

Bozho, nikanek!

My name is Liana Onnen. My Potawatomi name is Nahkwakishkokwe. Today, I ask for your consideration for the position of Vice-Chairperson in the upcoming Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation 2020 Election.

Many of you already know me from my time most recently, as Chairpreson of the Nation. It was an honor and a privilege to serve as the Chairperson, and serving as your representative was one of the most satisfying responsibilities. I have ever held. I have worked for our Nation for nearly 18 years, most recently returning as Housing Director for the Nation. Others may know me better from positions within the Nation such as the Housing Director, but also as the General Manager of Tribal Operations as well. To say that I have a deep historical knowledge and understanding of our Tribal Government and structure would definitely be true. For many years, I have had a front seat to the changes happening within our Nation, and at times was responsible for managing that change within our government.

The time I have spent working for the Nation has given me the experience and knowledge to continue to represent you with a position on our Tribal Council. I would appreciate the opportunity to continue to use that knowledge and experience to serve our members and communities in a new role on our Council. I would bring with me not only my successes, but the lessons I have learned from my failures. I would bring a sincere effort to do the best job I can for all of you, and I would endeavor to not make mistakes again, and when those mistakes happen, as we know they will, I would do all I could to never repeat those mistakes again.

While I was away from employment with the Nation, I was able to work as an independent consultant for several tribes, particularly in the Midwest and Northern Plains. I found this to be one of the most valuable experiences I have had in my professional career. The opportunity to continue to work for tribal communities was a gift. It was also an education for me. I was able to help tribes with my experience in managing tribal governments and entities, but I was also able to learn from their structures and their constitutions and laws and programs. I also learned about their cultures and sometimes even the historical ties between our peoples. It brought me a new perspective which I know brings value to the Nation.

I believe in our Nation and our people. I always have. I am not running to serve for my own reasons, I am running for all of you. Serving on Tribal Council is tough and I am ready for that. I am ready to dig in and do the work that needs to be done, because I know we can do better and be better. I also know, that the way things are in the world today, we will have to be better. We will have to be visionary in a way only Prairie Band Potawatomi People can be visionary. Every one of us, as members, deserves leadership who works hard for them. Leadership that doesn't show up, or speak up, or only speaks up when it affects them, is not leadership. It is certainly not representation. And at the end of the day, that is what Tribal Council is first and foremost: Your representatives, elected to act in the interests of the membership.

In the coming weeks leading up to the ballot mail-out and election, I will have a website up and running that will delve further into the following key issues and outline actual plans to address the deficiencies in these areas or at a minimum and analysis of the issue and why it is important. Each will be given its own, in-depth look.

TRIBAL COUNCIL ACCOUNTABILITY/TRANSPARENCY/REPORTING

We all know there have been issues for many years in this area. Every election cycle we talk about it. Why? Because nothing is ever done. Because the promises are made, the research starts, and suddenly

people find out two things. 1. It is work. 2. It will truly make them accountable. Both of those things become negotiable and they even if they are brought to the table, no action is taken. I watched this happen time and again as both General Manager and Chairperson. In my new position I will bring forward revised policies, reporting requirements, proposals for open/streaming meetings. You deserve to know which Tribal Council members show up on time and stay for the duration of meetings. You need to know how many times members miss meetings and why. You need reporting of a week's work, especially if it is "out of office" or "work from home." Tracking hours is tedious, not impossible. This will be the first issue/plan I roll out on my website and other electronic outlets. Because I have experience with policy and ordinance development, I have the skills necessary to complete this work and the drive to bring it to the table for action. As a voting member, I would even be able to make a motion so that the Council is forced to act, because letting an issue die for lack of second is action. Then you can truly see who wants to be accountable and who doesn't.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Casino, LLC, and beyond.... What is next? We need to explore more and we need to do this now. If the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought home no other lesson, it has to be that we can no longer rely solely on our Tribal Casino to carry us through. We must focus on new economic development opportunities and invest our dollars more wisely as we move forward. We also need to take a hard look at our Land and plan for the future. Land is one of our most valuable resources for economic development as well as regaining our land and preserving sovereignty. We need to know why we are buying land, how much it costs, and in the instance of Thunder Hill, what did we spend? What are we going to do with it? What will the Return on Investment be for that property? We must be judicious in our land purchases and not dip into reserves to make purchases we have no plans or use for. Now more than ever, sound, experienced fiscal management matters. The current crisis is the "rainy day" our reserves were meant for. Do we have enough to sustain? For how long? We do not know as members. That is because there is another key area we must work on.

COMMUNICAITON

The Tribal Council must do better in keeping its membership informed about tribal government business. Program coverage is important, but we need the membership to be informed before they get misinformation or before they get to General Council and are expected to make huge decisions. It is the 21st Century, we can make this happen. Let's find a way and move forward. Streaming meetings will help, but a communication plan is needed so that access to official Tribal Council action is simple for our membership no matter their access to internet or distance from our home reservation in Mayetta, KS. Our membership deserves to know what Tribal Council is doing at the table and how those decisions can impact them. We can do better and I can develop a communication plan as a starting point.

Other topics I plan to dig deeper into are:

ENROLLMENT
CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM
TRIBAL PREFERENCE & TRIBAL EMPLOYMENT
STATE/FEDERAL RELATIONS

I invite you to engage with me via social media and email for now and to look for more info on my website through those avenues. Find me on Facebook Liana Onnen Public and email me at voteliana@gmail.com. I can also be reached at 785-608-7873 for phone or text message. I will get back with you as soon as I can! I appreciate your consideration as we move forward and encourage you to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. I look forward to engaging with you!