appeal to our readers is to carefully evaluate what the letters say and to try to distinguish between fact and fiction.

To the editor:

Last month I highlighted the issues facing our tribe. The biggest issue is control. A pattern has developed in which a few people are trying to close off any threat to that control. I described how it is happening last month.

One of the ways we get a closed system where a few people control the entire process is by our method of voting. Each of us has three votes rather than one. This encourages block voting, as 300 people can control three Tribal Council seats each election. If we were to change this so we could only vote for one candidate, then 300 people couldn't control three council seats. They could only vote for one person.

As an example, Dee Pigsley got approximately 300 votes last election. Council candidates run in a block of three and encourage their supporters to use their other two votes for other candidates. Dee's supporters then can vote two more times for the candidates Dee has decided to support.

If we had one vote per election, however, Dee would get 300 from her supporters, who then couldn't vote for anybody else. The other block candidates would have to generate their own votes to get elected, as Dee's supporters couldn't vote for them. This, of course, applies to others who use block voting and is one of the reasons it will be hard to change. It would, however, cut down on politics

and favoritism and ensure a more representative government.

Many tribes face this problem, but if we are to make progress, we need to face this issue. The old saying that "If we don't learn from history, we are bound to repeat it" is appropriate for us.

Our No. 1 priority is making plans in which we can achieve unity. After this is achieved, we can then agree to some goals we all can agree on and which we will be motivated to achieve. Right now, we are looking at as many ways as possible to minimize tribal member participation and involvement, through the methods I spoke of last month.

Our No. 2 goal needs to be creating a TERO ordinance and a commitment to tribal member employment in **all** the jobs we have, now and in the future. Through this, we also can begin doing an assessment of our tribal members and assisting them in utilizing their abilities. We don't have any idea of tribal member strengths, so how can we plan to utilize them?

That is the point. We aren't planning to use our own tribal members. We are using outside individuals, who may or may not have our best interests in mind.

It's difficult and poses problems, but it can be done.

Ray Blacketer