

Chairman's Report

From: Delores Pigsley

By the time you receive this Newsletter, another election may be over.

I may be your councilman for another term; then again, I may not. Whatever the outcome, I feel I can reflect on the past 10 years with satisfaction that we made significant accomplishments.

It would please me greatly to be able to continue to serve for another term - to follow through on the important programs and issues that we began. That, however, is/has been up to you, the General Council.

Whatever the outcome, this is an excellent opportunity for me, as your current Tribal Chairman, to share with you, a few of my thoughts about the Tribe and the Tribe's future.

I would like to begin with a few words about "respect for Elders" - about which we have heard so much lately. Those are just empty words unless they are translated into action.

The question is: what can we do to express our respect for our Elders.... to give those words real meaning for the lives of our Elders? We, on the Tribal Council, have been sensitive of the fact that because of our limited resources, we have been unable to do all that needs to be done. And because of declining timber resources, the need is getting even greater.

Our struggle to develop a gaming enterprise was to generate revenues that would help improve the life of our people. And it goes without saying that our children and Elders have been high on our list of priorities. Our gaming center is becoming a reality and within the next year, we will be able to begin addressing these pressing needs in a meaningful way....not just by empty words.

But while meeting the current needs of our people, our Council must also weigh what is needed to meet future needs. As I said three years ago, when we first launched our gaming effort, "gaming is only the means to an end; it is not the end in itself."

We must ensure that a substantial amount of our gaming revenues are invested for the future - including property and economic enterprises. We must not be caught with all our eggs in one basket. We must diversify. The future of gaming is promising for the immediate future but it may not be ten years from now. The

market may be saturated or the gaming laws affecting Indians may change. Just a few years ago, timber was thought to be the best tribal resource available until the endangered species suddenly appeared.

While keeping our focus on our own tribal needs and issues, we must not lose sight of, and be actively involved in, national issues that impact us. It was only after the US Congress adopted Termination as a national policy and after the Siletz Tribal Termination Act was passed, that the Termination Policy was reversed. It was because tribes across the country joined forces to reverse that misguided policy.

And more recently, it was the coalition of tribes in the National Indian Gaming Association, fighting against the Anti-Indian gaming forces, that prevented IGRA from being severely weakened or Indian gaming destroyed. The Siletz Tribe contributed to that effort.

Our members must understand that the Council's active participation in these national organizations is an obligation - to ensure that our tribal sovereignty, which is constantly being threatened, is preserved.

Finally, I would like to say something about being a Council Member. We often hear on the one hand that being on the Council is a thankless job; and on the other, that we are in it for the money. At eight dollars an hour, we certainly aren't in it for the money (and most council members don't submit claims for all the time contributed).

And as for being vilified with irresponsible charges hurled at us, at times, we feel it is a thankless job, frustrating and discouraging.

But the truth is, there are rewards that can't be measured in monetary terms - it is in seeing that the time and effort devoted to the work of the Council bear fruit.

In that connection, this has been a spirited, emotionally charged election. It's unfortunate that there were, at times, damaging, irresponsible charges made against certain candidates and staff.

Just as our Tribe must be constructively involved on a national level to protect tribal rights and sovereignty, each of us in the Tribe, has a responsibility to be involved constructively in the tribal government - to make sure we understand, preserve and strengthen our own Tribe - not to tear it apart.

Too many tribes have been weakened, some virtually destroyed, because their members have lost respect for each other and have torn their tribes apart by sheer negativism.

We must now put aside our personal animosities and endeavor to work together in accomplishing our goals - to continue the work of the Council in achieving a better life for our people.

Positive support for the Chinook Winds Gaming Center has been evidenced by several letters of support I have recently received. Following this report are just a few I would like to share with the Tribal Membership.

Dear Ms. Pigsley,

Thank you and the Tribe's members for caring about the opinions of Lincoln City residents regarding the new gaming center.

My only concern at this time is the traffic problem. I live in the Taft area and is very difficult at the present time (especially in summer) to go north out of town. My family and roots are in Tillamook County. Even though I often travel East Devils Lake Road in the heavy traffic times, it's a bad situation.

Knowing that changing traffic patterns is a long term item, it needs to be dealt with the sooner the better.

My family were early settlers in South Tillamook County (early 1870's) and my parents and grandparents always spoke highly of the coastal Indians.

I'm happy for you to have this chance to improve your livelihood. I can see no reason to oppose what the state allows. My personal opinion is that we have all reached a sorry state when we can no longer fund our government and government entities without gambling which seems to take much of it's monies from the poorer families.

However, go for it!
Audrey Knotts