

## **Repairing the harm**

### **Tulalip CAB helps youth offenders make amends**

Article by Brandi N. Montreuil

For three years the Tulalip Community Accountability Board has successfully mentored Native youth who have been arrested for the first time for low-level crime. Offenses such as graffiti, theft, or marijuana possession are examined by a panel, which consists of a judge and trained volunteers. The panel recommends any number of actions from community service to personal essays. The goal? Get these youth headed in a better direction.

“I thought it would be good for us to have the members of our tribe and community to be able to interact with our youth in these low-level types of cases and help them see where they went wrong,” explained Tulalip Tribal Court Judge Gary Bass. “That was the genesis of the program.”

The program, commonly referred to as CAB, is used in communities around the state, but the 90-day Tulalip CAB is tailored to the needs of Tulalip youth, who find it hard to relate to non-Natives in the juvenile court process. Tulalip does not currently administer formal juvenile justice.

The CAB program works through the State of Washington Juvenile Justice Act of 1977, which mandates diversion services for minor first time offenses. The goal of CAB is to make youth accountable for their offenses and involve community members in the process.

The process is set up to allow youth to think about their actions, for example, if a youth vandalizes a fence CAB members might impose painting the fence as restitution to the victim. When youth are arrested they are processed through the juvenile court system. A prosecutor will review the case and determine if the case can be diverted to CAB. If the case is eligible for diversion, then youth are given the opportunity to enroll in the voluntary program. If the youth successfully completes the program, the youth will receive no criminal conviction. The action is scrubbed from their record and they continue with a clean slate.

“When we meet with youth, we ask them to explain the particular incident that brought them to the CAB,” said Judge Bass. “We try to find out what is driving them to commit this offense. We ask about sanctions their parents and school have enforced, and we review the police records. For instance, if it is a theft charge, we have them attend anti-theft classes, or if they are using drug and alcohol we might require them to complete drug and alcohol treatment.”

As Judge Bass further explained, the role of CAB is to engage youth. Youth are asked to critically analyze their actions and realize the impact their actions have in their life, as well as their family and friends lives too.

Judge Bass said the benefits for youth and community through CAB are tremendous, reaching a level that formal court systems cannot produce. “Community members have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the youth in their community. In turn, youth see there are community members that want to help. That gives youth hope to make a change, that is the great advantage to this program.”

Tulalip CAB meets once a month with tribal youth under the age of 18 who are arrested for minor offenses and are eligible for CAB participation. If you possess a commitment to the welfare of others, and would like to volunteer with CAB, please contact Tulalip Tribal Court Judge Gary Bass at 360-716-4773.