



White Earth Reservation Tribal Council

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January 19, 2016

To the people of the great White Earth Nation:

After deep consideration, I regret to inform you that I have resigned my position of Chairwoman effective Thursday, January 21, 2016.

During my twelve years as Chairwoman, we have been able to recover from significant debt, build financial reserves, make significant improvement to our infrastructure, and start the process of building of a strong foundation for the future. I have worked diligently to leave you in better hands today than when I first became Chair in 2004. But unfortunately, today, the situation has become unbearable and I must focus on my health.

While it has been a privilege to serve as your elected leader with constitutional reform as my primary mandate, regrettably health concerns prevent me from continuing this effort in the current inhospitable environment. As you know, I have been subject to a censure by the Tribal Executive Committee (TEC) of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) and currently am facing further action by the White Earth Tribal Council. These situations have been very stressful and have contributed to my health concerns, but I want to assure you, members of the Tribe, that I am leaving my position with the highest of integrity.

For the record, I strongly disagree with the TEC decision to censure me. As Chair of the White Earth Nation, I have always acted in good faith. Furthermore, as I'm sure any objective investigation would find, I have acted within the bounds of my office. My ongoing correspondence and efforts to support a solution to the conflicts surrounding the implementation of the new Constitution were done with integrity. I felt I had an obligation to exhaust all possible remedies to implement the Constitution of the White Earth Nation as enrolled members voted by a margin of nearly 80% to accept it. I encouraged all members to vote in the referendum and remain proud that the turnout was more than twice that of a typical election at White Earth.

I will continue to support constitutional reform for White Earth. Only after we stabilize our government and implement a true separation of powers with checks and balances that allow for due process, will we become a self-sufficient, strong nation for future generations. The governmental system we have now has failed me and will continue to fail all of our Members until it is changed.

With deep regret,

Erma J. Vizenor
Chairwoman