



SouthDakota

Legislative  
Research  
Council

Revised MINUTES  
Tribal Economic Development Task Force

Representative Don Haggar, Chair  
Crow Creek Tribal Chair Roxanne Sazue, Vice Chair

First Meeting  
2015 Interim

Grand River Casino/Oahe Room  
Mobridge, South Dakota

**Friday, June 5, 2015**

The first meeting of the Tribal Economic Development Task Force for the 2015 interim was called to order by Representative Don Haggar at 1:00 p.m. in the Oahe Room of the Grand River Casino and Resort in Mobridge, SD.

A quorum was determined with the following members answering the roll call: Representative Don Haggar, Chair; Senators Jim Bradford and Craig Tieszen; Representative Mike Verchio; Secretary Steve Emery, Department of Tribal Relations; Mr. Tuffy Lunderman, Rosebud Sioux Tribe; Mr. DelRay German, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate; Mr. Steven Sitting Bear, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; and Former Representative Kathy Tyler. Members excused: Senator Bruce Rampelberg; Representative Elizabeth May; Crow Creek Chairwoman Roxanne Sazue; Former Representative Mark DeVries; Former Senator Chuck Jones; and Ms. Sarah Zephier, Yankton Sioux Tribe.

Staff members present were Roxanne Hammond, Legislative Attorney; and Amanda Jacobs, Research Analyst.

*NOTE: For purpose of continuity, the following minutes are not necessarily in chronological order. Also, all referenced documents distributed at the meeting are attached to the original minutes on file in the Legislative Research Council (LRC).*

An opening prayer was offered by **Mr. Tuffy Lunderman**.

**Opening Remarks**

**Representative Don Haggar, Task Force Chair**, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Tribal Economic Development Task Force. The task force was created by the 2014 Legislature through HB1213. Section 5 of HB1213 reads, *“The task force shall evaluate issues associated with economic development needs, initiatives, and barriers affecting South Dakota’s Native American population and South Dakota’s Indian tribes and tribal governments. Specifically, the task force shall analyze business and economic sectors and segments having potential for higher levels of success, as well as other possible approaches to improve economic conditions. The task force shall also address workforce availability, including education and skills, related demographics, salary and wage scales, and other issues affecting human resources necessary for the promotion of economic development for this segment of South Dakota’s population.”*

**Approval of Minutes**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY SENATOR TIESZEN, SECONDED BY REPRESENTATIVE VERCHIO, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 9, 2014, MEETING. Motion prevailed on a voice vote.**

## Tribal Perspectives

**Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Presentation – Mr. Harold Frazier** pointed out that the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe has no casino and is not on an interstate. The tribe is reliant on seasonal hunting and fishing. The reservation covers 2.8 million acres. The unemployment rate is seventy five to eighty percent in the winter and sixty percent in the summer due to seasonal jobs. Many jobs are held by the same person year after year so not much opportunity for others to gain experience. No new jobs are available and for those that do work, the road conditions are difficult, and child care is a challenge for many single parents. The tribe also struggles with collecting accurate data on the workforce to address existing issues.

Representative Haggar asked how many current tribal members are of working age. Mr. Frazier responded around 35-40% are currently of working age.

**Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Presentation – Mr. DelRay German** distributed the document, “Dakota Nation Development Corporation” (*Document 1*). Mr. German went through the document and explained the need for new development to create jobs. Currently, there is fifty percent unemployment on the reservation. Younger members are becoming educated at faster rate than ever before but jobs do not exist to employ many of them. Tribal members are leaving the reservation because jobs are not available. The biggest problems on the reservation currently are poverty and diabetes. Millions of dollars flow into the reservation each year but is not being captured by the tribe. Data collection is also a problem, and the tribes cannot collect accurate data needed to address current needs.

**Senator Jim Bradford** commented on the treatment center on the Sisseton Reservation. The center provides employment and a service to tribal members.

Mr. Lunderman asked about the current percentage of females serving in management positions. Mr. German explained female tribal members account for 59% of employees on the reservation and 60% are employed in management positions.

**Standing Rock Sioux Tribe – Mr. Chad Harrison** stated that the lack of infrastructure is the biggest problem on the SRST reservation. One size does not fit all for the reservations. Standing Rock has been working on relationships, trying not to be so defensive. Lack of financing makes it impossible for new businesses to come to the reservation or for existing businesses to expand. Land issues are also a problem. The reservation is 2.6 million acres but only 1.3 million acres are in tribal trust. Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates is a valuable resource but there are no jobs available for graduates. Other students stop their education because of the lack of jobs available. The reservation needs to do an assessment of what resources it has, and what obstacles the people face. Standing Rock is working on data collection, unemployment, land issues, capital issues, and mentality. The tribe also needs to look at its code, and possibly adopt the Uniform Commercial Code.

Mr. German discussed opening the dialogue between tribal leaders and county officials. Tribal members should serve on commissions, boards and city councils. He stated it is necessary to work with cities and counties to build relationships and open dialogue.

**Senator Craig Tieszen** asked the committee to consider a hypothetical situation of a tribal member getting educated in car mechanics off of the reservation, and possibly returning home to start a business. What are the incentives or disincentives to returning to the reservation to work?

Mr. Chad Harrison said the need to be around family is a factor, and a potential advantage is the relationship with the community.

Mr. Del Ray German said a lack of capital is a struggle. Senator Bradford pointed out that issues with trust land is a challenge, because business owners can lease a building for five years, put \$50,000 into the building, and then after the lease is expired, the tribe can take the building from the business owner. It is a large risk to take.

**Mr. Mark Benoit, Cheyenne River**, said that teacher salaries are so low the reservations never get quality teachers, and the kids don't dream anymore. There are strong cultural ties, but they lack infrastructure and facilities.

Mr. Tuffy Lunderman pointed out that even if a business came to Rosebud, they would be competing with the tribe, and the tribe eliminates competition as much as they can. He said that it does not matter how much capital is available if no one knows how to manage it.

### **Public Testimony**

**Ms. Akeesh Latif, Standing Rock**, said that she is worried about the suicide rate on the reservations. Education is difficult because teachers do not want to teach on the reservations and many end up leaving after a year. It's difficult for students to want to go to school; they get attached to teachers that leave after a short time. She would like youth to get involved on the reservation in recycling.

**Ms. Tonya Fiddler, Eagle Butte**, distributed the document, "Cheyenne River Workforce Development Survey Results" (**Document 2**) and "Cheyenne River Indian Reservation Visitors Guide" (**Document 3**). Ms. Fiddler spoke on the high rates of unemployment and poverty on the reservation. She is the executive director of Four Bands Community Fund, which provides entrepreneurial assistance training and education to put members of the tribe into the workforce. She pointed out the women who have completed the training and education, are now working and productive members of society. She would like to see this idea expanded and implemented elsewhere.

### **Committee Discussion**

Representative Haggar discussed the next task force meeting and set a tentative date of July 10, 2015. He further stated he would like to meet three or four more times between July and the end of 2015. Potentially, he would like to meet on the Rosebud Reservation, the Crow Creek Reservation, in Pierre, and Sioux Falls.

### **Adjournment**

**SENATOR TIESZEN MOVED, SECONDED BY REPRESENTATIVE VERCHIO, TO ADJOURN. The motion prevailed unanimously on a voice vote.**

The committee adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

*This meeting is being held in a physically accessible location. Any individual needing assistance, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, should contact the Legislative Research Council (605-773-3251) in advance of the meeting to make further arrangements.*

All committee agendas and minutes are available on the LRC website: <http://legis.sd.gov/>. You may subscribe to electronic delivery of agendas and minutes at *E-Subscribe* on the LRC website.