

Productive Use of Reservation Land - Lydia Whirlwind Soldier - OSEU #7

On our reservation, our Tribal Council is really struggling to bring jobs to the reservation, but we also have to think about the impact those companies have on our land. And with owning a million acres, we have to start thinking about the use of that land. How are we going to use it so it's productive, and how is it going to benefit our people? And we still have that tribal way of living that we are responsible for one another. And we have to make sure that everyone is taken care of, the children, the elders. And they come first.

They always come first in all our decisions that the Tribal Council makes. They talk about the elders, what the elders need and what the children need. And the people in the middle are supposed to take care of business. So our tribe has a casino, and that casino supports the communities. They provide money for medical travel, for any kind of emergencies, funeral expenses, and all that. And they provide for children's or the community children's activities for entertainment and all of that. And so the casino has really helped our people.

And also we have Tribal Land Enterprises. We're the only tribe in the whole United States that has Tribal Land Enterprises. And that is a collective ownership of land, and that's that million acres. And the tribe buys land as it becomes available, if they can afford it. And that land goes into TLA, Tribal Land Enterprises, and that benefits the entire tribe. So the lease that comes off of that land goes to the tribe. And also we as tribal members can apply for land to live on.

And so the Tribal Land Enterprises, I think, are really beneficial to our people.