

Business Alliance holds annual conference

By Rick Smith

The second annual conference of the Sault Tribe Business Alliance (STBA) was a gathering of alliance members, federal and state agencies along with others involved in developing businesses on Aug. 8 at the Kewadin Casino and Conference Center. The conference was conducted by Sault Tribe Economic Development Director Joel Schultz.

The goal of the alliance is to promote tribal businesses, members who are interested in becoming business owners and working with the eastern U.P. business community as a whole. The STBA is composed of Sault Tribe members who lead their own successful business concerns and are interested in helping the tribe and its members develop businesses.

Speakers on hand for the function were Sault Tribe Board of Directors Chairperson Aaron Payment welcomed all, state Sen. Wayne Schmidt spoke on the Michigan's stake and role in small business development; Joel Schultz provided an update on the alliance and opportunities to do business on tribal lands; U.S. Small Business Administration District Director Constance Payne-Logan gave an overview of the agency; Sault Tribe attorney Courtney Kachur conducted a question and answer session on the tribe's tax agreement with the state; Assistant Health Director



Sault Tribe Business Alliance member Alan Barr of Concept Consulting said the rise of the STBA will mark “a significant time in the tribe’s history and things are stepping off.” Other members of the alliance also spoke with feelings of optimism while considering challenges.

Joel Lumsden gave an overview of the tribe's health system; and Michigan Defense Center Executive Director Sean Carlson and Operations Manager Dustin Frigy spoke on contract bidding and writing.

After a break for lunch, alliance members and some of the attending officials conducted a group discussion on issues of the economic climate in the tribe's service area.

Following the group discussion, a panel of five spoke on the services provided by their respective agencies. Included



Photos by Rick Smith

A panel of small business counselors, from left, Michigan Works training specialist Jason Venema, Invest U.P. Director Marty Fitante, Northern Initiative President Dennis West, Small Business Development Center Regional Director Laura Marohnic and Procurement Technical Assistance Center counselor Coury Carland.

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The conference concluded with an award ceremony recognizing Tipping Point Solutions, Inc., and the JETA Corporation sharing the Sault Tribe Business Alliance 2019 Business of the Year Award for their outstanding performances and community contributions in the efforts of the alliance.



Sault Tribe Business Alliance 2019 Business of the Year Award winners (holding plaques, from left) Rick Schmidt of Tipping Point Solutions, Inc., and Linda Grow of the JETA Corporation with, from left, Sault Tribe Board Director Kim Gravelle, Sault Tribe EDC Director Joel Schultz, Sault Tribe Board Director Jennifer McLeod and Small Business Administration District Director Constance Payne-Logan.