

Answering recent questions from membership



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It has been such a short time between issues of the paper I will give a very brief rundown of the most asked questions recently brought to me.

What is happening with the

Lansing Casino Project? At this time we are at a standstill until the Supreme Court rules on the Bay Mills case. Little can be moved forward on our case until we know what path we have to take. It has been stated that at the latest we should hear the ruling by late June. That statement is always tempered by, "No one really knows when it will happen."

Do we have a new Human Resource Director yet? The answer is yes. Brenda Johnson has been on the job for just over a month now. She just gave the board a very quick and informative rundown of her first 30 days. The tribal board was very pleased to hear how she dove into her job and the new and exciting perspective she brings. This was very evident in her evaluations and recommendations.

What is the financial health of the tribe? Well, the overall financial picture is somewhat dark for 2015. We have a lot of challenges with so many different factors that cannot be pinned down.

Federal dollars continue to be elusive and vague on if funding will continue or be eliminated. Grants are ending and some are replaced with new conditions and some are just gone. We struggle to find funding to keep these programs running at current levels but with limited availability of dollars we will have to prioritize what is statutory, essential and discretionary. Not an easy task, not a popular job. Everybody believes their programs are completely essential.

Are the five Kewadin Casinos making money? Yes, they are. We still manage to transfer about \$17 million to the government programs. Our continuing chal-

lenge is that the gross revenue of the casinos is on a downward trend as is the entire business sector. We have to continue paying down our debt so we can get out from under the bank's covenants and then reprogram those dollars. The debt should be completely paid back to the banks in 40 months or so.

We have heard lots of rumors about health care; what is going on? That is a tough question. The tribe is in a unique position in the fact that it has tribal members, tribal clinics and tribal employees. These all are affected, but in substantially different ways.

Members are encouraged to sign up for health care coverage but are uniquely not required like everyone else in the United States. This allows our members to slip through the cracks of the system and leaves the limited resources

of the tribe to meet their needs.

Our employees are offered health insurance in which they pay a percentage of the premium. The problem is that the program has been hemorrhaging large quantities of dollars and changes have to come. The clinics are funded almost exclusively by Indian health BIA dollars, grants and third party billing. All three are very volatile or short lived in secure support.

I know this only glosses over the questions with basic answers but I hope this shows what the board deals with daily and there are so many more items not mentioned here.

Thank you for all the phone calls and e-mails.

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