

## Setting the Record Straight

by Jessie Davis

In the last issue of Siletz News, a letter to the editor appeared by Pat Duncan that contained several pieces of misinformation. As vice-chairman of the Tribal Council, I felt compelled to write this article to set the record straight.

That council members receive wages and expenses is not disputed. Council wages are based on the actual number of hours each member puts in.

However, it is probably not common knowledge, but important for tribal members to realize, that Siletz Council members are paid less than tribal secretaries and far less than most Indian tribes. Council members are paid \$9.54 per hour, which is less than the \$10/hour that the Chinook Winds dishwashers make.

Pat should know that in keeping with this Tribal Council's obligation to fully disclose the finances of the tribe, including what our council members make, council members' timesheets are published monthly in Siletz News. There are no hidden costs.

As for reimbursements for travel, they are exactly that: reimbursements for expenses incurred for business travel. Council timesheets reflect the many meetings and conferences we attend.

Pat singles out three council members and the amounts they spent on travel. I was one of them. The fact is, each of us as a council member is assigned to various committees. We also attend national conferences – NIGA, NCAI, ATNI. Dee Pigsley, as tribal chairman, has an obligation to represent the tribe and attend numerous meetings, and must take many trips. (Incidentally, the charges against me, as shown in Pat's letter, reflect the fact that for many months, my tribal credit card carried the travel expenses of another council member who did not have a credit card of her own.)

Council members have an obligation to represent the tribe at local and national meetings, to speak on behalf of the tribe about our needs and issues, and to negotiate and fight for programs and resources. Our accomplishments, including protecting our sovereignty, are the results of our efforts.

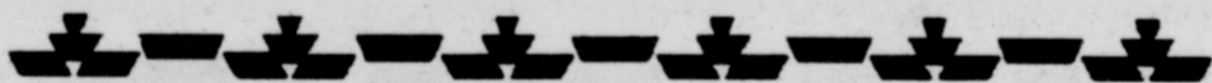
How else did the Siletz Tribe achieve our community clinic, our self-governance funding, our housing projects, and Chinook Winds? They didn't just come to the tribe by magic or because council members just sat around. It was because the Tribal Council fought for them. The council also fought side-by-side with the National Indian Gaming Association and the National Congress of American Indians on proposed legislation that would have damaged Indian rights and tribal sovereignty. We encourage our own legislators as well as other members of the Native American caucus in Congress to support our cause.

Pat states that "An elders program should be funded first before the Tribal Council is funded, especially for junkets (such as all Tribal Council members going to Hawaii in October) and other unnecessary spending."

Here again, we need to set the record straight. Not "all Tribal Council members" will make the trip as Pat alleges. Only three – Tribal Chairman Pigsley and council members Lillie Butler and Reggie Butler – will attend.

Some people may think this is just a "junket." It isn't! They will attend a very important AmerInd-sponsored conference to discuss increased access to housing financing. The conference just happens to be in Hawaii.

I, myself, have taken trips to Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, Las Vegas, and other places for business purposes. Sometimes I may be under the weather, but I still feel obligated to make the trips nevertheless. Council members certainly are



To the editor:

In the September issue of Siletz News, Vol. 29, No. 9, there was a Passage on page 24 to the brothers who are locked up, saying that because we are outta' sight doesn't mean we are outta' mind and prayers, placed by the Butlers.

I would like to say thank you. It's good to know that we are thought of and prayed for. Know that you are thought of and prayed for too.

Much love and respect,  
Dan R. Sullivan, Jr.

not in this because of the money or to take trips. Although it is difficult at times, what motivates us is our love for, and dedication to, our tribe.

Pat asks, "Why are our elders being ignored?" I regret that Pat failed to disclose in her letter the following facts:

- For the past two years, \$30,000 was distributed **only** to the elders as a Christmas bonus. This has been budgeted again in 2001.
- In addition to the dollars stated above, \$20,000 has been allocated annually to the elders group for activities of their choice. These have included attending other tribes' gatherings, plus a trip this year to the Pendleton Round-up.
- Last year, an additional \$10,000 was given to the elders to attend the National Indian Council on Aging in Duluth, Minn., and in 2001, \$15,000 has been allocated to attend the next NICOA conference.
- \$45,000 was allocated for an elders coordinator because the council saw the need for someone to help them coordinate their activities.
- The council also allocated \$40,000 to purchase a new van for elders.
- The council has annually funded \$7,500 for the elders conference, hosted by the Siletz Elders.
- On a monthly basis, the Tribal Council provides elders with certificates for meals at the Chinook Winds buffet.
- At each entertainment show, the Tribal Council provides the elders with a block of admission tickets.

The council will continue to do what it can to help our elders.

Another point of clarification is Pat's inference that the Tribal Council was opposed to per capitas.

During 2000, when the Tribal Council realized there might be sufficient gaming revenues to justify the distribution of per capitas, we began discussing plans for such distribution in 2001.

In the July issue of Nesika Illahee, I wrote an article in which I stated that the council was considering a plan for per capitas, but needed to wait for a final audit of gaming revenues.

The important fact to remember is that **no council member has ever been opposed to per capitas**. We knew we had to comply with the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) and get approval of the per capita distribution plan from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The council understood that sufficient gaming revenues needed to be set aside to enhance tribal programs and services, including the funding for tribal government operations and economic development. Whether IGRA mandated it or not, we council members knew the tribe needed to set aside adequate funding for the future of our children and our children's children.

That meant we couldn't just arbitrarily decide to give out per capitas without knowing how much we could afford. We needed to balance the needs of individual members today with the needs of the tribe tomorrow. I feel confident that our tribal members understand and agree with that view.

As it turned out, Chinook Winds generated sufficient revenues last year to enable us to provide relatively generous per capitas this year. I say "relatively" because I think we all know we will never be able to compete with our neighboring tribe. They have the location! I am pleased that we will be able to make a \$516 per capita distribution this year from last year's revenues as soon as the BIA approves our plan.

By the way, I want to remind all eligible tribal members to submit copies of their Social Security cards to Lisa Norton, Enrollment Department, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, P.O. Box 549, Siletz, OR 97380.

In summary, I wish to state again that I felt compelled to write this article because of the misinformation being disseminated. I appreciate the time you took to read this and hope this helps you understand that Tribal Council members are concerned with what happens to our membership and the future of our tribe.