

Boozhoo.

My name is Michael Steven Wiggins Jr. and I need your support at our Tribal Caucus on Thursday, September 3, 2009.

I am Son of Michael Wiggins Sr. and Geraldine Nelis. Grandson of Lillian and Sam (Wobby) Wiggins and Bill and Irma Nelis. I have been married to my wife Luanne for over 11 years and we have two wonderful daughters, Paige and Madelyn.

During my youth, I recall very influential people in my life, these were Tribal Members volunteering to help kids, others were just doing their jobs. Ed Boulley coached and drove us to softball, Erv and Bill Soulier coached the Odanah Midgets basketball team for whom I proudly played, Bob Dashner ran the Trails Program and taught me respect for elders and gave me self-esteem to handle the pressure of being a young man. I will always be in debt to these people for the care and time they put in with me. Their commitment and genuine concern to help youth instilled within me, a drive to do likewise for others in our community. ***It is this drive to help my people, and work towards a better community here in Bad River that compels me to seek the position of Tribal Chairman.***

I've written the following letter to serve as look into my worldview and foundation from which I hope to serve Tribal Members.

My Professional Journey Thus Far

- I have lived on the Bad River Reservation for the past 40 years. I left only to obtain my Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Wisconsin-Superior.
- I graduated from college in 1992 at the age of 23, and immediately returned home to Bad River to try and find meaningful work. I found it with the AODA Youth Prevention/Education Program. Working with kids in Bad River became my life while I was a young man in my 20's. Working with Bad River Youth has since become a cornerstone of my professional journey. I worked in Bad River for 6.5 years and during this time I built up a very successful program that served the needs of our youth.
- In 1999, I left the AODA Youth Prev./Ed. position to become the Home School Coordinator at the Ashland High School. Some Bad River Elders may recall when the AHS Native American Club and I would come to Odanah to cook and serve dinner. Working in the

Home-School Coordinator Position was an incredible experience. I learned first hand the intricacies of the issues, challenges and success our kids experience inside the Ashland School District. I also learned about the resources, tribal programs, and School District initiatives that dealt with the achievement gap our Native Youth face compared to other demographic groups within the District. Seeing how a large organization works in regard to communication and strategic planning was an enlightening experience.

As Tribal Chairman I would voice our educational concerns in a constructive manner while working with the Ashland School District for positive change for our Tribal students.

- After enjoying *over a decade* of working first-hand, on the frontlines with Bad River Youth. I decided to make a career change that would further my professional journey. I left the position of Home-School Coordinator to become a GLIFWC Conservation Warden. I became a State Certified Law Enforcement Officer and received Cross-Deputization from the State DNR. More importantly, I received an eye opening peek into our Ceded Territory and our Treaty Rights. Until I became a Game Warden I never realized the resources that were available, or the lands, lakes and opportunities. I also got to see the importance of recruiting youth and others into the world of Off-Reservation Harvesting. Bad River has a homeland that is able to provide for our needs, however, as our Tribal Population increases Treaty Rights and the resources Off-Reservation will become crucial for us as people.
- During my time at GLIFWC my best moments were teaching Bad River people harvesting skills and encouraging them to fall in love with the outdoors. Unfortunately my least favorite activities ended up having to do with Law Enforcement. I had an inkling when I was 22 years old with my brand new Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice that Law Enforcement was not for me, but I had never tested the theory. I found out that as much as I loved being in the outdoors, putting on a bullet-proof vest and carrying a firearm in public was something I could never quite embrace. I believe I was a good Warden, I made cases against violators, I became a Firearms Instructor for the Department, and I upheld my oath of duty- but I also knew that there was someone out there that was a better fit for the job. In August of 2008 I resigned on good terms with the Enforcement Division of GLIFWC.

- I have since had the opportunity to rejoin the GLIFWC Team as a consultant doing Wild Rice Workshops and a Canoe Safety Class in Bay Mills, MI. In my time at GLIFWC I learned that the Commission is an organization that we as Ojibwe People can be very proud of. Many dedicated employees work hard to insure that our rights and resources will always be available.
- I am currently a salaried full-time employee of Prentice House Inc. in Ashland, WI. In my job I work with male juvenile delinquents in a group home setting. I coordinate activities, distribute medications, and conduct alcohol groups for Prentice House 3. Helping young men as they strive to straighten out their lives is a rewarding job and is one that calls for optimism and hope as principles to guide my work.

Optimism and Hope are principles I will draw on as I campaign to become Tribal Chairman and as I address issues that confront our Tribe.

My Leadership Principles

I have always conducted myself with manners and respect when it comes to people in our community. I am honest and willing to work for the betterment of our people as a whole. I don't believe in "revenge style politics" nor do I believe that we need to tear each other apart in order to find leadership within our Tribe.

I have always tried to be a person that can bring people together. At the end of the day, young or old – this is our time together in this world. I remember sitting at an Elder's breakfast with my grandmother Lillian as she was talking with Lloyd Neveaux Sr. they used terms like "in our day" and "in our time". Now that they're gone I realize what they meant.

This is **our time**. I personally choose not to attack other candidates or Tribal Members, as I work and play here in our Reservation. We have issues and needs as a Tribe that can be attacked.

I believe in working hard as a servant of the people. Public service-elected positions entail responsibilities to be taken to heart. My goal is to work towards the day we become a better community, a happier, healthier community. My happiest moments as a professional have involved being "of service" to our Tribal People and I will use this as a foundation to serve as Tribal Chairman.

Concerns about me?

I realize that in the minds of some of my elders, even though I'm forty years old, I am probably considered to be young for the job. I am old enough to remember the pain and hardship that came with the division between our "Concerned Citizens" and "the Ojibwe Justice Society" in the Seventies. I was puzzled then on why families were split and people showed hate towards each other. Along with this came a feeling of being powerless to help since I was just a child. Well, unfortunately I've watched and listened as our Tribal Community once again splintered in different directions this past year and a half. Fortunately, I am no longer a powerless child. I am running for Tribal Chairman as a man who has had enough with divisiveness and short term approaches. I will strive to be a leader that renews our sense of unity as one people, one nation.

One could look at my job career as being too varied or too "flighty". I would say this to any potential detractors. My goal in life was never to be a Home-School Coordinator or a Warden. I value having a purpose in my work over any particular job title. Money and security are not my personal priorities. I will continue to strive and be of service to my community, I believe my career path has given me an excellent professional foundation with which to continue this journey.

Thank You

I thank you for your consideration as we approach the caucus Thursday Night, September 3 at 6pm.

The Tribal Chairman is an important position and as a voter I always looked to find out as much as possible about a candidate before any election. In the spirit of sharing information, I have included some additional thoughts and ideas for those Tribal Members that would like more information about me.

Mike Wiggins Jr.

The Bad River Reservation – Our Land

In order to discuss the ideas, hopes and dreams I have for our Tribe, I believe first and foremost there must be context, a filter thru which we see and hope to grow. I feel this foundation is our Land. Everything I love, places that inspire awe and awareness are found here on our land within the Reservation. I'm sure that most, if not all tribal members have felt the same

pride and joy I feel when the top of Birch Hill is crested and one looks over our land after a long trip or time away from our home.

Waverly Beach, The Falls, The Sloughs, Stones Road, The Mouth, Potato River, Graveyard Creek, Honest Johns, Elm Hoist Bridge, and more....all these places have their seasons and all these places have their meanings for me, as I'm sure they do for many our people. We are blessed as Bad River people to have so much wilderness and water at our fingertips. I think about the responsibility we have in preserving and protecting our place in this world as our communities grow and new generations join us.

This responsibility is lived as a set of values our people carry with them. This is evidenced through our pristine waterfront east of Bad River, our commitment to keeping our waterways development free, and our cultural values that contain the duty to conduct ourselves with forethought to future generations. In addition our land serves as the source thru which we live our culture and traditions.

In 2003, we bought back 23,688 acres of our reservation from private interests. Our people supported this purchase and the fiscal sacrifice that was to come with it. We turned back the clock and re-took what was rightfully ours in the first place, but of course, it came at a monetary price of nearly 5 million "*They're not making any more land*" was an old saying that never used to resonate with me, it does now. It is our time and our duty to secure our home base for future generations. If we look at urban sprawl, our tribe's growth, and threats to our environment through the lens of 25, 50, or 100 years time it's easy to see that paying off our land purchase bill, is the least we can do for our children and future generations.

There has to be strategic planning if we hope to protect this jewel in which we live. As our tribe moves into the future, issues such as housing needs, population numbers, economic development, and trespassing will begin to take their toll on our resources. As a leader in this Tribe I will work to confront and address environmental issues with strategic planning and foresight from all segments of our community.

We have tools at our disposal, excellent Departments such as Natural Resources, Recycling, Water and Sewer, Roads, Law Enforcement and others are there to be called on for expertise. We also already have an Integrated Resource Management Plan, elders, hunters, fishermen, moms, dads, and a Tribal Land Ethic that has been exemplary. We can move forward with confidence that sustained economic growth can be had without sacrificing the spirit of the pristine land areas we currently enjoy.

"What kind of community do we want to be?" "Where is the line between enterprise and conservation?" These are *our* questions, and we

have the answers if we work together to plan and prepare. The Tribal Chairman acting as Executive Director needs to facilitate this process. I would work to facilitate this process.

The Bad River Tribal Mission Statement:

To Work Toward a More Progressive, Financially Stable Government, To Maintain Tribal Sovereignty, and Enable Members To Progress Individually Towards a More Fulfilling Life Culturally, Spiritually, and Economically.
1996

Thirteen years ago our Tribal Organization attended a Bad River sponsored organizational In-service held at the Hotel Chequamegon. During this in-service we formulated the Tribal Mission Statement.

Creating a mission statement was just the start of what should be an ongoing, evolutionary process of self-analysis as a Tribe. How are we currently helping Tribal Members “to progress individually towards a more fulfilling life culturally, spiritually, and economically?” How are we going to improve our organization to help members even more next year? Or five years from now? How would we know we’re on the right track?

I believe we need to define tangible and feasible goals that would allow us to evaluate whether we are succeeding with all the efforts we are making.

To work towards a more Progressive Tribal Government.....

I see tremendous opportunity here as it pertains to the way we are currently conducting business vs. how we ***could be*** conducting business.

I’ve listened to many tribal members and without a doubt our people want transparency in our government. Our people want to know what’s going on inside our government and in our communities. Our people want and need credible information.

As one example of my view of a progressive government, I’d work to transform badriver.com_ into a more diverse website where tribal members could go online and see their home reflected back to them. Granted we need to advertise our enterprise’, but beyond that we can create an informational and interactive site that serves the needs of our people. Community bulletins, Department Head Blogs, Picture Pages, Forums, Tribal

Organizational Calendars, PDF Files of our Constitution, Policies, and Council Minutes, email lists and links could all be accessible with the push of a button.

In addition, and most importantly I would *encourage* all Tribal Council Positions to obtain an e-mail account and to do a monthly summary of Tribal activities from their perspective and post online. This would amount to a minimum of 12 paragraphs a year. 12 paragraphs is not too much to ask in my opinion. I would start this process by incorporating a “Chairman’s Blog” that would keep Tribal Members abreast of events and activities for the good of all. There are big ticket trips taken by representatives of our government, Tribal members deserve to see a summary of these activities, complete with what was done, what we learned, and how it will benefit our Tribe. Doing a report is nothing more than being accountable. I will be accountable.

We could also work with our “Tech specialists” to stream live feeds of Tribal Council Meetings in on our website. I’ve seen footage of tribal proceedings on “Youtube”, why not our general sessions?

I would also be in favor of rotating Tribal Council Meetings thru our various communities. Utilizing the Housing Building and the Community House on Birch Hill for meetings are simple efforts to include more Tribal Members in the political process. Again, these are just ideas for now of what I feel are feasible and tangible goals to address the notion of becoming a “progressive government”.

Increased transparency would be progressive, but placing more emphasis on technology as a means to become more efficient would also help. I lived on Birch Hill for over 5 years, travelling to and fro for everything took a toll. If we can bring the government to the people, then we need to do it and we need to do it as soon as we can.

To Work Towards a Financially Stable Government, to Maintain Sovereignty.....

I’ll start by saying the quickest way to a financially stable government would be to increase our annual revenue and eliminate our debt. Sounds easy, but obviously it is more complex than this.

Where I would begin would be a common-sense approach to our business, organization and finances.

First and foremost I am proud of our current enterprises and departments and how hard our people are working therein. As a leader I would work to build on our current level of success, by allowing our managers to manage without political interference to the best of my ability. Who better to run our

enterprises than the people we have hired and depend on? The Tribal Council needs to support our managers as they strive to increase revenue. Our Tribal Council is tasked with decisions that affect all of our people, but business management has to be left with the personnel on the front lines. I believe we can support those enterprises that bring revenue by increasing fiscal discipline at all levels, and thru all Departments. I've listened as each enterprise was analyzed from a fiscal (\$) perspective. The scrutiny in which we evaluate our enterprises is good, but in addition all Tribal Organizations need to step up and/or continue the same dedication and discipline when it comes to the bottom line. Every Department in our organization has an annual budget under which they are expected to conduct business. Operating within our budgets is a common-sense tactic that is within our control. We are all in this as one people, I believe we have to move forward together. If we paddle a canoe on only one side, we're going to go in circles. When we get our Tribal operating expenditures and revenue efforts as efficient as possible we will see our true bottom line. In talking with our Accounting Department one thing I heard was that our Tribe *has the ability* to be successful while paying off our current debt, *but* we need to work hard with efficiency and all eyes on our goals. We are not currently operating that way.

Why should we pay off our debt? How much should we spend or save? What would we save for? Once again, these are *our* questions that need to be addressed *by all* segments of our community *for all* segments of our community.

As Tribal Chairman I would make sure our Organization and Enterprise' stay within their budgets, but I would also work with Tribal Members and Tribal Personnel in order to identify community goals and projects that would enhance the quality of life for our people. Our Tribal Employees and People need to understand *why* it's in everyone's best interests to increase efficiency.

One of the reasons we work is to make money and take care of ourselves, but as we work for our Tribe we can conduct ourselves as professionals with goals that go beyond earning a wage. Paying our medical bills, increasing access to Higher Education, Building a Health and Wellness Facility, the list goes on and on when it comes to community needs.

Identifying priority needs, goals, projects and saving money *are achievements to be developed, accomplished, and shared with all aspects of our community*. I believe these to be more common-sense tactics to move us towards a financially stable government and to move us forward as one people.

Future Economic Development

I've always believed that we can grow as a Tribe economically. My view doesn't include the "get rich quick business endeavor", but it does include creating a business friendly atmosphere.

I was, and remain opposed to the untested, unproven Biomass Plant Technology that almost landed here in Bad River. In a quick summary, I'll say this, the Biomass Plant was unproven, and consisted of trucking in 900 tons of garbage per day. Most importantly to me though, was that *the downside of the Biomass Plant's failure didn't align itself with our Tribal values* from the land perspective I discussed earlier.

BUT there are things to be learned from it's proposal.

The Biomass Plant was voted down by our Council due in part to our lack of ordinances and overall preparedness to handle a business project on the scale of R3 Verdant's Biomass Proposal.

Quite simply, our Council knew we were not ready for this business. What if it was the homerun swing we as a people had been waiting for? Not being ready when a good, culturally aligned, profitable business comes knocking on our door in the future-would be an outright shame.

Now is the time to look at business planning and future economic development from different perspectives.

- Where would or could we put a business?
- What kind of business do we want in Bad River?
- How do we market ourselves to a good venture that fits our needs and values?
- What ordinances and controls do we need?
- How does all of it fit in relation to our Tribal Sovereignty?

We are in control of this land and our future. ***We can*** have terms ready to offer the next "outside" business venture rather than clinging unto anything that comes along. Our people need jobs, our tribe needs to diversify, but we can't let desperation trump rational foresight and planning.

With strategic planning we stay prepared for the "big homerun" if it comes along, but in addition, it allows us to be realistic and look within our current "circle of influence" to develop strategies that are tangible and feasible.

Would an "aquaculture business venture" be a bad idea? Raising fish as food and bait aligns itself with our values. It also happens to be a multi-million dollar industry.

When I was a Game Warden I remember hearing biologists talk about “VHS” a deadly fish disease as an inevitability in Northern WI. What they meant was that this disease is coming to town eventually. As “VHS” spreads, the bait industry and fish rearing as we currently know it will change forever. I listened as biologists discussed how “closed circuit” aquaculture systems could become the norm. “Closed-circuit systems” essentially raise fish in water that is re-circulated and filtered within a closed system. The water isn’t taken in and returned to a river or other water source. Our current Fish Hatchery is not a closed system in that the water used to rear fingerlings is returned to the Kakagon River.

Closed circuit Aquaculture Systems could insure and certify that all fish produced are disease free and ready for sale or consumption. When “VHS” spreads and State DNR rules expand, some bait dealers will be left behind, and others will be ready.

Is Aquaculture feasible as a Tribal Business? I think it is, but more importantly it illustrates an example of how with planning and foresight our Tribe could position itself to be ahead of future markets, and in business’ that are conducive to our cultural values.

This project is just used as an example of how we could *re-define* our notions of what business success is, as it pertains to planned development. Aquaculture Projects, Investing in Off-Reservation Enterprise, Online Sales of Native American Crafts, ect. There are better business personnel to crunch numbers and develop bigger projects, but I would make sure that the *planning process is moving forward in a way that aligns itself with what we want as a community, as one people.*

I also think with strategic planning we can start breaking the mold of our current lines of thought.

Over towards Ashland, I watched different parcels of lakefront property came up for sale along Bayfront Road it occurred to me that here was opportunity passing us by as a Tribe. *I am in favor of never developing our pristine lakeshore, the Sloughs, Bad River, Waverly to Marble Point are areas that need to stay wild and free.* Future generations will fall in love with these areas just like we did.

However, nearer to Ashland along Bay Front Road though I see potential opportunity. On the West Edge of our Reservation the lake front is different. It is mostly owned by non-tribal individuals, but more than that it is developed with houses and piers and a landing. It occurred to me that “this

lakeshore is in our reservation, it was once “*ours*”. I entertained the notion that if our people deemed it appropriate, maybe someday we could re-acquire this area for Tribal People.

I envisioned us purchasing this already developed lakefront land west of Second Landing Road.

Then I allowed myself the chance to dream a bit.

In my mind I saw a beautifully planned out building complex that offered a variation of our current business’ – gaming, lakeview lodging, lakeview dining were there, but more than that, I saw a place that was connected to the land and water. A sport/bait shop was there, as was a “beach club” type lounge that opened to the lake. Heck, I even saw a marina out in front of the whole works. From this Marina our Tribe was offering charter fishing opportunities out to the flats North of Long Island. Our Tribe was also offering charter tours of the Apostle Islands. The big Tribal boat for sale in front of our Casino had a home in one of the Marina slips. I also saw our tribal youth learning how to kayak and canoe, while other Tribal Members got re-acquainted with a lakefront that was part of their heritage in the first place. Maybe I was getting carried away. Maybe I was just dreaming. I’ll say this though, I believe strategic planning and preparing for opportunity *could* make it happen if that’s something we want as a Tribe. Maybe it couldn’t happen all at once, but investing in strategic land would be a start. It’s been said “a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.”

To enable Members To Progress Individually Towards a More Fulfilling Life Culturally, Spiritually, and Economically.....

I believe that in order to help our people live a more fulfilling life we can start by paying them the best possible wage the position merits. Each individual chooses their version of happiness and lives a life they see fit to serve that purpose. A good solid living wage will help them in their personal journey towards a more fulfilling life. It goes back to what I discussed earlier about setting goals and priorities and getting Tribal members to buy into why it’s a good idea to be efficient. If Tribal Employees understand they have a vested interest in being frugal and efficient with Tribal monies, it will happen.

Again, common sense says that if I’m a Tribal Employee and I can do my job in a good way, with less money spent, I increase my chances of a raise. Taking this logic, it goes to figure that if every Tribal Member made an

effort to shop at our IGA Grocery Store, there would be increased revenue for the Tribe. Increased revenue allows us to re-invest in our people's wages and our business'. Common-sense Tribal business practice.

Getting back to how we can increase the quality of life for our people. I am realistic when it comes to our financial constraints, but I still see hope and opportunity. When I was AODA Youth Prevention/Education Coordinator for Bad River in the 90's, I never allowed the lack of funding to deter me from trying to maximize my activities for our kids. As an example, I remember how my program, Trails and Summer Youth all worked together to refurbish our ball diamond in Odanah. Here's the thing, it didn't cost much money to cut and mow grass. It didn't cost much money to run chalklines. Most importantly the kids played on that field and loved it. Heck, we even threw a couple of "bike rodeos" in and around the ball diamond. At any rate, my point is we can get back to community based projects that can be done at a grass roots level.

Whatever happened to....

- Creating a skating rink in Odanah for families
- Maintaining nice outdoor Basketball Courts in our Communities
- Insisting our youth have a baseball diamond to play
- Investing in new playground equipment for each community

We have carpenters, masons, heavy equipment operators and volunteers in our community. Could they build or refurbish any of these things? The answer is yes.

Or is it too much to dream that.....

- There could be a nicely maintained family and elder gathering place called Bikwadjinee Park by Waverly Beach....
- That we could have a simple, affordable and safe handicap accessible ramp down to the beach at Waverly for our Elders and others to go touch the water if they wanted to...
- That our Landing at Bad River be safe and someday offer a dock to help our people access the water...
- That someday we have a gun range on our reservation where people can safely sight and shoot firearms, and where our law enforcement personnel could train and our youth could learn "hunter safety".
- That our Tribal Picnics don't have to be subsidized by any Tribal Programs and "potluck" and good will could return to our community...

People in our communities deserve better. We have resources, we have members with knowledge and skill.

It's time to put our differences aside and start working together. I have hope and I'm in this campaign for the betterment of our communities and Tribe. I'm not about "revenge style politics" or worrying about my family or that family. I firmly believe in order to move forward, all people need to be considered and called on as we work to better our Tribe. I've talked about a grass roots style approach to community based changes. Obviously there are other ways our Tribe could work towards increasing the quality of life, bigger monies bring bigger projects, but I wanted to take the opportunity to talk about where I as Tribal Chairman would move toward positive change.

This letter was an attempt to give the voter an educated look into how I think and feel as it pertains to our land and our people. I am trying to become Tribal Chairman, but first I must make the ballot at our Tribal Caucus on September 3, 2009. I need your support in the form of a vote at our Caucus on that night.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Mike Wiggins Jr.