

Council Relations Coordinator Has Set A Goal To Improve Communication

By Peta Tinda

Tribal Council Relations Coordinator Dakota Whitecloud stops the interview when Tribal Council member Wesley West comes in holding a file the size of a phone book.

Seems he's not sure of the numbers.

"See, these are last year's numbers," Whitecloud explains, pointing to the page. "You need to be looking at this year's, located... right here," she says. West thanks her, leaves and the interview starts again.

"So, as I was saying, my job is to communicate with exterior and interior entities, whether it be Tribal members, federal and state officials, private industries, all different types of entities, and relay that information to the Tribal Council."

That, she says, is the main focus of her position.

As Tribal Council Relations Coordinator, Whitecloud does all those things, as well as attend just about every meeting the council has, so she can track different issues that the council wants to follow up on.

Doing that might mean setting up meetings, calling and making appointments or doing follow-up correspon-

dence with people.

"It's stressful but rewarding," said Whitecloud.

Whitecloud, who has worked for the Tribe for 15 years, is known for her matter-of-fact demeanor and as someone to see when the job needs to get done. "If something needs doing, I do it," she said.

Her first position was as an assistant to the Tribal general and legal managers. Since then she's worked as assistant Tribal court clerk, before working in Tribal finance as executive assistant to the finance officer for three years.

She feels that working with the different branches over the years has given her a solid basis for communication with the various Tribal departments.

"If I don't know the answer, I know exactly who to call to get the answer."

Whitecloud attends weekly meetings with the Tribal Council to bring forth any issues that may have arisen during the week.

She often takes note of things that the council doesn't want to fall through the cracks.

"If certain directives are given, I

track them and let council know the status of them," she said.

The most challenging aspect of her job is "helping the membership to understand that even though they may feel they need to have certain information, it may not be possible to provide the information that people are asking for at the present time."

Its human nature to want information, Whitecloud said, so if Tribal members feel they are being left out of the loop or not provided with the information they want, they naturally get upset.

"So it's my responsibility to explain." She often has to ask people to be patient until she can get them an answer or until a decision has been made.

She wants the membership to know that she is always available.

"If the council is not available, then they can talk to me and I will relay the information to the council. I'm here for them and even if I'm in a meeting, the staff knows they can come and get



Dakota Whitecloud

Photo by Peta Tinda

me and I'll make time."

For the future, Whitecloud wants to provide more avenues of communication "that are open and honest between the council and the membership. That's one of my personal goals."

In her spare time, Whitecloud continues to make the beautiful leatherwork she is known for. She can often be seen at local pow-wows, either selling her leatherwork or just enjoying the celebration. She likes camping, fishing and working on her home in Grand Meadows. ■

Executive Secretary Plays Important Role For Tribal Council

By Peta Tinda

Tribal member Colleen Branson has worked her way up in a very short time and is now enjoying the challenges that come with her job as Tribal Council Executive Secretary.

Branson, the daughter of Marvin and Eleanor Kimsey and the Grand daughter of Nora and Loren Kimsey, started working in housekeeping at the Tribal governance center three years ago. From there she got a job in the Tribal Accounting office, where she worked for about a year.

She kept her nose to the grindstone and when the opportunity arose, she applied for and got the position she wanted.

Now, as the first person one meets when they go to the Tribal Council office, she performs a variety of tasks, from answering phones to greeting visitors to assisting with scheduling for the Tribal Council.

"It's been an excellent opportunity for me to learn," she said. I think I'm in the right spot."



Colleen Branson

Photo by Peta Tinda

She also records the minutes of Tribal and General Council meetings as well as taking notes by hand.

The most difficult aspect of her job, Branson said, is the ability to multitask and handle many different responsibilities at once.

"I have ten bosses," she said, referring to the nine Tribal Council mem-

bers and her direct supervisor, Laurie Smith, the Tribal Council Administrative Assistant. "So it gets pretty busy."

"She's highly motivated and has shown a lot of dependability and initiative," said Smith.

"She is the first contact for the Tribal Council, and because of that, say, if a VIP or a Tribal member with a concern ar-

rives, she offers them a wide range of options to direct them to where they need to be," added Smith.

Branson says she gets her stick-to-itiveness from her father, Marvin, probably best known for his efforts to get the Tribe restored in the early 1980s.

"Mostly, I watched my dad; he was

one of the main players in the Restoration. I watched him work so hard, so I try to follow his example. When something's important, he doesn't stop until it's accomplished."

She says that one of the best aspects of her job is helping people.

"People want to know that you are trying to help them," she said, "that you want to help them. And that's what I do. If I can help, I will."

Branson said she is enjoying her new position and plans to stay the course.

"I want to do a lot more in Tribal government and find out how our government works."

To that end, she takes every training course she can. A class on Roberts Rules of Order, essential to running a meeting, is on the horizon, with similar classes planned.

"It's good for me to be where I'm at," she said. "Even though my part is really small, for me it's important and I'm hoping it's important for the people I work for." ■

Tribal Member Says "Working Here Makes Me Feel Good"

By Toby McClary

The newest employee in the Finance Department finds joy in working for the Tribe. Tribal member and Executive Assistant, Ken Trevino, works closely with Finance Officer, Larry Kovach.

"Larry and I have a great working relationship," said Trevino. "I just try to keep him on time and on task."

Trevino is the son of Tribal member and Tribal Council Coordinator, Dakota Whitecloud. Whitecloud was the former Executive Assistant and Trevino has taken over where his mom left off.

Trevino began working for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in July. Some of his job duties include making arrangements for classes and seminars, setting up appointments and keeping the files up to date for Kovach. He also shadows Kovach in meetings to take notes and does the Financial Officer update every week.

"Preparing the Financial Officer

update is very rewarding to me," said Trevino.

Ken's interest for the Tribe began when he participated in the first time home buyers program about three years ago. He explained that he wanted to give back to the Tribe by contributing his knowledge and experience.

He went on to successfully complete the program and buy his first home in Woodburn, Oregon, where he still lives today. Ken lives alone with his dog, Yukon J. Cornelius.



Ken Trevino

Photo by Toby McClary

He has lived in Oregon his whole life and graduated high school at Roseburg Senior High in Roseburg, Oregon with a 3.5 grade point aver-

age. He then attended Umpqua Community College for a year and a half. Shortly after college he had a few odds and ends jobs until landing a corporate job at Fred Meyer. He worked there for 14 and a-half years spending the last five as an Operations Manager.

"Working for the Tribe is a lot different than working for a corporation," said Trevino. "I have a lot to learn."

Trevino shows interest in what the Tribe has to offer. He wants to take advantage of the education options and says he wants to pursue a degree in business or business accounting.

Ken feels closer to his culture since working for the Tribe and has started to bead, making necklaces and smaller jewelry. He explained that other than his mother getting the product, he has pretty much self-taught himself.

"It's nice to finally be involved with the Tribe instead of just reading about it," said Trevino. "Working here makes me feel good." ■