

## December General Council Meeting Highlights Tribe's Health Plan

By Toby McClary

Tribal Chair Chris Mercier called the meeting to order and Tribal Elder and Council member Wesley "Buddy" West gave the invocation for the December 3, 2006 General Council meeting. All nine Council members were present. The minutes of the November 5, 2006 meeting were approved and the meeting was underway.

For the approximate 170 people in attendance, the meeting turned to new business when Elder Committee Chair Louise Coulson stated that there were three seats available for the Elder Committee. Tribal Elders Tom LaChance, Dakota Whitecloud, Louise Coulson, Janet Phillips and Violet Folden were all nominated for the three positions. Elections for those positions will be held at the January 7, 2006 meeting. Tribal Elders will vote in person.

Also under new business, Financial Risk Manager and Tribal member Debby Larsen introduced her staff Allyson LeCatsas and Tribal member Barbara Steere before giving a Powerpoint presentation on the Tribal member health plan.

Larsen began the presentation with a history of the health plan and its mission statement. She then stated that the Tribe became self-insured in 2004 and remains self-insured. Before becoming self-insured, the Tribe paid a fee to the insurance company for pro-



Photo by Toby McClary

Financial Risk Manager & Tribal Member Debby Larsen

cessing and all areas of insurance, she said. The self-insured plan includes processing claims done by a third party administrator, UMR.

After the presentation, Larsen opened it up for questions from those in attendance.

Tribal Elder Rebecca Crocker requested that copies of the Powerpoint presentation be made available to Tribal members to which Larsen responded with "I don't see a problem with that."

Tribal member Ron Rife asked about the Risk Management expenses being paid to consultants. Larsen turned that over to Finance

Officer Larry Kovach.

Kovach answered Rife by stating that the expenses from 2003 to 2005 were approximately \$500,000 per year and for 2007 it is budgeted at \$150,000.

Tribal Elder Patsy Pullin then asked for information about open enrollment to all Tribal members and what that would do to the health plan.

Tribal Elder Linda Olson stated her concern about the cost of health care and also offered a bit of advice to Tribal members by saying, "We need to

take care of ourselves." Olson also challenged Tribal members to take accountability for their self-care.

Tribal Elder Bernadine Shriver helped to explain ways to save money in the health plan.

Tribal member Perri McDaniel questioned how much money used for the health plan was Tribal and how much was being donated by the Indian Health Service. Larsen explained that it was all Tribal money. McDaniel also stated her concerns about the Tribe not taking care of the Tribal members first, including youth needing braces.

"Health is the heart of our Tribe," said Tribal Elder Maxine Rock.

Tribal Elder Janet Phillips also offered ways to save money and encouraged Tribal members to use the Tribe's clinic and pharmacy for savings.

"You need to look at all programs when cutting costs," said Tribal Elder Monty Parazoo. "Tribal members need to let Tribal Council know their priorities."

Tribal Elder Val Grout said that she felt urgent care services should be advertised in *Smoke Signals* and also stressed her concerns with taking generic medication as opposed to name brand medication stating that they are not all equal.

Tribal member Michael Bolton said that he felt Tribal member spouses should be able to be covered by the Tribal insurance.

"I was unaware that my spouse was eligible for health care under my plan," said Tribal Elder Steve Rife. "My wife is now deceased and I'm paying all of the bills out of pocket."

The meeting was then opened up to the door prizes during which Dorothy Short, Sylvia Fuller and Jesse Robertson all won \$50 and Candy Robertson won \$100. The Elders' Committee also had a raffle with items being donated from the Elders Bazaar held on Friday, December 1. Winners from the raffle included LaDonna Norwest, Dwayne Wheeler, Marilee Norwest and Betty Reed.

The next General Council Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 7. ■

## Where are they now: A Glimpse At The Success Of The 1999-2000 Hatfield Fellow

By Angie Sears, Tribal Mentee

Direlle Calica, a member of the Warm Springs Tribe, received the opportunity of a lifetime as she experienced first hand what happens on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C.

Calica, the 1999-2000 Hatfield Fellow, served her fellowship in Senator Smith's office working hand-in-hand with the legislative assistant for Indian Affairs.

When she entered the program she was searching for insight. Calica had worked as an intern on the Hill twice prior to receiving the Hatfield Fellowship, but was disappointed in how shallow her experiences were during both internships. The internships were for a short period of time and did not allow her to gain the knowledge and experience she had desired.

"I felt that with the Fellowship I would get a more in-depth opportunity to be engaged with what's really happening on the Hill for an extended period of time," Calica said. "I would also be able to get a staff's perspective this time, and be involved in the actual process."

The Hatfield Fellowship provides opportunities for aspiring young politicians that an internship can not. Interns typically work for a short period of time, and are given very little hands-on experience. The Fellowship is designed to provide a well-rounded experience for the recipient. The Fellow works for a full year, and receives actual job responsibilities.

"The big difference between a Fellow and a staffer is the time frame," said Calica. "A Fellow works in a one-year program, and a staffer has a permanent position."

Prior to entering the Fellowship program, Calica attended Portland State University where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political & Social Science. She had developed an interest in policy, law, and government at an early age, and had immersed herself in leadership activities during high school.

Perhaps her interest stems from early childhood memories of traveling to Washington, D.C. with her parents, who were both involved with education and natural resources issues concerning Native Americans.

The Hatfield Fellowship was very inspirational for Calica. In fact, it was the work she was involved with in putting together potential pieces of legislation that would prompt her to continue on to law school after the completion of the Fellowship. Calica received a J.D. degree in Law from Lewis and Clark Law School in 2005.

"I thought what a great opportunity to look into going to law school and pursuing that route, in terms of putting together a policy that will one day be presented to public law or becoming a statute," said Calica. "Getting to know some of the council on the Hill was also very inspiring for me. It was getting the opportunity to hear what they do and see what roles they



Photo by Sibhan Taylor

Warm Springs Tribal Member Direlle Calica

play, as well as seeing them advise other members of what they can do within the parameters of law."

The highlight of Calica's Fellowship experience was traveling to Canada with the American Political Science Association (APSA) and getting a snap shot of what was happening within the Canadian Parliament. It allowed her to see what was happening with the indigenous people in two different countries that neighbor each other, and provided her with a parallel exposure to the difference between U.S. policy and the Canadian Government.

"It broadened my interest in politics regarding Tribes and Indig-

enous people, and took it to a new level of exposure for international policy in working with indigenous people and how that varies from country to country," said Calica. "I was able to see that the way Congress engages with Tribes in a government-to-government relationship is vastly different from the way the Canadian Parliament engages with Tribes."

Currently, Calica works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a Tribal Liaison for the Northwest division. She feels that her current role with the Corps is very similar to the operations of a congressional office. Calica works with a team of five liaisons who all work in different locations.

"I sit at a regional level and I tend to use the parallel of how a congressional office is organized because the team has a hands-on government-to-government interaction with Tribes," said Calica. "I keep a sort of policy perspective of what we're doing, how we engage Tribes with certain issues, and the impact our projects have on Tribes."

"I think what I've learned in the Fellowship is really helping with what I'm doing now. We as a Corps do a lot of interface with Congress; most of our districts are funded by Congress," she said. "So I think my time on the Hill has helped me to understand how all of that works; the timing of things and what committees will have an impact on various Tribes." ■