

# Balance and wisdom make good decisions



**Aaron A. Payment, MPA  
Tribal Chairperson  
“Representing All Members  
Everywhere”**

Let me begin by thanking you for the opportunity to once again serve and represent you as chairperson. I wake every day and do my traditional Anishinabe Biimaadziwiin prayer to thank the Creator for each new day and ask for the maturity to hear the directions of our ancestors to make good decisions that benefit all the members for generations to come. I ask for balance and wisdom to see past petty conflicts to see what is in the best interest of our people and to keep moving on a positive path forward.

## **REINFORCING OUR ELDERS’ ROLE**

We have had a busy first few weeks. I have spent my time so far getting reacquainted with our elder groups, traveling to their meetings and celebrations and recommitting to building a strong rapport and relationship to reinforce our elders’ rightful role in advising our governing board. One example is the leadership our elders exercised with the tribal candidate forums during the election. The next will be their wise direction in recommitting to evolving our tribal government to include a separation of powers like most other tribes in Michigan.

## **A NEW CONSTITUTION**

In many senses, amending our tribal Constitution is not about accepting foreign ideas but is really about revitalizing our Anishinabe Biimaadziwiin (our Indian way of life) of balance to ensuring that no one branch of government is all powerful. This concept predates European contact and predates the United

States Constitution formation and ratification in 1887. In fact, historical documents clearly show the origin in the Iroquois Confederacy Great Law of Peace, which was designed to balance power. This is a critical need as right now we do not have any rights as citizens to ensure our Constitutional rights are upheld. Right now, any such rights exist only subject to the benevolence of the board of directors. This must change.

We are not a real government if we do not have a separation of powers and a clear delineation of civil and constitutional rights. Please join me in supporting our elder groups in their advocacy on this issue. Others may filibuster and make excuses but there is no greater right that your constitutional rights as citizens of our tribal nation.

## **LIMITED DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO THE CHAIRPERSON**

As you all know, the people of the tribe voted to separate the chairperson and chief executive officer functions for our tribe. While there is a great diversity in what this actually means or what folks understood as they were casting their ballot, the fact remains that the functions have been separated with the provision for the board to delegate the administrative functions to the chair. Well, I am happy to report that though this issue has languished since the people voted in the spring of 2010, upon my request the board voted on July 13, 2012, to delegate the following administrative functions to the chair.

## **TRIBAL CHAIRPERSON AUTHORITY**

**1. Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 2 and 3 below, the Tribal Chairperson is authorized and directed to manage and direct the day to day operations of the Tribe including but not limited to the following:**

**(a) Serving as the ceremonial figure head of the Tribe for public events and visiting dignitaries;**

**(b) Serving as the spokesperson for the Tribe on issues requiring a singular voice of the Tribal Board’s official position;**

**(c) Guiding and direct-**

**ing tribal governmental and business operations to ensure operational efficiency, quality, service, and cost-effective management of resources;**

**(d) Performing any and all duties delegated to, authorized to be performed, or directed to be performed by the Chairperson in any previously adopted motion, resolution, or ordinance;**

**(e) Performing any and all duties delegated to, authorized to be performed, or directed to be performed by the Chairperson in the various Team Member Manuals;**

**(f) Performing all administrative and management functions required to be performed pursuant to the current organizational chart.**

**2. In the exercise of the authority delegated to the Chairperson by the Board of Directors in paragraph 1, the Chairperson shall consult with and shall be subject to the direction and review of the Board of Directors consistent with Article VII, Section 1(n) of the Constitution. All actions taken by the Chairperson pursuant to this delegated authority shall be subject to the authority of the Board of Directors and the Board may review, approve, modify, or rescind any such action. The Chairperson shall report to the Board of Directors at each regularly scheduled board workshop and shall provide an update of any activities, issues, decisions, or other matters requiring the attention of the board. In the event that the Chairperson is unable to attend any such workshop, the Chairperson shall assign the vice chair to provide that report.**

**3. The authority delegated to the Chairperson by this resolution shall continue until modified, rescinded, or extended by a subsequent resolution of the Board of Directors.**

To change the delegation of authority, seven votes would be necessary so it looks like we may just enter an era of relative stability and calm over the operations of the tribe. For the record, though there was some consternation demonstrated by at least one board member, in the end the vote

was unanimous.

## **CHANGES AT THE TOP**

Recently, we received a resignation from the former associate executive director for membership services. I welcome this voluntary resignation. Pursuant to past practice and the delegated authority of the chair, I have appointed an interim associate executive director to ensure continuity of services until we fill the position on a permanent basis. The method I used to select an individual to this interim post was to solicit from each board member their input of whom I should appoint on an interim basis. Though we have several qualified and talented tribal members current employed from which to choose, one individual stood out with the vast majority of the board identifying the individual by name.

Thus, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Angeline Bouley to the position of associate executive director, effective immediately. Angeline holds a master’s degree in public administration, has served as our education director and assistant executive director since 2007 and has over 15 years of administrative experience working for three different tribes in Michigan.

This interim appointment is for a duration less than three months and until such time I can collaborate with the tribal board to rewrite this position to become a lead administrator in terms of a chief of staff to report directly to the chairperson such that the will of the people as evidenced in the recent election is honored along with the separation of the chair and CEO functions.

## **SIMPLE CHANGES?**

At the time I write this report, I am aware that the wage report done recently shows that there is \$1.1 million in potential savings to be had from the results that show a cadre of our team members are overpaid. This same report shows that a segment who are underpaid to the tune of about \$500,000. While I intend to preserve the lower paid salaries of team members, I have no qualms about lowering the higher end salaries in order to afford the pay adjustments to get everyone at least up to the midpoint of the wage and salary study.

**TRIBAL BOARD RETREAT  
A SUCCESS!**

I am very pleased with the outcomes of our retreat, which included building a foundation for a positive rapport among our elected leaders. Those team members who presented their programs did an excellent job and instilled confidence. We spoke of the authority of the chair; the desire of the board to not micro-manage; the need to restructure to organize ourselves around functions rather than personalities; and opening up a dialogue to see each other’s perspectives better. This was intended to be a beginning. We plan to schedule additional sessions to include such planning for our internal services, enterprises and our gaming operations.

I want to invite you to get more frequent updates on my Facebook page by typing in “Aaron Payment.” Also, I want to give a plug for a membership driven site called the “Sault Tribe Guide” which is also housed on Facebook. I hesitated to join Facebook for the longest time, but it is an excellent way to keep up on tribal issues. Please join us.

**SEND ME YOUR EMAIL  
FOR A CHANCE TO WIN  
\$1,000 CASH!**

Finally, with some of the savings of the “twice the chair, half the pay” motto, I am offering a draw chance for a chance to win \$1,000. All you have to do is to send me a working email by Oct. 15 so I can add your name to receive my tribal updates. There is no cost to enter but you must be at least 18 years of age. For spouses of tribal members who handle their email communications, you can also enter but please include the name of the tribal member in the body of the email. Send email addresses to aaronpayment@yahoo.com

## **MEETINGS COMING TO A LOCATION NEAR YOU**

Information will be provided in next month’s paper of meeting time and locations throughout the Upper Peninsula as well as throughout lower Michigan. I cannot wait to see you in person.

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