



POARCH BAND of CREEK INDIANS

April 30, 2020

Tribal Members,

As your elected leadership we, the Tribal Council, want to first say that it is our fervent hope that you are safe and doing well during these difficult times. All of us are traveling in uncharted waters, and we must trust that God will get us safely to the other side of this Covid-19 crisis.

We hope you take comfort in knowing that we are all in this together and that together, we will come through these hard times as a strong, sovereign Indian nation.

Finances are a concern to all of us now, and we feel it is important to keep you apprised of the financial health of our Tribe.

First and foremost, we are **solvent and stable** because we have been careful stewards of our financial resources, and we have always planned for economic crises. We have always been committed to paying our bills, keeping our debt low, looking for opportunities for smart deals, and putting aside funds for rainy days.

Adhering to this kind of financial discipline has allowed us to continue to provide you, our Tribal Members, with essential services during the Covid-19 crisis. No doubt, we have had to scale back and have been operating with limited staff during this difficult time, but please know that we are committed to continuing to provide services and keep everyone safe. If you need any assistance, please call:

- 251.368.9136 for general inquiries,
- 251.446.4930 for family services inquiries, or
- 251.368.8630 for health related inquiries.

We have also continued to pay our employees, who have contributed to our financial stability. We know how important it is for families to be able to count on a paycheck, and we are blessed to be able to provide that stable source of income.

It is important that each and every one of you know, too, that one of our primary goals is to maintain our benefits and services. Benefits for the upcoming year are usually set in October/November. However, in recognition that all of us are looking at our family budgets extra hard right now, we are reasonably confident that we will be able to provide 2021 benefits at or near 2020 levels.

Being able to do this is crucially important. But, it demands that we continue to prepare for the worst, hope for the best, and work our hardest to ensure that we weather this storm in good shape.

With this in mind, we have taken several steps including:

- Working with local, state, and federal agencies to learn about additional funding opportunities and programs.
- Evaluating and re-evaluating our budgets to ensure we are as fiscally lean as we can possibly be.
- Asking our CFO's and management teams across all our entities to crunch numbers daily to find where we can cut costs and put non-urgent projects on hold.

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We would like to thank the Tribal Chair, the Executive team of all our entities and their staff who have physically come into their respective offices to work on developing operational preparedness plans to present to leadership. As some were able to work on operational preparedness plans, assisting with maintaining critical services here in the Poarch community many of our staff were able to work remotely, making sure the Tribal Chair and Tribal Council, and Executive team were aware of the everchanging environment during this pandemic. Everyone has played a role; we thank you for that.

Looking forward, it is our job as leaders to continuously make sound financial decisions in order to help bolster a better quality of life for each of you. Even in a crisis, we have a fiduciary responsibility to look towards the future and new opportunities for growth that will sustain our Tribe.

When the crisis is finally over, we will look carefully at any opportunities that may come to us while faithfully adhering to the financial discipline that has made us successful. If we are in a strong position to avail ourselves of those opportunities, we will make decisions carefully, with an eye on providing for the future.

Finally, we hope each of you finds strength in our history of survival. We have the benefit of learning from both our Creek ancestors and our Tribal elders about getting through hard times. Many of us have heard stories of Poarch life during the Great Depression when everyone had to make-do and do things differently. "Necessity was the mother of invention" for them. Today's challenges demand that we find ways to change and innovate – both in how we work, and in how we care for each other and our community.

Hard situations have a way of bringing us together in a way that overcomes even big barriers, including social distancing. Every day, you are rising to meet these challenging times through acts of kindness, understanding, and giving.

In the days ahead, we will be providing updates via rapid cast so please share any information you receive with your family and others who may not have access to such important information. Please continue to be vigilant about protecting your health and your financial well-being. As your Tribal Council, we promise to continue to work to protect our Tribe's interests and to sustain a strong financial future for our Tribal Members today, and in all the tomorrows to come.

May God bless you and keep you.

Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Tribal Council

