

Meeting Notes 11-25-2020

Attendees: Cheryl Edwards, Lyz Jaakola, Connie Saaristo, Alexandera Houchin, Mary Stone-McConnell and John Saaristo

Sovereignty questions from education meeting

- What is it, Define it?
- What does it mean to you and your band/tribe?
- What does it mean to future generations?

Lyz – the right to govern oneself, Connie agreed. Self- determination is also an element of sovereignty.

Sovereignty is not something we are given; it is something that we need to assert.

Distinction as citizenship is a question for dual citizenship in the US and the tribe they are from. Some tribal members only identify as Tribal citizens. National Congress of the American Indian addresses some of these topics that create a larger constituency of Natives.

- Does being a part of the larger group have any effect on the sovereignty?

Alexandra brought up Creating relationships in all aspects of our lives for the needs of people. Housing sovereignty, food and resources being used on the reservation.

Cheryl talked about the social relationship and we must work together to find a common goal with the constitution reform. Agreed with Alexandra about food sustainability and community building.

Side discussion about use of greenhouse space on the reservation and how we could better manage our resources. Community garden space and resources need to be better used and planned. Sawyer resources for greenhouse space is poorly planned and underutilized.

Lyz talked about how you need to have involvement from the community to do projects. If you don't have buy in from the community it becomes more difficult to deal with people who may not agree with you on the project.

Connie discussed the difficulties that she has experienced with education and employment with the reservation. The concern she has is that there isn't a consistent standard for sovereignty.

Lyz talked about how projects will progress when some folks will do the work and eventually, they lose funding, or the projects fade away due to the project leader leaving. We need to keep our egos in check on the project development on the reservation to keep moving the ball forward.

Lyz also discussed her struggles with the original housing that she had for her home. There were many difficulties in the home and problems with its design that no one was able to address due to the rules of sovereignty.

- There was no recourse for her to protect her interests. Sovereignty determination needs to protect tribal members needs and interests.
- Lyz wants to start a circus at her house. 😊
- The tribe has an opportunity to establish and protect our definition of our relationship with the US Government.

Trucks driving across reservation land are abusing the roads and that should be something that they pay to repair through potential tolls. It is an example of how our land is used.

How do we get it right? Cheryl stated

- Does the blood quantum need to be a focus of the constitutional reform?
- There is a waning number of Natives and we will not have anyone left if we do not change.
- Many feel disenfranchised due to punitive action or being treated differently within the tribe.

Connie talked about how she had an allotment of land that was taken from her when she was sick. She did not make improvements to the land and they took it and built a house for another person with no consultation to her. No checks and balances.

Lyz discussed eminent domain issues that are faced by the reservation that they do not act on. It is a touchy situation to address but the land needs to be reclaimed for reservation purposes.

- Property like the Sawyer School need to be dealt with through eminent domain.
- How can we repurpose land?

Mary shared information about eminent domain that is in effect but not acted on because of political blowback. There is a right to take back land if a fair market value is offered.

Lyz talked about the City council relationship with the reservation and how the City of Cloquet annexed land. The city wanted it to happen and the reservation did not want it to happen and it went to state court and the reservation lost.

- The city needed the land for water and sewer reasons.
- It also had repercussions on gaming for the reservation.
- Lyz ran for office so that the reservation is represented on the City Council.

Discussion about the intersection at Brevator Road has been a problematic process due to poor communication about the changes being made. The intersection was not safe for pedestrians and there needed to be changes for safety purposes. This is part of the communication between organizations.

- Slowing down is not so hard to do, yet people had problems with it.

When a tribe exercises their sovereignty, things change and not everyone is going to like it. We need to make changes for our needs.

- Determination for land use on the reservation

If we do not exercise sovereignty in a strategic and smart way, decisions will be made for us.

- Land use is something that needs to be exercised for several technologies and bandwidth uses on the reservation.
- Infrastructures build out for telecommunications usage on the reservation is not being monetized properly.

Lyz discussed the Potawatomi tribe and how they expanded their base for land and members, and they grew their influence. The surrounding communities did not like the shift of power and did subversive acts to cause problems for the reservation. The tribe had to litigate in order to get compensation for the damages, but they were ultimately protected under sovereignty of the reservation.

Lyz also shared a story of how a reservation was caring for an injured eagle and the US government had a problem with it. They had an even bigger problem when the eagles they were caring for laid an egg and the government wanted to take drastic measures to destroy the eagle egg. Sovereignty prevailed and the tribe was able to protect the eagles.

The education committee is asking the bands are supposed to creating a timeline of events and provide as much detail that they can on the history of becoming members of the MCT.

The cumulative documentation can be consolidated to the web site for a reference point for educational purposes. Lyz has information that she wants to share with the group and suggested a work group to organize the documentation.

Cheryl has historical documents that she recently found that have details about the relationship with the government. Transitional information about the tribal hospital to the clinic system was also a part of the documentation.

There was a lot of discussion about FDL history and how things have evolved. The clinic system has grown as needed over the years for the care of Tribal members, despite challenges in resources and cooperation from the government.

FDL historical society is a resource for the details that are needed for the constitutional discussions. There can be a connection between different organizations to compile data for the reservation history.

There were suggestions of different speakers to bring in for the meetings to help with historical details and perspective.

