



# TRIBAL UTILITY COMMISSION

Melinda Iverson, TUC Chair

# TRIBAL UTILITY COMMISSION



White Earth Resolution was passed on June 7, 2022 which allowed White Earth Nation to adopt a White Earth Band of Ojibwe, Title 23, Utilities Code.

This Code was passed through special meeting on March 22, 2022 which includes the establishment of a Tribal Utility Commission, which is a key step to the success of the White Earth Nation's energy future and independence.

Code was updated in December of 2022.

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The establishment of this code results in energy sovereignty for the tribe and economic development opportunities which benefit both the tribe and the communities the co-ops serve.

The goals may lead to clean energy collaboration, development of clean energy infrastructures, and to have shared sustainability goals meeting tribal, federal and state environmental standards.

It also means we can introduce agreements that make sense for all parties, have joint emergency response coordination as well as take advantage of funding sources and incentives for renewable energy, energy efficiency and infrastructure improvements, as well as develop training programs to benefit both.



Jason Croxton-Senior Counsel with Quarles and Brady is our legal counsel for tribal energy policy and planning, clean energy and infrastructure project development and financing, federal and state energy regulatory, programs and policy efforts.

TRIBAL UTILITY  
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- ▶ The Tribal Utility Commission is comprised of five (5) Commission Members and have gone through the interview process for recommendation to White Earth Tribal Leadership for appointment purposes.
- ▶ In addition, the White Earth Tribal Council have appointed two (2) Commission Members as Chair and Vice Chair.
- ▶ All serve staggered term limits, two (2) or three (3) years dependent upon position.
- ▶ Melinda Iverson-Chair
- ▶ Jacob McArthur-Vice Chair
- ▶ Christie Haverkamp-Board Member
- ▶ Mike Smith-Board Member
- ▶ Vacant-Board Member

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Education of the Commission was integral as this is another opportunity for the White Earth Nation to exercise sovereignty and energy self sufficiency; including broadening the energy knowledge base, assessing potential for ownership of generation and the development of renewable energy projects, and ensuring cost of energy is affordable for the people of the White Earth Reservation.

Education included connecting with other Tribal Utility Authorities, touring their facilities and learning about their best practices. Gila River and Tohono O'odham welcomed White Earth and have advised us. We have since assisted other Tribes in setting up their respective TUC.

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The TUC Hired Nathan Mathews as our Executive Director.

Once our Executive Director was hired, we looked to formulate and adopt the following policies/Code:

- TUC By-Laws
- TUC Conflict of Interest
- TUC Code of Ethics
- TUC Confidentiality and Disclosure
- TUC Siting Permit Application
- Net Metering
- Telecommunications

We are currently working on additional policy that relates to the TUC Code and updates to the TUC Code.

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It is important to us to establish positive work relationships with the Reservation's 4 Electric Service providers:

1. Otter Tail Power Company
2. Wild Rice Electric Cooperative Inc
3. Clearwater Polk Electric Cooperative
4. Itasca Mantrap Electric Cooperative

And establish positive work relationships with the 3 main Broadband/Telecom Providers:

1. Arvig
2. Garden Valley Telephone
3. Century Link / Quest

With building relationships, it is also important to discuss potential collaboration on projects for both tribal and cooperative communities, projects such as renewable energy projects (solar, wind) and how we may share resources, workforce training, etc.





Work  
closely  
with  
Federal &  
State  
Agencies:

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MN PUC (Public Utilities Commission)

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MTERA (Midwest Tribal Energy Resources Association)

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WAPA (Western Area Power Administration)

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MN Department of Commerce

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MN TACE (MN Tribal Advocacy Council on Energy)

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BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs)

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THPO (Tribal Historic Preservation Office)

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NARUC (National Association of Regulatory Utility  
Commissioners)

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DOE (Department of Energy) Office of Indian Energy

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## Future Goals:

1. We have met with numerous providers that in the future may align with us to achieve our renewable energy and broadband goals.
2. Support WE developing a strategic energy plan.
3. To get ready and prepared for this we are implementing policy and procedures that will support White Earth's goals.
4. We will continue to partner with WETCC (White Earth Tribal Community College) on potential workforce development initiatives that can encourage participations and support all of us.

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## Challenges:

- Lack of Tribal Representation in Utility, State or Federal Energy Policy Decision Making Processes
- Tribes served by multiple utilities
- Tribes served by cooperatives or utilities that are not state regulated
- Distributed generation connection dynamics
- Need for public engagement and community events to keep members informed
- Continued networking meetings to maintain transparency and open communication fostering a long-time relationship with our TUC and each utility provider

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## Propose:

- Annual Meeting
  - Bi-annual Meetings with key stakeholders
  - Ongoing Information Share
  - Provide Code and Policy Updates Regularly
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- Miigwech for your time and consideration in how we may work together to provide the best possible energy infrastructure for our people.
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- It is collaborations such as these that can make the difference at the state and federal level for increased funding and legislation changes for the benefit of all parties.