

## Chairman's Letter to the People - February 2017

Greetings members of the Kul Wicasa Oyate, I pray that this letter finds you all in good health and spirits.

Most importantly, I would like to thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve you. I can't tell you how humbling it is to be elected your Chairman. Second, I want to thank you for the Council you elected to serve these next two years. Orville Langdeau, Darrel Middleton, John McCauley, Clyde Estes and Donnie Moore have shown great leadership and each have attributes that complement each other, which makes this a highly functional council.

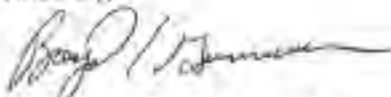
We realize that our ability to issue assistance has been limited and we assure you that we are doing our best to make sure that no one in a difficult situation is going without. Propane assistance has been available as needed, especially during this cold winter. As you are all aware, we unfortunately do not have some of the services that we used to have; things like grocery orders, money for emergency situations, as well as other medical transportation services are very limited at this time. Our summer youth program has been affected due to a lack of funds. This program was vital in not only promoting community clean up, but created employment for tribal members. We sincerely apologize for these circumstances, and we are working hard to try to make it available this summer.

While we acknowledge these issues, it is important to understand why we face this lack of funding. We are currently trying to create financial stability by working with various financial institutions. The major difficulty in these institutions' willingness to work with us is their concern for our governmental stability as well as the lingering effects of the Human Rights Watch Report (HRW). Precipitated and fabricated by our own members, the HRW report in 2015 that claimed to have examined financial mismanagement has affected our tribe immensely. Their claims that funds were taken away from key social programs are absolutely false. These false claims directly affected the basic services on which many tribal members rely. In fact, the HRW report is a large factor in why our tribe had a non functioning government throughout the prior administration.

A memo sent by the former Vice Chairman to the Bureau of Indian Affairs asking to freeze the flow of funding to the tribe has also detrimentally stifled our access to the financial government support we rely on. In this memo, the former Vice Chairman claimed he was not privy to certain financial information although a full audit report was provided to him. This memo was promoted by the former Vice Chairman's inability to understand an audit report and I find it extremely unfair to the people that a request was made to halt essential funding that keeps our programs available. While the irresponsible actions by a handful of members has caused great adversity for our programs, governmental stability, and reputation, I assure you, that all audits and investigations that we have been subject to, have gone very well so far. While the current difficulties we face are disheartening, I am confident that we will succeed at restoring our funding and our reputation, as we now have an entire Tribal Council that truly care for the Tribe, more than they care for creating media headlines.

In closing, I hope you find it reassuring that I am more than happy to give you all an update on our new Administration after being in office for 4 months now, and will try to get a letter to you all quarterly. Please understand that I hope to keep you all informed about our frustrations and difficulties, as well as our general plan of action when it comes to restoring our stability and funding. We will include more information and elaborate on our goals for our Tribe as we progress. Also, please keep in mind, we have an open door policy and a present Council, so if you have any questions or concerns, our doors are always open to you. I ask for your patience & understanding for the situation we find ourselves in and that you bear with us while we do our best to continue to serve you. Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,



Boyd I. Gourneau, Chairman  
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe