

Council: reform measure would be significant change

(Continued from page 1)

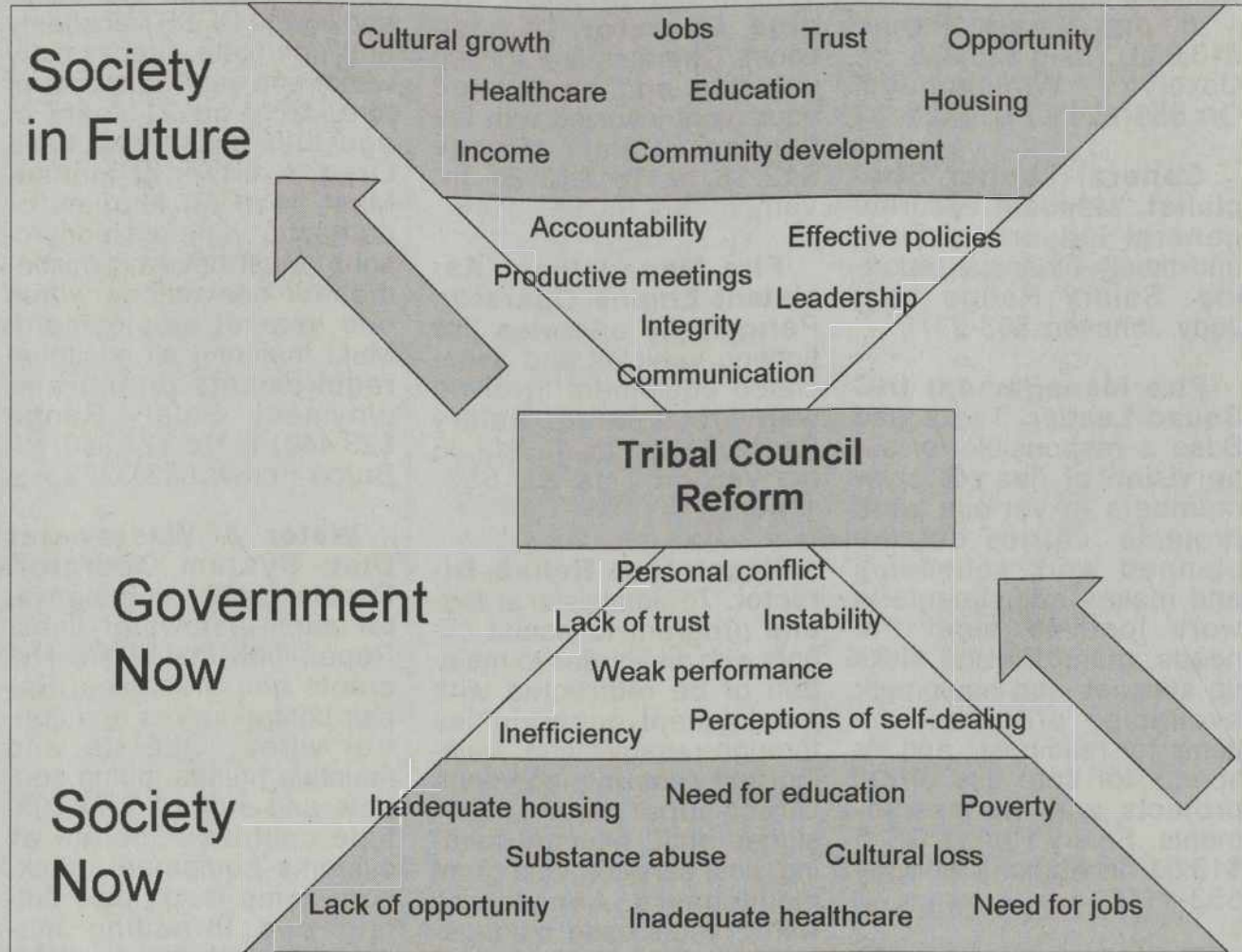
The picture at right, distributed and much-discussed at the meeting, illustrates the problems that have led to the need for Council reform, along with the idea that good governance is essential in forming the basis of a healthy community.

"If we're really going to listen to the membership," said one councilor, "the change has to come, whether we like it or not. It's going to be a personal decision—it's up to each individual whether we want to make the change for our people."

Proposed committee structure

As a way to start doing what it can, Council considered a proposal to adopt an internal, three-committee system to help it manage responsibilities more effectively and monitor its own performance through a limited system of checks and balances.

Under the proposed system, a Governance Committee would recommend policies and procedures, an Audit Committee would track compliance with those policies, and a Rules Committee would recommend disciplinary action in cases of non-compliance. In addition, the Governance and Audit Committees would have responsibilities to oversee certain other areas of Council business.



For details on the committees, how they would work, and why they would help Council become a more effective leadership group, please see the accompanying article in this issue of the paper.

Council response to committee proposal

Council members posed numerous questions and made several observations in an active discussion about the committees and whether they could help Council do its job more effectively.

Many spoke to the need for greater trust and accountability on Council and in the tribal organization. Members were unsure whether the proposal would work, but they also showed willingness to give the idea a serious try.

"Somebody's going to have to start following some rules around here," said one of the chiefs. "Right now, if somebody loses a job, they come to Council; if somebody loses a court case, they come to Council. We

have to close the loopholes. If the loopholes are closed, if there are some rules people followed, it could be a lot better."

Another councilor stated concern that forming new committees to improve the operation of Council wasn't addressing the big picture of problems on the reservation. "Yeah, this is workable," he said, "this is doable. But it [problems on Council] is only one of many

symptoms. If you address this one you don't do a whole lot because we have other problems that are bigger."

The member's statement captured widespread sentiment. Throughout the day, several others also said they wanted to be doing more to address major problems in the community. But members acknowledged that strong leadership on Council would translate into doing a better job of tackling community issues.

"We need to make ourselves more accountable to the people," said one. "This same council has been on a long time. It's got to be accountable; if we make a change and are accountable, people will see it and respect that. I think it [the committee system] would make us more accountable."

Another member, who said he thought the committee system would be a step in the right direction, also said that, "We haven't made a dent in that yet, what we're supposed to be doing" to move our community forward. "Once we get there maybe we'll get the trust of the people. We're a long ways away."

Overall, reception of the committee structure was posi-

tive, not because anyone thought it would improve the Tribes' situation all by itself, but because it would strengthen leadership and lay a better foundation for meeting challenges in the future.

"It's a way to measure our performance as leadership," remarked a member. "It helps with the need, to follow up, to be accountable. Membership has asked us to look at checks and balances on what we do. The three committees would help implement those checks and balances. They would help us operate in way that's feasible, that's right. The key point I wish would happen is to build a more cohesive group on Council, to address the problem of us undermining each other."

Council was supportive of looking into the committee idea further. Not wanting to move too rapidly, however, one of the chiefs asked for more time to study the matter. "We're taking a major step here in trying to meet Tribal Council reform," he said. "We ought to make sure we understand it and help the people understand it."

A motion was made and passed to continue working on the idea and address it again in a later session.

U.S. House committee approves bill to combat Indian meth use

(AP) — The U.S. House Judiciary Committee has approved legislation to make federal grants available to help combat methamphetamine in Indian Country.

The measure sponsored by Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., now heads to the House floor.

Udall said larger meth legislation passed by Congress last year "unintentionally left out" Indian tribes as possible applicants for some grant programs.

"Our criminal justice, welfare

and substance abuse systems in Native America country face substantial obstacles in their tremendous fight against meth," Udall said in a news release. "This legislation seeks to provide assistance in the fight by allowing tribes, consistent with tribal sovereignty, to apply for these grants just as states can."

In New Mexico alone, Udall said the state Department of Public Safety handled more than 400 cases involving meth in

2004. But, he said the situation can be worse in American Indian communities where the use rate is more than double that of other ethnicities. Additionally, he said when the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs surveyed tribal law enforcement officials, more than 70 percent of them said meth is the drug that poses the greatest threat to their reservation.

American Indian filmmaker Phil Lucas was 65

BELLEVUE, Wash. (AP) — Phil Lucas, an award-winning film producer and director who made a career of telling the stories of American Indians, has died at age 65.

Lucas, a Choctaw, died Sunday, Feb. 4 of complications following heart surgery.

In his four decades as a filmmaker, Lucas wrote, produced or directed more than 100 feature films, television series and documentaries in an industry that often stereotyped Indians.

"He's definitely one of the pioneering creative forces in American Indian life," said Hanay Geogamah, a professor of theater and American Indian studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Among his films were "The Broken Chain," about the Iroquois Confederacy, and "The Honour of All," a documentary about how the Alkali Lake Indians in British Columbia became almost entirely sober in the 1980s after being 100 percent alcoholic 20 years before.

Lucas also co-produced and co-directed the PBS series, "Images of Indians," about Hollywood stereotypes of American Indians, and directed the 1994 television documentary series, "The Native Americans," for which he won an Emmy.

He was also nominated for an Emmy for his film "Dances for a New Generation," a documentary about the American Indian Dance Theater.

Lucas, who lived in the Seattle suburb of Issaquah, also consulted on television shows such as "Northern Exposure" and "MacGyver."

Lucas was born in Phoenix and grew up seeing racism, which helped inspire his film career, said Gary Robinson, Lucas' production partner and friend.

Lucas received a visual-communications degree from Western Washington University in Bellingham, and had taught at Bellevue Community College, east of Seattle, since 1999. He ran the school's annual American Indian Film Festival.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Lou, and five children.

Contractor to remove Chiloquin Dam

(AP) — A contractor has been chosen to remove the Chiloquin Dam to open up spawning habitat for endangered suckers in Upper Klamath Lake in southern Oregon.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation said last Tuesday that Slayden Construction Group of Stayton, was awarded the \$9 million contract to remove the dam, an irrigation diver-

sion built in 1914 on the Sprague River outside the town of Chiloquin.

The 11-foot-high dam is scheduled to be removed by the end of 2008. It is to be replaced by pumps to serve the Modoc Point Irrigation District.

"This is a significant step in helping to restore the traditional fishery for the Klamath Indian Tribes, which have reserved fishing rights in the area," said

Steve Thompson, head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service California-Nevada office.

Besides being protected by the Endangered Species Act, the suckers are a traditional food for the Klamath Tribes, who conduct a ceremony each year near the dam to welcome the spawning run of the fish.

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