

**The following are responses to questions posed to the
Tribal Council at the January 27th General Body Meeting.**

Q: At Tribal Council was asked to consider creating an enrollment committee and presented with a list of signatures from supportive tribal members.

A: Council has looked into the possibility of having an enrollment committee but has decided at this time to stay with the current process that is in place. Council has discussed the pros and cons of an enrollment committee, some being a committee would serve as a “second set of eyes” to verify accuracy; a committee could assist with difficult applications such as adoptions, relinquishments, paternity and maternity; would assist in any future change in the constitution and help with accountability. On the other hand, the confidentiality of the application would be a risk; it may be difficult to get committee members gathered on a regular basis which would lengthen the time frame of the enrollment process; it would be difficult to ensure the committee remains neutral and unbiased; and there is a lack of funding for stipends and training. Tribal Council ultimately certifies the accuracy along with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Q: The sewer system does not have a failing pump, however, there was a concern regarding a failing pump in the sewer system.

A: The Slocum Ridge lift station pumps wastewater from the Slocum Ridge housing development to the SBR Treatment Plant. During power outages that last more than a few hours, it is necessary to pump the accumulated waste from the lift station.

In the design phase it was recommended by Indian Health Service engineers, that if the lift station lost power, a portable pump could be used to pump the waste. However, after the first major power outage we learned that this solution just did not work and we did experience a small amount of liquid effluent that overflowed the lift station. We reported this to IHS, who checked with the Environmental Protection Agency to verify that the action taken was appropriate. Since then, when we experience power outages we have had a commercial septic pump truck come in and pump out the waste. This past winter was particularly severe and the lift station was pumped several times in November and December. To fix this problem permanently, we are installing a fixed propane generator with an automatic transfer switch. This generator requires only minimal maintenance and will start automatically upon sensing the loss of power to the pump motor. This generator should be in place by mid-May 2006.

Q: Concern regarding the decrease of healthcare for Indians and the lack of healthcare for tribal members.

A: The health and wellness of tribal members is very important to the Tribal Council. Providing quality care to as many people as possible with limited funding is a constant struggle. Health care for our native people is a trust responsibility that needs to be addressed by the federal government and both the Tribal Council and administration are working diligently to increase the flow of money to tribal health care programs. Until the federal government lives up to their trust responsibility of fully funding health care the tribe continues to be aggressive in dealing with this lack of funding.

In the last few years, Tribal Council, in addition to federal dollars, has supported and directly funded several projects to increase health services for our tribal and community members. Tribal Council has designated \$100,000 recurring funds to support an additional medical provider at the clinic which has increased the number of appointments available and patients being seen. Tribal Council also designated \$100,000 to purchase prescription drug coverage for our elders and basic health insurance coverage for CHS eligible's that have significant health issues. Funds were also allocated from administration for the clinic renovation and expansion and the increased medical and dental space certainly better serves our patients.

Other projects that we have been working on to conserve funds and improve health care services include:

- Contracts with outside providers for reduced fees;
- Contracts with specialty providers for on-site specialty services;
- Liaison with the state to enroll patients in state provided health care programs;
- Additional state funding to support a Community Health Nurse; and
- Research and further training for pain management issues.

Q: Concern regarding the Elders Digs, and why there are no buyers. Also why did the Elders have to load and ride on the scow to Church Point, why couldn't they drive which would have been easier?

A: As always, buying at the senior beach when there is also a regular opening in Oakland Bay remains an issue. Salish Seafoods and the Natural Resources Department plan on meeting to discuss this issue and see if arrangements can be made to assist seniors in selling their product. Also the opening at Church Point had no restrictions from seniors simply driving to and parking on the tribe's Church Point property.

Q: Why did the Tribe purchase D & D Seafood?

A: Three years ago there were problems with attracting buyers for clams and salmon, the Tribal Council approached the owners of D & D Seafood to acquire the business for the Tribe. The plan was to take a private firm which could buy from anyone they chose and make it available to all fishers and diggers. The company came with trucks, trailers, and other equipment. The Tribal Council agreed to pay for two years of salary for David Johns if Island Enterprises Inc. would pick up the salary after that. The purchase has been very successful and all of the equipment is utilized and is necessary for the purposes of buying and transporting clams and fish. The current flatbed is a semi sized vehicle with a dump bed and not designed for smaller loads and long hauls. Overall the purchase has been a huge success. The old oyster company is in the black, a tribal manager has been hired, it employs more tribal members than it ever has, and most importantly has enabled the tribe to have a consistent buyer for clams and salmon. David Johns has been the key to this success and we are very proud that he was able to return and work for our tribe. He is now working on new and exciting projects for Island Enterprises so stay tuned.

Q: Concern regarding a non-tribal member harvesting Geoduck for Salish Seafood on Squaxin Island.

A: Salish Seafoods arranged for the final harvesting step in a study of geoduck growing feasibility conducted by the Natural Resources Department. Salish Seafoods did this free and used volunteer assistance from an employee of Taylor United who is an expert in digging enhanced geoduck in the inter-tidal area. The employee is also a spouse of a Squaxin Tribal member making the offer of his time and expertise an excellent offer. The clams were then sold through Taylor United who has the markets for these specific products which resulted in the highest possible prices to the Tribe. The proceeds are the property of the Tribe's Natural Resource Department not Salish Seafoods.

Q: Concern regarding a lack of tutoring for children.

A: The Sylvan Tutoring Program is available through the Learning Center, and is continuing to grow. We have seen dramatic benefits in the Sylvan tutoring program and plan to add tables to meet future needs and growth. Students are experiencing success which builds confidence.

Q: When will the tribal members be able to build their own house on tribal land, and will the tribe buy tribal members old homes on the reservation?

A: The tribe has designated land for tribal members to build a home. We are currently developing that plan. Surveying the land and creating a master plan of the designated site is being done currently. Land will be made available thru long term leases with the ability to renew. The challenges to this project are that the tribe will need to put in the infrastructure (roads, electricity, sewer lines, water) to be able to move forward. This is a huge expense which strategies are being looked in to possibly fund a portion with grants that would lower the overall cost to the families building homes.

In regards to the tribe buying back homes on the reservation, and putting them back into the housing inventory has not been decided. Homeowners do have the option of selling their homes to other tribal members or renting their home to tribal members and using the Section 184 program to possibly qualify for a home loan.

Q: Why are we spending all this money on development when we have unmet needs in health care and tribal programs?

A: While we have seen incredible growth in our programs over the past years we continually are challenged by the unmet needs in the tribe. Our goal as the Squaxin Island Tribe is to continue to move towards self determination and self reliance. To be Self Reliant we must move towards having more financial resources and diversifying our economy. Building sustainable revenues will allow us to meet the needs as a Sovereign nation. Being able to access capitol thru Bank loans allows the tribe to meet this infrastructure without taking away from existing program dollars.

Q: How does the Tribe ensure financial integrity?

A: The Tribe has Policies and Procedures that direct how all accounting transactions are processed. The Finance Department has many internal controls in place that provide for checks and balances, separation of duties, and compliance testing.

The Finance Department employs trained professionals who are bondable and insured to perform all financial functions.

The Tribe is the recipient of Federal funding and as a result is subject to annual organization-wide audits. These audits are performed by independent Certified Public Accountants. The Tribe's annual audit results consistently indicate that its systems are reliable and in compliance.

The possibility of any material misstatement of the financial statements caused by error or fraud that would not be detected in the normal course of business is highly unlikely.

Q: Concern regarding the pollution of Skookum Inlet

A: The Squaxin Island Tribe Natural Resources Department has monitored water quality in Skookum Creek for over five years. Their objective is to ensure that the quality of the water will support abundant and healthy finfish and shellfish populations in the watershed.

Natural Resources collects stream water temperature data during the summer months, and measures fecal coliform bacteria, plant nutrient pollutant levels, and stream flow year around. The results indicate that, on Tribal property, water quality is good and has not changed over the past five years.

Skookum Creek, as it passes the Tobacco Factory, Casino and Childcare Center, has low levels of bacteria and very low levels of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Little Creek has slightly higher levels of nutrients, but still well within widely accepted scientific standards.

Stream temperature is the major concern—it is higher than fish prefer during the summer in Skookum Creek. The primary cause is a lack of trees along the stream banks. Trees provide shade and when they fall into the creek, they create deep pools and fish cover.

To cool stream temperatures, Natural Resources have planted trees on Tribal property and added logs to the creek (*see picture below*). Upstream, we have offered to plant trees on all property adjacent to the creek.

State agencies also monitor water quality. The Department of Ecology found excessive bacteria and high stream temperatures upstream of Tribal property. Most of the bacteria seem to die before they reach Tribal property, but water temperature continues to warm. Department of Health data indicate that the water in Little Skookum Inlet is clean enough to maintain the highest level of shellfish harvest possible.



Skookum Creek behind the Casino after addition of large woody debris in 2006