

**TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES  
OF THE FLATHEAD INDIAN NATION, MONTANA**

Volume 23 Number 59  
Council Chambers, Pablo, MT

Held: July 7, 2023  
Approved: July 11, 2023

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tom McDonald, Chairman; Martin Charlo, Secretary; Ellie Bundy, Treasurer; Mike Dolson; Jennifer Finley; Carole Lankford; Jim Malatare; and Terry Pitts.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Len TwoTeeth, Vice-Chairman; and James “Bing” Matt.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jableau Arlee, Council Office Manager; James Steele, Sr., Sergeant at Arms; and Abby Dupuis, Recording Secretary.

The meeting was called to **order** at 9:18 a.m. Quorum established.

The meeting was opened with a **prayer** by Johnny Arlee.

**The Veterans Brothers Drum Group** sang a flag song.

The floor was opened for comments from the Elders.

**Shirley Trahan** talked about the Salish Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee. The staff are doing okay and moving forward and doing their job the way they always have. It is a pleasure to work for Sadie; she is a good boss and works hard. They are short-staffed but are looking to add more people. They are doing their best and hanging in there. Shirley mentioned the name for the Bison Range; she wants it to be more personal and suggested it be renamed to Big Medicine Animal Refuge. The Bison Range is important to us and it is awesome to have control of it again.

**Johnny Arlee** thinks the tribal council is doing a great job; they recognize quite a bit of our culture. There is so much to share and so much has been lost. They are trying to keep it alive and keep the children in this direction for their future so when they become leaders of our community they have good words and good hearts. We need to keep that enforced. We talk about education for our children, and we should have a place for them to work when they finish their education so they do not need to leave the reservation to find a job.

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**Stephen Smallsalmon** is proud of the kids at Nkwusm. The basement has not been finished and it has been three years. The fence was installed at the school yesterday. They got another person to finish the basement and will start working on it again in two weeks. The pow wow was a good celebration. Nkwusm got some grant writers. Stephen plans on going to the Elmo Pow Wow. He has been dancing in Arlee for 80 years. There are activities planned for the students this summer, such as going boating on the lake, go to Buffalo Jump by Three Forks, and go huckleberry picking. Stephen thanked the council for everything they have done to support Nkwusm. He has been working at the school for 20 years.

**Ron Trospen** was at today's meeting to honor his father Thurman. Bob Biggert asked him to write a biography about his father so he will be doing that this summer.

**Council** recognized Jim Clairmont who retired from Fire Control and thanked him for his years of service.

The floor was opened for council updates.

**Carole Lankford** thought it was a good celebration in Arlee and it was good to be part of it. She thanked the drum this morning. The council went to the Medicine Tree. She asked the Elders Committee about the Medicine Tree trip; she wants there be an explanation as to why we travel there, why we give, and what we give. It was always clear in the past. Carole went to the Solidarity Meeting at SKHA. People around the state and throughout the country want to give back to the Tribes for giving up our land. Jody Perez was approached and set up a meeting with folks who want to give back to the Tribes, such as their buildings, land and money. She attended the Great Futures Breakfast at Boys and Girls Club. The club is short-staffed. Council is working on the Healing Court and the court had its first court session two weeks ago. It is just getting up and started at the Tribal Court. Lake County Drug Court is doing well and has a lot of graduates. People are seeking out help and it's nice we are seeing a community come together to help people. There are families that are struggling and need help. Carole went to the AMERIND meeting. It is struggling due to the weather changes. SKHA buildings and homes and Tribal buildings and homes are seeing a lot of fluctuations in the prices with insurance, so it's been difficult. There was a grand opening for the Ronan Health Center. They are working on the pharmacy but the center is open and taking patients. Carole and staff went to Tulalip to visit a Drug Court and Tiny Homes. We are looking at tiny homes to provide places for temporary housing for homeless people. She will be showing the council a video of what they did there. Carole is part of the Homeless Coalition and attends regular meetings. Project 30 is being turned into a recovery place so when families are in the process of getting well they have a place to be. Pablo is in a serious problem with Project 30 because of all the things that go on with drugs and they are trying to turn that community around so people have a

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good environment and a safe place for kids. Council went to Canada and visited the tribes/reserves and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho to talk about protocols so there are outcomes when they hold meetings. They also discussed selenium due to mining and Elk River. Carole mentioned Vern Clairmont is in the hospital and is struggling. She spent time with his family last night. She asked everyone to pray for Vern and his family. Vern would do anything for anybody and he was able to articulate things when she didn't understand and he explained it where council could understand the matter. We are where we are today because of people like Vern. He had a passion for what he did at the Tribes and did very well. She acknowledged Ron Troster. He is made of the same mold; when he did that economist report for the Tribes when we initially were working on Kerr Dam. What he did for us to educate us and write all that stuff got us to where we are today with SKQ Dam. Carole was appreciative of all the people in the audience today.

**Terry Pitts** supports Shirley's recommendation to change the name of the Bison Range. McLeod's have a life-size metal bison standing along the highway, and Terry would like to purchase that and put it on the hill, paint it white and put it by the pond. He thanked Jim Steele for all his time and effort to the Tribes to help strengthen this nation. He thanked Johnny for the prayer and the drum group for the song. We continue moving forward with community projects around the reservation. There has been a challenge to find workers. The basketball court is in at the Dixon Agency. He thanked Jim Malatare for making the meat rack. He is pleased to get a refrigerator for the Anita Matt Building but they are waiting for an electrician to get the work done for a stove and microwave. Terry thanked Casey Sorrell and Brenda Bodnar for all they do for the Dixon community. They offer cooking and nutrition classes. He hopes to have a dumpster at the agency for the community to use. Terry was pleased to take the Chief Cliff field trip to view the impacts of the fire and see what is being done for cleanup and restoration. On June 7 there was a meeting at the Hot Springs Center regarding the impacts of grasshoppers. The Nkwusm students took a field trip to the Medicine Tree and Terry went with them. He thanked Stephen for his talk about the importance of the sacred site. Terry attended the primary graduation at Nkwusm. The weather was nice for the Arlee Pow Wow and attendance was good. He looks forward to the Elmo celebration. Terry thanked the audience for their time.

**Martin Charlo** thanked the employees and support staff. He appreciated everyone being here today. It is important to hear the elders speak first. He is fortunate to learn from his elders. Martin appreciates the people learning and teaching our culture. That is the kind of job where our cultural people need to make a living wage and the Tribes are making progress with that. There was a great celebration last year at the Beartracks Bridge when they did the renaming. As a part of that collaboration, there will be a celebration pow wow on October 9 for Indigenous People's Day at Caras Park. The city of Missoula and county

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commissioners are supportive of our presence in that area. They also did one at Grant Creek. There is talk about some areas east of there that has been our land forever so he appreciates Missoula and the people for supporting our endeavors to increase our presence there. Martin thanked the membership for their continued support. The Tribes are working on different things with the American Rescue Plan. There will be single-family housing in Pablo through the SKHA. They will build units in every community over the next four years. He asked for patience for the big changes we have made over the past couple of years while we experience growing pains. The council tries to acknowledge and learn from their mistakes and continue to get better. They do our best and strive to do better each day. This group works well together.

**Mike Dolson** thanked everyone for being here today. Our meetings were online during the pandemic so it was nice to see everyone here in person. He reminded people to contact him at 406-880-5524 with any issues or concerns. Mike holds district meetings the last Friday of every month. He is part of the Department of Interior Rulemaking Team. Congress amended Public Law 93-638, the law that gives us the power to self-determine and Mike has been working on the rulemaking committee called the PROGRESS Act. They did not have time to complete the job due to COVID-19 and it is an important task to move article IV into modern time. That is the major thing Mike has been working on. Mike participated in the negotiation meetings for the Columbia River Treaty. It was written 50 years ago and controls the floods in the Columbia River. It is an important treaty. Tribes throughout the region are coming together to talk about pollution and mining happening across the area. There will be a transboundary conference in August in Canada to talk about selenium. Canadian and British Columbia officials will be attending. Mike attended the self-governance conference in Tulsa, OK. There is an effort to get community gardens in all the communities and he encouraged everyone to participate in those. He always thinks about our kids. COVID-19 was tough on our kids and we need to take care of them.

**Ellie Bundy** gave the following report: Thank you Chairman McDonald and council peers... Thank you all for being here today and for the song and prayer this morning. It's so nice to start our day in such a beautiful way! I would like to begin with thanks to each of my council peers for a great last quarter. I am blessed to know each of you and I am honored to be able to work with all of you. I hope everyone had an amazing time with friends and family at the Arlee pow-wow celebration and I hope you are able to attend the Standing Arrow celebration as well! I extend a huge thanks to both pow-wow committees who have worked so hard and do their best to make the events successful for all of us! It is not an easy job and you can never quite prepare for everything, despite efforts to do so, so please be sure to thank those folks for their time and commitment! As a report for some of my activities outside of council meetings this last quarter, I provided presentations on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons and CSKT's Tribal

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Community Response Plan to the Democratic National Committee, to Providence St. Pats in Missoula and Providence St. Joe's staff in Polson. Additionally, I worked with Providence, SKC, Safe Harbor, and Rising Hearts to host the MMIP Walk/Run event in early May which turned out to be a great event despite the downpour that day! I continue to serve on the state task force for Missing Indigenous Persons and am pleased to share with the membership that ALL four MMIP related bills presented to the state legislature this session passed. They include: House bill (HB)163: *Revise and Extend the MT MMIP Task Force. The ask was for two years but was amended and approved for ten! A huge win!* SJ 5 : *Urge congress to fully fund public safety & Law Enforcement agencies, programs, services, and activities within reservations.* House bill (HB) 18: *Establish Missing Persons Response team training grants.* House Judiciary (HJ) 1: *Request interim study on missing youth.* Additionally, I have been looped in with NCMEC (the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) to collaborate on training and awareness events related to MMIP and Human Trafficking, as well as Billings MMIP LLC for possible collaborative efforts related to Search and Rescue Trainings coming forward soon with the passing of HB 18 as mentioned. On another note, some highlights that come to mind for this last quarter include: The Medicine Tree visit; the Headstart pow wow (which was particularly special to me as my mom was acknowledged and honored for all of her hands on work and oversight to have 200 pairs of moccasins made for our little ones); the Ronan Health Care Clinic grand opening event; all of the meetings to discuss Public Law 280; the implementation of the wellness court; the town hall meeting held in St. Ignatius to discuss the Fentanyl epidemic, a topic that needs much more work; the hiring of our new General Manager at MVP, Mr. Zach Camel. While we are sad to lose him here in Central Accounting, we feel good about his new ability to lead well in his new role. A water hearing I was able to attend in Missoula. I must acknowledge the amazing work of Ryan Rusche, Dan Decker, Melissa Schlicting, Seth Makepeace, and Casey Ryan! I appreciate SO MUCH the excellent representation provided by these folks! We are so fortunate to have them on our team! I look forward to the work before us on some of these topics. There are so many more events and projects but I wanted to at least acknowledge a few of them from this last quarter. In closing, I would like to acknowledge those families who have lost loved ones these last few months. I pray for all who are struggling to find strength and peace in their most difficult time. With that, I will end my report by saying thank you for this opportunity to serve you!!

**Jennifer Finley** commented this last quarter was eventful for her personally. She attended the National Congress of American Indians Midyear Conference and serves as vice-president of our region. The Shakopee Tribe was a good host and served their local indigenous food. She presented a resolution for the transboundary mining issue and it was passed. Jennifer took a tour of the tribally-owned recycling facility. The Shakopee Tribe are willing to help us if we want to start our own facility to reduce global warming and do something good for the environment. She attended the self-governance conference in Tulsa.

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Jennifer was grateful to the local tribes who were gracious with their knowledge and their hospitality was amazing. She went to a presentation about grant dollars available to invest in solar and other forms of renewable energy and will give a presentation to CSKT. It is the wave of the future and it would be good to pursue grant funding for that. They will be here Monday for the presentation. She toured the Muskogee hospital. It could relate to what we do here; the services they offer are centered around their patients. They had lots of people using the emergency room as their primary care so they opened an Urgent Care which is a walk-in clinic. The hospital has hospice care so no tribal member has to die alone and can die with dignity. Their pharmacy is open seven days a week. How we do tribal health here can be done differently and it can be done better. We need input from the users to see what we can do better. They also had a chiropractor at their facility. While at the self-governance conference, she heard a presentation from the Chippawa Tribe on asserting their sovereignty. They encourage their people to be organ donors and it is worthy of discussion for us. She went to a MMIP meeting; there is a website through the BIA about MMIP where individuals can submit names of MMIP and look at their database. Casino tribes should do training on MMIP and Jennifer thought it was a good suggestion for CSKT to do that. She is proud of the people who graduated from SKC and got their degrees; they are our next generation of professionals. The Tribal Council received a presentation from the Hope Center out of Helena. They operate an addiction/recovery center that many of our people have participated in and got sober. They want to build one on our reservation. It would be a good idea and bring more resources to the community for healing and recovery. Rob McDonald with the water compact and IPO are bringing a free welding training to the reservation through the ironworkers. That will start this Fall so anyone who is interested in participating in the training need to contact Rob McDonald or the Indian Preference Office. It is a wonderful opportunity to become a welder. It is a free training program and participants will receive a stipend.

**Jim Malatare** thanked the drum group and the elders who are here today to share their words with us. He appreciates listening to the elders and what they have to say. Jim did not travel much this past quarter. The Medicine Tree was a good trip; he went a second time with Nkwusm. Jim enjoyed Stephen's talk and it was great to see their children learn. He has three grandchildren who attend the school and it is nice to see what they are learning and how they respect their teachers and elders. The teachers do a lot for the children. Jimmy went to an Elder Abuse training in Idaho and he learned a lot. He wishes we could get a conference here; it opens the eyes of people it is happening to. He appreciated Carole's efforts on homelessness and Martin's comments about housing issues. We need to find ways to help people who need housing due to the issues they have and we need to find a way to help them get back into housing. It bothers him that we have people who need to go to warming centers, and we need to work hard to fix that problem. Jim enjoyed the Arlee Pow Wow and has some issues he wants to visit with the council about. There are issues we need to fix.

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Jim appreciates the work this council has done and the people for showing up today.

**Chairman McDonald** thanked his fellow council representatives and the staff. Every day he sees a number of tribal members working on the highway. It goes without saying the Indian Preference Office is doing an outstanding job. When he sees judgments of the Supreme Court he wonders how that will affect us in the future. We will lobby as much as we can to get things back. Tom gave kudos to Melinda Charlo for getting tribal members on the job. As our kids are getting their education and looking for a job to fill the needs we have on the reservation, we have been missing an enhancement on vocational training and we are trying to get more vocational training. The welder training is in August. It could be a catalyst to get more trainings here, such as plumbing and electrical. We want to step up the training programs to fill our needs. He appreciated the drum being here. Tom's father has a photo that was taken on the steps of the Catholic Church with individuals dressed in traditional clothing and Johnny knew every one of those folks in the photograph. Tom thanked Johnny for doing that. Chairman McDonald agreed with Shirley when she talked about the SQCC crew working hard. We talk about our entire landscape and treaty rights is something he has defended his whole career. We need to make sure we do not lose our language and that the people coming here know we existed here. When we go to the Bitterroot or upper Yellowstone and practice what's been going on for 10,000 years it is critical to let people know we are here and thriving. We need to recognize that with private landowners. We can work with private landowners to get access to that private land. Tom and Martin attended a workshop to get nonprofit groups such as The Nature Conservancy and various land trusts that secure easements that prevent developments on the landscape. We try to get our people access as part of that to be restored and get land back and access lands we used to have access to. He hopes we get access to places we have been denied throughout Montana. Tom mentioned we have an election coming up. Len TwoTeeth is officiating an event so could not attend today's meeting. Len serves as chairman of the Election Committee. They will finalize the election schedule on the 20th. The opening date for candidates to file for office will be August 7. That date is still tentative but they will finalize it soon. Chairman McDonald stated there are so many staff members that have meant so much to us and one of those is Vern Clairmont. Vern went to the same school as Tom. Vern attended business school, worked at the bank, and then came to the Tribes. He spent his entire career working for CSKT and had the best intentions for our Tribes. Vern's work ethic was incredible. Vern is an outstanding individual.

The floor was opened for comments from the membership.

**Art Caye** introduced BB Erikson, who is a well-known businessman in Missoula. **Mr. Erickson** addressed the council. His family has lived in this valley for 150 years. He's here today because of something that bothers him. His family has

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made electronics for years. He showed the council a device that S&K Electronics makes. The devices can be purchased at Costco. That device saves families \$30 per month. His family is the biggest solar panel dealer in the state and has been installing solar panels for 50 years. He suggested the Tribes train tribal members to install solar panels. Mr. Erickson is doing this type of work for other Montana tribes. **Chairman McDonald** commented CSKT is applying for a solar grant that is coming up.

**Ron Trahan** was concerned about the Tribes losing land on this reservation. We should set up a budget to buy the land that is for sale. Ron does not think the Tribes are going after it strong enough. It is getting bad. We have lots of people moving in. Housing is another issue. There was a company building a single-family house, but we could not get anything through Housing to get it done. Ron wants to look at the land and see what we can do. We lost almost all of our land and are now up to 60%.

**Shirley Trahan** commented there are so many places we should have that should be trust land. There are places close to St. Ignatius by the highway and people are moving in. The Krantz property should be ours. People she has talked to told her the Tribes should have bought that land and developed homes there because we have so many homeless people. There are some other places we should have bought by Ronan that should be ours. They will build a housing development there; if the Tribes bought it they could have put more homes there. There are other places, too. We need to step up and start acquiring our land back. We talk about our culture and language and we will be overrun by people who don't belong here. They won't know the language. It should be our people that have those places; our people should not be homeless. There are thousands of acres and we need to step up our plans to acquire our land back for the future and for homeless people we have. The elders quit having lunch at Ronan because the homeless people were there. If they went there to eat, they did not feel welcome. Many tribal members feel the same way that we should get the land back.

**Art Trahan** works in the Fuels program and is a firefighter. He runs into people that are abusive to our land and not taking care of things and not being respectful. Art wants the council to close more areas, especially when we are out of there until May 1 in Ferry Basin. Those areas need to be closed to outsiders. Hank Adams talked to him about the Jocko area having ATVs up there. The fire quieted things down there. We should keep outsiders out of our areas. People cut down live trees to make firewood in one of our campgrounds; that should not be happening. There are a lot of issues like this that need to be addressed. We need to keep outsiders corralled so we can monitor them.

**Stephen Smallsalmon** had a complaint about Pete Beaverhead's house. He came to council many times about it. Pete's house has a sweat house and had a



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garden, and that should be honored. About 12 people moved in and there is nothing we can do about it. Stephen lived there many years and now he can't even go up the hill. They are trying to get that kid out of there and nobody will do anything about it. He told the council about it many times. For 30 years they were supposed to burn that house down. The health department said it was not worth living in there. He goes up there and is told it is none of his business. Council should go look at that house and land. They have guns, so Stephen does not know what we can do but the Tribal Council has the power to do something about it. **Chairman McDonald** will talk to Shane Hendrickson about it next Monday. The Tribes have a draft Land Ordinance that is not fully codified yet. The supervision of that property goes to the BIA Superintendent so Mr. Hendrickson is the person we need to talk to.

**Johnny Arlee** had a concern and was confused about the Rehbein gravel pit and asphalt plant. He does not know if they are still going on with it. He heard the state of Montana gave them permission, and that is confusing to him. We should have the say so since it is on the reservation. We had treaty rights with the government. Johnny does not know where the state came in. The council should not negotiate with the state for any of our rights or things. As a sovereign nation we can declare war if we want to. We had a Clean Air Act for the reservation.

**Joe Butterfly** goes down the highway by Perma and there is a big house. Elk cross there every year. We talk about environment. His family used to harvest elk there. It is sad to see big mansions built there. There are rock pits and the people are probably nonmembers milling the rocks. They put rocks on a pallet and load them on a big truck and take them out of state. Tribal members can pay to get rock through the Tribal Lands Department. He talked about the bridges and asked where the tribal inspector is. We do not have any say. It needs to be fixed due to wear and tear and it goes to the state. He has seen that in Evaro, St. Ignatius, Arlee, Lonepine, and even the Back Road. He has worked on all these projects. He wants to know why we don't have a say. When we build the Pablo highway the 8 tribal members and 1 nonmember get to watch another company take all this stuff out. When Lissa Peel worked at the Indian Preference Office she would ask them what they were doing. They are taking it to Treasure State. They are moving it to another pit although it is our dirt and our land. They took it and we should make them bring it back. We have tribal members sitting in Rehbein trucks watching nonmember trucks take stuff out and take it to their pit. He has personally seen all this neglect and abuse on this land. The state Game Wardens confiscate boats, ATVs, jet skis, and four-wheelers and make people pay a fine and then they get their stuff back but it's too late. We amped up the Game Wardens and now we have twice as many wardens but have the same problem and nothing is going on. Everything gets stopped through probate. There are a lot of realty companies making profits on our reservation. He rode ditch last year and never got a raise like he was told he would. He also did not receive holiday pay or PTO. Mr. Butterfly was on emergency hire. He talked about

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the salaries and benefits of the ditch riders through the BIA program. Mr. Butterfly talked about kids in the Tribal Social Services program. He was told to change the case manager because of the abuse. There's a trauma kids endured while in custody of the Tribes through the Tribal Social Services program. He discussed a situation regarding a child that was placed with family members. Mr. Butterfly talked about construction projects; he helped build the wildlife crossing in Evaro. Tribal members on lease land have to pay for water. We should tear down the house Stephen was referring to. He talked about elders needing assistance for home repairs. His father has been placed in four different rest homes and he is concerned about the lack of care nurses provide to his father. He talked about the water in Hot Springs and wanted to know why we don't do anything with it. He talked about the Salazar money; it was supposed to be allocated to the people but the people only received \$10,000 and it went to tribal programs. People are hurting for homes and the money needs to be paid out to the people. Some elders cannot get any help because they are told they make too much money. There are a lot of places for sale and the Tribes need to be buying land. He talked about the hiring practices where people apply for jobs but then the jobs are readvertised because the staff say there were no applicants. He has applied for several jobs and is always deemed over-qualified. The Tribal Council always has good words to say at the quarterly meeting but nothing ever gets done. He hopes council hears the voice of the people and starts getting things done. The Dixon Agency was not paved and it looks like a ghost town. All the people had there was the post yard and it was taken away. That area was abandoned. Nonmembers are milling rock in Camas Prairie and Jette. He has watched semi loads of rock being loaded out of there.

The floor was opened for closing comments from the council.

**Carole Lankford** followed up on the Tribal Council's previous discussion about dedicating the main tribal complex to Vern Clairmont, who was very committed to this Tribe.

**MOTION** by Carole Lankford to name the main tribal complex the Vern Clairmont Building for his commitment and dedication to our people and to us. Seconded by Terry Pitts. Carried, unanimous (8 present).

**Terry Pitts** thanked Ellie Bundy for her participation and leadership with MMIP.

**Chairman McDonald** is proud of the accomplishments of the Tribal Council. The Flathead Allotment Act is the most outrageous thing to happen to this Tribe and we are still recovering from that today. That is how we ended up with gravel pits on the reservation. Tom does not know why the federal government does not recognize CSKT as a true sovereign. That is why we cannot confiscate nonmembers' property. Those are federal laws that need to be fixed by congress. We have some cooperative agreements with the State and CSKT will exert our

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jurisdiction the most competent way we can. We have always stressed that to our attorneys with jurisdictional cases, such as the right-of-way on tribal land in Big Arm. We won that court case and they could not build an RV park by accessing a prescriptive easement through tribal land. There are a lot of pressures by people moving here; we dedicate as much as we can. We want to buy as much land as we can. The Tribal Council is deeply concerned about our housing crisis and they work as diligently as they can on those issues.

The meeting was closed with a **prayer** by Shirley Trahan.

**The Veterans Brothers Drum Group** sang an honor song.

Council **adjourned** at 12:00 p.m., and is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

**CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES**

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Martin A. Charlo  
Tribal Council Secretary