Tribal 'Change Team' takes shape; promotes Two Spirit/LGBTQ equality

In July 2010, the Siletz Tribe received a grant from the Western States Center to help the Tribe promote equality for our Two Spirit/lesbian, gay, bi, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) Tribal members. The Western States Center in Portland, Ore., is an organization with a mission to build a progressive movement for social, economic, racial and environmental justice in the eight western states.

The Tribe has participated in a year-long cohort with other organizations that serve people of color.

The grant's goals and objectives focuse on the following:

- Bringing together a full network of organizations within Tribal departments and outside agencies to provide services and supports to family wellbriety
- Bringing information, curricula, roundtable meetings, trainings and technical assistance regarding LBGTQ constituents and members
- Creating a model for Tribal departments to respond more effectively to the needs and issues of our LGBTQ constituents and members
- Providing trainings to transform organizational culture and structure in regards to going back to our old ways of being accepting and equal no matter what our preferences are
- Developing resources and protocols for assisting LGBTQ constituents and members to navigate systems with fairness

At the end of the day, we are here to recognize our LBGTQ/Two Spirit Tribal members as an important part of our membership and address their unique barriers.

Earlier this year, the Change Team along with Aimee Santos-Lyons from the Western States Center hosted a retreat in Lincoln City to provide training to our staff and allies. We also were joined by Se-ah-don Edmo from Lewis & Clark College.

The retreat focused on building relationships with staff and different departments within the Tribe. We participated in exercises to build our capacity and knowledge about the LGBTQ/Two Spirit movement.

A large part of the training also focused on recognizing gender oppression and building our skills to intervene. During the retreat, we focused on goals and outcomes that will create positive change within the Tribe and the services we offer to our members and families.

The following programs were represented at this staff retreat: 477-Self Sufficiency, Elders, Vocational Rehabilitation, Behavioral Health, Education, Legal, Administration and Tribal Council.

A work plan and timeline were created to track our progress and accomplishments. To date, we have met the following goals:

- Created a leadership model that will guide the Change Team
- Create/adopt Safe Zone symbols (many staff posted the logo below left in their offices). LGBTQ Tribal members can feel safe discussing or asking questions of these staff.
- Created a brochure to provide basic education and awareness of LGBTQ/ Two Spirit and to show diversity in families
- Participated in different Tribal events. The Change Team was present during the annual Health Fairs that took place in each office.
- Adopted gender-neutral restrooms at the Salem Area Office
- Review of Tribal Personnel Manual and 477-SSP Policy Manual (in progress)

The Change Team has many other goals and objectives that we will be working on in the next couple of months. The Change Team will be an ongoing group that will work to create/change policies to promote equality and awareness of LGBTQ/Two Spirit Tribal members. We will work to ensure that new and existing policies are created or changed to explicitly make them inclusive of LGBTQ needs.

Courtesy photo

Change Team from left: Tracey Worman, vice chairman; Jenifer Most, community representative; Norma Trefren, secretary; Sonya Moody-Jurado, community representative; Kurtis Barker, chairman; Jamie Mason, community representative; Anna Renville, community representative; and Andrew Johanson,treasurer. Not pictured: Sherry Addis, Felicia Carmona and Delina John.

The Change Team has adopted the following mission statement:

"The CTSI Change Team promotes the renewal and reclamation of our traditional and cultural ways of thinking that values all members of our Tribe. We are committed to help create a safe, open and caring environment to all LGBTQ/Two Spirit individuals, families and allies. We work to ensure that policies, practices and people welcome, value and treat equitably two-spirited individuals in the work place and in our Tribal community. Our vision is of a Native people helping a Native community reach a goal of equality amongst all members, inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation. We recognize that as a Tribe and work place, we would be diminished without each and every one of us."

Several studies have shown that LGBTQ people (especially youth) face unique barriers in regards to self-sufficiency. LGBTQ youth face even more barriers/oppression and face higher health risks, homelessness, lack of access to higher education, suicide and involvement with alcohol and drug programs.

It's also commonly known that LGBTQ adults and youth who are people of color experience much higher levels of oppression and discrimination.

If you have questions or ideas on how the Change Team can create an environment within the Tribe that is more accepting of our LGBTQ/Two Spirit Tribal members, please contact Kurtis Barker at 800-922-1399, ext. 1247, or 541-444-8247.

Enter First Freedom Student Competition with essay, video

The First Freedom Student Competition is a national essay and video contest offering high school students an opportunity to compete for $2,500 awards as they examine the First Amendment and the history and implementation of religious freedom in American democracy and the world today.

The year's topic, guidelines, student flyer and classroom poster can be found at firstfreedom.org/.

The online student registration deadline is Nov. 14. The video upload deadline and postmark deadline for mailing the entry and its accompanying materials is Nov. 26.

Elders Council Meeting

Oct. 8 • 1-4 p.m.

Chinook Winds Casino Resort

For more details, contact Rachelle Endres at 800-922-1399, ext. 1261; 541-444-8261; or rachellee@ctsi.nsn.us

Siletz veterans office open daily for you

Tony Molina is available for all Siletz Tribal veterans. He is in the Tribal administration building in Siletz on Monday-Friday to help you get information for your VA benefits.

Additionally, he needs your help to update our veterans' roster, especially for those who are currently serving.

Call Tony at 541-444-8330 or 800-922-1399, ext. 1330.

A note from our veterans coordinator

By Tony Molina

All of our veterans and families can call me 24/7 at home at 541-444-2828 or on my cell at 541-272-2818.

This will help since I'm only in the office part-time. My office number is 541-444-8330 or 800-922-1399, ext. 1330.

I thank all of our veterans for their service to our nation.Thank you!