

## WHO'S THE CHIEF?

We are looking for a few good men! So goes the recruiting slogan for the United States Marines. But this phrase applies equally as well for our great Prairie Trail Federation. This is the time of year when each tribe selects their best up-and-coming dad to be their new Tribal Chief. be your Tribal Chief. The question that should be on every tribe's collective mind is: Who will be the new Tribal Chief. Do not pick the joker who failed to show up. Pick a real leader to be your tribal chief. But first, it's time for a quick story.

I phoned my father this weekend, which I try to do, not always successfully, every week. I could not help but want to reach out to dad because I had been with my kids to a school function at which they played an old song by Harry Chapin called, "Cat's in the Cradle." If you recall the song, you're a real audiophile, because it was written and recorded in 1974. Although it's been played many times since Harry Chapin died in a 1981 plane crash.

Whenever I hear "Cat's in the Cradle," I think of my dad. He now lives in Florida, is 80 years old and one of the remaining WW II generation. The lyrics to Chapin's song, based on a poem written by his wife Sandy, talk about a child's growth from being a kid idolizing his dad, right through to becoming a dad in his own right with kids, a busy life to live and a busy job. If you close your eyes, you can imagine yourself in the child's shoes as the lyrics roll onward. The sadness of the song is that that child and the father never spend time together. They are too busy with the chores and routine of life to make time for each other. The lesson of this song is to not be distracted by the demands of living and miss the point of all our hard work: to enjoy family. Each and every time I hear the song, I get a little misty eyed, and am grateful for the time Dad spent with me and the time I spend with my kids.

"Okay," you say, "Chief, that's a great, touching story. But what does that mean to me?" Read further.

Last weekend as my Dad and I spoke on the telephone, he asked, "Are you still working the Chief duties?"

"Yes." I replied, and was proud to say, "I'm still the Chief of the Federation, dad."

"I'm proud of you son," beamed Dad. "But always remember, family come first." He continued, "Remember when we were in Indian Guides, son?"

"Sure Dad", I said, "I'll never forget." Although the specific memories are a little vague, I'll always remember the feeling of being with Dad and the warmth of being the recipient of time reserved just for me.

Dad continued, "I was very busy with work, but I always tried to share time with you kids. And do you remember when I volunteered to be Chief of the Tribe?"

"Are you kidding Dad?" I exclaimed! "I was so proud that my Dad was the Chief." My mind immediately plunged into a sweet memory of my sisters and me out on our driveway, with dad, wearing the big feathered bonnet of the chief. I can still feel the moment and the happy emotions that accompany this memory. I am fortunate to have this bit of childhood in an actual photograph carefully framed and hanging in my home.

But let's return to the question: Who's the Chief? At the Spring Campouts, the tribes elect a new Tribal Chief who is anointed at the Passage Ceremony. In my Illini Guides and Princess tribes, we've always had a person who was happy to take on the mantle of chief. What about your tribe? Who will be your next tribal chief you ask? Maybe it's someone you know well and see in the mirror. Why not? It's for the kids!

But being a Tribal Chief is not the easiest of roles. It takes phone calls, emails and cajoling leadership to keep your tribe moving forward. The Tribal Chief is viewed as both Leader and Administrator: getting the monthly

meetings organized, collecting campout monies, establishing a tribal roster, a tribal calendar, making sure all the dads and kids attend the campouts, and promoting all the special traditions of Indian Guides and Princesses.

That sounds like a difficult job. And it can be if, and only if, the Tribal Chief decides to go it alone.

The key to great Tribal Leadership is delegation. A good Tribal Chief should lead. A Tribal Chief should get all hands on deck and delegate roles to every member of the tribe. Doing so gives Tribal Dads a sense of ownership in their tribe. If there is a defined role for every father, they have a meaningful purpose and feel ownership in the group.

That's the key word: Ownership. Tribal Chiefs, who spread the ownership of tribal operations, create a functioning smooth-running tribe. The Tribal Chief must spread the administrative mantle of leadership and assign all dads an active role. Create a Wampum Bearer position to run the tribal finances; pick an Assistant Chief to help organize meetings and civic activities; have a dad who is simply in charge of the campout late night cook-outs; select another dad to order tribal t-shirts, hats, and sweatshirts; appoint a story-teller; anoint a Dad to create and maintain the roster and email block; if you've got a dad who is crafty, maybe he should lead crafts at meetings and campouts.

Remember: if you are a Yo-Yo Chief you'll have a Yo-Yo Tribe! Do you want that? Therefore, as Tribal Chief you should have a clear image of what you want for your tribe to be a success. Be a visionary and lead your dads and their children in the direction of your vision. Use your imagination and create new activities (then assign the task of making it happen to another dad), or create new ideas for tribal property (then get another tribal dad to lead the charge).

The success of your leadership is found in your willingness to let go and delegate tasks, projects and ownership to the members of your tribe. Did you get that? If you don't delegate, you are not leading. Make dads feel included. Then, and this is very important, always follow up with your dads and their tasks, provide encouragement, problem solving and specific goals. Be the leader: inspire, imagine and delegate.

The Tribal Chief should never try to be Superman and do every role in the tribe. If you don't give other tribal dads responsibilities and duties in the tribe, your tribal membership becomes passive. They don't have ownership. They don't feel included. They sometimes show up and sometimes not; they begin to feel as though they don't belong because they lack purpose.

Worse yet, the Tribal Chief Superman loses time with his kids! The Tribal Chief, who expects to do it all, and never delegates, can expect that his kids will not feel the glow and warmth of the father and child relationship that Guides, Princesses and Trailblazers provides. The Superman Chief will be so busy running around that the sweetness of our program's purpose, namely spending quality time with his kids, will turn sour.

So Chief, remember your kids. Volunteer for them, but don't forget to give them your time. It is inherent in the job of being Tribal Chief (or Nation Chief or even the Federation Chief) to want to create the best possible program for our children. But it takes all of us to run this program, so that years from now, when our children hear "Cat's in the Cradle" they know that the message isn't for them or their dad.

My Dad and I share wonderful feelings and memories about our time together in Guides, even though it was decades ago. But the depth of feeling and warmth still abide because dad knew: "Remember family comes first." Knowing my dad as I do, I'm sure he understood, back when he was Chief, how to balance leadership with delegated ownership in the other dads of our tribe. I know this to be certain because dad always had time for me at Indian Guide Meetings, Campouts and Events. He must have been a fine leader, because the results, fond memories of time with Dad, speak volumes.

Federation Chief, Silver Cloud (Tom Estey)