

January 7, 2021

Dear General Council:

I hope this finds you well – I and my family send to you and yours our best wishes for a peaceful, joyous and healthy new year!

Our pensions, college scholarships and other programs are at risk now and could be cut or disappear. If we don't act now, we may need to reduce elder checks, scholarships, and government programs by 30%-50% soon. **This would mean many tribal jobs cuts.** Even if we do as suggested and just cut other programs to keep the pensions stable, we will have massive tribal jobs cuts, which could devastate the local economy and people would move away. If we don't have people here on our lands, we put our existence as a Tribe at risk.

I am running for Tribal Chairman because we need to prepare now to make sure we survive and thrive for future generations. Our challenges are complex. My background in economic development and planning can help get this done. But it will take a massive team effort to accomplish this – we need our whole community to participate.

Our Tribe depends on \$8 million each year from gaming machine leases. Changes in the gaming industry could eliminate these soon (changes from Class 3 to unlicensed Class 2 machines). **We have an opportunity now to not only cover this potential loss, but to move our Tribe forward and provide even more support for ALL our tribal families, both on and off reservation.**

My goal is to **serve you by focusing on three factors: prosperity, process, and people.** Prosperity can be achieved through good economic development, and this can generate an additional \$8 million each year (and more!) to cover that revenue we could lose. If elected, I will work with the elected officials, staff, and tribal members to move forward in these areas:

1. PROSPERITY: By Summer General Council 2022 present an economic development plan to generate additional \$8 million in annual revenue to ensure continuity of our programs. I will coordinate with the full Council to **significantly ramp up our lobbying in Washington DC to get our piece of the federal funding available now. I will also use my MPA final project to advocate for fishing rights, a critical source of food and culture.**
2. PROCESS: promote accountability and transparency throughout our system, specifically with budgets and capital expenditures (like land purchases over \$1 million). This will make sure our government is working for every tribal member.
3. PEOPLE: advocate for budgeting more for cultural programs to support and strengthen our community. This is the top request from our tribal members.

The most important thing we need to do is lobby now in DC to get a piece of the once in a generation funding for infrastructure. This can help solve many of our key issues – lack of housing, opportunities for economic development and basic security and safety of our people.

The lack of buildable land is a major challenge and getting roads and utilities uphill solves this. We would be able to build houses for all of our people. We have overcrowding in our homes. We have people who want to move back to retire or to work for the Tribe/WBE, but they cannot find housing. We also need to prepare alternative village sites now to prepare for rising ocean levels/storm surges, liquefaction, and tsunamis. We need to do more to protect our people and a project like this will be the most complex thing we have ever done.

It is unusual to start with Chairman, but there's a reason. I sat in many government meetings (tribal, state and federal) where they only let elected officials speak. They expect to hear from the Chair. Online meetings are not enough, we need someone to go to DC and lobby hard for this funding. The only way to get things done is in week-long trips of 5 days filled with meetings with Congress people and cabinet members. It takes knowing how to speak at a high level and in detail; it takes stamina and drive; it takes knowledge of law, policy, economics, and government systems. I've heard stories of this from the days of Ike and Earl. I just don't see any Council members doing this. Of course, they are nice people and have served our community in many other ways, they just have not been doing this. As Administrator, I learned in detail our whole tribal government system and played a key role in our Tribal and General Council meetings. Many elders have been part of this education, guiding me on how our systems have and should work, including traditional leadership values.

As Tribal Administrator for the last almost 3 years, I worked hard to bring accountability and ensure everyone follows the same rules, including me and my own family members. (As a result, one or two of my family members are some of my harshest and loudest critics. This is also why I am being attacked now with fabricated rumors.) This wastes everyone's time and our resources. Wouldn't it be better to focus our energy on moving our whole Tribe forward?

As Administrator, I worked with our staff to start the General Council weekend of events and each summer we got a quorum, even during the pandemic. In my first Tribal Council meeting, I proposed a new legal strategy for dealing with the Tuckers – we did it and won. This increases the value of our land. I worked with our staff to increase our tribal household employment rate by 5% in my first year, which included people from ALL our families (this does NOT factor in impacts of additional COVID funds). I proposed and coordinated advocacy to federal officials for support and funding – multiple Council members said we never had anything like this before.

We proposed two new codes and brought the staff and Council together to get it done. This includes the Hearth Act code (lets us to forgo the BIA approval and do our own land leases) and Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) code, which would fund a new workforce development program to provide our people get more and better job training. **Both support our sovereignty.** It is this type of coordination with all staff, tribal members and elected officials that we need to move forward. No one can do this alone.

In mid-November, I resigned as Tribal Administrator to accept a position at WBE to focus on building businesses and revenue for the Tribe. (They have asked me to focus on real estate development projects, which is my background.) I also resigned because there is so much

potential here, but we are standing still. **However, I know there are Council members, employees, and tribal members who, like me, want to move our Tribe forward. The right leadership can coordinate and focus this potential and harness everyone's good work to solve the big problems and achieve more for the whole Tribe.**

So often, the "crabs in a bucket" metaphor plays out in our politics. We need to stop pulling each other down. Instead, we need to work together and lift each other up to get out of the bucket and back to the sea. Let's remember that and support each other.

I am old enough to have life/professional experience and young enough to have the energy to get things done for our Tribe. If you do elect me, I will take this seriously and I want you to hold me accountable. If I don't uphold my campaign promises, you can hold me accountable and vote for someone else next time. Please email me at jessedowns@gmail.com with any questions. To move our Tribe forward, we need to come together – we have so much more in common than we have differences.

Xusqa,

Jesse Salakie Downs

Biography

My mother is Mary Downs, and her father was Earl Davis. Both were part of the fight for our full federal recognition (achieved in 1971) and both were on the first Tribal Council.

I am 44 years old and was born and raised on a farm in Brooklyn, WA on the North River, on our traditional lands. Although I did not grow up on the reservation, I spent summers here staying with my Grandma Ruthie, playing with the cousins, and working in our fireworks stand.

In 1992, my parents moved us to Anchor Point, Alaska. In 1994, I got a federal scholarship to do my senior year of high school in Germany. In 2001, I graduated with a **BA in Economics from Harvard University**. In 2005, I graduated with a **MA in Sociology** from AUB. From 2005-2018, I lived and work in Dubai where I worked the last 10+ years in investment advisory, focused on large-scale real estate and development projects **with significant economic development components**. In April 2019, I started as our Tribal Administrator. I moved back because I wanted to use what I've learned to contribute to our Tribe, to be closer to my family, and to have my son, Jackson, who is now 2.5 years old.

I'm now doing a Master's in Public Administration (MPA) in Tribal Governance at The Evergreen State College and should finish by June. **My final project is on our fishing rights on the Willapa Bay. It includes creating tools that could be used by our Tribe to advocate for an interim solution that will get our people back on the ocean catching our traditional food source.**