



John O'Kimosh Candidate for Menominee Tribal Legislature

Educational Background:

High School: 1998 graduate of Menominee Indian High School

College: University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Business Administration-Finance, Bachelors, 2017

Employment Background (current/last three jobs):

Current Position: Accounts Receivable Coordinator, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, June 2024

Military Background: N/A

Other:

Place of Residence: DePere, WI

Narrative:

I want to thank everyone who signed my nomination petition for your initial support. When meeting with our citizens, I talked to local workers, students, elders, entrepreneurs and business leaders. I heard your concerns, and I appreciate your engagement as we select our next group of tribal leaders.

I was raised on and spent 28 years of my life on the reservation. I currently reside in De Pere, WI and I continue to remain involved with the Tribe through my employment and being on the reservation daily.

I was educated in the Menominee Indian School District and graduated from the Menominee Sr. High School. I received an associate's degree in business administration from the College of Menominee Nation. I furthered my education and received a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in finance from UW Green Bay. I also have additional education and training for entrepreneurship and economic development.

I have over two decades of experience in tribal gaming and government while working in various roles at the Menominee Casino Resort and our Tribal Government. I gained gaming experience in our security, slots, and marketing departments. My government experience has been in our Chairman's Office, Property Management, Transit, and Finance departments.

My proudest achievement is working in our non-gaming business entity Wolf River Development Company as the Financial Analyst where our team researched and developed the Standing Pines Convenience Store and Bay Bank project.

My legislative and leadership experience are from appointments to our Menominee Gaming Commission, Wolf River Development Board of Directors, Menominee Fuel Station Board of Directors, and Menominee Tribal Legislature Budget & Finance and Governmental Affairs Committee.

When observing our leaders make decisions, it is not always in the best interest of the nation. Over the last decade we've seen our nation fall behind and not address the needs of our citizens. With these decisions we have seen a decline in safe and affordable housing for our elders and families, an explosion in substance abuse, a complete neglect of our gaming enterprise and a complete squandering of opportunity from historic investments from federal and state economic stimulus over the past five years.

My run for Legislature is to give our community an alternative to our current leadership and a hopeful vision for what the Menominee Nation can be with a clear point of view, priorities, and accountability to the Nation.

As workers we're told to do more with less. We're told there are no resources for fair pay. As a nation we need to start developing new compensation models to address our workforce needs. I propose we implement a 32-hour work week with no loss in pay. For example, if a worker is making \$20,000 a year, they should not lose their salary with 32-hour work week schedule. If our business leaders choose to not develop innovative compensation models, I will use the legislative process to amend our tribal code and grant workers in our tribal businesses a right to a 32-hour work week along with progressive policies like family leave and paid time off.

I also want to address a skills gap in our workforce from lack of training and education. I will direct resources to our college to develop training and curriculum to meet the workforce needs of our tribal government and businesses.

When tribal leaders sat down to draft our Constitution and Bylaws, they specifically separated the management of our only tribal enterprise from the government functions of the tribe. Any tribal business created after the adoption of our Constitution is charted by the Legislature. Our legislators include themselves on the management boards. I argue that when we elect our tribal leaders, we are not electing them based on their business expertise. For this reason, I will propose amendments to our

business charters to remove legislators from the boards and commit to appointing qualified tribal citizens with experience in management and leadership to steer our business to economic success. I will meet directly with our business leaders to propose further amendments to our charters to develop legislation that is designed specifically for economic success. I will also propose creating an economic development fund that can provide low interest loans to our tribal entities to invest in their current facilities or start new tribal owned business ventures.

A failure of our current leadership is neglecting and not directing more resources for treatment and recovery. A day one priority for me is to re-open the residential facility at Maehnowesekiyah. So far, the Tribe has received over \$1,000,000 related to the Tribal Opioid Settlement, and we can anticipate receiving more funding annually over the next decade as part of these settlement orders. These funds are to address prevention, education, treatment, and harm reduction. I propose using these funds to complete any outstanding construction on the facility and prioritize hiring treatment personnel to re-open the residential facility.

The settlement funds can also be used to develop programs and curriculum to educate our youth on the dangers and consequences of drug use along with additional resources to stop drug related deaths in our community.

For years we've asked for safe and affordable housing for elders and families. We're told there is no funding and land to develop projects to address this issue. We can solve this. I will work with our program staff and business leaders to develop a comprehensive housing plan to acquire land and create new housing developments that will offer subsidized elder housing and affordable housing for families, along with home buying education and programs for families that do not meet the qualifications for income based affordable housing. We can identify federal and state grant and lending opportunities, and we should not fear committing our own tribal resources to solve this issue.

Thank you for learning more about who I am and sharing with you the priorities that I think are important to our nation, and I look forward to more engagement with the community.