



Weekly Message from the Tribal Chairman

April 18, 2005

Dear Tribal Members and Employees:

This week like every other week has been busy, especially since several of us traveled to San Diego. Though, while we were away there were several accomplishments on the home front and I am grateful to Annmarie Johnson, our Tribal Vice-Chair for tending to tribal operations while many of us were on the road. Here is a short summary of our accomplishments far and near:

Travel to NIGA:

This past week, the entire Gaming Management Board, the Menominee Casino management and I attended the National Indian Gaming Association's (NIGA) conference and trade show in San Diego, California. This trade show is probably the second largest gaming trade show in the country, only next to the World Gaming Congress. Legislators Awonohopay and Reiter, both who serve on the Gaming Management Board were in attendance, as were the three community member representatives, Richard "Snuff" Dodge, Petronell Martin and Betty Jo Wozniak. It was great to see old friends and to be on hand to see Ernie Stevens (Oneida) be re-elected to his third term as NIGA Chairman.

On Wednesday, NIGA and the National Congress of American Indians held their second of three round tables for tribal leaders on off-reservation gaming. Again, I participated in this forum and addressed concerns we have about opening up the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) to a congressional amendment process. Of the roughly 35 tribal leaders who spoke, overwhelmingly most tribal leaders opposed any amendments to IGRA. There were, perhaps, five tribal leaders who specifically opposed any off reservation casino development, namely from either New York or Minnesota. Potawatomi Chairman Frank was in attendance at NIGA though he did not attend this forum.

Tribal Attorney Rita Keshena also addressed the round table on the issue of "reservation shopping", another concern of some congressional leaders, she reminded everyone that this wasn't a foreign concept to Indian Country, for many tribes were ravaged by eager "pioneers" who sought the best and most productive lands to homestead and built towns and later cities around such lands. Unfortunately, most of those lands were Indian lands. She reminded us that we "only learned from the best" when it came to sizing up economic opportunity.

Proud moments and heavy hearts:

This past Friday, Legislators Fish, Reiter and I spent four hours touring the forest with some Menominee men who hold our forest near and dear to their hearts. The premise of the trip was to expose us to both good and bad forestry practices. We only saw a fraction of the forest, namely up along Highway 55, but it was an eye opener for everyone involved. Clearly, many of us are concerned about the clear-cutting practice utilized in recent years.

I don't know much about forestry, but I am alarmed at the disregard for an ecosystem that has sustained our people for centuries. Clearly, the canopy of our trees provided shelter for a diverse ecosystem, including our rivers and lakes. Clear cutting up to the shores of creeks, rivers and lakes can have grave impact upon those ecosystems. This jolt coupled with the spraying of chemicals over these clear-cut areas further compromises the health of our forest and environment.

I am grateful for this exposure and am glad other Legislators have already expressed interest in gaining similar insight. In the coming months the Legislature is charged with developing a new Forest Management Plan and having this context will only inform our decision-making.

AODA Awareness Week Candlelit Vigil:

On Wednesday, April 20th at 7:30 p.m. Maehnowesekiyah Wellness Center, as part of their AODA Awareness programming, will be sponsoring a Candlelit Vigil at the Keshena Pavilion. The vigil is intended to remember all those whose lives have been affected by AODA issues. There will be speakers, refreshments, open mic, a flower send-off and candles will be provided for everyone.

Community Meetings:

Just a reminder, next Tuesday there will be Community Meetings in Zoar and South Branch and on Wednesday the Community Meetings will be in Keshena, Neopit, and Middle Village. The meetings are posted in the community and begin at 5:00 p.m. Community attendance is encouraged.

BIA Gives Approval for Logging Prescriptions:

If you recall from last week's message, I told you I was in Minneapolis to deliver the tribe's draft harvest schedule and backlog plan. These documents had to be approved before any prescriptions could be approved, which are the nexus for our loggers to get back to work in the woods. I was informed on Thursday that all the prescriptions had been signed and that MTE could go forward with their Bid Opening on Wednesday, April 20th. The BIA approved of the prescriptions, though withheld approval the harvest schedule and backlog plan until they can utilize updated data.

We will be discussing these issues further on Friday when the BIA Regional Director and his staff will be on the reservation to discuss this and other concerns they have regarding our PL 638 forestry contract.

Sturgeon Feast:

On Saturday I was able to attend our Annual Sturgeon Feast and Pow wow. I provided the welcome and read the Tribal Legislature's proclamation in honor of Ingrid Washinawatok El Issa, who gave her life in the pursuit of sovereignty for Indigenous People. Ingrid had a blend of warmth, passion and humor that made her larger than life and that is why we still pay tribute to her more than six years after her passing. I remember trying to struggle with her loss and finding comfort in knowing that she lived a short life that was brimming full of both excitement and accomplishment.

In anticipation of the Feast and Pow wow, there was a blessing ceremony on Monday near Keshena Falls, where the Sturgeon were released into Menominee waters. Vice-Chairperson Johnson and Legislators Besaw, Fish and Washinawatok all attended this ceremony. Also, it should be noted that all three officers, Johnson, Warrington and myself, along with Legislators Awonohopay, Besaw, Fish and Washinawatok were all at the opening of festivities on Saturday – this is the first that the Legislature had such a strong showing at this feast and pow wow!

The Menominee Historic Preservation Office is to be commended for doing an excellent job once again with the Sturgeon Feast and Pow wow. They meticulously planned this event for months and all their efforts are appreciated, for this feast is symbolic of the changing seasons and gives us the opportunity to reconnect with one another. Wae-wae-nen!

Menominee Supermarket transcends into the Menominee Community Resource Center:

Many of you may be wondering what is happening to the old Menominee Supermarket? It will soon be the Menominee Community Resource Center. Essentially, this operation will be a "one

stop shop" for employment and training programs. In addition, the Summer Youth Program will also operate out of this building.

Meanwhile, if you want to seek employment and training opportunities or summer youth employment, please call the Job Training Program at 799-5137. The offices are still located in the Tribal Office Building, though they plan on moving in mid-May to their new location.

Recessed General Council will be Saturday 04/23/05 at Menominee Tribal School in Neopit:

The recessed General Council on forestry issues will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Menominee Tribal School in Neopit on Saturday, April 23, 2005. Again, tribal attendance is encouraged.

In closing:

Again, thank you and I am grateful to all of you who again expressed their appreciation for my Weekly Messages. In particular, I want to thank Virginia Nuske and Lorene Pocan for their kind words, for I respect their long service to the tribe and am grateful for their encouragement.

Sincerely,

Michael Chapman
Tribal Chairman

PS On a lighter note (not literally) Tony Warrington, Tribal Secretary, shared with me at the Sturgeon Feast that he has a hungry bear in South Branch! So far, the bear has taken three of his chickens and one 50 lb. bag of bird seed! He lamented that this bear is never around in the fall when he could "take care of him!"