THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WHITE EARTH NATION

TRANSITION TEAM MEETING #4

Thursday, November 13, 2014 ~ Shooting Star Casino

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Brent Gish	Don Vizenor	Franklin "Bud" Heisler	Gabe Brisbois
Hepsi Barnett	Jerome Lhotka	Jill Doerfler	Joan LaVoy
Joe LaGarde	Lenny Fineday	Lisa Brunner	Lorna LaGue
Marcy Hart	Mike Smith	Pam Aspinwall	Sharon Enjady-Mitchell

1. **Prayer**

   Moment of silence as everyone passed the group feather from one to another.

2. **Welcome & Housekeeping Items with Lorna LaGue**
   - The meeting minutes of the October 8, 2014 were approved after a motion by Brent Gish and a second by Joan LaVoy.

3. **Review of Native Nations Institute Training by Hepsi Barnett**
   - Comments received from attendees:
     - It was interesting to see how many Tribal Councils are so alike (relates back to the IRA);
     - Business and politics do not mix;
     - Without checks and balances a few have absolute power;
     - Our sovereignty is inherent, treaty signing is just one example of sovereignty in action
   - Why are some Nations more successful than others?
     - Research shows it is critical that culture is infused in the process;
     - What is written really needs to reflect the local people;
     - Pine Ridge was a classic example – the IRA rules do not work for them;
     - One size does not fit all, the role of government has to reflect the needs of the community;
     - The nation building approach is not intended as a "solve all", it is a mind set for us to consider how we are thinking about government;
     - White Earth is a lot further along than the exercise might show, we have a tendency to exemplify the negative;

- Social problems were not brought up in the exercises, some of our problems still need to be dealt with (in the gas station story, the first thing that happened was they quit drinking); we can't push our social problems under the rug; need healthy people to implement a strong government; in many areas success has been attributed to the citizens regardless of the governmental structure.

- It was pointed out that our progress isn't necessarily reflective in the charts we worked on in the nation building exercise, people don't often step back to realize, recognize, or remember the changes that have occurred in the last ten years or so, we have come a long ways.
- Government should not be "what have they done for me"; this training would be helpful for the community at large.
- The standard model is more like the imposed IRA constitution, it reflects the values of other people; in the nation-building approach, our own traditions become our form of government.
- The role of government is to create a framework and atmosphere where economic development can happen, elected leaders should not be deep into personnel issues or day-to-day operations; need to be looking long-term instead of getting caught up in crisis management. Think of it like a hamster wheel, instead of spinning your wheel, create the infrastructure for success and look towards the next seven generations.
- We also need to be careful not to disconnect with our community, when people are focusing on meeting their needs or getting through a crisis it is difficult to think about governance. People are addressing things at so many different levels.

4. Group Exercise

The Transition Team members broke into three groups, each assigned a question:

Group #1 Q: List three things learned yesterday that can be used to educate the community.

- Use the NNI course to train the community, or perhaps a train the trainer session.
- Go into communities and talk with people, there are natural leaders in our communities – engage them in conversation; many are in the dark as to what we are doing.
- Recognize our accomplishments and weaknesses – use visuals so people can see what has been done and focus on the next generations.
- Engage our youth, give them structure and more to do, acknowledge their strengths.
- Throughout all aspects include our culture!

Group #2 Q: List three concepts that can help the Transition Team complete their objectives:

- Use the implementation matrix and allocate responsibilities.
- Change the language of reform – create the message so that we are all speaking the same. Educate and provide public relations information.
- Empower citizens, they need to speak out and talk with the elected leaders to get them all on board/unified.
- Draft a letter to RTC voicing our concern.

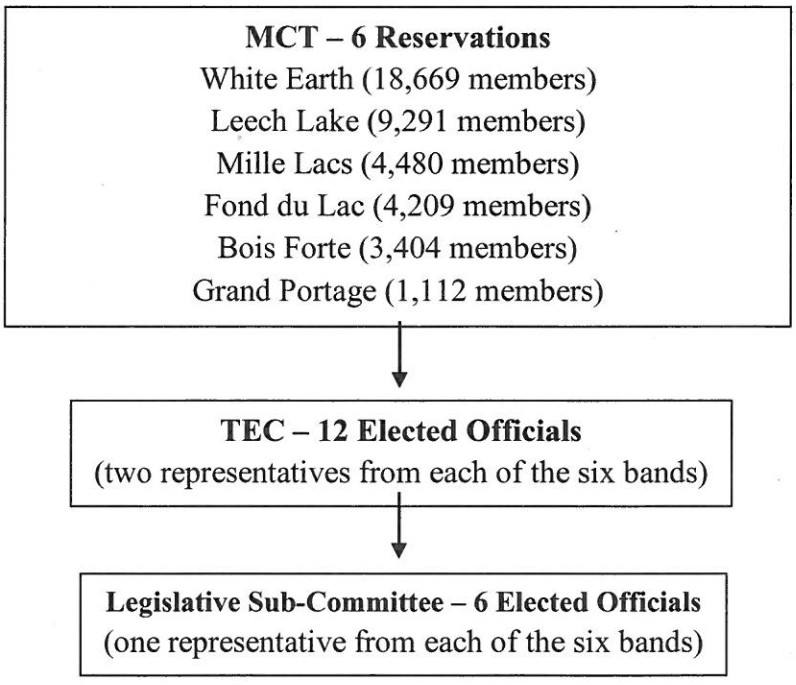
Group #3 Q: List 3 ideas or concepts learned in the training that could be utilized by the White Earth government to move from the "standard approach" to the "nation-building approach".

- Encourage dialogue amongst RTC
- How can the referendum results be ignored (off Reservation vote carried referendum, on Reservation vote elected new RTC members);
- Separation of powers – all council, directors, and managers (include community members) to attend nation-building training.
- Get local community/cultural input.
- Education/change – marathon not a sprint
- Be comfortable and accepting of "21st century Ojibwe" and bridge the gap by talking with elders (more importantly listening to elders).

5. Constitution Refresher/Update by Jill Doerfler

Jill attended the Tribal Executive Committee (TEC) meeting on November 5th. Erma had presented two resolutions to the Legislative Sub-Committee (copies were distributed), both died due to the fact that there was not a second to her motion. Discussion was held on the overall governance structure of the MCT.

MCT is comprised of six of the seven Ojibwe bands in MN (all except Red Lake). The Chairperson and Secretary/Treasurer of each reservation becomes the TEC. The Legislative Sub-Committee is comprised of one TEC member from each Reservation.



The MCT structure is really not a representative government structure for the members of White Earth. Although we are the largest band (over 49%), and White Earth members strongly voted in favor of the new Constitution, no action took place at the TEC level. The resolutions presented by Erma (one of our elected officials) died without a second from any of the elected officials from the other reservations.

Discussion was held regarding on-Reservation versus off-Reservation members; on-Reservation actually had more opportunity for educational sessions. The referendum was ultimately challenged in Court and upheld. It should now be the law, but matters are complicated when you consider the MCT governmental structure under the IRA Constitution we have in place.

The recent newspaper articles were brought up, there was not anyone present who could speak on behalf of the disagreement between Tribal Council Members.

Discussion on MCT lands, Lenny informed everyone of a previous resolution that had been presented to TEC to return the MCT lands to each band. MCT does hold title to some lands but each Band/Nation also holds title to some lands. MCT does not have a mechanism in place to handle lands, all lands are currently managed by each local reservation and it has been this way for a long time. This is complex situation but a resolution is possible. The BIA has completed an appraisal.

6. **Transition Team Concerns by Hepsi Barnett**

The Transition Team reviewed the list of concerns previously generated from our first meeting. A couple items were added:

- A calendar laying out a timeline
- More newspaper articles written by others – maybe Transition Team members
- Tasks to be completed ultimately land on Administration, we would need the Council to review to ensure we are on the right track

7. **Wrap Up by Lorna LaGue**

- Discussion on the Native American Heritage/Sovereignty Day event on November 19th.
- Discussion on scheduling for future meetings, the group agreed it would be worthwhile to consider 6-hour meetings.