

Causley's February and March unit reports



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UNIT II

I want to apologize for my last month's unit report that was not printed; it was submitted but accidents happen and it was not included. The report was online and is available in this edition.

February report — We have had a very busy month. Throughout this report period, we've had many discussions on the financial health of our tribe. We have been presented with many concerns, factors and funding needed for the coming year. Every budget comes with increased costs, struggles and necessary funding that we will need for the year.

One major cost looming for our tribe is the upgrade and security systems for our telecommunications and MIS throughout our administration and casinos. The total amount requested for the mentioned upgrades and capital expenses for 2013 is \$2.3 million dollars. In the past few years, we have prioritized and always attempted to plan properly, these items need to be completed and I'm confident we will figure the budget and move in a direction that is stable and affordable for our tribe.

It's very difficult but I'm happy to report that we have a board that, so far, has held the line on our spending and continues to stay the course on our debt reduction plan. Back almost nine years, when I was first elected, we were in debt well over \$700 million dollars, through proper planning, constraints, restructuring, reorganization and resolving Greektown, we are now \$33 million dollars in debt and a little over four years from paying that amount in full. This is so important to the elders and members I speak with, I always want to give raises, increase services, buy land

and open new businesses, but all this takes revenue that we simply do not have at this time. I'm proud that we are becoming financially healthy. It is never popular to be frugal and a bean counter, but it is necessary.

Two major projects I have personally been working on is the tribal drug action plan and increased access to health services for our members in Unit II, both have not been funded through tribal dollars at this point, and it's time consuming and takes many people at the table to figure out how to get things done with either just grant dollars or existing funds in the budgets. Both priorities are on track and Director Hollowell and I were able to hold a unit meeting this month to talk with members and ask for input on our outlying areas' needs and concerns on health services.

Our housing division and commission presented some amazing information on housing tax credits and plans we can look into for increased housing throughout our service area. The department has been working with professionals in the business of tax credits exclusively for Indian tribes and diligently came forward with plans for our Odenaang site and spoke about plans throughout the service area in other units. As reported in past reports, we are always in demand for more elder and family units. With input from surveys of community members and the need-based information, the division and commission are moving forward to address those needs. I'm grateful for the hard work all have put into this and it truly was a breath of fresh air to see the department so prideful and excited about the plans for future housing needs.

As stated above, Director Hollowell and I held a unit meeting on Drummond Island this past month, we will be scheduling throughout the unit as well. The board's schedule has been changing weekly with meetings in the Sault at least three days a week, financials, workshops, legislation preparation and constitution reviews. Many items are outstanding and creating plans to move on things are slow. It seems it's been difficult to add items of importance to our agenda when all aren't in attendance or other non-pressing issues come up. We have a lot of business to get resolved

and the last nine years have demonstrated that agendas change quite fast, hiring a CEO, constitutional amendments, additional health services and our tribal drug action plan are the four priorities for me and I will keep them at the forefront.

In closing, I will be in attendance of the downstate Lansing meeting on Feb. 20 and our unit's regularly scheduled elder meetings. If you would like to meet or discuss any items, please contact me at your convenience at Lcausley@saulttribe.net or (906) 484-2954. Baamaapii. Lana Causley.

March report — We have been working on many items with the board of directors, our meetings are filled with items requested by our departments and the following is a list of some items that have been requested to be scheduled by the board: Website update, livestream, sufficient utilization of the site, child welfare, human resource policies, health 24-hour access line, constitution review update, tribal action plan update, existing ethics resolution discussion to implement additional policies and many others.

Along with all the requests from the board that must be scheduled for discussion, day-to-day meetings and business are active. We held our bi-weekly health access workgroup meeting and, during the discussion, many facts and insights were given from those present on the services we have available now and the Affordable Care Act structure we have to look at, including a total of 54,570 visits in 2012. The clinical manager brought forward a draft plan on delivery of medicine thru the U.S. mail, although this would benefit greatly to many, there are many restrictions to this process that include many medications that CANNOT be delivered thru the mail. One item that is completely available to implement at this time is to increase the areas for pick up, again the clinical manager committed to bringing a draft plan to implement the prescription delivery/pick up sites in rural areas for our next meeting.

We also spoke at length about the difference between increased services to rural area members vs BETTER access to services for members, meeting the needs of medical services for our members with the funding we have now is the priority I explained. Outside

units aren't asking for big fancy medical centers, we just want better access with the two existing clinics we have and collaboration with the clinics/private physicians already servicing members in areas. Next month is the deadline for the solid plan to be presented to the board of directors, please keep the calls, ideas and concerns coming, this assists greatly to what is needed.

We also held our first focus group for our drug abuse tribal action plan, we presented the forum with the Hessel elder group and it was very informative. In this meeting I had a first hand look at how much the elders are concerned about the dangers of drug abuse these days compared to the situations in their days. They answered many questions about what abuse means to them, how it affects our tribal communities, what resources they think would work to reduce it and many others. Miigwetch to our group who gave time to our commitment. We will be planning for the other two elder groups along with full community meetings in the next few months. Please look on our website to keep track of the dates and times, we will also have the dates posted at our two centers in Unit II.

We attended the United Tribes of Michigan meeting and legislation conference in Lansing this past week, we met and educated many representatives and state agencies (assigned tribal liaisons) to encourage them about fair, serious tribal consultation and the history of our nation. A full report will be in this article.

During the visit to Lansing, we also held a membership meeting, we had a great turnout and many questions and concerns were brought up. The meeting was relaxed, respectful and a great invite to advance scheduling quarterly meetings in areas in lower Michigan. I am fully supportive of this and will keep it on our schedule for board discussion. I'd like to thank my family members who attended who live down state, it was nice having you there. Thank you to the members I met and for making me feel welcome as well.

One last report on board activity is that the chairman and many board members (I did not attend this year) attended the MAST conference in Washington, D.C., and had success in legislating and educating on behalf of our tribe. Miigwetch to them and to those (staff described each need in their

departments) who prepared them to attend on our behalf.

Holding meetings and being out in the community always brings up the discussion of what our Youth Education and Activities Program has to offer in our area. Our coordinators, Lisa Burnside, Robyn LaTour and Dawn Griffin are in our schools and tribal centers holding these programs for our youth. The lessons are taken out of the Building Circles of Support Partnerships for personal healing, cultural pride and positive change curriculum as well as the Natural Helper Curriculum, both of which is made available with funding from the STAY Project.

Building Circles of Support focuses on creating change with the individual, offering a better understanding of self and others while building trust in the classroom and community, thus creating positive change with the acceptance of self, others and our beliefs.

The Natural Helper Curriculum involves a lot of team building exercises, as well as building positive self-esteem at the same time learning how to identify a possible bullying situation and becoming a peer helper. Lessons from both curriculum's are to provide a fun, safe learning environment for all participants. Listed are just a few of the activities presented in our schools:

- Introduction/setting ground Rules and what's in a name
- Labeling
- Name tag game
- Understanding state of mind
- Mud mind
- Listening and trust walk
- Faces around a bullying circle
- Do you know your neighbor
- Creating bullying scenarios
- Understanding differences
- Build your circle of support
- I'm so grateful to these woman for their dedication to our youth.

If you have questions or want to make sure your child in our area is involved please contact Lisa Burnside (906) 484-2727. She is always approachable and looks for input from parents.

P.S. I've been in the youth van when she picks kids up off the street to attend our activities (with parents permission, of course).

With that I have to close. I will be at our regular scheduled elder meetings this month and hold office hours as requested. If you would like to meet contact me anytime: lcausley@saulttribe.net, (906) 484-2954.