

Health Committee addressing unmet needs



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It's official. This cold hard winter is over!

As delegate for Region 5 (MI, WS, MN) at EPA's National Tribal Operations Caucus (NTOC), we held our semi-annual meeting to move forward on a slate of critical initiatives designed to fully implement the 1984 EPA Indian Policy. Our

work involves moving forward with a process to ensure that we are adhering to an agency – wide policy for protecting physical and natural resources in Indian country. This includes efforts to include our fisheries as designated use for protection purposes. We are seeking direct implementation of tribal cooperative agreements. What this means is more resources so that we can increase our capacity to manage our environmental-related resources on a more level playing field with the states. I want to thank United Tribes of Michigan for supporting our effort to strengthen EPA/tribal partnership at its recent meeting in Mt. Pleasant.

LOCAL NOTES

Congratulations to all the graduates. What a milestone in your lives! I am especially proud of our tribal graduates from Consolidated Community School

Services (CCSS) Alternative Schools in Newberry and Cedarville. You've overcome significant challenges and demonstrated real fortitude. Congrats! We'll be announcing scholarship winners in next month's newspaper.

The Ad Hoc Health Committee will resume efforts to address unmet health needs in our community. We will be addressing the feasibility of after-hours urgent care in the outlying rural areas and will bring the conversation to the Elders Sub-Committee meeting this June in Newberry.

The local foods movement is vibrant. I want to give a shout out to the Youth Farm Stand project. Part of the project is teaching our youth to be entrepreneurs. Heirlooms seed banks and land restoration, hoop houses to extend the growing season here, expansion of the Hessel

community garden — these are the type of activities that bring our community together across generations. They also strengthen our food sovereignty, food security and traditional ecological knowledge. A big thanks to Monica Cady, Lisa Burnside, Bob Causley and many others who are nurturing this movement.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Independent auditing of financial statements of the tribal government activities, the business-type activities, each major fund and the aggregate remaining fund information through December 31, 2013, is complete. Financial analysis is ongoing. The simplest explanation of our Gaming enterprises is, operating costs are down, but so are our revenues. We recognize that the larger economy is down and that impacts our gaming, but there is much room for improvement.

Costs ticking down and revenue ticking up is the objective. Investment in our workforce and capable management will dictate our ability to achieve those objectives.

On the government side, the largest fiscal 2014 budgeted expenditures are for Direct Services, Consulting/Sub-contracting, and expansion of member services. If budgetary estimates are realized, the tribe's budgetary General Fund balance is expected to remain steady by the close of fiscal 2014. For the tribe's business-type activities, we expect 2014 results will improve based on reduction in operating costs and increase in operating margins.

Summer is here and it sure looks promising.