

Jury Duty is a Civil Duty

Photo and Article by Sarah Miller

Have you ever received a letter for jury duty at tribal court? Did you attend? According to court staff, most people disregard the letter and don't show up, causing Tulalip Tribal Court to find alternative ways for getting jurors. Tribal Court encourages people to perform jury duty, as jurors are greatly needed.

"How jury duty works is we select adults over the age of eighteen by getting a list from Tribal Enrollment," said Court Clerk Michelle Miller. "This list helps us keep up to date on who is able to serve on a jury. Then jurors are actually selected by a database system called Jury Full Court; it'll input the upcoming date and randomly select people."

Tribal Court usually picks about 50 to 65 people every month to serve on a jury. They need twenty people to serve on a jury. Not only can tribal members serve on the jury but employees that are non-tribal that have worked for the tribe for at least one continuous year prior to being called as juror can serve as well.

"One of the biggest problems we've had lately when it comes to jurors," said Michelle, "is that we don't have the appropriate addresses or phone numbers for certain people, or we never get their questionnaire or Notice of Hardship."

The selected people have five days after receiving their notice to submit their jury duty questionnaire or Notice of Hardship.

"Sometimes we don't get enough people to show up," Michelle said. "Sometimes there is a lack of response in the community."

That is when the Court Clerks have to find other methods of finding jurors. If there is no response from a chosen person, provided the selected people work within the Tulalip Tribes, Michelle will email them to inform them. If she still gets no response, she will send out a tribal wide email encouraging people to serve on the jury.

"When we notify by email, sometimes we get a good response, and sometimes we don't," Michelle said.

Jurors serve every Wednesday for a month. People who work within the Tulalip Tribes will receive their regular pay while serving on a jury. Michelle states that it is very important for people to do their jury duty.

"To serve on a jury is to give a defendant a fair trial by an impartial jury," said Court Director Wendy Church. "In order to uphold this, we need those summoned to participate in the jury process to ensure every citizen's right to have their case decided by a quality and impartial jury selected from a representative pool of prospective jurors."

If you received a jury summons or want more information on serving on a jury, you can call 360-716-4773.