

O J I B W E

I N A A J I M O W I N

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T H E S T O R Y A S I T ' S T O L D



In her 2024 State of the Band address, Mille Lacs Band Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin reflected on 2023 as a year of important victories for the Band, highlighting passage of a new law in Minnesota that removes the requirement that tribal police departments must have a cooperative law enforcement agreement with the local county in order to exercise concurrent jurisdiction to protect and serve.

In 2016, Mille Lacs County revoked its cooperative law enforcement agreement with the Mille Lacs Band, claiming that by its action, the Band's 23 post-certified police officers no longer had authority to enforce Minnesota law.

"Most of us remember that dark period," Benjamin said. "Mille Lacs County tried to strip our police officers of their state licenses, and threatened our officers with arrest if they did their job — even on our trust lands. The county issued a threat. They said they would only renew our law enforcement agreement on the condition that we agreed to act as if our Reservation boundary no longer existed. Never — not in a million years — would we ever agree to that."

The result of the County's unilateral withdrawal from the law

enforcement agreement was a period of lawlessness and increased crime, including an influx of drugs from off-reservation gangs who took advantage of the opportunity. And in the wake of those drugs came a spike of overdoses. "Never again will Mille Lacs County, or any county, be able to hold the safety of our people hostage. That period is over — forever!"

Benjamin also reflected on the Band's lawsuit against Mille Lacs County that grew out of the county's interference with public safety on the Reservation. In March of 2022, Senior U.S. District Judge Susan Richard Nelson ruled in favor of the Band; her opinion said, "over the course of more than 160 years, Congress



In March of 2022, U.S. District Judge Susan Richard Nelson ruled the Mille Lacs Band Reservation boundaries remain as they were under the 1855 Treaty.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE BENJAMIN NOT SEEKING RE-ELECTION

Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin has announced she is not seeking another term in office. Benjamin has led the nearly 5,000-member Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for more than two decades.

"Serving as your elected leader has been the greatest privilege and honor of my life," Benjamin said in her State of the Band Address. "To the next generation: You are the architects of tomorrow. Your dreams, ideas, and unique

perspectives are the building blocks of how our Band will continue to grow and thrive."

In a recent interview with MPR, Benjamin is quoted, "I love public service, but I have now accomplished what I first set out to do as Chief Executive. I learned from Art Gahbow, our past Chief Executive, that one of the most important jobs of any leader is to prepare the next generation to take over."

Watch for more in-depth coverage in upcoming issues.



Speaker Sheldon Boyd.

WORDS TO THE YOUTH

Speaker Sheldon Boyd

Good morning everyone, travelers, elected officials, honored guests, to the Anishinabe, and to our Indigenous brothers and sisters worldwide. On behalf of the Legislative Branch of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, I say Boozhoo, good morning! We all hope this day finds you well. So far, winter has been forgiving, the days are getting longer, the darkness is beginning to give way.

This is the 40th Annual State of the Band. The first State of the Band was in 1982, and today we begin the fifth decade of this Assembly. We all come here this morning to hear Madame Chief Melanie Benjamin and Chief Justice Rhonda Sam report to the Band Assembly their Annual State of the Band and State of the Judiciary Addresses.

Under Band law, their respective reports are to made to the members of the Band Assembly, which consists of District Representatives Virgil Wind, Wendy Merrill, and Harry Davis, with myself, Secretary Treasurer presiding as Speaker of the Assembly, on this second Tuesday of each calendar year.

I have a few things to say before calling to order the first session of the 21st Assembly. It's the young people I had in mind while thinking about what to say. And I do this because along with common uncertainties that all youth face, our Anishinabe youth are facing a world where the meaning and identity of our history and culture is just not there.

The greater media and the educational systems have been a danger to us and have tried to systematically destroy Indigenous peoples, our language, and cultures. This is the world our youth is facing, where the crises that face all people today like drugs, violence, and suicide are disproportionately so much higher among Native communities.

Our youth. You are strong and smart.

So, to the younger people, what are we doing here? Where is our place in all this?

Sovereigns are Nations

There are 11 recognized tribal sovereign nations within the

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has never clearly expressed an intention to disestablish or diminish the Mille Lacs Reservation. The Court therefore affirms what the Band has maintained for the better part of two centuries the Mille Lacs Reservation's boundaries remain as they were under Article 2 of the Treaty of 1855." Mille Lacs County has appealed that decision.

"The County spent over \$10 million on this case, paying 11 outside attorneys, and now the County is spending even more money appealing this case. The United States, the State of Minnesota, and the Native American Rights Fund — which is representing the National Congress of American Indians, Leech Lake, Bois Forte and Grand Portage — have all filed legal briefs siding with the Band. Mille Lacs County stands alone."

Benjamin also addressed the county's decision to appeal the decision from a financial perspective. "As the leader of a government, I know if we were spending \$10 million or more on something, our Band members would want something to show for it. To our non-Native friends and neighbors, I would like you to think about this: Have your lives changed since we won our case in 2022? Has the Band taxed you or zoned your property, or forced you into our Band court system? No. I know we haven't, because we don't want to, and we can't. Mille Lacs County officials have nothing to show for spending all this money except that all of our property taxes in this county keep going up. The Band is the biggest taxpayer in the county, so Band members are paying for both sides of this case. And we will keep doing this as long as we must, because these are our homelands, and we

"TO OUR NON-NATIVE FRIENDS, I WANT YOU TO THINK ABOUT THIS: HAVE YOUR LIVES CHANGED SINCE WE WON OUR CASE IN 2022?"

- CHIEF EXECUTIVE MELANIE BENJAMIN

are not going anywhere. We will always be Non-Removable!"

Other highlights from the speech include:

Nickel mine proposed near tribal lands: "In March, we launched our Water Over Nickel Campaign to spread the word about prioritizing clean water over nickel mining and have been steadily gaining many new allies from the surrounding communities, the state, and the nation." Chief Executive Benjamin spoke about her invitation from the National Congress of American Indians to attend the UN Climate Change conference in December in Dubai.

"I joined over 300 Indigenous delegates from around the world for what was called the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change. Under the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are stakeholders with international rights. The purpose of this forum was to make sure Indigenous rights are

not side-lined during climate change negotiations."

Benjamin asked Minnesotans to be careful about believing what they hear about nickel mining. "When Minnesotans hear that nickel mining is the solution to creating a clean and green economy, I encourage everyone to remain cautious and skeptical. Every day, we see new alternatives to support electric vehicles. Research has showed that metal recycling could meet between 37% to 91% of the demand for these minerals. Other products like lithium are options, too."

Language and Culture

"Rosetta Stone has put our language on the map!" Benjamin said. "Tribes and people all over the Great Lakes region, in Canada, and even in California, are using our Rosetta Stone program to learn Ojibwe. Disney even announced recently that they are dubbing a Star Wars movie in the Ojibwe language."

Congratulations to New Commissioners

Benjamin noted the return of Samuel Moose, who was appointed Commissioner of Administration in 2023. Commissioner Moose has 17 years of experience working with the Mille Lacs Band, including 14 years combined as Commissioner of Health and Human Services and Community Development. Benjamin also welcomed Rick Pardun, who was recently sworn in as Commissioner of Community Development.

Congratulations to Band member Syngen Kanassatega

Among the visiting dignitaries were U.S. Attorney Andy Lugar and three of his staff. "Today, for the first time, I am so proud to introduce the newest full-time Assistant U.S. Attorney — our own Mille Lacs Band member, Syngen Kanassatega! Syngen, we will miss you in our office, but all of Indian Country will benefit from your new appointment." Mille Lacs Band member Syngen Kanassatega began working for the U.S. Department of Justice last week.

At the conclusion of her speech, Chief Executive Benjamin honored Kanassatega by presenting him with a blanket. Kanassatega spoke briefly about the importance of the Band's division-of-powers form of government and urged Band members to respect and protect their system of government and take advantage of training about the Band's history and government that will be provided this year.

Leadership

Chief Executive Benjamin talked about the next generation of leaders, addressing them directly by sharing some of what she learned from the accomplishments of her predecessors, Chief Executives Arthur Gahbow and Marge Anderson, and how great leaders are chosen by their Elders.

"Every leader carries a torch that will eventually be passed. I want to take this time to share some of the lessons that I learned. First, I did not just wake up one day and decide that I wanted to be the Chief. And neither did Chief Executive Gahbow or Chief Executive Anderson. Because you do not choose leadership. Leadership chooses you."



Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin presented Syngen Kanassatega with a blanket during the 2024 State of the Band Address.

Benjamin spent time listing some of the most important accomplishments of the Band over the past 30 years, including the number of times the Band was first in the Nation to undertake a progressive initiative. "I want to acknowledge that progress, so our next leaders know what is possible to achieve as an Indian Nation."

Benjamin noted that the Mille Lacs Band was the first tribe to buy a bank and a holding company; the first tribal health insurance program; the first tribe to focus on the non-gaming hotel industry for economic diversification; the first tribe to open a satellite school in the BIA system; the first tribe to create a Department of Athletic Regulation and bring professional boxing to the Reservation, and provided scores of other examples.

"In years past, I have talked a lot about growing our own leaders. I've called for new warriors to come forward. For Band members to take advantage of education opportunities, training programs, and to get involved in our communities. And many of you have done that."

Benjamin spoke about the qualities that Band members should look for in their next leader and encouraged the next generation. "Some of you here today may not have chosen leadership, but leadership has chosen you! You have not stepped forward yet, but you know who you are, and you are ready. To the next generation: You are the architects of tomorrow. Your dreams, ideas, and unique perspectives are the building blocks of how our Band will continue to grow and thrive."

"As you take hold of the torch, remember that it is not just a symbol; it is a call to action. Embrace the challenges that lie ahead with courage and determination, for it is through adversity that character is forged. In your hands, we place the power to innovate, to bridge divides, and to envision a future that transcends the limitations we face today. The torch you carry is not just for you; it is a shared flame that illuminates the path for all."

Mille Lacs Band statute requires the Chief Executive to "present to the Band Assembly an annual State of the Band Address on the second Tuesday of January of each calendar year" [4MLBSA 6(i)]. The first State of the Band Address was delivered in 1983, making the Band the first Minnesota tribe to provide a formal update in this way.

AUTOMATIC EXPUNGEMENT OF CERTAIN CANNABIS RELATED OFFENSES

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is hard at work preparing to implement a pair of decisions by the Minnesota Legislature that mandated expungement of certain criminal history records, removing them from public view.

The Adult-Use Cannabis Act and the Clean Slate Act passed last spring by lawmakers identifies what types of records (convictions, arrests, juvenile records, etc.) can be seen and by whom. Public data from criminal history records can be viewed on the BCA's Criminal History System (CHS) website.

Based on the initial analysis, more than 66,000 criminal history records are eligible for automatic expungement under the Adult-Use Cannabis Act. An additional 230,000 felony records are eligible for review by the Cannabis Expungement Board. Work to determine how many records would be affected by the Clean Slate Act is still underway.

The BCA's work to enable the automatic expungements of cannabis-related records is well underway. There are more than a dozen staff and contractors working to automate expungement of cannabis- and Clean Slate-related records. The

BCA is continuing to analyze rules for identifying records and notifying law enforcement agencies and the Minnesota Judicial Branch; however, they've also begun developing certain changes that will be required to be made to CHS.

While the BCA continues to work on changes to CHS to make these expungements possible, they have added language to all criminal history records to indicate that a record may contain information about an act that is no longer illegal in Minnesota. Here's what it says:

"Minnesota Session Laws — 2023, Chapter 63, Article 5 requires automatic expungement of certain cannabis-related offenses effective August 1, 2023. While the Criminal History System is being updated to support the changes, an individual's record may include cannabis-related offenses that are eligible for automatic expungement. In addition, an individual's record may include cannabis-related offenses that are eligible for review by the Cannabis Expungement Board. The Board will determine whether the offense meets the criteria for resentencing or an order of expungement through the Judicial Branch."



This language will remain on all criminal history records until work to complete the automatic expungement of qualifying records is completed.

Cannabis-related expungements will begin in mid-2024, and the BCA anticipates Clean Slate-related expungements will be implemented to meet the January 2025 deadline.

Updates will continue to be posted to the BCA website. Anyone who needs access to records expunged under the recently passed legislation can also visit the expungement webpage to learn more about that process.

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

SWEARING-IN CEREMONIES WELCOME NEW TPD OFFICER AND HOUSING BOARD MEMBER



BAND ASSEMBLY GATHERS TO WELCOME NEW HOUSING BOARD MEMBER AND TPD OFFICER

Band Assembly proudly taking a moment to welcome Michael Davis as a new member of the Housing Board and Officer Peter Dietzer as a new officer with Tribal Police Department. Both were sworn in by the Honorable Chief Justice Rhonda Sam on Wednesday, January 3, 2024. Left to right are District II Representative Wendy Merrill, Michael Davis, Chief Justice Rhonda Sam, Speaker Sheldon Boyd, Officer Peter Dietzer, District I Representative Virgil Wind, and District III Representative Harry Davis.



NEW MEMBER OF THE HOUSING BOARD SWORN IN

Band member Michael Davis, was sworn in as a new member of the Housing Board by the Honorable Chief Justice Rhonda Sam on Wednesday, January 3, 2024.



NEW TRIBAL POLICE OFFICER SWORN IN FOR DUTY

Officer Peter Dietzer, was sworn in as a new Tribal police officer by the Honorable Chief Justice Rhonda Sam on Wednesday, January 3, 2024.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS

Band Assembly Meeting Jan. 3, 2024

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Bill 21-01-03-24 (A Bill enacting a Cannabis Code as a new chapter within Title 15 - Independent Agencies. This bill will create a Department of Cannabis Regulation, an independent entity, which will be administered by a five-person board. The Department will oversee issuance of cannabis licenses for cultivation, manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and testing within the Band's sovereign territory. The board will hear license appeals and also approve contracts and create regulations consistent with the Code. The Department will have an executive director and staff to carry out the necessary duties to effectuate the purpose of this Code. The Code also allows for home cultivation of up to eight cannabis plants. This bill also amends Title 23 to update outdated citations to Minnesota law and update possession of cannabis within a vehicle to mirror Minnesota law).

In the creation and drafting of this bill, the Legislative Branch held several workshops and two public comment periods. The first public comment period, the draft bill was posted for 22 days, and the bill was discussed in every community. The Legislative Branch received over 50 comments with a majority of comments being positive. The second public comment period, the draft bill was posted for 13 days. The Legislative Branch received two comments.

This bill is intended to encourage not only business opportunities for Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures but also Band members; to encourage responsible use of cannabis within the communities; to support drug abuse prevention efforts through education, prevention, and treatment for the community; to provide smoke-free and clean air places for the community, and to continue providing a drug-free workplace for government-owned and government-operated buildings.

Band Assembly Meeting Jan. 24, 2024

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Bill 21-01-05-24 (A bill of supplemental appropriation for the February and March 2024 Tribal Per Capita Distribution for adults for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024).

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Bill 21-01-06-24 (A bill of supplemental appropriation for the February and March 2024 Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act ("TGWEA*") Assistance Payment Program for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024).

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Bill 21-01-07-24 (A bill authorizing a supplemental appropriation for the purpose of authorizing budget revisions)/transfer(s) for the Tribal Employment Rights Office, and Gaming Regulatory Authority for the Fiscal Years ending September 30, 2023, September 30, 2024, and September 30, 2025).

When are Band Assembly Meetings?

The Band Assembly regular meetings are scheduled every Wednesday at 10 a.m. Band members can attend live in person or view the meetings live from the Band website. Follow the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Legislative Branch Facebook page for more information and schedules. Dates and times may vary.

STATE AND LOCAL NEWS BRIEFS

Longtime Mille Lacs tribal leader to step down:

After serving more than two decades as the popularly elected Chief Executive of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Melanie Benjamin announced she will not seek a sixth term in office this year. Benjamin, who was first elected to the role in 2000, is one of the longest-serving chief executives in the history of the east-central Minnesota band of 4,700 members, 2,300 of whom live within the reservation boundaries. During her tenure, Benjamin diversified the band's economy by expanding its commercial enterprise beyond gambling and situating the band as the largest employer in its region, according to a news release issued Thursday. She also worked to protect the band's tribal sovereignty. Source: *Star Tribune*.

DNR to close Upper Sioux Agency State Park in February:

As part of its work to transfer the land at Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the Upper Sioux Community, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will close the park to the public on Feb. 16, 2024. The Upper Sioux Community has had a longstanding request to the State of Minnesota to return the land at Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the Community. This land is the site of starvation and death of Dakota people during the summer of 1862, when the U.S. Government failed to provide food promised to the Dakota by treaty. The return of the land to the Upper Sioux Community was directed by the Minnesota Legislature in the 2023 session, with support from the Minnesota DNR and the Walz-Flanagan Administration. The park will be open to visitors until 10 p.m. on Feb. 15. The park will be closed to visitors by 8 a.m. on Feb. 16. Once closed, there will be no public access to the park, and no services will be available. Gates will be closed, facilities including restrooms will be locked, informational and wayfinding signs will be removed, and trails will not be maintained. Additional details about what this closure means for park visitors are available on the Upper Sioux Agency State Park land transfer webpage (mndnr.gov/usasp-transfer). Source: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*.

Minnesota Supreme Court to decide fate of felon voting rights law:

Nearly a year after Minnesota Democratic Gov. Tim Walz signed a historic bill restoring the right to vote for felons, the Minnesota Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal of the case challenging the law. Chief Justice Natalie Hudson signed an order granting an accelerated review of the case. The court will hear arguments April 1, after Minnesota's primaries take place on March 5. The Restore the Vote Act gave those with felony convictions who were no longer incarcerated the right to vote, enfranchising an estimated 55,000 people. Prior to the law, the right to vote was only gained after serving the entirety of a sentence including parole and probation. Minnesota has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country, according to 2021 data from the Prison Policy Initiative. The report shows that Black and Native American Minnesotans disproportionately make up the majority of those incarcerated. Source: *St. Cloud Times*.



The honorable Chief Justice Rhonda Sam.

STATE OF THE JUDICIARY BRANCH

The honorable Chief Justice Rhonda Sam

Boozhoo, Aaniin, good morning, Chief Executive Benjamin, Speaker Boyd, District Representatives of the Band Assembly, Mille Lacs Band members, employees, and guests. It is a new year and a good day for all of us to come together for this occasion.

It is my duty and privilege to deliver the State of the Mille Lacs Band Judiciary Address. Our theme for this year is Change and Progress. As our judicial system constantly evolves, so does our judiciary. Today, I am here delivering the Judicial address as the Chief Justice of the Mille Lacs Band. Many of you know me, Rhonda Sam from DI. It is good to see everyone.

Sylvia Wise resigned earlier, mid-year 2023, from the Chief Justice role. Chi Miigwech, Sylvia, for your service to the Judicial Branch. We all appreciate your work and contributions.

I was appointed to take on the role of the Associate Justice in March of 2022 but, with Sylvia's resignation, the Chief Justice role became available. After careful consideration with the other two Associate Justices, we decided that I would take on this critical role, which I take very seriously. I appreciate the assistance and input of the other two Justices who make up the Court of Appeals. District II Associate Justice Brenda Moose and our newest member for District III, Associate Justice Bernida Hume-tewa. Please rise and be recognized. Miigwech. I look forward to working with the both of you in 2024 and beyond.

Another area of change is the absence of the District Court Judge. Richard Osburn, the former District Court Judge, moved in October 2023. He served the Band well while here for the three years of his six-year term. Miigwech Judge Osburn. Since there has been a three-months lapse, the court is thankful to depend on our three Special Magistrates, Tammy Swanson, BJ Jones, and Joe Plumer in helping the courts manage the docket.

Currently, the Chief Executive is vetting several candidates for the vacant District Court Judgeship. When that process is complete, the Chief Executive will send the prospective candidate to Band Assembly to start the confirmation and ratification process. We look forward to the day when the new District Court Judge begins their appointment to the judiciary.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE COURT

Family Healing to Wellness Court

In addition to the judiciary changes, 2023 has brought about adjustments to the Noojimo'wiigamig Inaawanidiwag — Family Healing to Wellness Court. As you may recall, the Wellness Court is a 12- to 18-month program for parents of Band children who are the subject of a child protection matter in the Mille Lacs Band District Court and are having a difficult time staying substance free. It is a voluntary confidential program that uses a team of professionals to coordinate the services and resources needed to help the parent in their recovery journey so that they reunify with their children.

Noojimo'wiigamig Inaawanidiwag began accepting applications in October 2022, and had two participants by the first

week of November. Since that time, the Wellness Team has learned a great deal in their first year as to what is working for the participants, the team, and the court.

As you may recall, the Court was awarded a five-year grant by the Bureau of Justice Assistance Agency. In the grant, there is funding available to send the team to training with the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and to the Tribal Healing to Wellness Court Enhancement Training, which was held by the Tribal Law & Policy Institute, also known as TLPI. Fortunately, TLPI is also the Training and Technical Assistance Providers, for Healing to Wellness Courts grant recipients. The Wellness team has had several conference calls or Zoom meetings with the technical assistance providers and was informed that our current phase arrangement is much like an adult criminal drug court, instead of a Family Healing to Wellness Court. The program design is sound and structured well; however, as of November, the Team realized that it had to enhance areas when they noticed shortcomings to fit the design of a Family Wellness Court. Therefore, the Wellness team recently had a workshop to address what was working, what was not, and what needs enhancement.

The four-phase design will still be required, such as drug testing, checking in daily, and attending status hearings within the Tobacco, Cedar, Sage, and Sweetgrass phases. Our intent is to add milestones that are determined by the participant in each phase, empowering the participant with ownership in their own healing. For example, the participant may determine in the Tobacco phase, they only want to concentrate on staying sober and nothing else. However, when they get to the Sage phase, they may want to work on obtaining their license or mend relationships with a family member. The participant will realize that they have a voice in their own healing journey and it is not just the team or the court telling them what they need to do. It becomes a true team approach similar to that of a wrap-around system. Eventually, when the team determines that the re-work is complete, the team will meet with the steering committee to present the overall outcome later in the year.

Another area that the team wants to enhance after attending the TLPI training is to infuse culture into each level of the phases for the participant. Each member of the team agrees and the team is working on a design on how to make this happen. Though the team introduces the seven values, smudges, and offers a prayer at every staffing, more needs to be offered for the participant. More to explore in 2024.

The team also learned at TLPI's Enhancement training that the Band could ask for a waiver from the BJA grant in allowing violent offenders into the program so that the program would not have to turn these potential participants away, as they too, may need healing and want to reunify with their own children. This will be researched in 2024, and, if necessary, we may seek



The honorable Chief Justice Rhonda Sam.

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a change to the eligibility requirements within our own laws.

There is this statement that is known in the substance use program and in the Healing to Wellness Court, which is, “the team should not work harder than the participant.” Court Administrator Gilda Burr has mentioned that the team has a deep commitment for the participants who enter the Wellness Court. They work hard as a whole and are leading the charge for the program to be successful. Each team member comes from different disciplines and provides input to guide the participant in their wellness journey. The team has a better understanding how they interrelate with one another by removing the silos and communicating between the disciplines. They are guided by their profession but lead with their hearts from a humanistic viewpoint. They promote the healing of the participant by celebrating successes made by the participants, such as long-term sobriety, getting a job, reaching phase advancement, or addressing the need to change negative behavior by encouraging “pushes for improvements.” This team genuinely wants the participants to succeed. Could I ask the Family Healing to Wellness Team, if you are in the audience, please stand and be recognized. Miigwech. Thank you.

Though the team puts in a great deal of effort, it is the participants that are actually doing the hard work. Frequently, checking in with the case manager and social worker, attending sober support meetings, providing drug tests, working their case plan, appearing for court status hearings, and any other challenges put in front of them. It is those participants who put in the hard work. They are looking to enhance their life.

In one year, we have had:

- 16 individuals interested or who have asked about the program.
- 11 individuals applied to the program.
- 7 accepted in to the program; however, one did not show for the acceptance hearing and another individual was discharged for non-engagement.
- Unfortunately, one participant is deceased and one has been terminated.
- Currently, we have three individuals at various phases, with two in Phase III and one in Phase I.

Noojimo’wiigamig Inaawanidiwag has learned much in the first year and will strive to continue their work in 2024. Any changes to the program will be reflected in the handbook and policy manual.

Court Rules

Over the last two years, our former Court Attorney, Jill Tompkins, diligently worked on the reorganization of the Chief Justice Orders, the Rules of the Appellate Court, and separating out the Judicial Code of Ethics and the Bar Rules. The Associate Justices and I will wait until such time as a new District Court Judge is in place and has had time to review the reorganizations for their input. Thereafter, I will present the changes to Band Assembly in the coming months.

Goal — Clerk Of Court Manual

A goal for the Court Administration in the 2024 and 2025 fiscal year is to overhaul the Clerk of Court Manual as it is out-

dated from 2009. Some processes have changed, and statutes have been amended; therefore, the clerk’s manual must also reflect those changes. The clerks should have a specific set of instructions for each particular case type. This is especially important in a multi-clerk office, where there may be overlapping duties. Our clerk’s manual has been updated based on immediate input, however, Court Administration will be doing an overhaul of the clerk’s manual to offer specific guidelines to make the clerk’s job easier and for the continuity of the record-keeping. When our new District Court Judge is on-board, we will be able to establish updated or new procedures according to law and the court rules. The Court of Central Jurisdiction has a need to grow with the times. The new judge will step in at the right time to lead and assist with these developments.

Case Statistics

The Court of Central Jurisdiction continues to hear civil, criminal, family law, and Healing to Wellness Court cases, all totaling 1,098 cases filed in 2023. There has been little growth in court cases from one year to the next, which could be perceived as a blessing. The court closed 1,103 cases, which includes carry-over from past years. The total number of hearings held was 1,426 and 2,402 orders were issued by the court. These statistics indicate that the Court of Central Jurisdiction is continually busy and is serving the community.

In closing, I ask you all in 2024 to think about changes or progress you may want to make in your own life. I pray that you all find something dear to your heart that gives you the drive to fight for something that you truly care about, as the Wellness Team has done for the Noojimo’wiigamig Inaawanidiwag, and the participants or individuals making great strides in their own recovery and wellness journey. They have made a dedicated decision for change and evolution in their own lives. I applaud their efforts.

Miigwech



NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

Leading Museums Remove Native Displays Amid New Federal Rules: The American Museum of Natural History will close two major halls exhibiting Native American objects, its leaders said on Friday, in a dramatic response to new federal regulations that require museums to obtain consent from tribes before displaying or performing research on cultural items. “The halls we are closing are artifacts of an era when museums such as ours did not respect the values, perspectives and indeed shared humanity of Indigenous peoples,” Sean Decatur, the museum’s president, wrote in a letter to the museum’s staff on Friday morning. “Actions that may feel sudden to some may seem long overdue to others.” The museum is closing galleries dedicated to the Eastern Woodlands and the Great Plains this weekend, and covering a number of other display cases featuring Native American cultural items as it goes through its enormous collection to make sure it is in compliance with the new federal rules, which took effect this month. Museums around the country have been covering up displays as curators scramble to determine whether they can be shown under the new regulations. Source: *New York Times*.

U.s. Senators Amy Klobuchar, Tina Smith Celebrate Selection Of Minnesota Tribe For Innovative, Culturally Responsive Social Services Pilot Program: U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith (both D-Minn.) celebrated news that the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe was selected for the Tiwahe Program Social Services Demonstration Project, an innovative program that allows participating Tribal Nations to integrate certain services for their members and incorporate culturally-appropriate components. Tiwahe, which means “family” in the Lakota language, focuses on job placement and training, social services, housing, wellness, and various courts to give Tribal Nations the ability to make these programs work best for their communities. Source: *Tina Smith Press Release*.

Michigan Legislature to designate manoomin as state’s native grain: Michigan will soon have an official native grain with the help of the Lac Vieux Desert tribe in Watersmeet. Michigan legislators voted in November 2023 to designate manoomin, or wild rice, as the state’s native grain. This will allow the state to restore the environments that grow wild rice and fund the tribes’ restoration projects. The Lac Vieux Desert tribe has been working to reintroduce the cultural practice of planting and harvesting wild rice for many years. Source: *WLUC TV Michigan*.

BIA allocates \$12M toward fixing high-risk Oglala Dam: The Department of the Interior announced an additional \$22.3 million investment to protect tribal communities by repairing and upgrading water systems and replacing failing dams. The announcement followed the Tribal Nations Summit in early December. Of those funds, \$12 million will go toward fixing the Oglala Dam on South Dakota’s Pine Ridge Reservation and \$10.3 million toward repairs on the Menager Dam on the Tohono O’odham Nation Reservation in southern Arizona. Over the past five years, \$250 million has been allocated toward tribal dam and water projects across the United States. Source: *Rapid City Journal*.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR HEART

February is Heart Health Month

By Sarah Larson, Community Health Educator

Our hearts are constantly working and beating to keep us going, so it's important that we take care of them.

Five tips to have a healthy heart include: (1) eat heart-healthy snacks like fruit and nuts and reduce sodium intake, (2) attend regular check-ups to monitor your heart health, (3) quit smoking or vaping, (4) move more, (5) manage stress.

Did you know that managing stress is important to having a healthy heart? Stress can increase our blood pressure and make it more difficult to make healthy choices that affect our heart. What do you do to manage stress? Sometimes, we aren't even aware of the impact that stress has on us or that we are going through a stressful time. This month, learn a new way to address stress by attending a yoga or a yoga nidra session with Shena Matrious. When practiced regularly, yoga has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, and stress, and improve sleep and overall wellbeing.

So, what is yoga? It's a way to move your body gently that can help you to feel grounded by connecting the body, mind, and spirit. What about yoga nidra? Well, if you like to lay down and relax, this is a great opportunity! It's also a great opportunity if you find it difficult to relax or have difficulty slowing down your brain. Yoga nidra is a guided practice that allows you to enter a state of complete relaxation. Yoga nidra can help to reduce stress and improve sleep. Matrious will guide you through this relaxation process. After the session, you may notice that your body and mind feel lighter and that you feel more grounded. If you've never done meditation or yoga — no problem! These sessions don't require any experience or background knowledge. You'll have to try it for yourself. With support from the SHIP grant, all sessions are free of charge for participants, and there will be a prize drawing at every session. Keep an eye out on the new Health and Human Services

Facebook page to find out dates and times that sessions will be offered in your district. Or reach out to Sarah Larson at sarah.larson@hhs.millelacsband-nsn.gov or call 320-630-3115.



HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEART!

1.

Eat to nourish. Add heart healthy foods such as vegetables, fish, berries, nuts, and seeds to your regular diet.

2.

Attend regular check-ups to monitor your blood sugar and blood pressure.

3.

Consider quitting commercial tobacco products including smoking, chewing, and/or vaping.

4.

Move more. Aim for 30 minutes of activity every day. Getting 10,000 steps a day is a great goal!

5.

Manage stress. Identify stressors in your life and build healthy coping mechanisms such as physical activity, or make an appointment with a mental health professional.

MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

LOOKING BEYOND RACE TO INDIVIDUALS

By Jim Clark, Mille Lacs Band Elder

This article by the late Jim Clark was first published in the Mille Lacs Messenger. It is reprinted here to preserve his teachings and bring them to the next generation.

Up until World War II, my family always had non-Indian neighbors. Our children played together and cared about each other.

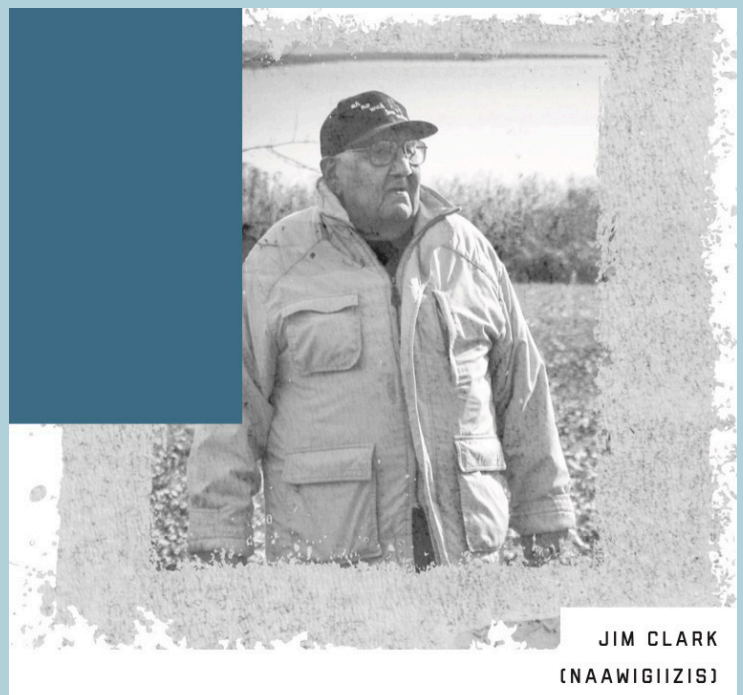
Young kids don't know anything about race until they learn it, which is usually when they start going to school. I remember my youngest went to school one day, and when she came home, she said to her mom, "Mom, did you know that I'm an Indian!?"

My kids played with non-Indians at school until about the fourth or fifth grade, and then the non-Indian kids started to shy away from them.

Why did they do that?

When my daughter was older, she had friends of different races. One day she had them over and they were all in her room, and we had to tell them to turn the music down. This was in high school, and I remember she had a Japanese friend, a Chinese friend, and a black friend. And she keeps in contact with them regularly to this day.

I wish more Indians and non-Indians would get to know each other like that, as individual people instead of as "Indians and non-Indians." There are opportunities here on the Reservation to do that. For example, our powwows are open to the public. Everyone is welcome to come and watch, and it's all free.



JIM CLARK
(NAAWIGIIZIS)

We also have free classes. We sit around and talk about traditions, about the Ojibwe language, and other things. It's what we call a mini-immersion. And it's not just for Band members — we're trying to get other people to come in and be with us. We hope to see more faces soon.

territory of the Sovereign State of Minnesota. During Sovereignty Day at the State Capital in March of last year, there were leaders from all 11 tribes and leaders from the State of Minnesota in a room one afternoon. I realized that among the 13 sovereigns in the room that day, the youngest sovereign is the State of Minnesota, next youngest is the United States of America, and the oldest sovereigns by far in this territory were the 11 tribal nations. To the young people here, you are part of these oldest sovereigns. We've been on these lands and waterways for a very long time — since time immemorial.

That day last March, the older sovereigns were continuing the education of state leaders because of an education system that lacks complete content on local history. This one-to-one education has been going on for hundreds of years.

My son, Shel Jr., told me one day that he asked his teacher at school why the U.S. Constitution uses the word Savages for Indian people? He told me his teacher answered, "Because of all the inventions and other things that were around at the time." (Ok, his teacher was going with what he was taught.)

"Why do you think they used that word, Dad?"

I said, "I think maybe they used that word to make us, and other people of color, less than, so they could treat us any way the wanted and still feel good about living up to the words, 'all men are created equal.'"

Shel said, "I like your answer better."

Many people in this room have never visualized the concept of nations spread across this turtle island say one thousand years ago. Vast linguistic groups with dialects, nations within those languages, different tribes within those nations, communities, and villages completely filling this land.

So, to the youth, where is your place? Your place in all this is where you stand. And those 13 sovereigns on that day last March have a common connection that's here today. But let me come back to that.

Legislative Review

Allow me please to update the youth and membership on three things about the Legislature, then investments, and I'll close looking forward.

First, thank you to all the people I work with where record keeping, appropriation of funds, passing resolutions, and law-making are the product of a group of leaders. No one person runs everything in this Legislative Branch; we're not built that way.

Parliamentarian and Clerk of the Assembly Darcie Bigbear, Deanna Sam, Deputy Registrar, Hannah Valento, Revisor of Statutes, Semira Kimpson, Legislative Coordinator, and welcome to Jared Miller, Staff Attorney. These are permanent employees meant to provide the institutional knowledge for future elected officials, making these people the Legislative Branch. In addition, there is Brianna Boyd, Legislative Director and Valerie Harrington-Wind, Communications Officer who serve with myself as Secretary-Treasurer.

Commissioner of Finance Mel Towle, Katy Radunz, Chris Waite, Joni Wall, and the OMB staff must be recognized because, regardless of days off or weather closures, the checks go out and business continues.

A special thanks goes out to Adam Candler and Joseph Jensen, whose paths have taken them elsewhere, and we miss you.

To all these people, my coworkers, I will remember this time of my life with great fondness and gratitude.

Now, to explain what's happening in sessions of Band Assembly for the purposes of today to the youth.

Accountability

For those attending Sessions of Band Assembly or viewing the live-stream, there are established protocols that are tedious and repetitive: the Rules of Band Assembly. We are doing the people's business. These processes combined with live-streaming shows the Legislature is committed to being as accountable as possible for each and every item that comes before the Assembly for consideration and approval by your District Representatives. Legislative Staff, including myself as Speaker of the Assembly, are there to provide the best possible support to aid the three District Representatives while carrying out their legislative duties. I really think the accountability has never been better and the acceptance of the Rules by the elected officials [enhances] this work. We have ideas to get better at this. There is always room for improvement, and that further drives accountability.

I will soon be calling to order the first Session of the 21st Assembly. What is an Assembly and what are Sessions?

These terms give structure to the terms of elected officials and keep track of time. They allow for changes in power. These assemblies, or "gathering of people," are two years long; also the U.S. Congress is like this. In the U.S. Congress, there are two sessions for each Assembly, but here, there are four sessions within each Assembly. The four sessions here represent the four directions, four colors, and the four seasons, and those teachings within stories.

There has been additional structure added to the Sessions under Rules of Band Assembly by having no new business carry over between Sessions. This provides a new Representative a clean slate, so to speak, when taking office, and provides a set timetable to pass meaningful legislation to promote the general welfare of the people during each term.

The Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2014

To all Mille Lacs Band members, take the time to review your monthly statements from OMB. As part of monthly direct cash disbursements, the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act monies are part of the Amended Internal Revenue Code to exclude from gross income, for income tax purposes, the value of an Indian general welfare benefit. Commissioner of Finance Mel Towle created the TGWEA Program locally, thereby taking advantage of the 2014 law making possible the added financial benefits to each Band member receiving direct monthly cash payments.

What does that mean? Many Indigenous peoples today were forcibly removed to remote lands away from historic prime homelands. Today, those areas are now populated with commercial centers where public tax monies provide benefits in public transportation and services. Reservations are a place to "put the Indians." Yet tribes are taxed at the same rates. The TGWEA monies are a recognition of that historic situation.

Investments

Again, this position of Secretary-Treasurer and Speaker of the Assembly is about two things: Facilitating the lawmaking process by chairing Sessions of Band Assembly and being tasked with the financial security of the people. Concerning investments for the economic security of the Band, I will be brief for now. The Investment Committee has finished the first year of meetings, but there is much work to be done. The Band's contracted investment advisor, Verus Investments, has begun quarterly reports to the Institutional Investment Committee. The Band's investments, the people's economic security, has never been as closely scrutinized with the best interests of the people as a priority. Being part of this first year and becoming familiar with the processes has been a life-changing experience for me and I will be forever grateful for this duty entrusted to me by you the people.

Moving forward, all elected officials of the Band will now have more clear information in financial forecasting than ever before. The financial course of the band will be done with eyes wide open. No excuses. That is what your Secretary-Treasurer is supposed to do.

Stories and Danger

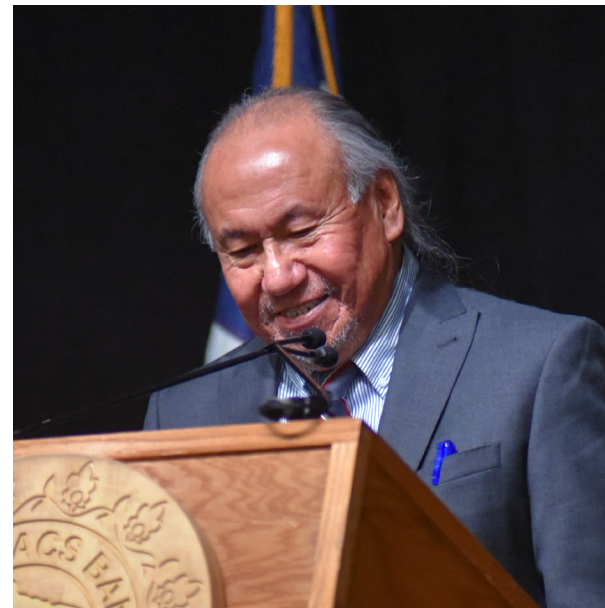
Stories are good. When I was a young man, these older guys from different places were talking at a meeting and one man said, "Some people cast their knowledge. While others talk in circles."

Stories. There are stories of runners that were sent out to speak to other tribes about things, getting to know them as statesmen. They were young and strong, had to know what was going on, and speak or understand different languages, and understand the world. They kept leadership and the people knowledgeable and safe on many different levels. They must have been exceptional people who moved into those positions. Leaders in training.

That's the same way it is now when people travel, even though it's sometimes made fun of, but the reasoning is the same. Those travelers are getting experience, becoming knowledgeable of neighboring tribes, and now the State and Washington D.C. The travelers are keeping the people aware and safe. Our nation continues to operate as it always has, there is continuity. We've been here since time immemorial.

Global Warming and the Wenabozho Water Story

Our youthful men and women, the strongest, fastest, and



Speaker Sheldon Boyd.

smartest, who were ready to fight and protect everybody long ago to meet all dangers head-on. Those same ones are going face-to-face with the dangers facing our people today — powerful drugs and violence. Many have perished. There is continuity.

Our youthful men and women are now among the strongest, fastest, and smartest who now seek the language and through language keep the stories and ceremonies alive one more day. There is continuity.

I heard an older guy say, "Just like each kind of bird was given the gift of its own sound and songs by the creator, so it is with man who was given the gift of their languages and songs."

Which reminds me of a couple of older guys; my uncle Jim Clark and my Dad Raining Boyd. One was a teacher, the other was a truck driver, a realist. My uncle Jim was quoted as saying, "Without the language, we are descendants of Anishinabe."

And my dad said, "Just because a guy talks Indian doesn't mean he knows what he's talkin' about." (They were buddies.)

Our financial investments may be economic security for the coming generations, but money can be spent. But there is continuity, a generational resonance in language and tradition.

To our young people, there are dangers ahead. There are many who refuse to acknowledge our presence as nations since time immemorial because they're not learning it in school. That's a problem. And when those people get into positions of power, our young and strong must run to meet them. Educate them like we have for hundreds of years.

And those people will keep coming like waves on the shore. We must not become complacent. We must cast our knowledge. The old people told stories where the young thunders are the loud crashing ones, while the old thunders are the ones you can feel more than hear.

My mom used the word Manido at different times to describe different things, expanding my personal understanding of that word each time. One time in particular, she called a panther Manido on a nature show she was watching.

My dad told me a story of the Bwan or Sioux woman who was in danger being chased by soldiers; she was told by a voice from above to make a drum and was taught songs to sing. He said, "When the soldiers came to destroy them, the captain of those soldiers disobeyed orders and said he wasn't going to kill those people because they were dancing and having a good time." The songs and dancing kept the destroyers away and the people kept living.

That's the drum like that one sitting with us this morning, right over there. That's what all those sovereign nations had in common that day last March — stories, just stories.

Today, I see the beautiful jingle dresses, young people dancing, and hear songs and everyone being happy. And I also see sickness, death, and many people dying too young. Our enemies, sicknesses, the destroyers, maybe they will leave us alone again too if we keep dancing and having a good time like in that story.

Maybe all we really can take with us is stories. Songs, language, and stories — they are energy, or as my mom might say, Manido.

To our youth, stay humble and be kind.

I now call to order the first Session of the 21st Assembly at Ne-la-Shing on Tuesday, January 9, 2024.

40TH ANNUAL STATE OF THE BAND ADDRESS

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians 40th Annual State of the Band Address Delivered by Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin, January 9, 2024

Boozhoo, Aaniin, Anishinabeg-dook. Mino gizhigd noongoom Mandamin indizinakaz, Melanie Benjamin indigoo. Mr. Speaker, Members of the Band Assembly, and Honorable Justices, welcome to the 40th Annual State of the Band Address. Miigwech to Obizaan for speaking on our behalf, so we can begin in a good way; miigwech to the Ceremonial Drum and Waa-bishkibines for setting the dish; miigwech to the Mille Lacs All Veterans for posting the flags, and to the singers today.

Welcome tribal leaders, honored guests, employees, and friends. And most important, welcome to my fellow citizens of the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

As in past years, there is an annual report on your table. So much has been accomplished in 2023, that there is not enough time to talk about it all in just one hour. The annual report is a detailed accounting of the programs and services that the Executive Branch provided in 2023. Band members, please take this home. Look through it. There could be services or programs that you don't know about that you might be eligible for.

Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly, enormous work went into this report. By delivering this report to you, I have carried out my statutory duty to inform you about the State of our Band. It is now your duty, as legislators, to learn what is in this report. Let's schedule a future meeting with the commissioners so you can ask any questions you still have. Miigwech to you for all our work together this past year.

This is a historic day. Today marks the 40th anniversary of the first State of the Band Address, delivered by our great Chief Executive Arthur Gahbow in 1984.

Forty years! This year also marks the 25th Anniversary of our 1837 Treaty Rights victory in the U.S. Supreme Court.

I stand before you today with a profound sense of gratitude, pride, and responsibility as we look back on the amazing journey we have taken together as a sovereign Indian nation. Over the centuries, we faced many challenges — even attempted genocide. But today, we gather here not only as survivors but as architects of our own destiny.

Everywhere we look we can see progress. From our growing economy to our educational achievements; from language preservation to the health and well-being of our people. We must be the architects of a future that not only honors the



Obizaan attending the 40th Annual State of the Band Address. He gave the invocation to begin the event in a good way.



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin delivers the 40th Annual State of the Band Address.

dreams of our ancestors, but builds upon those dreams, expanding the horizons of possibility for all.

2023 was a huge year for the Band, so I want to dive right into summarizing our biggest achievements on your behalf.

The Aanjibimaadizing program continues to be one of the best in the United States.

- 496 youth participated in Aanji last year.
- 704 adult Band members were served by programs such as workforce training and development. They received help with overcoming barriers to employment, finding child care, getting education, and family support.

People are getting jobs and succeeding. Some clients are now making \$54 an hour in construction jobs!

Aanji has also helped expand our language use through several programs. Many years ago, Elder Jim Clark said that he could remember way back when he was young, when there was talk about how important it was for all our people to learn English. He said that now — in just two generations — we had turned 360 degrees. He said that now, we need our people to learn Ojibwe.

Over all of the years I have served as Chief Executive, I have tried to make sure we provide opportunities to learn our language. We have tried many new programs, but the most successful might be our Rosetta Stone partnership. Rosetta Stone has put our language on the map! Tribes and people all over the Great Lakes region — in Canada and even in California — are using our Rosetta Stone program.

This only happened because someone took a bold step. Baabitaw Boyd fought hard for this, and took a few punches along the way, but her work was an example of doing something new and bold and following our teachings. And in case you haven't heard, the Disney corporation is now making a Star Wars movie in our Ojibwe language!

In the area of education, across the nation, and right here at home, students are struggling with mental health and wellness. Last year I directed that we work to provide more mental health services to our youth. Through a partnership with Health and Human Services, our middle and high school students can

now access therapists and wellness coaches at school. We have made it easier for our youth to get help when they need it.

Oshki-Maajitaadaa, which is our Alternative Learning program, is growing and graduating more students.

"I STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY WITH A PROFOUND SENSE OF GRATITUDE, PRIDE, AND RESPONSIBILITY AS WE LOOK BACK ON THE AMAZING JOURNEY WE HAVE TAKEN TOGETHER AS A SOVEREIGN INDIAN NATION."

— CHIEF EXECUTIVE MELANIE BENJAMIN

Last but not least, we broke ground on a new early childhood center in Hinckley to serve our future warrior Band members.

I am pleased to report that we have a new Commissioner of Administration. Commissioner Samuel Moose. For those of you who do not know Sam, he spent 17 years working for the Mille Lacs Band. Fourteen of those years were in commissioner positions in Health and Human Services and Community Development.

Every now and then, elected leaders make poor decisions. Several years ago, a very poor decision was made by a previous Band Assembly. And Sam became available for hire. From the moment the news hit the Moccasin Telegraph, other employers were beating down Sam's door with competing offers. He could have gone anywhere, but he wanted to be close to home. Our loss was Fond du Lac's gain. Sam spent the past seven years leading their Health department.

But after years of success at Fond du Lac, we were able to convince Sam to return home and work for the Mille Lacs Band again. If I have not embarrassed Sam already, I know I

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am going to embarrass him now, because Sam is a very humble person. So Sam... just tune out for a few minutes while I brag about you!

Sam Moose knows how to get things done. As a young Commissioner, Sam became a national leader in the Self-Governance movement with the Indian Health Service. Sam was the visionary behind our beautiful new clinic in District I, and providing clinic services in Districts II and III.

Sam is an outstanding advocate for Band members at the state Capitol, and with the U.S. Congress and Administration. Sam is well-known in the United States as a national leader in Indian health and highly respected by state and federal officials.

In fact, the federal government has him serving on three national boards. And he is also trusted by tribes nationwide. He serves on the National Indian Health Board and the American Indian Cancer Foundation. Sam is a thoughtful, mature, highly educated leader. He has brought stability back to the Band and we are so fortunate to have him here.

Some of my pride about Sam is because I am the one who recruited him as a leader almost 20 years ago. I saw talent in Sam while he was working at the DNR, and decided he was somebody to watch. When I learned that Sam had his degree, I recruited him for leadership. I chose Sam as a commissioner.

Band members, we are very fortunate to have Sam Moose as our Commissioner of Administration. Welcome home, Sam.

In Administration this year, operations and services were streamlined, which means we now have more jobs available than ever. Please check the job postings often, because if you are a responsible person who is willing to work, we have a job for you.

In Health and Human Services last year, I spoke about our need for more foster families to come forward. We need so



many more. We currently have 77 children in Band custody cases, and 81 children in county cases. But we only have 32 Band licensed foster homes. We need more foster care families, especially relatives.

I want to acknowledge a foster family who I recently talked with. This couple has been a foster family for over 30 years to our Band children, sometimes having up to 20 kids at a time. They have committed their lives to our children. They spoke to me about how being foster parents can be hard at times, but it is also so rewarding. When this couple talked about seeing the kids they fostered grow up into healthy, successful adults, there was pure joy on their faces. If you have room in your home and your heart, please think about becoming a foster home.

In Natural Resources this past year, much of my time and Commissioner Kelly Applegate's time has been focused on a proposed nickel mine. The site is just 1.3 miles away from the Round Lake neighborhood in District II. Protecting our people, land, water, and resources from the possible threats of a nickel mine has been a top priority.

On March 14, 2023, we launched our Water Over Nickel campaign to spread the word about prioritizing clean water

over nickel mining. Many Band members were excited about the billboards we have put up, and our yard signs are in high demand. We are also gaining many new allies from the surrounding communities, the state, and the nation.

Commissioner Applegate and I, along with our team, have been in constant talks with the Department of Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers, the United States Geological Survey, and the Department of Interior to make sure the government upholds its trust responsibility to protect our homelands. I have had meetings with the U.S. Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Interior, and the White House about this issue — and of course Members of Congress.

We have yet to see any science or data to show that nickel mining can be done safely. Yet the mining company continues to expand its exploration activities beyond its original plans and beyond the original area outlined in the application it submitted. Indian country has seen this before: A modest proposal that quickly swells in size and scope, leaving damage in its wake.

When Minnesotans hear that nickel mining is the solution to creating a clean and green economy, I encourage everyone to remain cautious and skeptical. Every day, we see new alternatives to support electric vehicles. Research has showed that Metal recycling could meet between 37% to 91% of the demand for these minerals. Other products like lithium are options, too.

Also, this is not just a Mille Lacs or Minnesota issue. The entire world is watching this project and international companies and organizations are involved with pushing it forward. So we have made sure that our strategy also includes educating the international community.

The Band was invited in September to talk about environmental justice at a Carbon Capture Conference in Iceland. The mining company was also there, and on the agenda. People from across the globe who knew about the Tamarack project did not know that we existed or had concerns about this project. For some, that information was a game-changer. Later, people wanted to know how they could learn more, or even help.

In late November, I received a call from the former President of the National Congress of American Indians, who is a friend. She knew about our Water Over Nickel campaign. She called to ask if I could help represent NCAI at a meeting of the United Nations: It was the U.N.'s 2023 Climate Change Conference in Dubai.

NCAI sponsored the trip, so I agreed to attend. I joined over 300 Indigenous delegates from around the world for what was called the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change.

Under the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are stakeholders with international rights. The purpose of this forum was to make sure Indigenous rights are not side-lined during climate change negotiations. I made sure to share our concerns about protecting our water.

There were other Indigenous women leaders from the Pacific Islands who talked about how oceans are rising, and if this world continues as it is, their communities will no longer exist.

Here at home, our Band is also looking at our future existence through the lens of enrollment. Right now, we have just under 5,000 enrolled Mille Lacs Band citizens. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe has been talking about blood quantum requirements. There will be a referendum vote at some point in the future when you will be asked to decide whether you want to change enrollment criteria.

I think every Band member who is a grandparent has at least one grandchild who cannot get enrolled with the Mille Lacs Band, due to blood quantum requirements.



Kelly Applegate, Commissioner of Natural Resources. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is standing firm on their commitment to protect the resources of the land and will not risk the planet over profits or exchange water over nickel. File photo.

In 2014, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe had a blood quantum study done that predicted what would happen to each Band's population if no changes were made to the current blood quantum rules.

That study predicted that our Mille Lacs Band enrollment would continue to climb until the year 2038 — another 14 years from now — but would begin to sharply decline after that. Eventually, we could lose 60% of our members, but other Bands were predicted to lose 90% of their membership and one day might not exist.

At one of the many community meetings I held on this topic, a Band member asked about updating that study from 2014. That was a great idea, so we are re-doing that blood quantum study, just for our Band.

As of today, more than 500 Band members have completed a survey. Miigwech to each of you. If you have not filled out your survey yet, you have until midnight tomorrow night to finish it. When the study is done, a final report will be sent to every household later this year.

I asked Wilder about how Band members seem to be answering one particular question on the survey, so far. There is a question on the survey that asks Mille Lacs Band members if you believe that we should be required to follow whatever enrollment criteria that the majority of Minnesota Chippewa Tribe members vote on or whether you Band believe that we, as Mille Lacs Band members, are the only people who should get to decide enrollment criteria for Mille Lacs.

So far, I have been informed that 80% of our Band members have said they do not want the entire MCT membership to make those decisions for us. Most of you believe that we are the only people who should make enrollment decisions for our Band. I will be sharing that information with the Tribal Executive Committee.

In Community Development, we were without a commissioner for a very long time, because the people I nominated for that position were not ratified by this current Band Assembly. Miigwech to the staff for doing the best they could. If you

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noticed over the past few years, it seems like things really slowed down in housing.

At long last, the Band Assembly finally confirmed my most recent nominee for Commissioner of Community Development (CMD). I am happy to say that Band member Rick Pardun was ratified as the new Commissioner a few weeks ago, and was sworn in yesterday. He has begun digging in to making our Housing program better and stronger.

Congratulations Commissioner Pardun. Miigwech to the Band Assembly, and especially to Representative Davis, for his support in this search and getting a good candidate through the process! Commissioner Pardun, you have your work cut out for you and we look forward to your leadership!

I just held a Cabinet meeting in December that focused on housing. I want to say this. We must overhaul our policies and get our people into homes that they can own.

First, our loan program has not kept pace with inflation. People cannot find decent homes in the price range of our loan amounts. This program is not being used like it could be. We have to increase the maximum loan amount that a person can borrow.

Second, as a government, we need to get out of the business of processing loans and shift that over to financial professionals. We are one of the only tribes in the country that own our own bank and a holding company, but we have employees in CMD who are responsible for mortgage loans.

Think about that. Why should our government be trying to operate like a bank — when we actually own a bank that can do this? A change like this could speed up the process.

Third, CMD currently manages 513 rental units. This is an impossible number to keep up with for our small staff. A few years ago, I directed CMD to create a rent-to-own policy so that more Band members could own their homes, and government can get out of the business of being landlords.

The idea was that the Band member's rental payment would go toward the purchase price of the home. That proposal was not acted on by the Housing Board at that time. Commissioner Pardun, this is the directive I have for you. People who have a stake in their homes take care of their homes. Work with the Housing Board to get that policy passed.

Commissioner Pardun has also talked to me about his idea for home ownership that is a bit like Habitat for Humanity. Band members would be required to help with some of the work on the houses they want to live in. I fully support this idea and look forward to seeing it happen.

In 2019, we filed a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and distributors. Solicitor General Caleb Dogeagle has been working on this case. There have been some settlements, which will bring us much-needed funds for housing, treatment, and prevention programs. We expect additional settlements in the future.

Commissioner Anderson, I direct you to work closely with Commissioner Pardun to make sure that people who are leaving treatment have a safe place to stay that supports their wellness in a timely manner.

Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures had a good year under Commissioner Joe Nayquonabe's leadership. The business incubator project continued. Forty-two Band members who want to own their own businesses have now graduated from the Enterprise Academy.

The Corporate Commission is currently building Sugar Maple Crossing, which will create 40 workforce housing units in Hinckley. In the Urban Area, the Ventura Project in South Minneapolis is finally underway.

This project was stalled due to talks with the City of Minneapolis. Commissioner Nayquonabe and his team are work-



File photo of the late Art Gahbow who served the Band as Tribal Chair and Chief Executive for 19 years. From 1972 to 1991, he was the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

ing hard with the City to make sure we adhere to all of their regulations. The Ventura Project will provide housing to urban members, and a new home for our Urban office and programs.

Despite the economy, our casinos continue to do well. And most exciting for many Band members is that we are expanding the Band's business and economic capacity by constructing a seed-to-sale cannabis facility. This decision to get into the cannabis industry was not made lightly, but it is what the majority of Band members who spoke up said they wanted.

A leader's job is to listen to the people. I have always said that Band members know best how to solve our problems. It is my hope that this new industry is all that we have been promised it will be.

When we make decisions of this magnitude that will impact our future, we must also be guided by the wisdom of those who came before us, relying on the teachings they passed down. It is important to respect their strength, dedication, and foresight.

It will soon be time for our future leaders to step forward. One of my duties is to make sure that I pass along some of the things I've learned to the next generation. But first, I need to share some of the foresight and vision of those who came before me as Chief Executive — the people I learned from.

I first met Chief Executive Arthur Gahbow in an official capacity after he hired me as his Commissioner of Administration in 1989. Chief Executive Gahbow was a trail-blazer. He was a man of great vision. His vision included securing our 1837 hunting, fishing and gathering rights.

He began this work 20 years before our Supreme Court victory. In 1979, Chief Gahbow convinced the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe to establish a hunting and fishing code that was tailor-made for the Mille Lacs Band. Art also understood the power of knowledge. He directed the publishing of our Band history. This history was very important during our lawsuit to reclaim our treaty rights.

He worked hard to convince the Wisconsin Bands to recognize our rights. He also pushed the state of Wisconsin to

acknowledge our rights.

He stood firm in the face of resistance, and he never ran away from adversity. In fact, his dedication was so strong that he would seek out trouble — good trouble — which led him to be arrested for spearing fish, out of season. This was his strategy. He wanted to create a case to litigate the Band's treaty rights. And the State of Minnesota's Commissioner of Natural Resources knew it.

Minnesota Commissioner Joe Alexander did not want to litigate our treaty rights case, likely because he knew we would probably win. So State Commissioner Alexander dropped the charges against Art. But the thing is, the State DNR still had possession of the fish that Art had speared.

The way Don Wedll tells the story is that one day Art got a package in the mail. Art opened the box and inside of it was the same fish that Art speared. It had been to a taxidermist, was mounted on a wall plaque, and the spear was still in the fish.

Nobody thought this was funnier than Art. Especially since this trophy fish was not even a walleye — it was just a sucker! Other Band members were also cited for fishing violations. These acts of defiance were a step toward justice, a cornerstone in our struggle to protect what was and is rightfully ours.

Finally, in August of 1990, Chief Executive Gahbow's dream took a big step forward: Our case against the state of Minnesota for interfering with our 1837 Treaty Rights was filed in Federal Court. This was a historic moment, a result of 30 years of struggle, advocacy, and unshakeable determination.

Art also had a vision of hope and opportunity for Band members: a vision born from a life of poverty on our Reservation. He understood that our collective circumstances as a tribe were no fault of our own, but were engineered by 150 years of policies designed to keep us weak.

He envisioned our Band growing into a thriving Indian nation where the flame of opportunity would burn bright, casting its warm light on the hopes and dreams of every Band member.

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In a tribe with over 80% unemployment, Art dreamed of a future where prosperity was not a privilege, but a promise to everyone who was willing to work for it. He believed that the key to unlocking economic growth and hope for our Band was our tribal sovereignty. And Art was right. Casino gaming became a reality on our Reservation because we exercised our sovereignty.

Chief Executive Gahbow was also one of the 10 founders of the Tribal Self-Governance project in the United States. Art served the Band as Tribal Chair and Chief Executive for 19 years.

Chief Executive Marge Anderson was the first woman to become Chief Executive in 1991. She led the economic expansion of our Reservation during those first years of Indian gaming. She oversaw the transformation of our Reservation from being a collection of broken-down shacks to a community with modern schools, ceremonial buildings, good homes, and roads.

I also served as Chief Executive Anderson's Commissioner of Administration. With our new gaming revenue, she gave her commissioners the opportunities to be creative, and if our ideas aligned with her values, she supported them.

I will never forget the day that Ben and Elfreda Sam told me about an upsetting thing that happened to them. They were travelling, and one of them needed urgent medical help, so they stopped at a clinic south of us in Mille Lacs County. When they got to the clinic, one of the staff said to them, "Don't you have your own clinic where you can go to?"

That's when we decided that we needed to create a program where all Band members would have health insurance so they could go wherever they wanted and get the medical treatment they needed and deserved. We created Circle of Health. And our Ne-la-Shing Clinic was one of the first brand-new tribal health facilities in the United States built with gaming revenue.

Most important, Chief Executive Anderson led us to our 1837 Treaty Rights victory in the U.S. Supreme Court. Marge served as Chief Executive for a total of 13 years.

There are no perfect leaders — we are only human. But



The late Marge Anderson was the first woman to become Chief Executive for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in 1991. Chief Executive Anderson led the Band to the 1837 Treaty Rights victory in the U.S. Supreme Court. Marge served as Chief Executive for a total of 13 years.

there are perfect lessons to be learned if we pay attention to our history. Many of you know a bit about this next story because I speak about it often. But it is the foundation of who we are as the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band.

This story has everything to do with our current battles today, and it has great power because it's a true story. So to our future leaders: Please listen carefully one more time, and carry this story with you.

In 1855, our ancestors signed a Treaty with the United States. It created the Mille Lacs Reservation. At the same time, Leech Lake and other smaller reservations were also created.

In 1862, the Dakota War took place. There were several Ojibwe Bands from the North who wanted to join the Dakota and fight the United States. The Mille Lacs chiefs refused to join the war and instead sent warning to Fort Ripley, and tried to protect the fort and settlements.

In 1863, after the Dakota War, the United States wanted to remove several tribes that it made Treaties with in 1855, in order to appease the white settlers. However, there were two articles in the Treaty of 1863 that seemed to contradict each other. Article 1 seemed to say that Mille Lacs and other Bands had to give up their homelands to the United States.

But Article 12 said something different. Because of the Mille Lacs Band's good behavior during the Dakota War, Article 12 said we would never have to move, unless we caused harm to the settlers. Tribal Leaders from Mille Lacs met with President Abraham Lincoln. He told them that our people could stay on our Reservation for 100 years or 1,000 years.

Despite these promises, squatters and others who wanted our valuable pine timber tried to take our Reservation away from us. For 20 years, Band leaders like Shaboshkung and Mozomany fought to preserve the Reservation for Band members. But Federal officials wanted to send our kids to boarding schools and divide up our lands. The pressure to move all the Ojibwe to White Earth was intense.

In 1886, the U.S. sent a commission to negotiate one last time with the Ojibwe of Minnesota. They wanted us to give up our reservations and take allotments at White Earth. Our ancestors refused.

Shaboshkung said to the Commissioners that he would "rather that his bones bleach out on the shores of Mille Lacs Lake than move." He reminded the officials about the 1863 Treaty and President Lincoln's promise of their right to stay on our Reservation.

The commissioners reported back to Congress that Mille Lacs and Fond du Lac would not accept removal to White Earth. Congress responded by passing the Nelson Act, which authorized more negotiation with the Ojibwe to give up our reservations and take allotments. The Nelson Act Commission came to Mille Lacs to negotiate.

Our ancestors told the Commission that they would stay, and take allotments at Mille Lacs. They understood that the allotments would allow them to stay on the Reservation forever if they wanted. So the Nelson Act Commission promised that the Band could receive allotments at Mille Lacs.

However, before the allotments were made, squatters again swarmed the Reservation and claimed nearly all the Reservation lands for themselves. Band members' homes were burned and they were forced from their lands, sometimes at gunpoint.

But our ancestors fought to stay, even when the Federal Government withheld their annuity payments unless they went to White Earth. Eventually, a few allotments were granted on this Reservation. Band members and the Federal government

also bought back some land when they could. But most of our land was taken by force. We went from about 61,000 acres down to a few acres.

Our leaders would spend the next 135 years gradually buying back a small part of our lost land, which we are still doing today.

Fast forward to the year 2002. Some Mille Lacs County officials never got over our treaty rights victory in 1999. In 2002, Mille Lacs County sued us to disestablish our Reservation. I was the Chief Executive. This case was thrown out of court by the Judge, because there was no proof that the existence of the Reservation had ever harmed anyone.

Fast forward to 2010, when President Obama signed the Tribal Law and Order Act into law. TLOA, as it is called, made it possible for some of the worst crimes committed on a Reservation to be prosecuted by the United States. If a person was found guilty, they could be sent to federal prison instead of county jail.

So we made the decision to apply for Tribal Law and Order Act status, to give the Federal government criminal jurisdiction on our Reservation, because it might make people think twice before committing terrible crimes.

But the process slowed down after Mille Lacs County objected to our application. The County board told the federal government that there was no Reservation in their county.

In hindsight, the County probably should have kept still. Because of the County's objections, the U.S. Department of Justice had no choice but to ask the Interior Department: Does the Mille Lacs Reservation exist?

So Interior had no choice but to answer the question, which involved intensive research about the County's claim.

After almost two years of waiting, Interior finally issued a 37-page opinion explaining how and why the Mille Lacs Reservation never went away and continues to exist. With that opinion in writing, the U.S. Department of Justice accepted our application and we gained TLOA status.

At that point, the County board could have decided to work with us. But it did not. Instead, it kept fighting and used the only leverage it had over us: our cooperative law enforcement agreement.

In 2016, without warning, the Mille Lacs County Board voted to revoke our law enforcement agreement. Most of us remember that dark period. Mille Lacs County tried to strip our police officers of their state licenses, and threatened our officers with arrest if they did their job, even on our trust lands.

The County issued a threat. They said they would only renew our law enforcement agreement on the condition that we agreed to act as if our Reservation boundary no longer existed. Never — not in a million years — would we ever agree to that.

In March 2022, federal Judge Susan Nelson affirmed that our Reservation did, indeed, exist. Later, she ruled that we had law enforcement jurisdiction over the whole Reservation. We won.

The County spent over \$10 million on this case paying eleven outside attorneys, some with fancy offices at the top of the IDS building. And just so you know, the Band has spent far less on this case, and we keep winning. And now the County is spending even more money appealing this case.

The United States, the State of Minnesota and the Native American Rights Fund — which is representing the National Congress of American Indians, Leech Lake, Bois Forte, and Grand Portage — have all filed legal briefs siding with the Band. Mille Lacs County stands alone.

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As the leader of a government, I know if we were spending \$10 million or more on something, our Band members would want something to show for it.

To our non-Native friends and neighbors, I would like you to think about this: Have your lives changed since we won our case in 2022? Has the Band taxed you or zoned your property, or forced you into our Band court system?

No. I know we haven't because we don't want to, and we can't. Mille Lacs County officials have nothing to show for spending all this money, except that all of our property taxes in this county keep going up. The Band is the biggest taxpayer in the county, so Band members are paying for both sides of this case. And we will keep doing this as long as we must, because these are our homelands and we are not going anywhere. We will always be Non-Removable!

There was another major victory this year for Band members, which is related to this story. Back in September of 2018, right after Mille Lacs County agreed to renew its law enforcement agreement with the Band, I met with our government affairs team. I told them that our Band members cannot keep living under the threat that Mille Lacs County could cancel our law enforcement agreement again someday.

I was confident that we would win our lawsuit, but I was also confident that whenever the legal battle was over, the County would try to punish us again. Only a change in State law would ensure that this can never happen again.

I am happy to report that we made history this year, when a new law was passed that finally removes the requirement that tribes have an agreement with a county in order to enforce state law against non-Indians within a reservation.

Never again will Mille Lacs County or any county be able to hold the safety of our people hostage. That period is over forever! This new law recognizes our sovereignty and affirms our right to keep our people safe and increases safety and security for everyone who lives in Mille Lacs County.

Miigwech to the State Legislature, Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan, the Prairie Island Indian Community, the White Earth Nation, and other tribes who helped this effort, and Miigwech to our tribal police officers and government affairs team.

Also, Miigwech to our friends at U.S. Attorney Andy Luger's office. Under the Tribal Law and Order Act, our Tribal Police Department officers are also cross-deputized by the United States. Our Solicitor General is a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney.

Today, for the first time, I am so proud to introduce the newest full-time Assistant U.S. Attorney — our own Mille Lacs Band member, Syngen Kanassatega! Syngen, we will miss you in our office, but all of Indian country will benefit from your new appointment.

Syngen is here with his new supervisor, U.S. Attorney Andy Luger. Can the two of you please stand to be recognized?

Band members, we won our lawsuit and we achieved this new law because of the work and commitment from so many people. So many of you attended meetings and protests, wrote letters, attended rallies, and tried to keep drugs off our Reservation during that dark period.

Everything that happened also took thousands of hours of meetings and work for me, our staff, and our attorneys — too many trips to Washington D.C. and St. Paul for me to count.

Chief Executive Gahbow and Chief Executive Anderson had their legal cases to see through. This case was my duty to see through. And Band members, we did it! Together!

It has now been 24 years since you first elected me to serve as your Chief Executive. That is as long as some of you have



Syngen Kanassatega.

been alive. With your support, I have now accomplished what I set out to do as Chief Executive.

It has been an amazing journey, and as I said earlier, I have learned a few things along the way. Every leader carries a torch that will eventually be passed. I want to take this time to share some of the lessons that I learned.

First, I did not just wake up one day and decide that I wanted to be the Chief. And neither did Chief Executive Gahbow or Chief Executive Anderson. Because you do not choose leadership. Leadership chooses you. I have a story about that.

When I worked for Chief Executive Gahbow, every time we went to Washington D.C. and were visiting our senators, he had a tradition of stopping by the U.S. Senate cafeteria to have a bowl of bean soup. There is a senate resolution that mandates that bean soup be served every day.

During one of our trips to D.C., over a bowl of his favorite bean soup, Art began talking about his role as the Chief Executive. He talked about his vision for the Band, what we had achieved so far, and what he hoped we would achieve in the future.

He told me that the two great fights that he started were coming. One was for our 1837 treaty rights, and one was the battle for the very existence of our Reservation. Then he told me that he had decided not to run for another term as Chief Executive, and that someone else would need to see that vision through to the end.

Art talked about the job of a tribal leader, and how it takes total commitment, time away from family, tough decisions, and years off of a person's life. He said he thought that I could do the job, and asked me to run for Chief Executive. Although I was flattered and honored, I did not know if I was ready.

Sadly, Art passed away before his term was over, which was a devastating loss to our community. Another elected official needed to fill the role of Chief until a special election could be held. Secretary-Treasurer Marge Anderson was that person. She served the Band with courage and strength for that next decade. She was the right person for that moment in our history.

My time as Chief Executive began in the year 2000, but it was not a choice that I made. The only reason I ran for office is because a group of Elders asked me to. Ben Sam invited me to his home. He and several Elders had been talking and they wanted me to step forward. They asked me to. As my Elders, they were my leaders. And once again, you do not choose leadership. Leadership chooses you.

Twenty years later, it has been quite a journey. Together, we

have achieved astounding things that would have seemed impossible back in the 1980s, like something out of a fantasy movie.

I have been so proud of our work together — from the time I became Commissioner of Administration and worked for Chief Executives Gahbow and Anderson, to the past two decades of serving as your Chief Executive. I want to acknowledge that progress so our next leaders know what is possible to achieve as an Indian Nation.

In the 1980s, the Band was the poorest of the poor. We were not connected politically, we had no business economy, and the State of Minnesota was not our friend. The Governors, the U.S. Senators, and other politicians barely knew who we were. The State did not recognize our sovereignty or our rights.

Every day was spent fighting against injustice, and fighting for survival. Compared to our budget today, back then, we were operating on pennies. What we have done over 35 years is astonishing. So many times, we were the "first" tribe in the nation to do something bold and successful.

We were the first tribe in the United States to negotiate a Self-Governance compact.

We opened two highly successful casinos.

We were one of the first tribes to heavily invest in building hundreds of homes with gaming revenue [as well as building] schools and community buildings.

We bought a bank!

And we won a U.S. Supreme Court Case!

After I became Chief Executive in 2000, the first thing I did was to hire all Band member commissioners for the open positions. I only nominated people from other communities when I was unable to get Band members through the Band Assembly process. And our success continued.

In 2000, our Circle of Health program took off — we were the first tribal health insurance program in the country to pay Band members' co-pays and deductibles.

We began the Minor Trust Fund, which today ensures that our youth have resources to secure their future, if they spend wisely.

After pushing hard for a tribal pension plan, so that our Elders could retire with security, we created the monthly Elder supplement.

We opened a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant, and we overcame a racist campaign to stop us from operating it.

For the first time in Band history, we were finally successful in diversifying our economy beyond Indian gaming.

We were the first tribe in the nation to focus on the non-gaming hotel industry, purchasing five hotels, a resort, and many small businesses

We created Makwa Global, and were one of the first tribes in the nation to receive 8A certification from the Small Business Administration.

We are now in the international cyber-security business and the U.S. Defense Department is a client.

We won a very long battle to stop gaming expansion in Minnesota to non-tribal businesses, preserving our economic security.

We expanded private education opportunities to Districts II and III by sponsoring the first tribal charter schools in Minnesota and we have kept Minisinaakwang going in recent years through donations from the Band Foundation.

We achieved federal legislation that allowed Pine Grove to become a satellite school of Nay Ah Shing, and were the first-ever satellite school in the BIA system.

We completely reformed our tribal police department in

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2013, and we hired the first Band member Chief of Police.

We were one of the first tribes to create a Grants Department, which immediately began bringing in millions of dollars of additional funding for our programs, and we are still one of the few tribes that have a Grants Department.

We were the first tribe in Minnesota to create a place of shelter that Band members could use in times of crisis.

We purchased the state's Four Winds Treatment Center in Brainerd and became the first tribe in Minnesota to own a tribal treatment facility.

We were the first tribe to create a Department of Athletic Regulation, and with hard work from Representative Davis, we were the first tribe to bring professional boxing to the Reservation.

We could not stop the Line 3 pipeline from being built, but with a huge amount of work, we won the battle to get the pipeline re-routed further away from the Reservation.

We got through a global pandemic and made a very swift recovery.

And according to a national contractor who is familiar with hundreds of tribes, Mille Lacs Band members receive more programs and services than any other tribe in the United States that they have ever worked with. And our Band members share in the revenue, thanks to our Net Revenue Allocation Plan.

This is very different from how most tribes operate. Some tribes provide many different services, but do not share the revenue the way we do. Other tribes share revenue with tribal members but they hardly provide any government services. We are one of the only tribes to do both. Band members, we are some of the most fortunate people in all of Indian Country!

Looking back, over the past 52 years, we have only had three Chief Executives. Stable leadership is one reason behind our success, but there always comes a time when the next generation is ready to carry the torch.

In years past, I have talked a lot about growing our own leaders. I've called for new warriors to come forward, for Band members to take advantage of free education opportunities and training programs, and to get involved in our communities. And many of you have done that.

Some of you here today may not have chosen leadership, but leadership has chosen you! You have not stepped forward yet, but you know who you are and you are ready.

In a world often dominated by the loudest voices and the boldest claims, strong leadership is not about how loud someone is, or how often they post on social media. It is about the quiet strength that comes from a deep understanding of the issues at hand, and a genuine commitment to serving the people. Those who are humble can be overshadowed by those with flashy personalities, but humility is a cornerstone of effective leadership.

A great leader is one who listens before speaking, who values the input of others, and who is brave enough to admit they are wrong and change their mind. Strong leaders do not use their power to publicly criticize or cut down hard-working employees in front of an audience — employees who have devoted their lives to our Band.

Leadership is not about the volume of speech or having the most to say. It is about the quality of the message and the sincerity behind it. And Band members, it is so important that our next leader be dedicated to external relations and remain heavily involved with federal and state government processes, just as I have done and which Marge and Art did before me.

The decisions made at these levels directly impact our well-being. We have opportunities today that other tribes do not, but that could change. Our voices must continue to be



"BAND MEMBERS, MIIGWECH FOR THE TRUST YOU PLACED IN ME, FOR THE BATTLES WE FACED TOGETHER, AND FOR THE VICTORIES WE CAN CELEBRATE TODAY AS A STRONG, PROUD INDIAN NATION."

– CHIEF EXECUTIVE MELANIE BENJAMIN

heard in the halls of power or we risk being overlooked, which can stop our progress and block our ability to protect our rights.

Unfortunately, the influence that a tribal chair has developed does not automatically transfer to the next leader. It can be like starting from scratch, which is why it is so important that our next leader be credible, very smart, and taken seriously.

Our Chief Executive must have the diplomatic skills required to build external relationships and alliances, and they must be able to get through tension-filled meetings with other governments with a calm voice and a smile on their face. Leaders must carry themselves in a way that fosters respect.

Finally, our next leader cannot let up on all the work we have done to preserve our Ojibwe language and culture. It is okay to look at other ways, but the most important thing is to keep our ways because the Manidoog gave that to us.

Today I have a heart full of gratitude and a deep sense of accomplishment. Serving as your elected leader has been the greatest privilege and honor of my life. To the next generation: You are the architects of tomorrow. Your dreams, ideas, and unique perspectives are the building blocks of how our Band will continue to grow and thrive.

As you take hold of the torch, remember that it is not just a symbol; it is a call to action. Embrace the challenges that lie ahead, with courage and determination. For it is through adversity that character is forged.

In your hands, we place the power to innovate, to bridge divides, and to envision a future that transcends the limitations we face today. The torch you carry is not just for you; it is a shared flame that illuminates the path for all.

I am confident that the foundation we have laid together is strong and resilient. It is a foundation upon which a new generation of leaders can build, stepping forward with fresh ideas, renewed energy, and a commitment to the well-being of our Band.

Together, we have overcome challenges, championed causes,

and built a path toward a brighter future for our grandchildren.

We have worked non-stop to enhance the quality of life for every member of our Tribe, laying the groundwork for well-being and prosperity.

Our achievements are a testament to the wisdom and strength of those who came before us — of our refusal to never give up or give in — of our wise exercise of sovereignty — and the power of our culture and language.

I extend my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you who have been part of our shared success. Your dedication, hard work, and collective spirit have been the driving force behind our progress.

As we embark on our journey together as a Band into the years ahead, remember the wisdom of those who walked before you. Seek guidance from the lessons of history, and keep our culture close. Let the flame burn brightly in your hands, igniting devotion to our Band and compassion for our people.

As you take the reins, know that you carry the collective hopes and dreams of past generations, and future generations yet to come. Embrace the challenge, lead with integrity, and always remember that you have the power to make a difference.

Band members, Miigwech for the trust you placed in me, for the battles we faced together, and for the victories we can celebrate today as a strong, proud Indian nation.

It has been a wonderful journey, and as a Band member, I look forward to witnessing our continued prosperity and growth under our next leaders who follow.

May our future be even brighter, and may the bonds that unite us as the proud, the unbeatable and Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, remain unbreakable forever.

Miigwech!

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES WITH ANJIBIMAADIZING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CAMP GROWS INSPIRATION

By Maajiitaaziibiikwe, Mary Sam

For many kids, winter break can be boring and sometimes lonely. For 60 4th- through 12th-grade youth from across the Band, this was not the case. The Health and Human Services Substance Use Disorders (SUDS) Department, along with the Aanjibimaadizing Program in collaboration with District I Representative Wind's office, held the second annual Youth Empowerment Camp during the December school break. Kids attending were engaged, active, and energized over two days to be their best selves.

According to SUDS Program Director Chandell Boyd, the goal of the Youth Empowerment Camp is to provide a safe and healing environment where youth can learn and build confidence and connection with fellow community members. The camp provided opportunities for youth to learn new skills and gain tools to help them heal and be empowered.

"The skills the youth learned can be carried with them for the rest of their lives," Boyd said.

Over the two-day event, youth created, built structures, balanced on tight ropes, learned together, found their courage, danced, laughed often, and participated in many team-building activities, all of which were laced with cultural connections. Activities ranged from painting clan symbols, challenging team-building activities, communication and cultural teachings, learning about the jingle dress, and dancing, both western modern dance and side-stepping. Presenters included: Adrienne Benjamin, John Benjamin, Joseph Benjamin, Taliya Benjamin, Darcie Big Bear, Kim Big Bear, Amanda Nickaboine-Meyer, Mary Sam, Bobby Eagle, Virgil Wind, Darla Roache, Nick Cash, and Dr. Sulik.

The camp was not only inspirational for youth but for the adults who participated as well. Those helping with the event noted how awesome it was to see the big smiles of our youth, the kindness they showed one another as many took huge risks over the two days, and they had nearly a hundred percent en-

gagement of the youth in all activities. "The kids had so many questions and such good discussions," Bobby Eagle said. "I feel so proud."

There were a few youth who mentioned that initially they were not too eager to attend, but by the second day, they were telling staff they didn't want the day to end.

Darcie and Kim Big Bear led dance sessions. Both said they were inspired by the kids' excitement to participate. The youth demonstrated they were thriving in a good way. Our culture is strong and moving forward in a positive way.

The kids learned dance songs like Cupid Shuffle, Cha Cha Slide, etc., but they also included side-step and round dance songs. "The kids really lit up during the side-step and round dance songs," Darice said. "Even the kids who were the wall-flowers came out and danced with us with smiles on their faces. You could see how proud they are of their culture."

Representative Wind shared that this event was about the kids. "The camp was about really getting to know our kids; understanding their needs, fears, what holds them back, what makes them want to learn more, and providing real tools; whether those are lessons in bravery, courage, listening, or finding confidence. This is a small but important investment into our prevention efforts and maintaining healthy kids."

Camp ended with an evening dinner and dance party, which included disco lights, balloons, and rock-n-roll, and ended with a round dance.

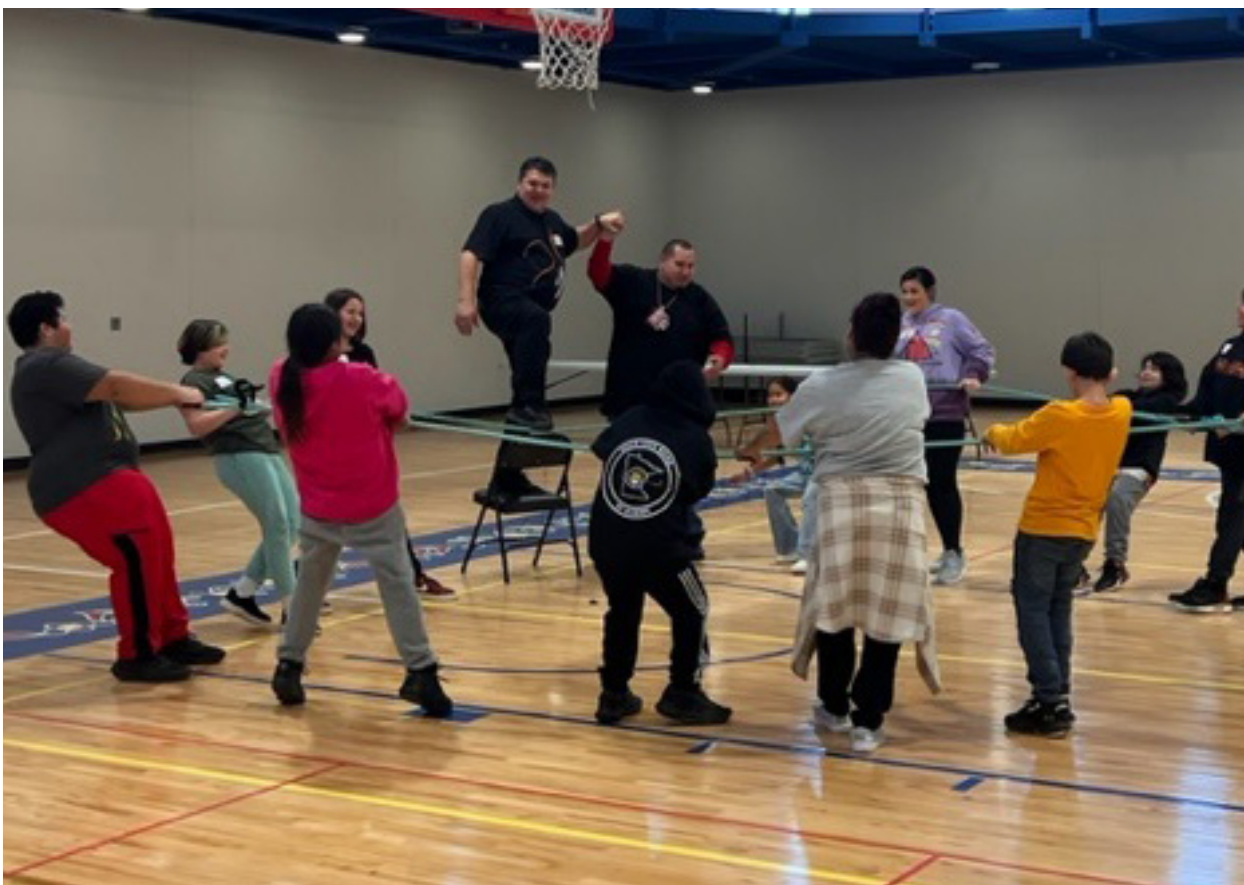
"I would like to thank the youth who attended, the SUDS team, DI Rep. team, Aanjibimaadizing Program staff, and all the presenters who helped make the Youth Empowerment Camp a success," said Boyd. At the request of youth, the SUDS Program will be adding a summer camp to expand on the great work that has started.



Participants painting clan symbols in a class taught by Amanda Nickaboine.



Bobby Eagle teaching



Participants in trust building activities led by District I Representative Virgil Wind and Nick Cash.



Participants learning dances taught by Darcie and Kim Big Bear.



By Maajiitaaziibiikwe, Mary Sam

From its conception in 2008, the goal of the New Year's Eve Sobriety Powwow is to offer a sober event for the community on a holiday that has traditionally been associated with alcohol and drugs, according to Commissioner of Health and Human Services Nicole Anderson, District I Representative Virgil Wind, and former District I Representative Sandra Blake. In its early years, the event was held at the Old District I Community Center, bringing together a sizable group. This year, at the New District I Aquatic and Fitness Center, attendance grew to well over 600 to welcome the new year clean and sober.

"To see how this event has grown is so heartwarming, and the energy there with community members and visitors was so positive," Sandy Blake said.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to former District I Representative Sandra Blake and many others who first brought this New Year's Eve Powwow to our community," District I Representative Wind said. "This event has grown and the movement to heal in our community is contagious, exciting, and so needed. This is one of my favorite events each year."

The celebration was co-hosted by Health and Human Services, Substance Use Division (SUDS), Halfway House Staff, and the District I Legislative Office. Additional dance specials were sponsored by District II Representative Wendy Merrill, District III Representative Harry Davis, Secretary Treasurer Sheldon Boyd, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, and Women's Auxiliary.

Health and Human Services and other volunteers staffed a space that provided a quiet and safe space for kids who needed a break. Countless others, including the District I Ge-Niigaanizijig Program, helped to ensure Elders were fed, and helped set up and clean up after the event.

Elder Joe Nayquonabe Sr. provided the invocation to start the event in a good way. "There was such good energy here. I remember spending times like this in unhealthy ways," Joe Sr. said. "This is a much better way to live."

Host Drums were Little Otter and Red Willow. Head dancers were Jada Karlstad and Max Blake Jr.

In addition to a delicious meal, dance specials, attendees celebrating being clean and sober were also recognized. Over 130 community members who were willing to be recognized



Joe Nayquonabe Sr. provided the invocation to start the event in a good way. Photo by BJ Roache.



publicly for living a life free from drugs and alcohol were recognized with a recovery coin designed by the District I Legislative Office.

"There was someone there celebrating his first day being clean to an Elder in recovery for 49 years," Wind said. "And another who shared she never used drugs or alcohol in all of her 63 years."

A circle was formed, and an honor song was given to those able to stand or dance.

"The room was electrifying — the joy, the respect, the love and gratitude that indicates that finally the clean and sober movement has taken hold in our community," said Chandell Boyd, SUDS Program Director. "It is now okay, cool, and the right thing to do for ourselves, our kids and the next generation to be clean and sober."

The District I Ge-Niigaanizijig Program has helped with this

event for a few years. This event provides another opportunity for youth to engage in service work which builds purpose, leadership, and spending time with positive people who are free from substance use and other unhealthy behaviors.

Program participant and leader Earl Monchamp said, "I do this because I care, it feels good to help and to see our community doing good things together."

Recovery doesn't happen in isolation. Recovery occurs and is sustained through community. "Making sure that everyone felt welcome in our really big circle helps everyone know that they all have a place as our community works to heal and recover. This is community at its finest, one day at a time, clean and sober," Commissioner Nicole Anderson said.

May 2024 be the year that brings your dreams, hopes, and recovery from anything that has caused you pain, to reality.



Over 130 community members who were willing to be recognized publicly for their sobriety received a recovery coin (shown above). Photo by BJ Roache.

Nandawaabandanan Ikidowinan Namebini-giizis 2024

K E E R O G W M A Z I N A A T E S I J I G A A N S
 G Q G R P F T V C X Y R B Z M X Z I C V I K V I M
 V I I A R C H E P E D U F H E T N W B H I I M K O
 W B K G O D O T A A G A N X Q V B L Y I F K L I O
 N L I I L D X Q H M Z P S R G Q W Y H L Z F J D Z
 P T N Q N M I Q P B D T A X H D N O E I W A C O H
 W Z O L T O W I I S I N I W I G A M I G L M A N I
 G G O V J N O I A W E N E N G T M W M A L R M N B
 I I A I F D U A R I O Z H I B I I I G A N A A K I
 K I M H T R G A M V Q Y S W H X N M R D Z K W M I
 I W A C Z U Z F H A A S O W N C Q H G C U I E C I
 N E A Z S L G G K R A A B S E A W Y P S N W K S G
 O W D J S U K R S J G G T J O C M B E H U O U M E
 O I I L F I A O N M X I E A C P K A J T J A T Q A
 A J I L U D N F A Z G B B W A E W J D T C R O U D
 M I W B M M S A L O A H M I I S V V K A Q K Z J O
 A G I L D I G N R U X E A T Z N O U R L B R X Z O
 A A G H F I T H I W C G D E R I I W Y Q V I G A P
 G N A G U N S Y D T Q A W T L S N N I X Q E N E O
 E D M C Z A G M L Q A M E R D T Z D I N F W Y L W
 W T I N Y W X M Z P E M S B V B P D O M E E D X I
 I U G G G A X P H Q O N I J P P K Y W O G N B R N
 K K N X F A W J U U U J N F D Y S X C R N A S G P
 W V M Z M E K R K S A W W X G Q Q A F S I V P L I
 E X F X U P H G P D L J K O R J H H P T O G J R L

Gikinoamaadii-wigamig

Gikinoamaagewinini

Ozhibiiigeadoopowin

Gikinoamaagewikwe

Mazinaatesijigaans Wiisiniwigamig

Ozhibiiiganaak

Ataasowinens

Gibizindoon

godotaagan

Giiwewijigan

Madwesin

Awenen

Namadabin

miinawaa

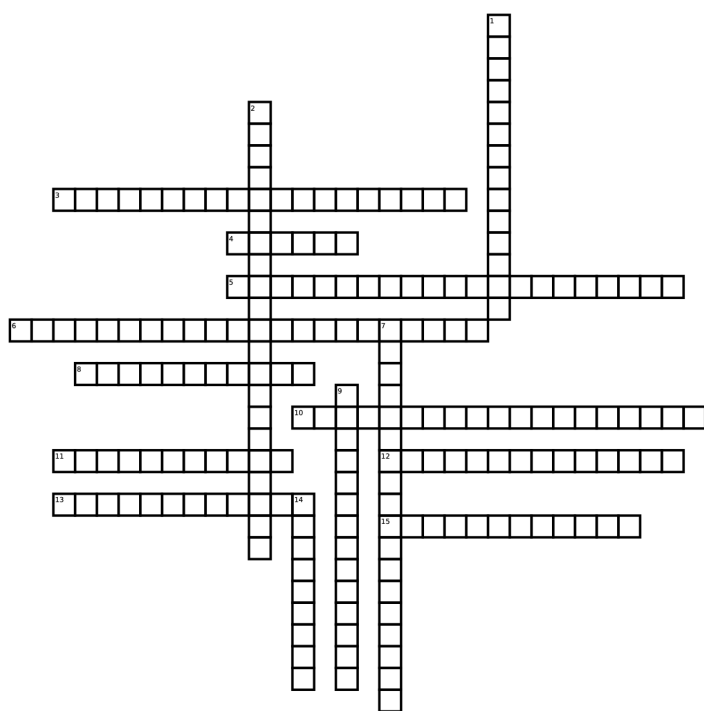
Bizaan

nitam

Ikidon

AAZHAWAAKWASING NAMEBINI-GIIZIS

By Nazhike Mille Lacs Band Member



Down:

1. A Cafeteria.
2. The bell is ringing.
7. Teacher (female)
9. Say again.
14. Sit down.

Across:

3. A desk.
4. Quiet!
5. a school.
6. An Ipad/Tablet.
8. I am listening to you.
10. Teacher (male)
11. Who's first/turn?
12. A pen/pencil.
13. Homework.
15. A locker.

THE BALANCE OF WHO WE ARE

By Nazhike Mille Lacs Band Member

As Anishinaabe, when we talk about what defines an Anishinaabe, we need to look at what the Manidoog intend. As laws are being implemented, services are going out, and Anishinaabe are returning to our way of life, we need to be able to understand. There are many stories of who we are today that have been based on the actions taken against us by colonization. Those who have faced removal, relocation, boarding schools, those who left searching for opportunity, and so on. There are many stories out there for the paths of the Anishinaabeg. The consistent turning point of those stories is the return to who we are. Perhaps the manidoog intended for us to have all of these experiences. What happens to one, happens to all of us. We are all connected, my relatives. The time has come to where our people are seeking who we are as a people while still dealing with the impacts of colonization. One thing we must not forget is that our individual stories are to contribute to our collective knowledge and experience as we return to our traditional way of life that defines us as Anishinaabe.

Today, the most common measurement of indigeneity is the blood. It is quantifiable and relies strictly on mathematics. Americans prefer quantifiable data and measurements so they won't have to rely on other variables. They imposed the measurement on Native Americans due to it being simple, measurable and, over time, the measurements will slowly move toward the number zero. We will breed ourselves out with the saturation of other peoples within our society. With the physical measurement, the Anishinaabe recognize that as an intergenerational sharing of connection to the spirits. If one of your parents are Anishinaabe, that means you have an Anishinaabe spirit to nourish, spiritually. For Anishinaabe, this is an important component but is part of a larger formula.

Another method of recognizing an Anishinaabe is through language. Similar to how we recognize those who are French, Spanish, and so on. We recognize them through the language and/or the accent they have on speaking the local language. The



Anishinaabe language is a gift to the Anishinaabe specifically to assist with and enhance life. It is a language that can be heard in this world and the spirit world. The Manidoog can hear and completely understand us as well as take on gratitude that we are using the gift that they provided for us.

A very important part of the Anishinaabe that contributes to the recognition as being Anishinaabe is the belief system. We have beliefs and customs that contribute to a larger life system that not only spans the current generation, but connects the time of the spirits to the present and the future. The spiritual belief system assists us with knowing who we are today, finding our purpose in life and binds us together in a way that is immeasurable.

With these three components, we can revitalize the Anishinaabe people. Having two of the components will drive the individual to seek the third. Balance will be sought. If we find our balance as individuals we will balance ourselves out collectively. Miigwech

GIDINWEWINAAN — OUR WAY OF SOUND

By Nazhike Mille Lacs Band Member

Gidinwewininaan — Our way of Sound

Ojibwe Language use needs to increase soon. A good way to use our language is at school. Schools have very similar language and objects to relate to in the language. Start using these words and day by day your language will grow. Give it a try!

Gikinoo'amaadii-wigamig = A school.
(gih kin new' uh mah dih wig gum mig)

Gikinoo'amaagewikwe = Teacher (female).
(gih kin new' uh mah gay wik kway)

Gikinoo'amaagewinini = Teacher (male).
(gih kin new' uh mah gay win nih nih)

Ikidon miinawaa = Say again.
(ik kid dohn mee nuh wah)

Awenen nitam = Who's first/turn?
(uh way nayn nit tum)

Madwesin i'iw godotaagan = The bell is ringing.
(mud way sin ih ew go doe tah gun)

Gibizindoon = I am listening to you.
(gih biz zin doon)

Giiwewijigan = Homework.
(Gee way wij jih gun)

Ozhibii'iganaak = A pen/pencil.
(oh zhib bee' ih gunnock)

Mazinaabikiwebinigaans = An iPad/tablet.
(muh zin nah bik kih way bin nih gahns)

Wiisini-wigamig = Cafeteria.
(wee sin nee wig gum mig)

Ataasowinens = A locker.
(uh tah sew win nayns)

Ozhibii'ige-adoopowin = A desk.
(oh zhib bee' ih gay uh dew poh win)

Namadabin = Sit down.
(nuh muh duh bin)

Bizaan = Quiet!
(biz zahn)

You can hear many words and sentences pronounced by native speakers at ojibwe.lib.umn.edu.



WAABISHKIBINES ENENDAANG — JOE'S THOUGHTS NIMIKWENIMAA NISHIMEBAN

GAA-TIBAAJIMOD (told by) JOE NAYQUONABE SR.,
WAABISHKIBINES
GAA-TIBAAJIMOTAWAAJIN (transcribed by)
JAMES CLARK, OZAAWAANAKWAD

This month, I would like to remember my brother who passed away last month. Brother, on your obit they had you under 70 but they also say you were born in 1946. Who would've ever thought you and I would've seen 77 years together? You remember that time that Elmer chased us around with that snake when we were about 6 or 7? And where I grabbed him and told him, "If you ever do that again, I'll beat the crap outta you"? I remember there was even a normal powwow where we didn't have any regalia but we still went out and danced the whole powwow. I think we were about 16 or 17 and somehow you and I decided that we should just get out there and dance. After it was over, we both talked about if people were worried that we weren't in regalia. Back in the days when we could just get into the arena and dance.

After that powwow, I remember the concerned look on your face when I told you that I was going to Vietnam, and it took me about 20 minutes to a half hour to convince you that I was gonna be okay. After coming home from the Army, when you picked me up at the Minneapolis airport, I remember the look of happiness and joy when you saw me get off the airplane. It has meant so much to me that you worried and cared about the dangers and worries of what I was gonna face overseas.

I know that most people probably didn't know who you were since you lived most of your life in Fergus Falls working for Coca-Cola. Then moving to the Mora area where then your health declined. I am proud of you that you always held your own, through working all of your life. I remember when my oldest was born, I came up to Mille Lacs with some of the people

who I worked with from the VA to ice fish at the marina. We had good luck getting walleyes that day. You were spending time with Rita helping with everything before taking the bus to Fergus Falls the next day. I came back from Mille Lacs late, and when I walked in the door and Rita said to me, "I think I need to go to the hospital!" Then you looked at me and said, "I think she needs to go, too," with a look of worry on your face. Sure enough, not long after we got to the hospital, then the baby was born.

And even when you came to our family dinners and gatherings with the fun we'd have as a family. Creating laughs, memories that I think of all the time. But I still can't believe how long you and I were here together. I don't know how many siblings can relate to that.

I am not sure how long I'll be around here yet, but when I leave here, if you and Elmer are planning on a snake homecoming, I'll beat you both up, so think about that (haha).

I am sure that you're happy with our relatives over there. I often think about those who aren't here anymore. Don't worry though, because I am still surrounded by people that I love and enjoy, and I want to thank you for showing me how to be a brother.

Weweni Nishiime.



NOTES FROM JOE:

Aaniin Anishinaabedog! Waabishkibines omaa. (Hello fellow Anishinaabe!) Joe Sr. here. With the times we live in, I must tell you about the article I have submitted. This article is full of my words, observations, and experiences that I have encountered throughout my life, and it is time to have these subjects written down. Understand not everything needs to be written, but various teachings cannot be lost.

That being said, as Anishinaabe, we all experience life differently. This disclaimer is needed for all intents and purposes as the goal of this article is: to better equip our people who'd like to learn, and for topics people may not have the ability to ask an Elder about. If these teachings are not as you learned them, that is okay. It is not our way to blame and criticize but to teach and show compassion.

Any comments, questions, or further discussion, please feel free to reach out to me and I'd be happy to have a conversation. Miigwech.

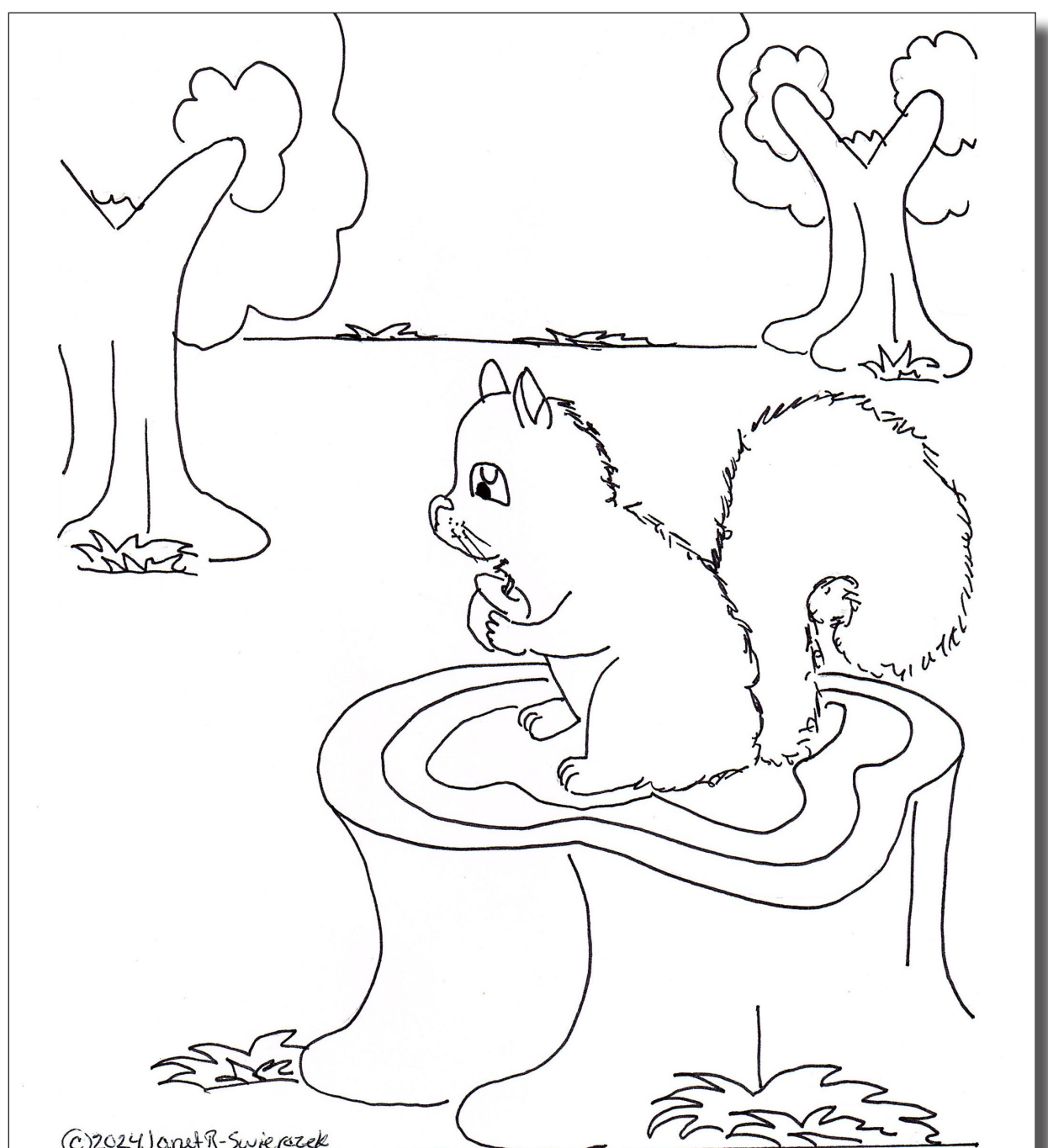


KIDS COLORING CORNER MISAJIDAMOO = GRAY SQUIRREL

Artwork by Janet Swierczek, Mille Lacs Band Member

Janet Swierczek is an artist and Mille Lacs Band member Elder who lives in Minneapolis. She has developed over 50 coloring books. Find out more about her work by checking out the archives of the Inaajimowin at <https://www.inaajimowin.com/news-blog/meet-the-artist-behind-the-kids-coloring-corner>. You can also check out her website at www.janetscoloring-books.com and follow her on Instagram at @coloringbookgirl-janet and Twitter at @Booksbyjanet.

"I'm always open for more requests," Janet said. "So feel free to email me at janetswierczek06@gmail.com."



AROUND THE RESERVATION

Keepin' it Real All-Recovery Meeting

All Recovery Meetings are based on the idea that there are great benefits to bringing people together from multiple recovery pathways.

Every Sunday at 6:00pm

**Red Brick Building,
42293 Twilight Rd, Onamia, MN**

**We honor all pathways to recovery –
harm reduction, medication assisted recovery, 12-steps –
any pathway that helps someone find and sustain recovery,
no matter what recovery looks like to them.**

**Recovery allies, family members and
concerned others are welcome to participate**



GRA UPDATE

HOW TO ASK FOR REVIEW OF LICENSURE

One of the principle reasons that the tribe operates its gaming enterprises is to enhance economic development and increase Band member employment. If you have doubts about applying for casino positions due to past criminal history, the Gaming Regulatory Authority (GRA) can help.

GRA licensing employees are always happy to assist Band members with questions regarding their background. In some cases, you may be able to meet with the GRA Board and get a waiver if you do not otherwise meet eligibility requirements. Band members who have faced licensing issues in the past are encouraged to contact our staff about eligibility and options. Don't hesitate to reach out for confidential assistance:

- **Mille Lacs:**
Sally at 320-532-8253 or
Krista at 320-532-8135
- **Hinckley:**
Lori at 320-384-4742 or
Joleen at 320-384-4774

You can find Employee Gaming License Background regulations on the GRA page of the Mille Lacs Band website. See "Gaming Regulations and Resolutions" for Detailed Gaming Regulations 7, 7a, and 7b. If you would like to have the Board look at a previous licensing action, please use the "Request for GRA Board Review" from the GRA page.

GAMING REGULATORY AUTHORITY



*Dedicated to
providing protection,
value, and regulatory
excellence in gaming
for the Mille Lacs
Band of Ojibwe.*

The Mille Lacs Band Gaming Regulatory Authority (GRA) is an independent regulatory agency of tribal government established to separate the government's regulatory function from the management function of the Gaming Enterprises. More information and contact numbers can be found at <https://mille-lacsband.com/government/indian-gaming-regulation>. You can also LIKE us on Facebook at Mille Lacs Band GRA.

GRA Board meetings are open to the public. Meetings are currently being conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams. This month's meetings are at 9 a.m. on February 8 and February 22.

AROUND THE RESERVATION



Hi Auntie,

I'm a freshman in high school. I live in the urban area and didn't grow up with the culture. I want to learn things that relate to me as a young girl. Where do I start to learn about culture, practices and more? Where do I find out the ceremonies for young girls?

Thank you,

Your Urban Niece

Aaniin Nishimis,

Thank you for this question, my niece. I relate to it so much on so many levels. Growing up, I didn't learn our culture and language at home. I learned it in elementary and high school. When I got older I took college classes. And I read books about our Ojibwe culture and I watched YouTube videos on Ojibwe culture.

Books I enjoy reading today are *Anishinaabe-Niimi'idizing: An Anishinaabe Ceremonial Dance and Aanjikiing* and *Changing Worlds An Anishinaabe Traditional Funeral*, both books are by Lee Obizaan Staples, Chato Ombishkebines Gonzalez.

I watch the Ojibwe word of the day from James Vukelich Kaagegaabaw and Anton and Madeline Treuer.

I invested in an Ojibwe dictionary and I kind of dove in and started looking at all the resources I had available.

So, if you have those resources available about your culture I would say start there. If there are Elders in your area who would be willing to talk with you, get the courage to talk to them, because I am sure they would love to share stories with you. If you can't find an Elder to help you, ask an auntie; they can share knowledge, too. And because finding your identity is so important, I hope that you start to look into your background and history.

Also, another resource could be Aanjibimaadizing. They have youth programs, Ojibwe language books, and Rosetta Stone. They may also have a schedule of ceremonies in your area specific to young women's ceremonies. Fasting and moon ceremony would be helpful to you.

Here is a link to help also: <https://www.maicnet.org/>.

The culture and language are inside your spirit. Once you start learning, you will remember and it will come back to you.

Take care, my Urban Niece. I'm proud of you!

Auntie

AROUND THE RESERVATION

DISTRICT I PET CLINIC

Due to high demand, an additional pet clinic was offered in District I on Saturday, January 27 and Sunday, January 28. Pet wellness exams including vaccinations and identification chips were offered as well as spay and neuter surgeries. A total of 47 wellness exams and 22 surgeries were performed.

The next spay/neuter clinic for District I will be Sunday, June 2 by MNSNAP and will be surgery only. Watch for announcements to register for that clinic when the date is closer.

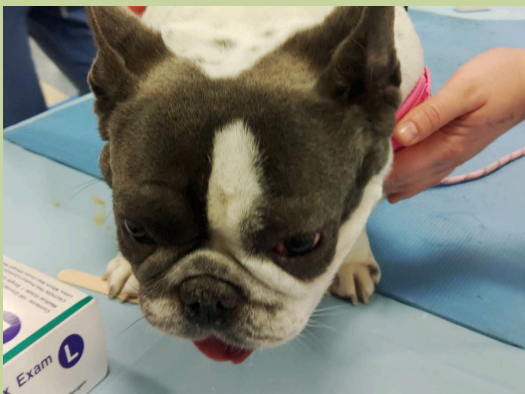
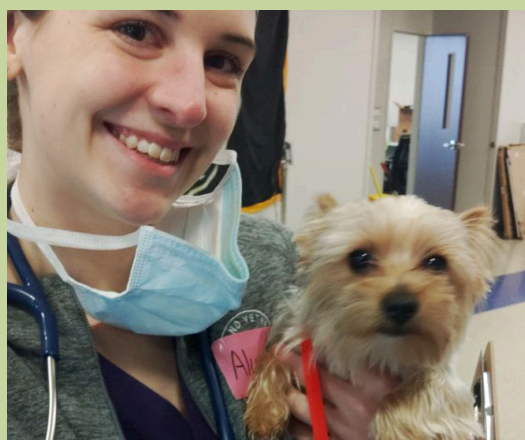
MNSNAP has scheduled the dates for surgery and wellness clinics for other districts for 2024. Watch for announcements to register for those clinics as the dates draw near. No registrations will be accepted at this time.

April 7 at Lake Lena, Aazhoomog.

April 21 at Hinckley, Meshakwad.

May 5 at East Lake, Minisinaakwaang.

May 19 at Isle, Chiminising.



MEKWENIMINJIG

THE ONES WHO ARE REMEMBERED

Laura MacLean

Laura MacLean, age 60, of Onamia, Minnesota, passed away December 11, 2023, after a year-long battle with cancer. A funeral service was held Saturday, January 6, 2024, at 1 p.m. at the District I Community Center with Nazhike officiating.



Laura was born on April 5, 1963, in Chisholm, Minnesota. She was a Mille Lacs Band member and dedicated 30 years to Grand Casino Mille Lacs as a slot attendant. Laura loved spending time being a devoted mother and grandparent. She was a homebody who loved spending time baking cookies, pies, and cakes. She took pride in her outdoor landscaping and decorating for every holiday, especially Christmas (sometimes the lights never came down). If she could not be found at home, you could find her at a local thrift shop trying to find the best deal or searching Marketplace for those can't-miss opportunities, and if time permitted, she would sneak away to the Lucky 7's — the slot machines were her favorite. She always found a way to put everyone's needs in front of her own. She will be greatly missed by her friends and family.

Laura is survived by her former husband, Patrick MacLean; her children, Christopher MacLean, Daniel MacLean, Alyssa MacLean, Bobby, and Catherine Kulhanek (MacLean); in addition to her children, she had 13 grandchildren; some of which she raised herself. Her siblings were: Richard Mortenson, Beverly Graves, William Erickson, and Darrel Erickson.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Catherine Erickson, Randolph Mortenson, and Viri Carpenter; and her sisters, Faye Ann Erickson and Joy Ann Mortenson.

You were our anchor who held our family together. It's your time to rest. We love you, Mom.

Zhaawan, Bobbi Sam

Zhaawan, Bobbi Sam, age 39, passed away on January 7, 2024. Visitation was held at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation. A funeral ceremony was held at 10 a.m. on Thursday, January 11, 2024, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation, with Ombishkebines officiating. Interment was in the Vineland Burial Grounds.



Zhaawan, Bobbi Rae Sam, was born February 17, 1984, in Onamia, Minnesota, to Corrina Cash and Darrell Sam. Bobbi attended Nay Ah Shing High School and later went on to take classes at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, where she loved writing and poetry. She spent most of her time helping others and was always there when anyone needed her. She loved making those around her happy and enjoyed making people laugh on social media but most importantly in person. Her contagious laugh and smile will be deeply missed.

Most of all, she loved being a mother and aunt.

Bobbi is survived by her five sons, Caleb, Cailen, Christopher, Cass, and Caidence; parents, Corrina Cash, and Darrell Sam; brothers, Garrett Sam, Daniel Sam, and Luther Sam; sister, Kasey McCabe; nieces, nephews, and many relatives.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents, Lorena "Panji" Gahbow, Archie Cash, Sr., and Dorothy Sam; sister, Erin Cash; aunts, Tami Gahbow, Nancy Gahbow, Linda Sam, and Isabelle Sam; uncles, Bill Gahbow and Pete Gahbow.

Lillian Mary Becker

Lillian Becker, age 67, of Onamia, Minnesota, passed away on January 8, 2024. Funeral services were held at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation. Arrangements are with the Shelley Funeral Chapel of Onamia.



Lillian Mary Becker was born March 20, 1956, in Sisseton, South Dakota, to Clarence Feather and Gloria Goodteacher. She attended boarding school in Wahpeton with her brothers and sisters, and later in life moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. She had two sons and two daughters, and in June of 1988, Lillian married Elmer Becker in Sisseton, South Dakota. Through their union, they had three daughters.

She loved to go camping any chance she got. She said she would go camping all year long if she could. Lillian loved spending time with family, especially her grandchildren. She loved being a mother and especially a grandmother. Lillian loved cooking, and everyone looked forward to her food. She was always a listening ear for anyone who needed it and was always helping someone if she could. Anyone who knew Lillian knew of her love and loyalty to the Green Bay Packers. Her smile, wisdom, and humor will be deeply missed by all.

Lillian is survived by her five daughters, Tanya, Denise, Shauna, Sharon, and Shannon; her two sons, Loren and Laverne, and her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Clarence Feather and Gloria Goodteacher; her brother, Elmer Feather; her sister, Corrine Feather; and her husband, Elmer Becker.

Waabishkaanakwadookwe ELOISE ALICE YANEZ

Eloise Alice Yanez, Waabishkaanakwadookwe, passed away Sunday, January 14, 2024, at her home near McGregor.



She was born April 6, 1961, in Le Sueur to Roger and Angeline (Boyd Wadena) Colton. She graduated high school and college, earning a bachelor's degree. She worked as a paraprofessional and enjoyed camping, crafts, beading, sewing, knitting, and spending time with her family.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband Torivio Yanez, and brothers Richard Boyd, Francis Colton, and Roger Colton.

Eloise is survived by her sisters, Mary Colton, Rosa Colton (Robert), Alida Colton, and Jennifer Wadena; Many aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, other special relatives, and friends who mourn her passing.

Visitation was held at dusk on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at the East Lake Community Center in East Lake, McGregor, until the start of the Tribal Rights Service at 10 a.m. on Friday, January 19, 2024, at the East Lake Community Center, with Ombishkebines officiating. Burial is in the Big Sandy Lake Burial Grounds. Arrangements are with McGregor Funeral Home in McGregor.

FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

ONI KOO GA BOU, MONTGOMERY JAY STAPLES

Funeral services for Oni koo ga bou, Montgomery Jay Staples were held on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 10 a.m. with Obizaan, Lee Staples officiating at the District III Community Center. No wake was held. A full obituary was not available as of press time. One will be posted when it becomes available.



BIG DRUM TEACHINGS & IMMERSION

**BRING ASEMAA
BRING A DISH**



Beginning February 7th join Waabishkibines at noon on Mondays & Wednesdays for Big Drum teachings, immersion, and open talk. All are welcomed and encouraged to join.



NEYAASHING CEREMONIAL BUILDING

16141 Nay Ah Shing Dr,
Onamia, MN 56359



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

For information on CPR/AED, Basic First Aid, Fire Extinguisher Training, Car Seat Training, and free car seats and fire alarms, contact Emergency Management Coordinator Monte Fronk at 320-532-3430.



CIRCLE OF HEALTH

Circle of Health is here to help you keep your health insurance.

Like all states, Minnesota maintained health care coverage for its Medicaid (called "Medical Assistance" in Minnesota) enrollees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, members stayed enrolled regardless of most life changes that previously would have affected their coverage.

In spring 2023, states returned to standard eligibility procedures. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has resumed the renewal process for the 1.5 million Minnesotans enrolled in public health care programs.

The Mille Lacs Band Circle of Health Department has partnered with DHS and is available to help Mille Lacs Band members and federally enrolled tribal members living in the service areas of Aitkin, Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, Morrison, Kanabec, and Pine counties. Please call Circle of Health at 800-491-6106 or 320-532-7741 for assistance to make sure you can keep your health insurance.

Circle of Health is working to make sure all eligible Band members and federally enrolled tribal members in Minnesota keep their health insurance. If you have Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare, Circle of Health is available to assist you in the renewal process. Please call Circle of Health at 800-491-6106 or 320-532-7741.

You can also visit mn.gov/dhs/renewmycoverage for more information.

Keep your health insurance

Do you have Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare?

You can now get text messages when you need to take action to keep your insurance.

Update your contact information to get texts.



mn
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Learn more at mn.gov/dhs/renewmycoverage

TRIBAL NOTEBOARD

FEBRUARY ELDER BIRTHDAYS

Bruce Alan Anderson
 Laura Ann Ashcroft
 Mahlon Scott Barnes
 Della Jo Benjamin
 Maurice Wayne Benjamin
 Melanie Ann Benjamin
 Steven Benjamin
 Sandra Lee Blake
 Allen Charles Bus
 Judy Ann Carlson
 Renee Carreon-Clara
 Dennis Wayne Davis
 Harry Richard Davis
 Dawn Marie Day
 William Carl Erickson
 Eileen Frances Farah
 Nicole Anne Froemming
 Beverly Ann Grave
 Mary Louise Hoffer
 Richard Nolan Holm
 Donald Ray Houle
 Sharon Louise Howard

Steven Douglas InYan Mata
 Colleen Michele Johnson
 Ronald James Johnson
 David Daniel Juarez
 Kurt Drew Keller
 Susan Marie Klapel
 Carolyn Dawn Lewis
 Ornorfio Zachary Lyons
 Scott Armond Meyer
 Cheryl Anne Miller
 Rhonda Jean Mitchell
 Victoria Gina Mitchell
 Lawrence Mark Nickaboine
 Debra Lee Northrup
 Patricia Ann O'Brien
 William John O'Brien
 Viola Marie Olson
 Robert Halvor Oswaldson
 Robin Lou Oswaldson
 Rhonda Lynn Peet
 Ryan Duane Pendegayosh
 Alan Pindegayosh
 Ellen Marie Roth
 Bette Sam
 Darrell Duane Sam
 Gladys Diane Sam

James Allan Sam
 Michael Mondel Sam
 Pauline Marie Sam
 Kelvin Ray Shingobe
 Bennie David St. John
 Edward Louis St. John
 Stanley Conrad St. John
 Richard Jay Staples
 Dennis Duane Thomas
 Gary Marshall Thomas
 Russell Harvey Thomas
 Kenny Jack Towle
 Mel George Towle
 Michael Leo Towle
 Valetta Irene Towle
 Sheila Marie Walters
 Ramona Joyce Washington
 Patrick Weyaus
 Marilyn Jean Whitney
 Rose Marie Wind
 Wendy Lee Wind
 Dorothy May Wistrom

HAPPY FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Happy 4th Birthday to **Alexa** on February 1, with love from Mom and Taylor. Dad, Zhaawin, Bineshiinh, Brandon Jr. and Hailey, Gramma Mickey, Papa Phil, Cory Jr, Christine, Auntie Whit, Uncle Les, Karly and Uncle Pinero.
 • Happy Birthday **Kaitlin** on February 2, love Dad, Val, Myla, Pie, Kev, and Lily
 • Happy birthday **Chris** Jr. on February 7, love from the Harrington family
 • Happy birthday **Baby Jacob** on February 13, love from the Harrington Family
 • Happy birthday **Jacob** on February 16, love from the Harrington Family
 • Happy Birthday **Rosie** on February 19, love Dan, Val, Myla, Pie, Kev,

and Lily • Happy birthday **Princess** on February 22 love from Auntie Val • Happy birthday **Braelyn** on February 22, love Dad, Daphne, Payton, Eric, Wes, Waase, Bryn, Tryn, Galli, Bam, Binesiikwe, Papa Brad, Grannie Kim, Papa Kyle, Gram Kim, Auntie Val, Dan, Kev, Pie, Myla, Auntie Randi, Bruce, Jayla, Lileah, Rachel, Rory, Jay, Taylor, and Guy • Happy birthday **Cordell** on February 23 love the Harrington Family.

Send your shout-outs to news@Millelacsband.com.

Send your email address to news@millelacsband.com so we can add you to the breaking news email list.

NOTEBOARD AND CALENDAR GUIDELINES

The Tribal Noteboard welcomes Band member submissions, including birthdays, congratulatory messages, and memorial tributes. For birthday messages, send name, birthday, and a brief message that is **20 WORDS OR LESS** to news@millelacsband.com or **320-630-8195**. The deadline for the March issue is February 15. Photos may be included if space allows.

If you would rather not have your name included in the Elder birthday list, please contact the Government Affairs office at 320-237-6851 or email news@millelacsband.com before the 15th of the month preceding your birthday. Send calendar items

IMPORTANT TRIBAL GOVERNMENT PHONE NUMBERS

Mille Lacs Band Government Center: 320-532-4181
Mille Lacs Band Tribal Police: 320-532-3430
Non-Emergency Phone: 320-630-2994
Chief Executive's Office
 320-532-7484

Commissioners:

Administration: Sam Moose: 320-630-2607; Assistant Commissioner: Maria Costello: 320-630-7643, or 763-260-0164
 Community Development: 320-630-7643, or 763-260-0164
 Education: Niiyogaabawiikwe, Brooke Mosay Gonzalez: 320-362-4245
 Finance: Mel Towle: 320-532-7475
 Health and Human Services: Nicole Anderson: 320-364-9969
 Natural Resources: Kelly Applegate: 763-221-0320

Housing Emergency On-Call

Districts I and IIa: 320-630-2498
 District II: 320-630-2492
 District III: 320-630-2497
 Dan Boyd, Housing Director: 320-630-2620

Public Works

Brian Schienost, Public Works Director: 320-630-2624
 Tony Pike, Roads/Solid Waste Supervisor: 320-980-5367
 Sean Racelo, Waste Water Supervisor: 218-838-8391
 Mike Moilanen, Director of Planning: 320-630-2623
 Chad Dunkley, Earthworks: 320-630-4763

Health and Human Services

24/7 Nurse Line: 320-630-0855
 Provider appointments: 320-532-4163 option #2
 Nurse Line Clinic: 320-630-0397
 Mental Health appointments: 320-532-4163 option #2
 Mental Health call line: 320-674-4385
 Substance use assessments and counseling: 320-532-7773
 Pharmacy: 320-532-4770
 Dental emergencies: 320-532-4779
 Commodities: 320-630-8362

Emergency Services: 320-532-1755 or 320-532-1756. After hours: 320-362-4672
 Family Violence Prevention 24/7 Crisis Line: 866-867-4006; or Kristen Allord: 320-630-2677
 Elder Advocate: 320-630-4395
 On Call Social Worker: 320-630-2444

Other frequently requested phone numbers

Court Administrator
 Gilda Burr: 320-532-7401

Legislative Inquiries

Brianna Boyd, Legislative Affairs Director: 320-532-7536 (work); 320-630-8702 (cell); 320-532-7506 (fax)

Band Assembly Inquiries

Darcie Big Bear, Parliamentarian/Clerk of the Assembly: 320-532-7420; darcie.bigbear2@millelacsband.com

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Inquiries

Deanna Sam at 320-279-0178 or 320-532-7498 to make an appointment.

Aanjibimaadizing Case Managers

District I — Candace Benjamin, Director of Case Management: 320-362-0014; Kaari Weyaus: 218-316-2437; Rosa Sam: 320-364-3187; Julie Peterson: 320 290 8729; Camille Smith: 320-982-0836
 District II/IIa — Winona Crazy Thunder: 320-364-3049; Autumn Ballinger: 320-674-0655; Mary K Boyd: 320-630-1307
 District III — Renee Allen: 320-591-0559; Kathy Nelson: 320-630-2671
 Urban — Winona Spaulding: 612-360-7219

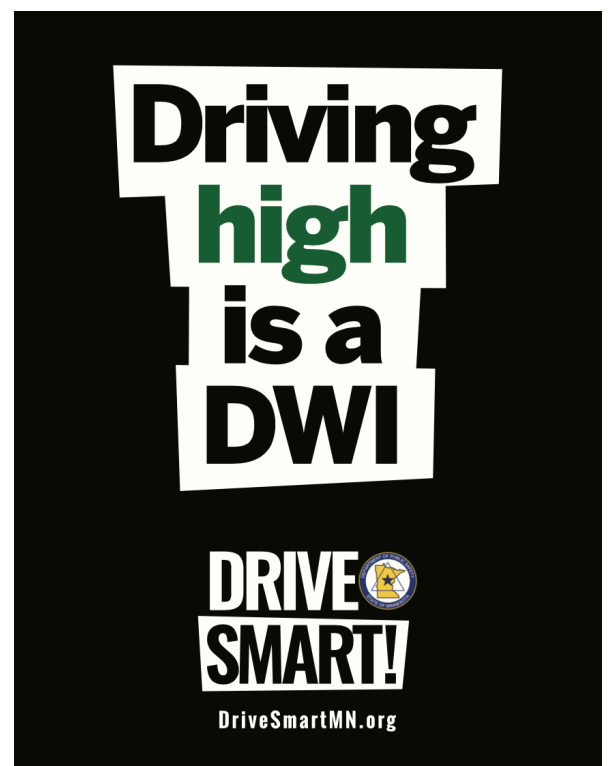
Office of Management and Budget

Economic Support and Per Cap: Katy Radunz: 320-532-7471, or Per Cap: 320-532-8928

Enrollments: 320-532-7730

ELDERS NEEDED!

The Government Affairs Department is seeking Elders to tell their stories for a new Moccasin Telegraph series as well as to preserve video and audio in the Mille Lacs Band archives for future generations. If you are willing to participate in a video interview to share your memories, please email news@millelacsband.com or call 320-630-8195.



DRUG TIP HOTLINE

The Mille Lacs Band Tribal Police Department's anonymous drug tip line is 320-630-2458. Feel free to leave voicemails and/or text messages. If you would like a call back, be sure to leave your name and phone number. In case of emergency, dial 911.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<p>1</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>On the RedRoad</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Keepin' it Real Recovery 6 p.m. Red Brick Building</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Men's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>First Tuesday SNAP see page 7</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Sa Miikana</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Red Brick NA Meeting 6 p.m. at Red Brick.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>On the RedRoad</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Keepin' it Real Recovery 6 p.m. Red Brick Building</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Men's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Sa Miikana</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Valentine's Day</p> <p>Red Brick AA/NA Meeting 6 p.m. at Red Brick.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>District III Community Meeting 5:30 p.m. Grand Casino Hinckley</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>On the RedRoad</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>18</p> <p>Keepin' it Real Recovery 6 p.m. Red Brick Building</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Men's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>District II Minisinaakwaang Community Meeting 5:30 p.m.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Red Brick AA/NA Meeting 6 p.m. at Red Brick.</p> <p>District Ila Chiminising Community Meeting 5:30 p.m.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>On the RedRoad</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Keepin' it Real Recovery 6 p.m. Red Brick Building</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Men's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Sa Miikana</p>	<p>28</p> <p>District I Community Meeting Aquatic & Fitness Ctr. 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Red Brick AA/NA Meeting 6 p.m. at Red Brick.</p> <p>Last Wednesday first aid CPR see 7</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>		





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UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS

If your address on file with the Enrollments Office or Office of Management and Budget is incorrect, you may not be receiving important mail from the Band. Each time you move, you need to fill out a Change of Address form from Enrollments (320-532-7730) and OMB. You can download a Change of Address form at millelacsband.com/services/tribal-enrollments.

ABOUT US

Ojibwe Inaajimowin is produced monthly by the Government Affairs Department of the Mille Lacs Band's Executive Branch. Please send questions, comments, corrections, or submissions to news@millelacsband.com or call 320-630-8195. The March issue deadline is February 15.

NEED HELP?

If you or someone you know is injured or in immediate danger, call 911 first.

Tribal Police Department dispatch:
888-609-5006; 320-532-3430.

Emergency Management Services:
24-hour fire, disaster, and emergency management response: Monte Fronk, Emergency Management Coordinator: 320-362-0435.

Addiction/Behavioral Health: 800-709-6445, ext. 7776.

Community Support Services: Family Violence Prevention.

District I: 320-532-4163 ext. 7793

District II: 320-630-7666

District III: 320-630-2691

24 Hour Crisis Line: 866-867-4006

Batters Intervention: 320-532-4163 ext. 7793

Elder Services: 320-532-7854

Emergency Services Loans: 320-532-4163 ext. 1755 or 1757

Food Shelf: 320-362-4672

Waivered Services: 320-362-0027

Heating, water, or other home-related maintenance problems: If you live in a Mille Lacs Band Housing-maintained home, call our Customer Service Representative at one of the following on-call numbers:

District I and IIa: 320-630-2498.

District II: 320-630-2492.

District III: 320-630-2497.

Mille Lacs Band Family Services: 320-532-4163, ext. 1714

On-Call Social Worker/After Hours Emergency 320-630-2444.

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