

# Expressing some thanks and pride in our tribe



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UNIT II**

It's been a long, cold winter and I'm so relieved that spring is on its way. Coming home in the evening during storms or frigid temperatures reminds me of times when I was young and my dad would say, "Let's just be thankful to have heat and a roof over our heads." He always looked like he was in a different place when he stated this, so I know now it was memories he had of not so good times. I've never been cold or hungry, we had very little growing up but truly we didn't starve or freeze, not like our elders have suffered and seen struggling times that most of us will never know, real hard times!

I started this report off inspired about being thankful and just appreciating all we have as a tribe. I am proud to be a member,

I am not losing my culture and I never will. So many hateful things are said and attacks are made that its difficult to see the forest through the trees. But I'm thankful for what we stand for and I know many, many tribal members are as well.

Our tribe has seen many successes and, yes, many failures (we have spoken about those) throughout the years and we have had to fight and scratch through every endeavor we've had. Past leaders and tribal members struggled for what we have. Currently, our tribe employees almost 1,800 people, we have programs that assist members through our ACFS program and has assisted thousands of members the past year, we have our tribal youth program that touched almost 4,000 youth through our programs, a fitness and daycare center that thrives with activity, we have six health facilities that have reached numbers of almost 42,000 visits in a year (not including our Behavior Health program and clinics). Our cultural department and traditional medicine programs promote our way of life and ALWAYS go above and beyond to help our members grow in our traditional ways, our powwows in every community hosted and planned by staff and tribal members every single year. Our men, woman and children who bring our big drums to celebrate

and comfort in members' times of need; our education department that services students in higher education, which provided several college scholarships and job training; our elders meal program that provides healthy meals and good laughs and visits in our communities numerous times every week; our law enforcement and court that protects victims and promotes safe environments for us to live in; our housing department provided down payment assistance and rental programs and home ownership programs that has provided 72 new homes and 438 warm, safe homes for our families; a safe shelter and victims services program that protects our children, woman and men in domestic violence situations; an Environmental Department that looks after our resources; a Communications Department that prepares and sends over 20,000 papers every month and, lastly, five casinos and enterprise businesses that bring in millions of dollars to provide our tribe with its needs.

There are so many mis-truths out there, we do not get grant funding that can even touch the amounts we need to sustain our services, we budget 18 million dollars from our profits to support our programs and the need grows every day in our communities.

My report and message is

I'm thankful, as I know countless members are, for the staff who work countless hours every single day to make our community and family life better, the past leaders that helped us here, dedicated tribal members that volunteer and the current board who work to keep moving forward. I would ask you to keep these good things in mind regardless of what you hear through social media or dumb ads that attack ANYONE (I know that's not politically correct but, my thoughts) I assure you there is a mutual respect with our board and a huge dedication from our staff and members.

I'm saying all this at this time because another election is upon us and, in my experience, it gets so ugly and hateful — people, our staff and families get hurt, and that's not how it should be. I want us all to keep the big picture in mind of what we didn't have compared to what we have now. Take pride in that, our tribe is a steam engine for the Upper Peninsula and even our members and loved ones who live far away can brag. I applaud anyone who is running, because it's tough to have many good ideas and passion for our tribe while always hearing that negative. It'll be a struggle but keep positive and please don't get mucked down in the hatefulness and, please don't get me wrong, I will be the first to say we have many things to

improve on and that will always be the case, we just have to be willing to work hard and not look backwards. Trust me, anyone who knows me, knows I do not have my head in the clouds. I know things need improvement and can be better! I have learned from the past mistakes, sometimes that's why due diligence in our projects or changes take so much time. As I have reported in past reports, we have many different projects worked on daily for advancement, leaders are lobbying for our treaties and trust responsibilities to be upheld daily. Moving ahead in a positive, respectful way is the only thing that will sustain our tribe and it's people.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the families who have lost loved ones this winter, our communities have been hit so hard by loved ones passing and there has been a lot of heartbreak this winter. These tribal members who passed on hold a special place in my heart, I've shared times with them and I believe they are with us still in a very different way. I take comfort in that.

That's all I have to write this time, I will see you at our monthly meeting in the area and look forward to any calls or contacts to meet.

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