



LITTLE TRAVERSE BAY BANDS OF ODAWA INDIANS
7500 ODAWA CIRCLE, HARBOR SPRINGS, MI 49740

TRIBAL COUNCIL TRAVEL REPORT NARRATIVE

From: Winnay Wemigwase

Date: October 6th – October 9th, 2014

Re: RES Wisconsin – RES Regional Economic Summit

I attended a regional economic summit hosted by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development and the Forest County Potawatomi Foundation. It was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the newly opened Potawatomi Hotel & Casino, owned by the Forest County Potawatomi Tribe. Just like the annual National RES held in March each year, this summit is designed to show what tribes are doing to diversify their economies, allow attendees the chance to network with other tribes and businesses and to promote and support young, Native entrepreneurs.

On Tuesday, October 7th, after the Opening General Session, I attended a session focused on tourism called, “Tourism: Marketing and Monetizing an Economic Diversification Opportunity for Indian Country.” It was in a panel format with three panelists: Collin Price, Public Relations

Officer for the Ho Chunk Nation; Ronald Spoerl, President, Hawk Construction, LLC and American Indian Chamber of Commerce Wisconsin Board of Directors; and, Ernest Stevens III, Executive Director, Native American Tourism of Wisconsin. They each spoke about tourism based businesses that they are all involved in and how other tribes could use their successes as a way to market their own tourism ventures. One of the items they showed was a map with several different “routes” that tourists could take through the state of Wisconsin to experience Indian Country. On this map they strategically highlighted different reservations that are capable of showcasing different aspects of Native culture such as wild ricing, fishing, basketry, etc.

This idea stuck out to me because we do something similar already with the tours that LTBB has done in the past with the local area, the area between Pine River and Cross Village. When I was an employee for the government, we discussed with GIS the possibility of putting the tour on CDs so that we could sell them to tourists interested in the Native history of the Little Traverse Bay Area. It would be great if we could get that off the ground; it would be great if we could partner with the other Michigan Tribes to offer a state-wide “guide” like the Wisconsin tribes have done.

The next session I attended was “Tribal Enterprise – Insulating Business from Politics. The Panelists were Derrick Watchman, Chairman, National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development and CEO, Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprises; Wizipan Garriott Little Elk, CEO of REDCO; and, Brian Pierson, Lead Counsel, Indian Nations Law Team, Godfrey Kahn S.C. The Moderator was Heather Dawn Thompson, Attorney, Greenberg Traurig, LLP. In a nutshell, the consensus was that creating a SEPARATE corporate structure for your tribe

that reports to the Council and citizens, but maintains autonomy in its daily operations. Some of the more financially successful tribes have a separate holding company and board of directors that run that “arm” of their respective tribes. We have begun work on such a structure for LTBB and I hope we continue to do so. Almost all of the presenters and those in the audience agreed that gaming is not going to continue to sustain tribes. We all need to diversify and keep politics out of the process as much as we can. It was said that continuing to focus solely on our existing casinos and/or continuing to set up new ones fits that old saying of “putting all of your eggs in one basket...with just different colored eggs...one might be white, another tan and another speckled, but they are all still eggs!”

I then attended a session titled, “The Current State of Native 8(a) and Federal Contracting: What does the Future Hold for 8(a) Native American Businesses, Alaska Native Corporations and Tribal Nations?” I am still trying to continue learning about this avenue for expansion, diversification and revenue. There is a lot of red-tape associated with getting the 8(a) status for a Tribe. At this point, our Tribe does not have the capacity to or own an existing business that could take on contractual work with the federal government.

The other sessions I attended were “The Future of Sovereign Immunity After Bay Mills,” facilitated by Brian Pierson of Godfrey & Kahn, S.C.; and, the “Listening Session on Economic Development” with the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. The two federal officials that held the listening session were Anthony Walters, Deputy Chief Counsel, U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and Rhonda Harjo, Deputy Chief Counsel, U.S. Senate Committee

on Indian Affairs. For both of these sessions, I have asked for the handouts and my notes to be scanned and added to this report. Please see attached.

As always, I am humbled and very grateful to be able to attend events like this. I would like to thank Tribal Council and all Tribal Citizens for allowing me to have these experiences. G'chi-miigwech.

Respectfully submitted by,

Winnay Wemigwase
Tribal Councilor