

Chairman's Letter to the People
February 2018

Greetings, my relatives! First and foremost, I am compelled to mention our Tribe's current financial climate. Although we are stable, our ability to conduct business has been stagnant and severely obstructed. While we are trying to diminish our deferred revenue (which is overall debt of our Tribe); we must prioritize our minimal funding to be able to continue to operate, pay our employees as well as pay the bills that are imperative to operations. There has been gradual improvement on our overall debt but previously committed obligations prevent us from making significant progress. I am working hard on gathering the hard numbers to report to you all in my next quarterly letter.

Although we have relied on the Tribal Farm in the past, we have become less dependent on them for our continued operations. We are truly grateful for their financial assistance as we couldn't have kept our doors open without them. We have made some small adjustments to help us through, and we hope to see the effects of these changes over time.

We've raised the leases and will be taxing any outside cattle taken in. The tax imposed on outside owned cattle has been enacted in hopes that our Tribal operators will stock their range units with their own cattle. We have also changed health insurance providers and have agreed to a cost share plan with the employee (which is still very beneficial in comparison to other employer provided plans). We have taken these measures in order to financially survive as a Tribe, and many of these changes should have happened a long time ago.

We've been working diligently on future financing for the Tribe. We are experiencing great difficulty in obtaining any bank to work with us, and have been experiencing this since the reputable damage that has occurred as well as previous media coverage of our Tribe. Although I dislike bringing it up yet again, the actions taken a few years back are still greatly and detrimentally affecting our operations and financial stability to this day. This administration has inherited a financial mess, but our Council representatives have been here day in and day out working to repair the situation we find ourselves in. While I am frustrated that this is the situation we are in, I can assure you that we will continue to fight for our Tribe.

We are working hard to try to obtain funding to support our Summer Employment Program. This program has always brought many positive benefits into our community in the form of a cleaner community as well as slight relief of our GA program by providing temporary job opportunities.

We have revived the Shore Stabilization Project on our shorelines near town and to the north of town. The erosion has been slowly creeping up towards town and this project will help stop the erosion as well as repair some of our shoreline. It would be devastating to have to move our town again, and in working with the Army Corps of Engineers on this project we hope that will be prevented. We are also working on solutions to improve and prevent our lagoon systems from spilling into the river adjacent to it.

This winter, the LIEAP program has operated exceptionally well. Now in working directly with the State LIEAP program, qualified applicants receive up to three times as much assistance than that which they would receive if we were to operate this program tribally as we have done in the past. Relying on the State programs that we qualify for and are entitled to makes more sense than having to ask a more profitable Tribe to directly pay these costs, as we already rely on them greatly for support of Tribal programs which they fund via grant application with them.

There has been recent interest in wind and solar development for our Tribe. There is a significant need for power supply at a nationwide level. As we communicate with the interested developers we have requested that the main contingency for collaboration be that they present solutions for supplying our community and members residing on the reservation with free electricity, or we are not willing to engage in negotiations beyond that point.

In closing, last month I was asked and greatly honored to deliver the State of Tribes Address to the Joint House and Senate Legislative Session in Pierre. I would like to thank Lance Witte and the LBHS for bringing the JROTC and drum group students to represent Lower Brule. These students and faculty members represented well, and I could not be more proud of the great job they did. The message I intended covered many areas pertinent to daily life on reservations in our state. As your Chairman, I pray that I represented our community members and Tribe well. I especially wanted to express to the public that our wonderful community and Tribe of Lower Brule is still here. We may have been knocked down over the past few years but we have gotten back up and thankfully for this opportunity we've finally been given a chance to defend ourselves. I hope that the coverage of this response will serve well as reminders that not only are we still here, but we will be here long into the future as well.

