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Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

A Federally Recognized Indian Tribe Organized Pursuant to 25 U.S.C. § 476
* 11404 Moorage Way * La Conner, Washington 98257 *

March 14, 2020

Dear Tribal Community,

The Swinomish Senate and staff are working to keep you and our community as safe as possible as we respond to the COVID-19 virus. I want to let you know what we are doing – and what you can do to help.

This will take all of us working together and supporting each other. Our shared goal is to do all we can to protect the community, and especially our elders and those who already have health conditions. We are blessed to have dedicated and skilled Medical Clinic and other staff to guide and assist us.

1. The Senate issued a Public Health Emergency Declaration due to the COVID-19 outbreak and directed Tribal departments to utilize Tribal resources and to do everything possible to assist our Tribal community and Tribal employees to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 outbreak.

2. We've established an Emergency Health Team and appointed Sarah Wilborn, the Tribe's Chief Medical Officer, to serve as the Tribal Public Health Officer. For the last two weeks the Emergency Health Team has been meeting with Sarah every morning to review the latest information and health advisories to advise the Senate, staff and community on the status of the virus and make recommendations.

3. The Governor has announced the closure of all schools in the state by next Tuesday March 17. The La Conner School District has informed us that they will close all La Conner Schools on that date. The Head Start Program will remain open for now. We are coordinating with Superintendent Whitney Meissner to address meals that the schools provide to our community children, and other impacts. We will keep you informed.

4. Tribal staff are working from home if possible, and are required to stay home if ill. Directors are evaluating each of their departments to determine which essential services can continue to operate safely and effectively. All non-essential Tribal travel outside Skagit County is cancelled. Tribal meetings are limited to small groups or held by telephone.

5. Many of you have asked what steps the Tribe's enterprises are taking to protect staff and guests. At our Casino and SDA enterprises, cleaning and sanitation are the highest priority for the health of our team

members, guests, and community. All our enterprises are wiping down and disinfecting surfaces, cashier areas, fuel pump handles, slot machines, restaurants, and restrooms on a continuous basis. They are also requiring all employees to stay home if sick. We will provide more updates and information about the enterprises in the coming week.

6. **Finally and most important**, your community and our families need your help to keep our community as safe and healthy as possible. Here are steps that every one of us can take:

- Avoid gatherings of more than 10 people
- Stay at home when you are not feeling well
- Wash your hands with soap and hot water for 20 seconds and sanitize your hands and surfaces multiple times every day
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or if one isn't available, into the crook of your arm;
- Don't shake hands or fist bump; use an elbow bump, or greet with a smile or a nod;
- If you are sick, don't go to the doctor's office, clinic or emergency room without calling first.

The **most important** message here is to stay home when you do not feel well, especially if you have a cough, sneeze, or fever. This is to protect your community. By staying home when you are sick, you are protecting your elders and others with chronic illnesses that are more susceptible to viruses like COVID-19.

Another **important message** is avoid gathering in medium or even small sized groups. The virus can be carried by individuals who appear healthy but have contracted the virus and may not show symptoms of the virus for up to 14 days. So the more you can limit contact with groups of people, the more you can help prevent the spread of the virus.

All of us on the Senate thank you for the trust that you have placed in us. Vice-Chair Joe Williams, Secretary Barb James, Treasurer Brian Wilbur, and I thank the Senate for the trust you have placed by asking us to serve as officers. We know that this is a difficult and uncertain time for the community. We want you to know that we are all working together to provide as much protection to you and our community as we can.

Sincerely,

Steve Edwards, Chairman