

Voices Were Heard

Tribal members elect current & new crew of council representatives

By Dave DeCoteau Jr.
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BELCOURT – Last Tuesday's Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Tribal General Election had a rather voter turnout, as the peoples' voices were heard loud and clear.

A total of 4,095 votes were cast in the general election on Tuesday, November 3, with close races in each of the four districts.

District 1 Council saw incumbent Craig Lunday leading the way with 2,376 votes, earning yet another seat on the council for Lunday. Finishing second was Zachery S. King, who received 2,194 votes and a seat on the TMBCI Tribal Council. Dennis C. DeCoteau was third with a total of 1,583 votes.

In the race for District 2 Council, it was incumbent Jon Jon Keplin receiving the highest number of votes with 2,497, followed by Jade M. Malaterre who tallied 2,009 votes, edging out incumbent Ron W. Trottier, who finished with 1,825 votes. Keplin and Malaterre will be sworn in during the December inauguration.

Incumbent Elmer Davis Jr. was the big winner in District 3, collecting 2,800 votes, while incumbent Lynn Gourneau came in second with 1,871 votes. Both Davis and Gourneau will serve as District 3 Council Representatives once again. The two incumbents were ahead of the third place finisher, Jessica Wallette, who received 1,662 votes.

District 4 Tribal Council was another district that witnessed change after all the votes were tallied, as incumbent Chad E. Counts and newcomer Loren "Beans" Baumgartner were elected to the Tribal Council. Counts received the highest number of votes with 2,271, while Baumgartner tallied 2,087 votes. Incumbent Blaine "Slugger" Davis was third with 1,892 votes.

All the winners took to Facebook on Wednesday to express their appreciation to their supporters and the people of Turtle Mountain.

Councilman Craig Lunday: "Hello tribal members… Thank you for trusting me to serve another term as your district 1 Tribal Councilman. I accept this responsibility with a grateful heart and a deep respect for the people I serve. Big thank you to everyone who voted, shared your concerns & ideas or just took the time to reach out and show your support. To my family, thank you for your love, patience, and support throughout this journey. Whether I earned your vote or



not, I am here to serve you. Your voice matters, and I will continue to listen, learn, and work to earn your trust through my actions. I am grateful for the opportunity to keep working alongside everyone, for our children, elders, families and the generations to come."

Councilman-elect Zachery King: "I've been doing a lot of reflecting and I don't know if I can fully put into words how grateful I am feeling right now. To have been elected as a District 1 Representative for my home, Turtle Mountain, is truly an honor. It's something I've worked incredibly hard for and I want to thank everyone who helped make this possible.

First and foremost, thank you to everyone who believed in me, supported me, and gave me their vote. I couldn't have done this without you. To everyone who has called, messaged, or stopped me out in public to congratulate me and share such kind words, thank you from the bottom of my heart. The encouragement, compliments, and respect I've received from my relatives, friends, and peers mean more to me than you know. I started campaigning back in early May. For the past six months, I've traveled all over this little reservation of ours, going house to house, meeting people, visiting with relatives, listening to concerns, and sharing my thoughts and ideas about the future of Turtle Mountain. I've learned so much about our community and our people along the way. I also want to thank everyone who followed this journey through social media. Whether you liked a post, shared something I wrote, offered encouragement, or simply took the time to read what I had to say, I appreciate you! Throughout this campaign, I knew I would have to work hard to be competitive. I didn't necessarily have the same large family connections as some candidates, so I focused on what I could bring to the table. I've spent years investing in my education, gaining experience, and developing my knowledge of tribal administration, governance, and leadership. I believed that preparation, along with hard work and determination, could make a difference. There is something incredibly rewarding about dedicating yourself to something, working hard for it, and having that hard work recognized and acknowledged. It's a feeling I'll carry with me for a long time. I feel confident and prepared for the responsibility ahead, but I also understand there is still so much to learn. I don't have all the answers, but I'm willing to listen, learn, and work hard for our people. I'm excited to get to work and see what we can accomplish together. Winning this election was one challenge; earning and maintaining the trust of our people through my actions and work will be the next. To everyone who has been part of this journey, thank you. I hope to make you proud. Miigwech, Turtle Mountain! From the bottom of my heart, thank you for believing in me and giving me this opportunity to serve our people."

Councilman Jon Jon Keplin: "Good evening Turtle Mountains, I would like to thank everyone who supported and believes in me. I am very humbled to be serving the beautiful people of the Turtle Mountains. I'd like to send best wishes to the councilmen that I served with in the last 3 terms. We made a family connection that I will carry with me. I also want to congratulate the Chief and Council that I will be serving with for the next 2 years… I look forward to working with you and for the people of the Turtle Mountains. Thank you for helping me to help you!"

Councilman-elect Jade Malaterre: "I want to thank everyone who put their trust and confidence in me to represent our community as a tribal councilman. I'm truly grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to working alongside my fellow District 2 representative, Jon Jon, and the rest of the Tribal Council… I'm excited for what lies ahead and ready to put in the work to help move our community forward in a positive direction. Thank you again to everyone who supported me throughout this journey… It truly means a lot!"

Councilman Elmer Davis Jr.: "Thank you, Turtle Mountain! From the bottom of my heart, I want to sincerely thank the people of Turtle Mountain for your continued trust, confidence, and support in re-electing me to serve on the Tribal Council. I am truly humbled and honored to have the opportunity to continue represent-



ing District 3 while serving our entire Turtle Mountain community. For over 20 years, I have dedicated myself to public service, and one thing has never changed: my commitment to our people. This election was never just about winning. It was about continuing the work, helping our families, supporting our elders and youth, and building a stronger future for generations to come. To my family, friends, campaign supporters, and everyone who encouraged me throughout this journey, thank you. Your kindness, hard work, and belief in me mean more than words can express. I also want to congratulate all the candidates who stepped forward to serve our Tribe. It takes courage and dedication to put your name on the ballot, and I have great respect for everyone who participated. Whether you voted for me or not, I want you to know that I am here to serve you. Elections may come and go, but my responsibility and commitment to our people remain the same. There is still much work to be done, and I look forward to continuing that work with dedication, experience, and a commitment to putting our people first. Once again, thank you, Turtle Mountain! Your trust is something I will never take for granted. May the Creator continue to bless our people, our families, and our beautiful Turtle Mountain community."

Lynn Gourneau: "I would like to thank all my supporters for trusting me to do the job of District 3 Tribal Council Representative. I am truly humbled and honored to serve our people for another term and I look forward to working with the newly elected Tribal Council Representatives throughout the next two years. I also want to thank the out-going councilmen, Ron Trottier, Slugger Davis, and Bugger Malaterre for all their hard work they have done over the past several years serving on council. They, too, deserve a lot of credit for the great work and all the accomplishments we as a council were able to do. With that, I say Miigwech."

Councilman Chad Counts: "Hello everybody! Thank you to all my friends and family and to each and every one of you that continues to support my candidacy to represent you all as your Turtle Mountain District 4 Council Representative! For the past ten years it has truly been an honor getting up every day and showing up. Of course, there are hard days but those don't compare to the thousands of good days. I'm looking forward to working with Loren "Beans" Baumgartner. I know him outside of politics and he's a good person and I am excited to work together… Congratulations to all the candidates! I look forward to working together for the betterment of our tribe. Once again, thank you all!"

Councilman-elect Loren "Beans" Baumgartner: "Hello, I am honored and grateful to have been elected your District 4 Councilman. Thank you for placing your trust in me and giving me the opportunity to serve the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. To everyone who voted, encouraged me, shared my message, or took the time to speak with me-thank you. Your concerns, ideas, and hopes will help guide the work ahead. To my family, friends, and supporters, your patience and hard work have meant more than I can express. I also want to recognize the other candidates who stepped forward to serve the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. Running for office takes courage, dedication, and many hours away from family. I respect the hard work you put into your campaigns and your commitment to our community. Thank you for sharing your ideas and giving our voters a choice. As your District 4 Councilman, I will serve everyone, whether I earned your vote or not. I am committed to listening, being accessible, and approaching this responsibility with honesty and respect. Our elders deserve to be heard, our families deserve support, and our young people deserve opportunities to build a strong future. Making progress will take all of us working together, and I look forward to doing my part… Thank you again for this opportunity. I am proud to serve District 4, and I am ready to get to work."

A whole lot of great words by the eight elected TMBCI Tribal Council Representatives who are committed to serve the people of Turtle Mountain and this great tribal nation. Congratulations, gentlemen!