

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Chairman's Report

Quarterly Meeting January 2010

Palace Casino

Good morning,

It is the Second Quarter of our fiscal calendar. It is also the start of a new calendar year. Every year starts with potential and opportunity. A New Year to look forward too as well as a point in time to look back, along with what we accomplished as a government. As promised, we got some money through the tax revenue sharing into our members' pockets for Xmas.

As I told you a year ago Leech Lake use to be looked upon as a role model with visionary leadership. This administration set the goal of again moving Leech Lake toward a vision of what could be and will be, a place that is known as an example of progressive tribal government with a strong commitment to cultural revitalization, a highly trained and educated workforce.

We have made some progress toward that goal and vision. But there is always room for improvement.. I need to remind myself, and you, we need patience because it will not happen in the first year or two. Over the last year and a half this administration started laying the foundation toward reaching that vision and goal.

We will be holding Band Assemblies in the near future to give a full review of current issues, projects, and goals. I am instructing our division directors and staff right now - to start preparing the agendas and timelines for those meetings.

We will have discussion on our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, our youth development plans, education and workforce development efforts. We will also review our housing needs, land acquisition, and healthcare.

In regard to gaming we have become very dependent on those revenues. We have faced threats before from the State of Minnesota including the push a few years ago to build a tribal/state casino. We are facing a very serious threat from the State of Minnesota on the opening of gaming to non-Indian entities. This was proposed last year and was defeated in the state legislature by only three votes.

Now there is a former state legislator who is working full time on this single issue – opening gaming at the race tracks, which will be the first step toward bringing gaming into bars and other outlets. We won't be hurt by gaming at the race tracks but as it grows outside the metro area we will feel the loss of revenues that could cause loss of services that we currently fund from our gaming revenues.

Therefore we have been planning on how to move to diversify away from our heavy reliance on gaming. We have completed and are implementing our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to start diversifying and building our economy, creating jobs and opportunity for small business development. We have been working with a number of partners including U.S. Department of Justice, Treasury Department, and Oweesta Corporation on Economic Development.

Part of this effort is working hard to capture Federal Stimulus funding and securing funding from the Obama administration on workforce development and job training. There is a committee working on a strategy for this and we will be very aggressive on going after this funding to train our people not only for the jobs of today but also for the jobs of tomorrow. A large part of this workforce preparation will be education and making sure we have the education funding available.

Looking ahead we have started and will continue to have a strong focus on investing in our Youth. We will continue to work on our youth development strategy with regional partners and our legislative representatives to develop a regional youth development strategy. We have continued to commit resources to create healthy

recreational, cultural and employment opportunities through Youthbuild, WIA, summer youth employment, conservation corps, and will seek an AmeriCorps program. We will work to increase the scholarship fund and doing all we can so that our kids do not drop out of school but instead graduate and move on to college or vocational technical training.

Health care is a major issue for our people and a major cost to our government. We completed an analysis of our health related operations. And we formed a Reservation Healthcare Workgroup to look at identifying ways of controlling costs and using the savings toward improving services at our six clinics. We are also still looking at the proposed Healthcare Campus partnership with Cass County on the Ahgwahching property.

In order to more fully exercise our sovereignty and jurisdictions this RBC has become more politically proactive at the federal, state, county, and local levels. We want to make sure that our federal issues remain at the forefront with this federal administration and congress.

We are working with Red Lake, White Earth, and other reservations on Federal and State legislative and regional issues. We have held meetings with some of the surrounding counties to improve working relationships, identify common state legislative issues, and developments.

In regards to developments we have told our Division Directors and Housing Authority we are going to become very aggressive on addressing our housing needs. A study by our own DPW found that we have 439 sub-standard homes on the reservation. This is unacceptable and I believe we can come up with a comprehensive plan to solve this problem. In addition to the sub-standard homes we know that we don't have enough homes to meet the needs of our people which has been recently confirmed in the Wilder Study on Homelessness.

We have received a much needed \$473,000.00 grant to work on developing a reservation-wide transportation system to meet the transportation needs of our members. We have also received stimulus dollars to work on our reservation roads and improve our infrastructure.

As you all know the issue of how much land we own has been a high priority. Beginning in this New Year we are taking steps to organize our land department, create a land acquisition committee to strengthen Band ownership of our lands.

To help keep the band members informed of important events, services and issues we are improving the Debahjimon, building a Radio Station, and designing a new Band Website. Additionally a Band Resource Guide outlining our programs and services will be available this February.

These are just a few things to report. In closing I want all employees to know we expect a lot of accomplishments this year. I want to see a lot of accomplishments achieved through this calendar year. To all on behalf the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the RBC I wish all a wonderful New Year and good luck on the challenges we all face in life.

Megwitch
Thank You