



Elma Thompson
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes'
Fort Hall Business Council Treasurer, Idaho
First elected 2020



WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO RUN FOR OFFICE?

I was motivated to run for the office by watching what was going on in the political realm of national politics. I questioned what I could do for my own community to help them prepare for the issues facing us, as well as to protect our membership from the pandemic.

National politics was getting intense and I could see how that was going to impact us locally and wanted to have a voice for our membership on the legislative level to ensure our tribes were not going to lose ground regarding voting rights or funding opportunities.

WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH AS AN ELECTED LEADER?

I would most like to accomplish raising the bar for our tribal government and how we operate as well as increasing the funding and services for our membership.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING YOUR COMMUNITY?

The biggest challenges facing our tribes right now are the fact that we face vaccine hesitancy. We try to motivate them by providing incentives, but it appears that we are missing the boat. Other issues facing us are employment; we have many employment opportunities and cannot seem to fill them. Another huge issue, not unlike other tribes, cities, towns or counties, is the lack of revenue and the lack of infrastructure.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR OFFICE FOR THE FIRST TIME?

My advice to a first-time candidate would be to study the treaty, reach out to current council members or past council members to find out the current or past issues, and get a good understanding of the government-to-government processes and how the federal agencies are supposed to work with the tribes. Learn how the tribes are impacted by national events and political decisions. Also learn how the Constitution and Bylaws affect them once they are appointed to the tribal council.

IS THERE A CONSERVATION-RELATED RULE, POLICY OR IDEA YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED AT THE LOCAL, STATE OR NATIONAL LEVEL?

I would like for the government-to-government consultation process to be relayed to all agencies that we deal with. I would like for them all to understand that one tribe cannot and does not answer for all tribes. There are five tribes in Idaho, and having one representative from one tribe to represent all five tribes does not work. I would like them to recognize that the tribes operate with sovereignty and learn how to work with the tribes.

THE SALMON CRISIS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST/INTERIOR WEST HAS CULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR TRIBES AND COMMUNITIES IN THOSE REGIONS; WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFIC WAYS IT HAS IMPACTED YOUR COMMUNITY?

The salmon crisis has impacted our community by curtailing the fishing and cultural practices of our tribes. Our tribe has practiced gathering salmon, and it was a family event. However, in this day and age, due to the salmon becoming extinct, there have been many families that have gone without fish, without sustenance of these fish.

THE COLUMBIA BASIN INITIATIVE WOULD RESTORE SALMON POPULATIONS WHILE ALSO STRENGTHENING THE REGION'S ENERGY SYSTEM, TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND ECONOMY. ARE THERE WAYS LOCAL AND TRIBAL LEADERS CAN ENGAGE AT THE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS TO ADVANCE THIS EFFORT?

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have engaged in media events, social media campaigns, newspaper articles, person-to-person meetings and events to advance the Columbia Basin Initiative. I personally have used my attendance at the Coalition of Large Tribes and other legislative meetings that I have had an opportunity to attend to discuss and bring attention to this initiative and how it has impacted our tribe and our concerns of how these issues have impacted and can in the future impact our tribe and others in the state.

