

ISANTI NEWSLETTER

November 6 2023 By Tribal Council Vice Chairman Kameron Runnels

GYM/YOUTH COMPLEX

Construction began recently of the new gym by the swimming pool. Council Treasurer Dave Henry helped lead the planning effort which was supported and approved by the tribal council. We hope more activities will be planned there such as cultural/language classes inside some of the rooms of the facility.



Not an actual photo of how gym will look

REPORT FROM THE VICE CHAIRMAN

Its been two years since my election as the Vice Chairman office for the Santee Sioux Nation. This has been the honor of my life to serve in this role, and I hope that I am living up to your expectations. I am always open to criticism, questions, advice, ideas, or if you want to visit in my office or at my home you are more than welcome. I understand there is always room for improvement. Two years ago I wrote a letter and presented it to each of you at your home and posted it on social media. In that letter I expressed the need for the tribe to plan and adapt to the future in all aspects.

Being able to plan for the future is the next step. How exactly do you do that? Over the past 18 months you may have seen surveys go out to the tribal membership. One covered enrollment/tribal membership, another was about homeownership/homes, and recently another went out on managing land and farming/ranching. These surveys give us some insight into what people want and help provide a direction for the tribe. The tribe has a desire to begin a strategic planning effort. We need to list our goals/priorities of the tribe and make a step-by-step process on how we can reach those goals. Expect more surveys to go out, and possibly our own tribally completed census. A short, medium-term, and long-term plan will be created sometime soon to help provide a direction for the tribe.

In the rest of this newsletter I will list some of what I have worked, and give you a few updates on certain areas in the tribe.

Tribal Hazard Mitigation Plan

Last year I attended a tribal leader/FEMA summit in Kansas City, MO. There I learned about Hazard Mitigation and the importance of having a Hazard Mitigation plan for your tribe, and what it can do for you. Hazard Mitigation is meant to limit damage and chaos in the event of a disaster or some kind of emergency. Having a HM plan that would be reviewed and approved by FEMA would also open doors for the tribe to apply for additional funding from FEMA. For examples, this funding could create an Emergency Management office within the tribe or help support other alternative energy sources. There are many other grant opportunities from FEMA that currently the tribe is ineligible to apply for because we do not have a hazard mitigation plan for our tribe.

Without a hazard mitigation plan, the tribe would have to go work directly with the state and county emergency agencies during a declared emergency. A declared emergency can come from the Governor of the state, the President of the USA, and it can also come from our own Tribal Council for our tribe. However, in order to work directly with FEMA the tribe must have a Hazard Mitigation Plan in place. If we do not, the tribe would have to work with state emergency agencies. FEMA would fund the state, and the state would funnel down funds to the

tribe and the rest of the state where areas are affected by such disaster. In the past this process never worked for the tribe. The hazard mitigation plan would eliminate the state from being involved in this process. The tribe could declare an emergency in the event of some kind of natural disaster, declared emergency by our Chairman and Council, and FEMA would work directly with our tribe because the tribe would have the Hazard Mitigation Plan in place. Only 50% of tribes across the country have one of these plans. It leaves them vulnerable and at the mercy of state agencies to help fund, reimburse their costs during a disaster/emergency situation.

We have been working on this plan for the last 6 months and it is close to being finished. I do commend the tribal council for having the vision to look to the future by approving to complete the HM plan. I will keep you updated as we move ahead.

Access to Clean Water

I understand we all have been bombarded by our efforts to get clean/safe drinking water. Clean water is a basic human right that all people deserve. All you may know by now that we have a mineral that naturally occurs and gets into the water supply. Manganese is something that our body needs, but we find in our water extraordinary high levels of Manganese to the point where it is unsafe to consume. The EPA states that consumption of the water over an extended period of time can cause negative neurological affects and other health related issues. This could be especially harmful with infants and mothers who breastfeed. The tribe has tried to prevent people from drinking water from faucets by purchasing bottled water and is distributed to all tribal homes. We will continue to do this for as long as possible.

The water problem is unfortunately a complex situation. While we believe the federal government should live up to their treaty responsibilities and provide us clean water; the government will only go so far and cannot totally fund a project that would end the water quality problem. Indian Health Service, who has done a great job with assisting and finding potential sources of water, has the money to build us a water treatment facility. However, the costs of maintaining this facility is high, and the manganese, taste and smell will still be a problem. The tribe would have responsibility for maintaining, purchasing chemicals. While we have full faith in our water operator Mr. Seymour Brandt, who we believe is an asset to this community, we could not afford to keep up with the costs of maintaining a new water treatment plant. Twenty or thirty years from now we would have to replace the equipment at the facility. We would be pushing this problem down the road for our kids to deal with. The tribe wants to have our own rural water district. We could do this by connecting an emergency pipeline from Randall Water District in South Dakota, which this line would be owned by the tribe. This is also very complex and controversial because of the cost of construction. This is the tribe's option, and while it can cost \$40-\$50 million dollars it would eliminate the manganese and give clean water to all of us for generations.

We understand the tribe will have to get multiple federal agencies to contribute, it requires the tribe applying for rural development funding, and it also requires us to ask the government to fund the project. The state of Nebraska gave our neighbors (Cedar Knox water) \$30 million to fund their water facility. At the same time the tribe was denied \$6 million from the state to help our tribe's water infrastructure. We will go to Washington DC to ask the government for assistance. To us, this is an emergency, and should be treated with the same respect that any other town/city in this country would have if they were going through a crisis.

We will continue pushing for us to get money for this project. We ask that you all please be patient while we continue to speak out on this issue, and at the same time secure funding. We are seeking a long-term solution that would give future generations access to clean water.

BUSINESS MANAGER

The tribe hired a new business manager Mr. Maunka Morgan from a member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. He began nearly three months ago. Mr. Morgan has extensive experience and knowledge in developing tribal business, and helping tribal nations grow. He wants our tribe to begin a new corporation, and create a board of directors to over see the businesses. I will let Mr. Morgan speak more on this as he can explain a lot better than I can, but it is another reason why the tribe hired Maunka. By creating a corporation we can start other companies that branch off of it such as a construction company, tobacco, transportation companies to name a few examples. It could lead to the tribe pursuing 8A contracting

one day, and would give the tribe growth, jobs, and money. Right now Mr Morgan is putting his efforts into helping our current businesses. I know he has a lot of plans and ambitious ideas for the tribe, and we ask that everyone stays patient while we work through this.

Another quick note from Shop Ez in South Yankton. The land the tribe owns has nearly completed the transfer to trust land. It is on the regional directors desk for signature. This is a big accomplishment for the tribe, and it has been nearly 15 years since the tribe tried to get the land into trust. It will be considered tribal land, and will be beneficial for our business in Shop Ez. Tobacco sales and fuel could be cheaper and we could one day place some gaming machines there or create a small casino of some kind.

TELE-COMMUNICATIONS AND FIBER BROADBAND GRANT

The tribe has a FCC legitimate internet company as you all know. We were approached by a consulting firm named Olsson who presented us with a plan to apply for a grant that if approved would award the tribe \$35 million. This would allow for Fiber cable to be put into every home on tribal lands. It would also give tribal members who live in neighboring communities eligibility to run fiber into their homes, and could also provide those off reservation communities with fiber cable. It would be a huge accomplishment for Santee Telecommunications. Olsson's is working on this grant for the tribe the next few months and we will keep you informed on the outcome. We have a real chance on accomplishing something great, and Olsson's has experience in doing this exact same grant with other tribes such as Winnebago. With our internet company already being established we are ahead in that regard and that helps a lot.

TRANSFER STATION

During September and October I helped work on a USDA Rural Development Grant that would fund a new transfer/sanitation facility. We all know the current transfer station can be an eye sore when arriving in town. That should not be the first thing people see when they drive into our community. Our solution is to create a new building, walls, and a structure that would cover the garbage and debris that is collected. This same site was chosen because water and electricity is already there and it would cost more money to put utilities in a new area. The Grant is near complete and will be submitted soon.

OTHER NEWS

A new road is in the planning stages and very possible it will be constructed in the next year. This road will start by the NICC and the ATV Building by the gravel road. It will connect with the other street by the woods brothers home project. This new street will have other infrastructure such as water and sewer lines, and will have home plots in the event new homes are built here. Houses are much needed in Santee. We hope this new infrastructure project will help the tribe plan for new homes to be built in the future. The tribe did reach out to FEMA asking for assistance with FEMA Trailer homes. We explained the housing shortage the tribe is experiencing and the long wait for tribal members to move into a home through the housing authority. We asked that this request be taken seriously. FEMA has responded and sent a request to their Washington DC headquarters asking for a number of FEMA trailers for the Santee Sioux Nation. While we cannot promise we will get any, this request is being discussed and we just need to wait and continue pressing FEMA for updates.

In the meantime we believe it is necessary we try to find another way to get houses built. There are multiple solutions but they all cost money. I know we can apply for competitive funding with our housing authority but we need to have infrastructure in place already to help support new homes. We could start a loan program where the tribe offers loans to tribal members for a down payment on a home. I know there is a lot of questions and concerns with that, but we would set parameters on how that would work.

TRIBAL ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

One thing I have not forgotten about is the tribal enrollment requirements for the Santee Sioux Nation. At some point this needs to be seriously addressed and a solution needs to be found. Too often, children are being left out of our tribe because



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they cannot meet the enrollment requirements. What will our enrollment numbers look like one hundred years from now? We have fewer people in our tribe than we did 30 and 40 years ago. I understand other factors might play into this, but we cannot ignore that more and more children each year, each month, are being left out because they are not enough Santee or Sioux blood. This needs to be fixed. Solutions could be increasing tribal members blood degree from one of the tribal census rolls in the 1970s or 1980s to raise the blood degree on everyone, or some other solution. I know these are temporary, but that could give us more time to research or find ways to change/lower enrollment requirements in our constitution. I understand that takes an election involving the entire tribe, but based on our enrollment survey, 95% of people wanted some kind of change to the enrollment requirements to make it easier for people to enroll. This survey was done by tribal members, and they had to share their tribal enrollment # in the survey so we knew who and if they were a tribal member.

I want to make sure people understand there is not just one person doing all these things and making all these changes. There is a group and team effort on the tribal council. I help push these things forward, along with support from the council, and other council members have their own plans and projects that they push forward. We support each other as long as their feasible ideas. There is much more I can add, but for now we will end this edition and come back in a couple of weeks with some more and newer information.

SANTEE SIOUX NATION

Tribal Council Headquarters/Museum

To: All Tribal Members

