

## HowNiKan March (Nmebne Gises) 2009, vol. 30 issue 2 - pages 20 - 21

Bozho, nikan!

I hope this issue of the *HowNiKan* finds each of you in good health and spirits. Summer is rapidly approaching, which means the Family Reunion Festival will be here soon. I hope all of you are making your plans right now to attend again this year.

For those of you who have never been, maybe this year will be the first. The temperature here in Oklahoma is slowly inching back toward summertime. The school year is now in the final quarter for most of us. I look toward it with mixed emotions each year as I will both lose students to graduation and find myself relaxing through the summer again.

After having some of my students for a half-day for two years, they kind of grow is probably a pretty decent person, so yes I'll miss them. Okay, so right about now most of you who are in education are wondering how does he manage to relax all summer? Well I really don't relax that much. But rather find myself doing other things that I find relaxing - like painting the house, mowing the yard, and other maintenance issues. And, my other volunteer work keeps me busy. It's just that it's different from my regular job, so it's relaxing.

I remember way back when I was a kid. My father took us three older boys for a ride one Saturday. Like most times, he just came out and said get ready we've got something to do. So you really never knew what was on the agenda. Sometimes, it meant something enjoyable, not all that often, but sometimes. Other times it meant he needed some horsepower.

Well, it was one of those days he needed strong backs and weak minds. We loaded up in the truck and off we went. Well this trip took me somewhere I didn't remember going to before. We just drove north a few miles, and he pulled off onto an old gravel road.

Now, where he turned in was right next door to the Shawnee Indian Agency. I had been there a couple times before. It was a collegiate-appearing environment. You know, lots of big stately looking buildings, well-kept lawns, and such. I had been to the IHS hospital there for checkups before scout summer camp and football season.

Nowhere we turned in was a road that led us to an old wreck of a building. Let me describe it as a little whitewashed structure that appeared to be waiting on a good wind to blow it over.

Well, we all rolled out and looked it over. Then we took the time to look in the back of the truck, and it became apparent why we were there. In the back of Dad's old Chevy pickup were a couple of those horrible green Lawnboy lawnmowers, some other yard tools, and a jug of water. It didn't take brain surgeons to figure out what kind of trip this was.

Anyway, that was the first time I saw the great Potawatomi Nation. Talk about having the wind taken out of your sails. Now don't get me wrong. I was proud of my Potawatomi heritage. And, to be perfectly honest, that little building was at least something. But somehow in my mind when we had driven through the Shawnee Indian Agency before I pictured our tribal headquarters being a little more impressive.

Well, over the years, we've made some progress. Some of it is almost forgotten, other things are proudly displayed about the tribal headquarters property. The first time I looked out north from that old building, there was nothing between it and the old Hardesty's grocery except Squirrel Creek. Today, if it still stood, you would be hard pressed to see that store. The Nation has grown over the years. Strong leadership went a long way toward making that happening.

This year our Nation has its usual election again in June. What's different this year is it is also an election for Chairman. Again this year, I will be supporting our incumbent Chairman John A. 'Rocky' Barrett. It is through his leadership that many of the improvements have been accomplished. Over the past six years, I have been fortunate to be able to serve our Nation. During this time, we have experienced growth that is almost unparalleled in Indian Country. Part of that was due to the good fortune of being in the right place at the right time. Much of it is the result of good business decisions.

The seed corn has been tended to wisely. Other tribes build new buildings with each new elected leader. Those end up being empty shells in a few short years. Our buildings are full of employees working in our programs and enterprises for each of us.

The sound, conservative business plan we have taken helps keep us from putting our grandkids in debt. It is our hope to be able to pay off the debt at FireLake Grand Casino long before our grandkids inherit it. We may lengthen it to accomplish some of our plans in a timely manner. But our hopes are to keep it within a generation.

In our Executive Branch, we have three able-minded people who direct our Nation. Along with Chairman Barrett are Vice Chairman Linda Capps and Secretary - Treasurer D. Wayne Trousdale. These three individuals run the daily business of the Nation in one form or another. None of them take their duties lightly.

So, expect to hear from me again next year when Linda and D. Wayne are up for re-election. I have walked a little in their shoes over the previous years and know that they are all three tireless workers for our people. If you appreciate what we have been blessed with as a Nation then I encourage you to vote for Rocky this year and Linda and D. Wayne next.

Those of you who follow our legislative meeting via Potawatomi.org may have noticed and wondered about the discussion on the Wanette property. For the first time I can remember, we had votes cast against putting property into trust status. It is hard for me to comprehend someone voting against this. One of the primary ways the nation generates income is from enterprises located on trust property.

The Nation is able to take advantage of some opportunities not available on nontrust property. We have a sales tax benefit that helps us get businesses off the ground and healthy quicker. Then, those same sales dollars go into future enterprises. I could kind of see someone disagreeing with a business proposal that we're looking at on trust property. But voting against putting property into trust, I don't know.

Well, the warm weather has me outside more. Hopefully, spring will find us all soon. I look forward to this time of year. I take pleasure in the time I get with my grandkids; we are able to get outside and do the things they enjoy. We'll be hooking up the fifth-wheel soon and heading to the lake with them. They really enjoy that.

Time spent outdoors in nature with them brings so many memories for the future. We as Potawatomis will be gathering soon with our families. Summer will follow and we will meet again in Shawnee for the annual gathering.

For all my relations around the country feel free to contact me via [Schmidlkofer@Potawatomi.org](mailto:Schmidlkofer@Potawatomi.org) if you have any questions of me.

Megwetch!  
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