

Views from Sault Ste. Marie - Leadership

Victor Matson –Wetmore

I think we're making great strides, that's one thing that being on the board, you have seen, just in the last ten years, this tribe has just grown tremendously, and we are, have got people coming out from down below and all over, where we never heard from them before. That means a heck of a lot. And there's a lot of people care about the tribe, and now when you walk down the street, you can look somebody in the eye and say 'we are independent,' and that means a lot to me.

Jerome Peterson –Manistique

The late Fred Hatch was the one that started this tribe back in the 1950s or a little bit right in through there. I didn't come involved until the early 60s when the tribe didn't have, I don't think we had two hundred members in the 60s, early 60s, and all at once they asked me to come to the Sault because they were going to have elections. So I went, I think that was about 1964, and to my surprise I was elected to the board of directors of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. It wasn't called the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians then, it was called the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. // We used to have meetings up at Eureka street, up where the late Fred Hatch lived on Eureka street, meet at his kitchen table, drink coffee, and talk about how we were going to become federally recognized. So it was decided that the only part that we could really control would be the Upper Peninsula, so we divided it up into units. I think we had about five units. Munising would be a head, Manistique would be a head, Hessel would be a head, St. Ignace, and the Sault.

Rosie Gaskin –Sault Ste. Marie

And the people, we said, well we finally did it, it's there. We couldn't believe it, we had the papers and everything down. And then that was just the beginning, because then we had to have a board of directors, just like a chairman, an elected chairman, and a board of directors, an attorney was hired, because we didn't know really what to do from one step to the next, to make sure it was all done right, had an attorney to help us. And we bought, we had to have a building, and we bought this little, it was a little concrete block garage down on Greenough Street, and there was no heat in it, no walls or anything, just a concrete building. We had, took donations of

chairs, desks, everything. And I remember Fred Hatch and I would go down there on the weekends and we painted it so it would all look like gray, and green and black and white. And he painted it, and meanwhile we talked about what we were going to do next. And we were talking about the treaties that were signed and were never honored by the government. And so we figured that if we could get somebody educated enough to come back and keep those, make the government keep those treaties, honor them.

Bernard Doll –Barbeau

Well these guys were working over in Sugar Island, Murrays, and I'm trying to think, some of the Gardiners, and some of the guys over there were working at it pretty hard. I was working pretty hard as a farmer yet, and I stayed here, and that was about all I ever did. When I was on the county supervisors, county commission, I was chairman of that for a number of years, and a friend of mine was the chairman of the finance committee, I remember Jerry Peters, he was eventually the mayor of the city for a long time. And this is when the federal government was giving out assistance for certain areas that they could better themselves. I remember Jerry and I tried hard to get a bridge built just to go up to Shunk Road, they had this terrible old crashy bridge, and the city fathers would never even put a, they had a gravel, well they did, they grudgingly did a little bit. Jerry and I tried to divert some federal funds for that. I was chairman, he was chairman of the finance committee, and then the DNR stepped in, which was in the conservation department, and then we had to have studies and of course eventually we lost that. I do remember trying very hard the two of us to get that done, eventually we diverted some money to the guys, when they finally got a little headquarters there on Greenough Street, the Sault. And that's just about the time, that Jerry got off the commission and we kind of... I remember trying anyway. We did divert a little, but it was just a start. People really weren't, I don't think they ever felt that the tribe would get together, people would get together and do something.

Jerome Peterson –Manistique

Then we all got to sit around there, and after a couple of meetings we said, how are we going to refer back to what we've done the meeting before if we don't have meeting minutes. Well somebody had to take the minutes, well nobody wanted to take the minutes because it involved a lot of writing and so forth. Anyway we decided we should hire somebody. This'd be the first

person that the tribe hired that paid before we were federally-recognized. And her name was Beverly Bouchor. She was in high school, and we paid her five dollars a meeting to come and take the minutes. And she'd take the minutes and type them all up and send each of us a copy, so after that whenever we went to a meeting we had all the minutes.

Rosie Gaskin –Sault Ste. Marie

The reason that I have is happening now, it's happening now. A continuous growth spree and our economic development, a continuous growth for our circles, because that in itself is a learning situation, where people sit and share what happened a long time ago and how the tribe evolved. And we have to let them know that because there are people that, it's grown so fast they don't know except for what that their paycheck is being signed by the Sault tribe, they don't know anything about what the Sault tribe is. Some of the things that I hear like the president talking about family unity, we've always had it. Cooperation in the communities, we've always had it, and it's just amazing that they're just beginning to find out about it, and we've always had it. We are a special people. Everyone that ever wrote about us in their books and history: we are unique. And in the dictionary it says, one of a kind. We are one of a kind. There is no other race or government that's like ours, and it has to swing back, the pendulum is swinging back, and we are in charge because of the self-determination that we've decided that this is where we're at, this is what we're going to do, this is what we want to do.