

Director McLeod: From my heart to yours



**JENNIFER MCLEOD,
DIRECTOR, UNIT I**

Aaniin, Anishinaabek, I am very worried about our tribe. We have some serious challenges facing us in 2015, and 2016 will probably not be any better. Sequestration and the slow economic recovery in the United States is hitting our nation, our tribe and our families hard. In the two years that I have been on this board of directors, I (and other board members as well) have often brought up the need for a strategic plan, the need for prioritization due to loss of revenue (from grants as well as our businesses), and the need for a plan to realize the vision for our people that is spelled out in our tribal Constitution. More recently, I have been pushing for a logical separation of duties and powers that would better position our tribe to take on these challenges by putting the BEST people in the RIGHT positions for the success of our tribe.

I strongly believe our elected chairperson needs to work in the political arenas, he is beyond “good” at it. He’s VERY good at it. However, by his own word, his business sense is only “better than most.” Unfortunately,

the financial challenges we are facing requires a level of ability that goes far beyond “better than most.” Our tribe needs expertise. I have worked hard to maintain a professional perspective and have not made this a personal issue against the current chairperson. My presentation and supportive arguments have been based on principal and a common sense approach. However, others have taken it to a different level and are asserting otherwise. But think about it, if you owned a business or were responsible for running an agency, whom would you hire? A politician? Or an individual with the skills, experience and expertise to help you through hard times and keep you on the road to success? Personally, I want the politician to stay in the political arenas, and for our tribe to hire someone extremely well qualified to run the day-to-day operations.

As a result of my position, the chairperson is using his political prowess to distort, distract and deceive from the simple logic of the best person in the right job, causing chaos in the boardroom and confusion in the workplace. When that hasn’t worked, he then seeks to discredit and destroy anyone he feels is in his way. One need only read his monthly tirades in our newspaper to find evidence of this. One need only watch the Livestream videos or attend a board workshop to witness for yourself what is happening. This is completely unacceptable, and is proof that this change is necessary. Success for our people cannot be achieved when there is a toxic leader doing everything he can to prevent progress.

I have been trying hard to avoid writing about this in this very public way, hoping that the board could successfully navigate through the manipulations of our

meetings, but it has been next to impossible, as the chairperson allows meetings to languish to avoid the topic altogether. Example, due to the chairman’s running of the meetings, we once spent nearly 45 minutes discussing a toilet, leaving just a few minutes to address separating the duties of the chairman from a CEO (or whatever we decide to call the one in charge of day-to-day operations), hard to believe? Watch the online Livestream video.

The chairman asserts that too much time has been wasted due to my efforts to separate the politician from day-to-day operations. Near as I can gather, I’ve had less than an hour of the board’s scheduled time. I could be wrong. However, even if it were a WEEK of time, the future of our tribe deserves careful consideration and discussion, and even a week would not be too much. What little time has been actually spent thus far, is nothing compared to the seriousness of the issue.

From those who oppose the separation, you will hear all types of arguments, including “we already have a CEO.” Well, look at our organization chart, and tell me the job title (other than the chairman) that is responsible for the day to day operations and reports directly to the tribal board of directors. There is no such position.

You will hear words such as “power grab” and “destabilizing the tribe” or “we will lose our investors.” These fears may be real, perhaps even justified, but the blame for these fears is directed at the wrong person and the wrong circumstances. Ask yourself, who is really after the “power?” The only person I hear saying anything about “power” is the chairman, and he constantly cries out that he is going to

be “stripped of his authority.” The authority of the chairperson is spelled out clearly in our Constitution and was there when the current chairperson decided to run for office. None of that will change. Allegations of turning the chairperson position into a “ceremonial figurehead” are unfounded and serve only to excite our people into believing that some gross injustice is occurring when it is not.

As for “destabilizing the tribe?” I believe having someone accountable more than every four years in an election cycle is far more stabilizing than what we currently have. If our tribe had an employee running the day-to-day operations, we could demand goals, profitability and progress. If it didn’t happen, guess what? As Donald Trump would say, “You’re FIRED!” As it stands now, accountability for the current chairperson will occur in two more years. Can our tribe wait that long? What do you think our bankers, investors and employees would rather have?

Also, the chairperson’s monthly rants and constant public posts on the Internet against our tribe, our members of the board of directors as well as the keepers of our traditions demonstrates clearly where the lack of stability is occurring. It there are ANY stability concerns from our banks and investors (outside of the simple financial concerns), perhaps it lies with these behaviors.

I am not happy to be writing this article. I would rather have continued to address these issues in the board meetings. However, in the book entitled *The Allure of Toxic Leaders* by Jean Lipman-Blumen, I learned why we follow destructive bosses and corrupt politicians. I’m not asserting that we have a “corrupt politician.”

However, I do feel that many of his behaviors are toxic, and this book teaches how we can survive them. Basically, “survival” all boils down to facts and truth.

Please don’t just take my word for it. Despite my best efforts to maintain professionalism and objectivity, I too am only human, and am growing weary of his “discredit and destroy” campaigns not just against me, but against other members and former members of the board of directors as well. Elders, members and loved ones continue to support that I not “go in the weeds,” and I thank them all for their support and good advice. But for those of you who want facts and truth, you can see it all for yourself in the Livestream broadcasts, monthly publications, board meeting minutes and by talking to those employees and staff who are not in fear of losing their jobs. I have, and despite the thinly veiled attempts to stop me, I am still pushing forward because I believe it is the right thing to do for the future of our tribe.

In closing, I humbly ask for prayers for all who are suffering. At home and throughout the world, people are experiencing deadly viruses, war, natural and man-made disasters, and live an existence that isn’t just day-to-day, but minute by minute. May the Creator bless them all and allow them to find ease to their pain. I am counting my blessings.

As always, if there is anything I can do to help, even if just to lend an ear, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Anishnaabe gagige (Anishnaabe for always),

Jen,
(906) 440-9151
jennifer.mcleod.2012@gmail.com

Website jmcleodsaultribe.com