



# PUYALLUP TRIBE OF INDIANS



## From Puyallup Tribal Council

April 14, 2020

txʷəl gʷəlapu, gʷəlapu siʔiʔab dʔiišəd, dsyayayəʔ. To all of you, our honorable people and relatives,

We write to you with heavy hearts and honest words. The pandemic we are in is unprecedented. COVID-19 is a public health crisis that has become an economic crisis. There are hundreds of thousands of positive cases and tens of thousands of deaths in the United States. Unemployment is in the millions. These are challenging times for everyone, and our sympathy is with the families who have suffered.

Our Tribal government's ability to deliver services depends on federal funding and revenue from our casinos and other entities. In the face of this uncertainty we have advised you to conserve your resources. Now we are able to give you a sharper picture of the Tribe's financial situation:

Our most conservative budget projections as of today show that we have resources for Tribal membership benefits and services to continue through the end of June.

We are telling you this now instead of waiting until summer to give you time to prepare yourself and your family for the changes we will have to make by then. Reopening the casinos won't be enough to keep up with our growing membership and sustain current benefits and services. Many people speak of "getting back to normal." We have to prepare for a new normal.

We know that even after we reopen the casinos, we can't count on their usual revenue right away. We don't know how many customers we will be able to safely admit or what other public health protocols will have to be implemented, and the casinos will have to rebuild their working capital. We have a team planning the re-openings with these limits in mind, but there are simply too many unknown variables.

To put it plainly: We want to prepare you for the reality that our current levels of services and benefits are not sustainable. We know this is not welcome news, and it hurts us to say it. But we have to hope for the best and plan for the worst.

Tribal Council and staff are working tirelessly exploring every option to minimize the impact on services and benefits available to our members, and we will continue to do so. In the past two months, we have taken many steps to financially protect the Tribe:

Earlier this month, we made the painful decision to temporarily reduce payroll. We temporarily closed some departments. We have been and will continue to search for every federal, state and grant opportunity for financial relief, including accessing every dollar available to us under the various relief packages approved by Congress.

These measures helped stretch the Tribe's resources, and we have had some success in getting relief dollars: So far, we have received relief funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Indian Health Service. Our Puyallup Tribal Health Authority also received COVID-19 testing kits through Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

We have directed our staff to prepare options for bringing us to financial sustainability for the long-term. We will review them in the coming weeks. Expect changes to your benefits and services. We do not want to do this, but we know we have to for the sake of future generations. Our growing population IS a blessing. And we have to leave our children and grandchildren resources after we are gone.

These are big questions, and there are many unknowns. As we move forward, we are committed to providing you with weekly updates to share with you the latest information on the crisis to help you navigate your way through these uncertain times.

Remember to take care of your emotional needs at this time. Our Kwawachee Counseling Center can be reached through PTHA at (253) 593-0232.

We close with hope: Despite the pain, social distancing appears to be working. Thank you for doing your part. Please keep following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and PTHA: Practice social distancing, wear masks when appropriate, and wash your hands. Respect our Elders by keeping them safe and connected, just not too close.

We will get through this. We are with you.

tixixdubut čäləp. Take care of yourselves. haʔt kʷ(i) adsəsłabcəbut. Watch over yourselves well.

Sincerely,

*David Z. Bean, Bill Sterud, Sylvia Miller, Tim Reynon, Annette Bryan, James Rideout, Anna Bean*

Your Puyallup Tribal Council