

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



STATE OF THE BAND SUMMARY COURAGE OF ANCESTORS

In her 2023 State of the Band address, Mille Lacs Band Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin reflected on 2022 as a year that held some loss, but also some historic gains — especially in the area of tribal sovereignty. While discussing the Federal District Court's ruling affirming the Mille Lacs Band's Reservation boundaries, Benjamin reflected on the leaders of the past who never gave up their fight to hold onto their homeland.

"Over 150 years ago, Shawbashkung and our leaders vowed that we would never give up our homelands — even if there was only one Mille Lacs Band member left standing. That absolutely amazing strength and courage in the face of losing nearly everything else didn't come from money, or goods, or services. It came from somewhere else," Benjamin said.

"Their cultural and spiritual identity as Anishinaabe was nearly all they had left, and it was more than enough for them to fight for their way of life for generations of grandchildren who would come after them," Benjamin said. "We are those generations! Their courage is why every one of us are here today!"

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SPEECH INCLUDE:

Reservation Boundary Victory

"After decades of challenging whether our Reservation exists, the county finally got its answer. March 4, 2022, will go down in history as the day that the Federal District Court ruled that our Treaty of 1855 is, indeed, the supreme law of the land: The Mille Lacs Reservation boundaries remain exactly as they were promised to us."

Language and Culture

"The root cause of addiction, poverty, homelessness, and violence is loss of identity. This can be traced back 150 years, when federal policies tried to strip us of our language, traditions, ceremonies, and culture." In 2023, the Band will expand its language and culture efforts to work with the local public schools in each district to provide Ojibwe language instruction through the Band's Rosetta Stone program. The Band will also continue its efforts to transform Nay Ah Shing into an Ojibwe immersion school in 2023.

[STATE OF THE BAND SUMMARY](#) see page 4

MCT NON-BINDING REFERENDUM VOTE

In 2022, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe held a non-binding referendum with the purpose of determining the interest of tribal members to hold a Secretarial Election regarding how MCT membership is determined. The MCT asked two questions:

1. Should the blood quantum requirement be removed from membership requirements for the MCT? Result: Yes: 4,778 No: 2,629
2. Should the six reservation Bands of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe be authorized to determine their own

membership requirements by Band Ordinance? Result: Yes: 4,236 No: 2,989

Because the vote last year was non-binding, the MCT must now determine if these two questions need to be put through a binding Secretarial Election vote, meaning if an election is held, the results would be passed into the statutes of the MCT. Chief Executive Benjamin reported that a date for a 2023 Secretarial Election had been proposed, but no election date was set at the TEC meeting held on January 27. See page 2 for more information.



Adobe stock image.

JUDGE RULES IN FAVOR OF THE BAND

Chief Executive Benjamin calls this a "Win for the Band"

STAFF REPORT

Federal District Court Judge Susan Richard Nelson ruled that Mille Lacs County interfered with the law enforcement powers of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. The final ruling in the Band's lawsuit against Mille Lacs County, County Attorney Joseph Walsh, and Sheriff Don Lorge was issued on Tuesday, January 10, 2023.

The ruling stated that the Band "possesses inherent sovereign law enforcement authority within the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation [...] The inherent sovereign law enforcement authority includes the authority of Band police officers to investigate violations of federal, state and tribal law."

"This is a win for the Band!" Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin said. "The Federal Court Judge has made a ruling that our inherent and federally delegated law enforcement authority are both intact. This means the county cannot interfere with our Tribal Police Department's ability to protect our communities and investigate crimes. This also upholds the Judge's previous ruling that the Reservation boundaries of the 1855 Treaty remain intact as well."

A summary of the ruling is as follows:

County Attorney Walsh and Sheriff Lorge moved to dismiss the Band's claims against them in their individual capacities. The Band did not oppose the dismissal of these claims, and Judge Nelson dismissed them.

Walsh and Lorge also moved to dismiss the Band's claims against them in their official capacities. The Band opposed the dismissal of those claims and Judge Nelson declined to dismiss them. This ruling was important to the Band because it was the actions of County Attorney Walsh and then-Sheriff

[JUDGE'S RULING](#) see page 4

MCT ENROLLMENT CHANGES — SEE PAGE 2

CHANGES POSSIBLE FOR MCT ENROLLMENT POLICY

STAFF REPORT

A Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) Secretarial Election could be scheduled this summer to allow MCT Members to vote on expanding eligibility requirements for enrollment with the MCT.

The TEC has been grappling with enrollment for decades, but things began picking up speed in 2014, after a study was done by the Wilder Foundation showing that enrollment in all six Bands will plummet within 75 years if no changes are made to the current blood quantum requirement of 25 percent Minnesota Chippewa Tribe blood.

In 2015, Grand Portage and Bois Forte pushed the Issue to the forefront by bringing resolutions forward to the TEC that would expand enrollment eligibility. Those two resolutions, 31-15 and 32-15, passed through the TEC in February, 2015. The resolutions call for MCT members to be able to vote on whether other verified Anishinaabe blood from other Indian nations and First Nations should be Included in the calculation of the one-quarter blood quantum requirement for membership in the MCT. Shortly after that meeting, the MCT sent a request to the U.S. Secretary of Interior to grant approval for the MCT to hold a Secretarial Election — which is the only way to change anything in the MCT Constitution, including enrollment criteria. After eight years, that approval has come through, but an election date has not yet been scheduled.

For years, much has been written about the MCT enrollment discussion in Band newspaper articles, Chief's columns, letters, and social media, and many meetings have been held about enrollment discussions as the TEC. Last year, meetings focused on the non-binding referendum vote that took place in spring of 2022, when MCT voters were asked for their thoughts about two questions: 1) Should the blood quantum requirement be removed from membership requirements for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, and; (2) Should the six reservations (Bands) of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe be authorized to determine their own membership requirements by Band Ordinance.

As previous articles reported, a majority of voters responded "yes" to both questions, but that election was not binding, which means that it was more like a survey and not a decision-making election.

But that vote did provide the TEC with important feedback. Most MCT members who voted are not happy with the current use of one-quarter MCT blood quantum when it comes to who can be enrolled, and most who voted in that election want each of the six Bands to be able to make the decision about what kind of enrollment criteria their Band will use to determine citizenship. (See actual numbers on page 1.)



Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin engaging with Band members for a questions and comments session during the enrollments information community meeting held at Grand Casino Mille Lacs on January 24, 2023.

That message was also heard loud and clear at two community meetings Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin held for Band members on January 24, 2023, at Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley. At both meetings, many Band members commented that they don't want to vote on something that impacts another Band, and they don't want the other Bands to have power over what happens at Mille Lacs.

Unlike the non-binding referendum vote about enrollment that was held in 2022, the will of the voters in a Secretarial Election would have the impact of changing the Constitution for the MCT, although no changes would happen overnight.

Whatever the outcome might be of a Secretarial Election, "That would be the beginning of a long, long process," Benjamin said. "Our Band Members have been consistent about wanting the Mille Lacs Band to be able to make decisions about what happens at Mille Lacs."

At both community meetings, Band members asked to see updated data about what future enrollment could look like for the Mille Lacs Band under different scenarios. In 2013, the MCT hired Wilder Research to conduct a population projection for each of the MCT Bands looking forward to the year 2098, or 75 years from now. This study was released in 2014. The study showed that if no changes are made to the current one-quarter blood quantum requirement, the entire MCT population will decrease from about 42,000 members to about 8,900 in just 75 years — an 80 percent decline.

This data was shared with Band members at both meet-

ings, along with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and an article from the Native Governance Institute entitled, "Blood Quantum and Sovereignty: A Guide." All of these documents are available online on the Band's website at <https://millelacsband.com/members/government/official-documents-and-communications>.

The current enrollment at Mille Lacs is about 5400, but the youngest Band members alive today could see their tribe decline to about 1,800 during their lifetime, which is a 60 percent loss of enrolled tribal citizens. Which is exactly what federal officials wanted to happen when they invented the concept of blood quantum and required it to be included in nearly all the tribal constitutions that were adopted in the United States during the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of the 1934.

The goal of the blood quantum policy was to eventually reduce tribal membership until a time when most people born would not be able to meet the one-quarter blood quantum requirement. "That generation is here, and it is us," said Benjamin. "Every single person in this room has a family member who has been denied enrollment because the degree of MCT blood does not meet 25 percent."

Federal attorneys from the 1930s, who included the concept of measuring "Indian blood" through blood quantum into the IRA constitutions, knew that tribal members often intermarried with people from other Ojibwe bands outside the MCT, like Red Lake, St. Croix, and other bands from Michigan, Wisconsin and North Dakota, as well as people from other tribes or non-Natives.

"Those little babies born into our families don't know or care anything about DNA," said one attendee, whose grandchildren cannot be enrolled because one of their parents is from St. Croix. "Who the parent is doesn't make our grandchildren any less Indian. It doesn't make our relatives not our relatives," she said.

At both meetings, Chief Executive Benjamin brought up "the elephant in the room," acknowledging that some Band members are concerned about whether per capita payments would be reduced if enrollment was changed and membership grew. One Band member asked for data so that people could make an informed decision about the financial impact on the Band, which Chief Executive Benjamin agreed is necessary.

As of press time for this issue, Chief Executive Benjamin had already shared the request for updated data with the MCT.

Chief Executive Benjamin reported that a date for a 2023 Secretarial Election had already been proposed, but no election date was set at the TEC meeting held on January 27.

More community meetings are being scheduled and will be posted on the Band's Facebook, and the MCT will be engaging in a massive educational effort while the Band continues its educational process. Many Band members filled out a questionnaire at the meetings and shared their ideas and comments, which are available on-line for viewing at <https://millelacsband.com/members/government/official-documents-and-communications>. Watch for updates in the mail, in the newspaper, on social media, and video updates from the Chief Executive about this important issue.



WINNER WINNER!

The Mille Lacs Band DNR has been participating in a study with the University of Minnesota and the MN DNR to help track chronic wasting disease in deer herds. See the full story in an upcoming Inaajimowin.

To test for CWD in deer, the heads of harvested deer are submitted for testing to the UofM. During the past harvest season the Band DNR offered gift cards to Band members for submitting the heads of their harvested deer. Ashley Hanson is the top winner turning in a total of 10 deer heads! Good harvesting, Ashley!



LEGISLATIVE

THE MOUNTAIN AND FRIENDSHIP

State of the Band speech presented by Secretary-Treasurer Sheldon Boyd

Good morning everyone. To elected and appointed officials, government employees, attending dignitaries, and friends, and the Anishinaabe gathered here, and to our Indigenous brothers and sisters worldwide, we from the Legislative Branch of the Mille Lacs Band say, "Boozhoo and good morning. We all hope this day finds you well."

The sun is getting brighter, there's lots of snow, and hearing birds singing in the morning reminds us things are renewing and we all look ahead to the coming year.

Allow me to welcome you all to the 3rd Session of the 20th Assembly of the Mille Lacs Band Legislature.

This Annual State of the Band Address of Madame Chief Melanie Benjamin and Chief Justice Sylvia Wise is to be presented to the Band Assembly on the second Tuesday of each calendar year.

Before we get started, I have a report to the people in my role as Secretary-Treasurer, because it is in my dual capacity as Speaker of the Assembly to officially open this session as this Legislature enters our 40th year.

These State of the Band gatherings as I remember were a good time to see friends again and reminds me that friendship, whether it's one or 100, helps us get through to the next day, or move mountains as the saying goes.

I remember one remark from then Madame Chief Marge Anderson in her speech many years ago: "They fight us every inch of the way."

Looking back, that's so true and the battles continue. Those comments were before Treaty Rights, Reservation boundary, and the gaming era was just beginning.

Those were mountains of sorts, and our leaders didn't shy away from the fight.

The people of the Mille Lacs Band by majority vote this past year authorized four more years to continue the direction of this current Legislature.

In preparing for this morning, there is reflection about the past four years' accomplishments and the impact moving forward.

Most important is the timeliness of a financial milestone concerning the Treasury of the Band.

Reflection

Looking back for self-evaluation, there were three goals I set in an online statement I made October 17, 2018, after getting a realistic sense of what needs to be accomplished under



Secretary-Treasurer Sheldon Boyd provides the State of the Legislative Branch.

statutory duties — the job ahead.

This "First 100 Days" statement targeted transparency, lawmaking, and investments.

And I told staff we have four years.

Transparency became live-streaming of sessions of Band Assembly, and lawmaking became a Revisor of Statutes.

The first is to provide as immediate and concise of recordings as possible, and the second is to leave a record for the people and is foundational to our tribal sovereignty.

The third: financial investments of the Band. The mountain.

You can't see all of a mountain because of its size; you know a lot is there, and usually you can't conquer a mountain without a plan and friends.

The world of financial investments needed months of travel, asking questions where there were many freely offering advice, and knowledge.

The enormity of the issue became apparent.

Looking back, the treaty rights, Reservation boundary, and a gaming era were issues our leaders took head-on.

In reflection, there came a realization that position of leadership doesn't mean you're the fastest, smartest, or strongest. Because as I look around there are so many Band members who shine so bright in what they do. I think it's about being perceptive.

It's about purpose now for me and less about ambition. Maybe ambition gets you there, but clarity and direction is in finding purpose.

There are also words that always help me: "Because we didn't want people to forget" that I will refer to later.

Three Goals Achieved

Now I am proud to report that these achievements were primarily the work of the Legislative Staff and their ability to collaborate with so many people.

LEGISLATIVE ADDRESS see page 7

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS

Band Assembly seeking public comment on proposed legislation amending Title 4 Executive Branch

"The proposed legislation would ensure continuity in vital executive officer positions of Band government by providing a timeline in which the Chief Executive must make a nomination for any vacant Commissioner position and establishing an alternative process should the Chief Executive choose not to nominate individuals to fill vacant Commissioner positions which are responsible for overseeing numerous employees and government programs, because a full cabinet of executive officers ensures effective delivery of essential services to Band members," the public notice reads. A formal public hearing was held on November 2, 2022.

The public comment period has been set at 30 calendar days beginning January 18, 2022, and will end on February 17, 2023, according to the formal notice.

The full amendment can be found by clicking the Tribal Register tab on the Band member side of the Mille Lacs Band website.

Band Assembly meeting January 10, 2023

The Speaker of the Assembly convened a meeting of the Band Assembly prior to the State of the Band Address held at Grand Casino Mille Lacs. The meeting was recessed and reconvened at the Band Assembly Chambers where the District Representatives approved the agenda.

The District Representatives received a brief introduction from Andrew Luger, United States Attorney; Ann Bildtsen, First Assistant United States Attorney; Laura Provinzino, Deputy Chief of Violent and Major Crimes; and Angella LaTour, Community Outreach Coordinator.

The District Representatives approved Resolution 20-03-01-23 (A Resolution in Support of a Multijurisdictional Sex Trafficking Task Force (Trust) Memorandum of Understanding Between the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior.

The District Representatives approved the nomination for Samuel Moose to fill the vacant Commissioner of Administration position. The current term will expire June 30, 2025.

Band Assembly seeking public comment regarding TERO

Band Assembly is seeking public comments on proposed legislation, available on the Band's Tribal Register, amending Title 15, Chapter 4 - Tribal Employment Rights Office. The proposed legislation would make comprehensive amendments to the Band's statute governing tribal employment rights.

The public comment period has been set at 35 calendar days. Therefore, please submit any written comments to legislation@millelacsband.com no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, 2023. Please use "TERO" as the subject title. Band members and employees may also submit written comments in person to the District I legislative office.

You can view the tribal registry at <https://millelacsband.com/government/tribal-register>.

During the Band Assembly meeting on January 4, 2023, Band members Collin Cash, Eli Staples and Lana Oswaldson were sworn in as new members of the Tribal Employment Rights Office. (Photos available online at Inaajimowin.com.)

THREE BRANCH MEETING WORKING TOGETHER

The Legislative Branch hosted a Three Branch meeting on January 23, 2023, to provide updates from each branch of government. These meetings are important for branches to work together to best serve the tribe, Band members, and employees.



STATE AND LOCAL NEWS BRIEFS

Judge rules in favor of Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe’s ‘inherent sovereign law enforcement authority’

Judgement upholds previous ruling that maintains Treaty of 1855 Reservation. A federal judge has ruled that Mille Lacs County interfered with the law enforcement powers of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Federal Judge Susan Richard Nelson ruled Jan. 10 that the Band “possesses inherent sovereign law enforcement authority within the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation [...] The inherent sovereign law enforcement authority includes the authority of Band police officers to investigate violations of federal, state and tribal law.” As a result of the ruling, the county must recognize the inherent authority of the Band and its law enforcement authority. As for Lorge and Walsh’s request to be removed as individuals from the case, Judge Nelson granted this request and dismissed their individual capacity claims. Lorge has retired as sheriff, but Walsh and Sheriff Kyle Burton should remain active in the case in their official capacities. Source: *Princeton Union Times*.

Looking Back: 30 years ago: 1993 At the State Capitol, the Hunting and Angling Club rallied to protest a proposed 1837 Treaty rights settlement between the Minnesota DNR and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; a counter-protest was also conducted on the steps to support Indigenous rights. Source: *Mille Lacs Messenger*.

New Sherburne County park protects sacred Indigenous site

Tribal heritage officers from the Upper Sioux and Lower Sioux communities and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe worked with Sherburne County and the Trust for Public Land to protect more than 400 acres on Big Elk Lake. A site holding cultural significance for both the Dakota and Ojibwe people along the shoreline of Big Elk Lake in Sherburne County will be protected as part of a new county park. Trust for Public Land and Sherburne County recently announced the protection of the 430-acre plot of land on the lake near Clear Lake. Source: *West Central Tribune*.

Red Lake Concerned Over Future Membership Declines Due to Blood Quantum Requirements

The Red Lake Nation is facing unprecedented population concerns following a recent study by Wilder Research. Due to current blood quantum requirements, a person must have at least a quarter Red Lake Nation blood in order to enroll for tribal membership – and this could cause a drastic decline in members in the next century. These guidelines for joining the sovereign nation are put in place not by tribal leaders, but by the United States government to determine important provisions for the tribe. But some members, like Red Lake Tribal Secretary Sam Strong, state these requirements are harming the people of Red Lake in more ways than one. “It’s important that we have our identity, and for those members that fall below that one quarter blood quantum and still do, some may still fall below it, we’re holding them back from really embracing their own identity, from understanding that knowledge of self, and really helping them understand how to not only be successful in today’s world but to deal with the issues that we’re faced with as Native people,” said Strong in a recent interview on Twin Cities PBS’s “Almanac.” Source: *Lakeland News*.

STATE OF THE BAND

STATE OF THE BAND SUMMARY from page 1

Investing in youth

According to a local study, 58% of Native youth in Mille Lacs County and 67% in Pine county have experienced depression or anxiety. “This is not a comfortable topic to talk about, but we must because it is a crisis. There are many ways we can help our youth as a government, community, and as families. But sometimes professional mental health support is what is needed to save lives.” In 2023, Mille Lacs Band HHS is expanding mental health services to ensure kids in crisis get the help they need.

In 2022, the Band worked with a group of youth girls to design and put on a conference for young women called “Finding your Oshkiniigikwe SuperPower.” The event drew more than 160 Band youth participants, and they are looking forward to a second event.

Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures (MLCV) also launched a Youth Ambassador Program in 2022 through which more than 120 youth got the opportunity to work for gaming entities to build academic and career skills and explore career opportunities.

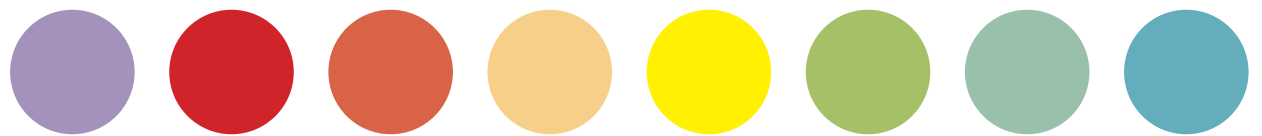
Economy

The Mille Lacs Band does not have a tax-base like other governments. Instead, Band government is dependent on revenue from its businesses, federal contracts, state contracts, and grants. 2022 was a year of recovery for the Band’s businesses, which have remained competitive. Makwa Global, the Band’s government contracting arm, tripled its revenue in 2022 and landed their biggest contract to date. A record number of Band members are in leadership positions within Band-owned businesses.

Community Development and Public Safety

In 2022, Community Development was focused on addressing the Band’s housing shortage. In 2023, a focus will be on constructing and renovating housing to improve accessibility for Elders and Band members with disabilities. Another emphasis in 2023 will be on improving street lighting to improve public safety in Band neighborhoods.

Tribal Police have been working to remove drug dealers from our community. Under the Tribal Law and Order Act, the U.S. De-



JUDGE’S RULING from page 1

Lindgren (for whom Lorge was substituted) that triggered the law enforcement crisis on the Reservation from 2016 to 2018 and gave rise to the Band’s lawsuit.

Judge Nelson said the Opinion and Protocol issued from the county attorney’s office “caused harm to the Band’s tribal sovereignty” after the revocation of the law enforcement agreement in 2016.

The Band asked Judge Nelson to enter a declaratory judgment defining the scope of the Band’s inherent and federally delegated law enforcement authority. All defendants (the County, Walsh, and Lorge) opposed the Band’s request on multiple grounds. Judge Nelson agreed with the Band and entered a declaratory judgment, rejecting each of the defendants’ arguments.

The declaratory judgment confirms that the Band’s inherent and federally delegated law enforcement authority extends throughout the 1855 Reservation and includes the authority to investigate violations of federal and state law by Indians and non-Indians. The Band’s federally delegated authority includes the authority to fully investigate and arrest both Indians and non-Indians for federal offenses, as set forth in a Deputation Agreement between the Band and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Band’s inherent authority is more limited as to non-Indians; Band officers can only temporarily detain non-Indians and conduct initial investigations before turning them over to agencies with prosecutorial authority. Judge Nelson stated that the scope of such investigations is governed by the Supreme Court’s recent decision in *United States v. Cooley* and other case law.

The Band also asked Judge Nelson to enter an injunction prohibiting defendants from interfering with the Band’s law enforcement authority. Judge Nelson declined to do so, reasoning that her declaratory judgment should be sufficient to

prevent interference with the Band’s law enforcement authority. Judge Nelson stated that the Band could return to court to seek an injunction in the event the County interferes with the Band’s law enforcement authority in the future.

DNR

Department of Justice has taken over prosecution of certain major crimes that are committed on the Mille Lacs Reservation. With our SAUSA grant, the Solicitor General and U.S. Attorney have been able to target outsiders from big cities intending to bring enormous quantities of poisonous drugs into our communities. “Recently, one major dealer was arrested in the cities who had five pounds of meth and heroin laced with fentanyl. These drugs were meant to be delivered to the Mille Lacs Reservation.”

“Protecting our natural resources from external threats was a major focus of 2022 and will continue. Under the outstanding leadership of Commissioner Kelly Applegate, the Band is more heavily engaged in defending our sovereignty, tribal rights and resources than in recent memory.”

With strong support from the Band Assembly, the Band is doing whatever they can to make sure that Band members are not collateral damage from mining pollution from proposed nickel mining near the Reservation.

The Mille Lacs Band supports electric vehicles as a way of reducing carbon and were the first tribe in Minnesota to receive an Electric Vehicle Charging Station award, through a demonstration project at the University of Minnesota. The Band just doesn’t believe that nickel is the only way to create electric batteries.

The Band is also doing its part to fight climate change with renewable energy. “Our latest efforts include a solar energy project that was installed at Grand Casino Hinckley last year which will save over \$3.3 million dollars in energy costs and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.”

Education

The Band shifted back to in-person education in 2022, and Nay Ah Shing Schools received excellent scores from an outside, independent agency review. Our strong commitment to teaching Ojibwe language, culture, and history was acknowledged, as well as the many opportunities and services we provide to all learners and their families.

Judge Nelson’s final order incorporates her earlier rulings that: (1) the case is within the Court’s subject matter jurisdiction; (2) the Band has standing to pursue its claims and its claims are ripe and not moot; (3) Walsh and Lorge’s various immunity and federalism defenses lack merit; and (4) the 1855 Reservation has not been disestablished or diminished.

Defendants have 30 days from the date of the ruling (until February 9) to file a notice of appeal. According to a statement published in the *Mille Lacs Messenger*, Mille Lacs County Administrator Dylan Hayes said the county feels it has “grounds for a strong and successful appeal.” Hayes also stated that the county board of commissioners will review its options at its regular meeting on January 17 and make a decision afterwards regarding the county’s future actions. That discussion was held in a closed meeting with no action publically announced on January 17.

There has been a temporary cooperative law enforcement agreement in place for several years. That temporary agreement is set to expire 90 days from the conclusion of the case, including any appeals. As a result, it remains in effect and will remain in effect should the County appeal the case, which could take a year or more to be resolved.

The Band’s Solicitor General, Caleb Dogeagle, stated that the Band is pleased with Judge Nelson’s ruling. “The Band has accomplished everything it set out to achieve with this case, which was to end the law enforcement crisis on the Reservation and to prevent interference with the Band’s inherent and federally delegated law enforcement authority. At every step, Judge Nelson agreed with our arguments on the merits and rejected defendants’ counterarguments.”



Chief Justice Sylvia Wise provides the State of the Judiciary Branch.

STATE OF THE JUDICIARY ADDRESS

Text of Chief Justice Sylvia Wise Biibahbanookwe, indizhinikaaz.

Boozhoo. It is my duty and privilege to deliver the State of the Mille Lacs Band Judiciary Address today. Biidahbanookwe, indizhinikaaz, Sylvia Wise, from District III from the St. Johns family. My mother was Beatrice St. John Taylor.

The Court of Central Jurisdiction strives to be a place where problems can be solved, wrongs can be righted, and lives can be healed. It should constantly evolve and try to be more accessible to the people and more reflective of Band values and culture.

Today, I will share with you a few important milestones that the Court can celebrate. Some of these milestones took years, and others had to come about quickly. With this year's appointment of Associate Justice Rhonda Sam, we have a complete Court of Appeals bench. Justice Sam joins Associate Justice Brenda Moose and me. Richard Osburn returned to the position of District Court Judge for the Band in 2020. He continues to hear most of the trial-level cases and administrative appeals. Will the Justices and Judge Osburn please stand and be recognized?

The Court has statutory authority to appoint law-trained individuals to hear cases when there is a high caseload, if there is a conflict on a particular case for a judge or justice, or if a case involves complex litigation. B.J. Jones, Joe Plumer, and Tammy Swanson serve as our Special Magistrates. Tammy Swanson also serves as the judge in our Family Healing to Wellness Court.

About five years ago, the Court saw that Band families involved in Child in Need of Protection or Services cases were not successfully reunifying with their children and were falling between the cracks. Service providers and Band departments were operating in silos and not collaborating. Over the past five years, the Court has worked hard to develop a solution: the Family Healing to Wellness Court program, also known as Noojimo'wiigamig Inaawanidiwag, or Healing Journey. The planning process brought together all three branches of the Band government. As a result, the Family Healing to Wellness Court was established in April of 2022 with the passage of Chapter 4 of Title 5 of the Mille Lacs Band statutes.

The Band successfully applied for a competitive five-year Department of Justice grant to plan and implement the program. It is a pilot program, so it will work with five (5) Band families in its first year. Then, as the program grows, it can work with additional families.

It is a rigorous four-phase program available to caregivers of Band children. Its purpose is to use a team approach to bring together healing services, cultural resources, and substance use disorder treatment to reunify families faster and prevent future child protection cases.

A dedicated case manager, Theresa James, works with each program participant to ensure they receive the services they need and follow drug testing and other program require-

ments. The program became operational on November 1, 2022, and has already admitted two participants, and is considering the admission of a third. Vanessa Weyaus, a Peer Recovery Specialist and Healing Journey team member, said this about the program: "The Family Healing to Wellness Court is a great opportunity for our relatives to come together again after facing challenges with Substance Use Disorder. As a mother and community member in recovery, it is rewarding to see the healing and growth each family experiences. I am humbled and honored to be a part of this team."

The Court continues to hear many other civil and criminal cases. The caseload dropped due to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 but is again steadily rising. In 2022, 1,089 cases were filed, 1,118 cases were closed (including cases carried over from prior years), 1,444 hearings were held, and 2,710 orders were issued. The Court is highly fortunate to have a competent and hard-working court staff on the front line moving the cases along. The Court staff prides itself on being helpful and compassionate to all those in need of judicial services. May I please have the Court staff stand and be acknowledged?

The Court facility had been in dire need of renovation for many years, and finally, the work was completed in October 2022. Many of you attended the open house and could see the new professional space for yourself. The renovation also allowed us to make the court space more reflective of Band culture. For example, a new courtroom can be used for regular hearings and converted into circle seating for Wellness Court and peacemaking.

With the advent of COVID-19, court operations had to adapt and implement technology that allows for remote hearings, such as video conferencing. As restrictions have been lifted, the court can again conduct in-person hearings. But some persons may still need to appear remotely, so hybrid court sessions can be conducted. Chief Justice Order 56, which can be found on the Court's website, details which proceedings must be in person, and which can be attended remotely.

For the past 16 years, Gilda Burr has done an outstanding job as Court Administrator leading and guiding the Court through these challenging years. In large part due to her hard work, the Mille Lacs Band tribal justice system is one of the most respected in Indian Country. In October, the National American Indian Court Judges Association awarded Gilda its Court Support Excellence Award. We thank her for her enthusiasm and dedication. Gilda, please stand and be recognized.

It was gratifying in 2022 to see so much growth and improvement in the Court of Central Jurisdiction and to mark these significant milestones. But the journey must continue. We must persist in striving to be the most effective tribal court we can be while demonstrating our Band values in all that we do.

Miigwech.

NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

Dept. of Interior Halts Mining in Pristine Boundary Waters with 20-Year Moratorium:

The Biden Administration has issued an order that will protect nearly a quarter-million acres of wilderness in northern Minnesota from mineral and geothermal exploration and development. The order to protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness safeguards nearly 225,500 acres of National Forest System lands in three Minnesota counties. Signed by Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo), the order will expire in 20 years, unless changed, or extended, by the Interior Secretary. According to the Minnesota Department of Tourism, the Boundary Waters outdoor recreation economy generates \$540 million annually in the area. Source: *Native News Online*.

ND lawmakers considering bill to make Indian Child Welfare Act state law:

Lawmakers in Bismarck are considering a bill that proponents say would preserve cultural connections for Native American children in the foster care system. House Bill 1536 would cement into law the Indian Child Welfare Act, which is a federal law that could soon be overturned by the United States Supreme Court. Regardless of the Supreme Court's decision, it would preserve the law that gives preference for foster care and adoption of Native American children to tribal members. "This is why ICWA is so, so important, so that we don't replicate these illegal takings of our children and our people," said Scott Davis, former Indian Affairs Commissioner. The Supreme Court is expected to release a ruling in the case this year. Source: *KFYRTV.com*.

U.S. Senator Tina Smith applauds passage of key tribal priorities from mental health care to homeownership in government funding bill:

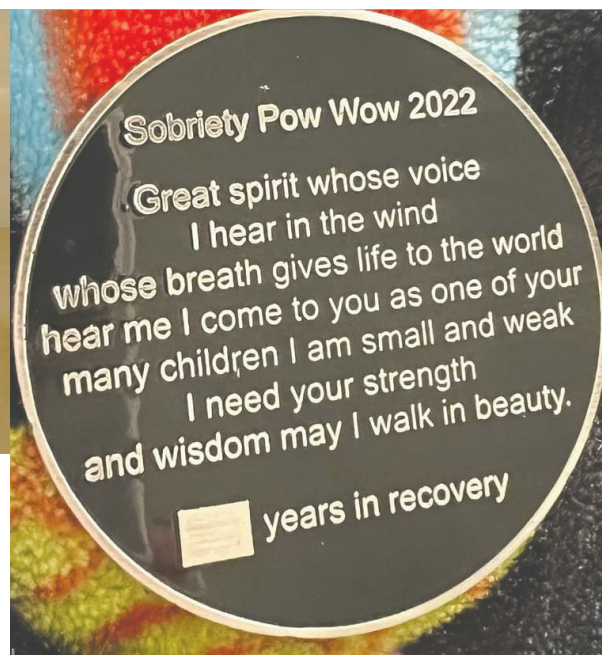
U.S. Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn.) applauded the bipartisan government funding bill, which includes a number of key Tribal provisions she has authored or championed. The Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which was signed into law by President Biden two weeks ago, will take important steps to help Native families achieve homeownership, provide culturally competent mental and behavioral health services, and provide adequate funding for the Indian Health Service. "This bill is a historic investment in hard working families in Minnesota and across this country," said Sen. Smith. "It gives us the tools to make significant progress on upholding our commitments to Tribal Nations, lowering health care costs, tackling the mental health crisis, and more. I was proud to vote yes on a bill that will give Minnesota, and our country, needed resources to build a stronger future." The Omnibus Appropriations Bill includes many key provisions authored or championed by Sen. Smith. These new laws will: Establish grants for Tribal governments, Tribal organizations, urban Indian organizations, and Tribal health programs to receive funds for culturally-competent mental and behavioral health services for Native Americans; Provide parity for Tribal courts in splitting retirement plan assets in divorce proceedings; Advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service through 2024; Help Native families living in rural areas achieve homeownership through provisions from Senator Smith's bipartisan Native American Rural Homeownership Act; and other important provisions. Source: *Tina Smith Press Release*.

GRATTITUDE

NEW YEAR'S EVE SOBRIETY POWWOW

By MAAJIITAAZIIBIKWE, MARY SAM

RIGHT: District I Representative Virgil Wind and staff distributed recovery medalions to over 150 attendees who were celebrating the new year being clean and sober.



The 2022 Annual New Year's Eve Sobriety Powwow was a huge success, with over 700 people in attendance at the new District I Community Center. It was hosted by the District I office and partners including Mille Lacs Band Health and Human Services and Behavioral Health Program and supported by countless employees and volunteers. Representative Virgil Wind noted his excitement and gratitude for the ability to "help others bring in the New Year clean and sober." A special Miigwech to those who sponsored dance specials, including District II Representative Wendy Merrill, District III Representative Harry Davis, Secretary/Treasurer Sheldon Boyd, Am Vets, and Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures. Additional thanks to emcee Redwing Thomas, host drums Little Otter and Young Kingbird, Arena Directors Nick Sam and Donald "Duck" White, Lead Dancers Bobby Eagle and Wendy Merrill, and Elder Joe Nayquonabe Sr. for providing the invocation. This year's event included a successful vendor fair.

Two new additions to the event included gifting attendees who are walking the path of recovery from mood altering drugs and alcohol a recovery coin along with an opportunity to participate in a gratitude activity sponsored by the family of the late David "Amik" Sam. Nearly 50 years ago, David was co-founder of American Indian Services Half way House Annual Sobriety Powwow held at the American Indian Center, when living free from alcohol and celebrating being clean began to take hold in the urban community. In honor of David, who practiced living gratefully, attendees were invited to participate in an activity and drawing with prizes provided by the Sam family and Representative Wind. Participants filled out a note card where they were asked what they are most grateful for now that they are living clean and sober.

Listed on the right are a few comments and reminders about how living clean and sober has created a moment to reflect and

practice gratitude in the coming new year.

The coins and gratitude activity reminded many about the value of gathering at the beginning of a new year creating a safe, clean, and sober event, and changing the cycle of addiction that many of our families are all too familiar with.

What I am grateful for now that I am clean and sober

- Doing things on my own • No guilt and shame • Substances no longer control my thoughts and actions • I was abused as a kid and recovering from the harm, I still choose to not do drugs or drink • Family • Self-respect • Respect of my community •
- My children trust me again • Feel productive • For the Elders who stuck by me •
- I contribute • Responsible • Positive example for kids and community •
- For my trials and tribulations because I can face them sober • Less ego • Humility • I can prove how wonderful life is • Enjoy life • Sober and clean is Kool • I have a future •
- Walking the Red Road • I can be a good parent •
- Watch my kids grow up and be part of their lives now • People • Opportunities •
- I feel blessed to be clean • Family can count on me now — day or night •
- Enjoy each day • Remember each day • Stop the cycle of abuse and addiction •
- Clarity of mind • Attend ceremonies • Trust • No longer a batterer •
- Faith • Present for my children • Physical, emotional, spiritual health •
- Wellbeing for the next 7 generations • Living the good life • Inspire others •
- Break cycle of generational trauma • Another chance • Community • Healing •
- My kids are returned to me • I can forgive myself • Being alive •
- I just love life • Helping others heal • A home to live in • A job •
- New connections • Be the person Creator wants me to be • A good mom •
- A great daughter • My mind • Creating better memories • Fellowship • Creators grace •
- Responsible • Freedom from drugs • A clear head • An open heart •
- I am starting to like myself • Quit using meth • Get my looks back •
- To be the person that I now can love •
- Minobimaadiziiwin! •

MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

WINTER LEGENDS

By OBIZAN, LEE STAPLES, MILLE LACS BAND ELDER CULTURAL ADVISOR

I remember when I was a child, I could hardly wait until the first snow fell because that meant the telling of legends could start.

Our legends are traditionally told only during the winter. I think this is because a lot of our people were busy in the summer. When I was young, we were told that if the legends were told in the summer — out of season — we'd end up with a frog in our bed.

I was raised by my uncle and aunt, who I refer to as my mom and dad. I was four months old when they took me in as their child. When it started snowing, right away I would ask my mom to tell me these legends. They would be told after dark. She would always tell me, "Please try to stay awake because these characters that I'm talking about are powerful Manidoog (spirits)." She said by listening to the legends, you could acquire some power or gift from the spirits she was talking about. So she would get upset with me if I fell asleep.

There was a lot of respect shown toward those legends. She would start telling them maybe in November, about the first or second weekend when we'd usually have our first snowfall. And she'd tell them practically every night during November and December. There were a lot of teachings in those legends. A lot of the legends relate to our belief system and our relationship with the animals. And many of those legends dealt with respect. They taught that we should respect the animals and other creatures in this world.

Then in January or so, she'd say, "Out of respect for these legends, now I'm going to send them back." She needed to send the characters in the legends back where they came from. So she'd say, "I'm going to repeat these legends I told you earlier." And she'd retell them in January, February, and March.

Some of the legends I remember. I have told some of them in the winter time.

Our Anishinaabe songs

were also taught to me as a child. In the winter, my dad would bring out a small drum. He loved to sing in the evenings, and he had a wide variety of songs that he would sing each night. I learned to recognize a lot of those songs. He would sing some of the songs that we use in our ceremonial dances. He would sing love songs or what they called sweetheart songs. He would sing moccasin game songs. Above all, what these people gave me is the knowledge of the language. That's all that was spoken at home. Along with that, they showed the importance that they placed on our teachings — the gifts to us as a people from the Creator. My mom would spend many hours sewing blankets to be offered to those powers we rely on as a people. The many blankets she sewed were utilized as offerings at our ceremonial dances or at the Mide Lodge. Along with that, she would take great care in cooking the best for these ceremonies. There were countless ways they showed me the respect we need to show to that which we were given as a people.

This is what some of our Anishinaabe children are missing today. A lot of the parents today choose to believe the lies that we were told: that the teachings we were given had no value. When you are in attendance at a ceremonial dance, take a moment and feel what is there when the drum is sounded.

The sound of that drum embraces your Anishinaabe spirit. The very same thing happens when you are able to speak and understand the language. Hearing and understanding these legends in the language nurtures your Anishinaabe spirit. The songs do that, also. All of what we have been given soothes our Anishinaabe spirit. If each and every one of us chooses to bring those ways back, we can only bring peace and harmony to ourselves individually, as families, and as communities.

This article by Obizaan, Lee Staples, was first published in the Mille Lacs Messenger. It is reprinted here to preserve his teachings and bring them to the next generation.

To my friends in Legislature, with live-streaming, Revisor of Statutes, and Title 17 Chapter 3 Institutional Investment Committee, you found common ground and made three goals a reality, and I thank you. And you did it in four years. Simply amazing.

This Legislative Branch is in our temporary care and we will pass this on to the next generation.

Darcie BigBear, Deanna Sam, Semira Kimpson (who I make sure knows what I know), Brianna Boyd, Hannah Valento, Adam Candler, Mel Towle, Kianna Morrison (we miss you), Slippery Joe Jensen, and Valerie Harrington-Wind.

It's friendship and teamwork that is core to this work product.

Impact

The full impact of live-streaming of sessions of Band Assembly remains to be seen.

Live-streaming is not a one-way street and it's the people of the Band, the viewers, that are breathing life into the live-stream and making this something more than we all imagined.

We didn't foresee a session with over 600 viewers this year and other sessions with 200 to 300 hundred viewers.

Regular sessions consistently have over 100 viewers, which shows ownership.

In the First 100 Days statement I wrote; "People in power should not be allowed to be comfortable. Those in power need to be watched and constantly evaluated by those not in power to guard against the tendencies of human nature."

I still believe that.

The impact of the Revisor of Statutes is legacy. The bulk of the material of the Revisor of Statutes rides on the shoulders of the work of Band Assemblies of the past 40 years. The written laws.

The legacy of their work has been completely catalogued, guidelines for storage have been established by legislative order, and current statutes have been republished in new books that are free to Band members.

Publications and scheduled updates in hard copy and electronic media are invaluable to elected officials and staff in their work of drafting bills and resolutions to continue the business of lawmaking.

Hard copies are also sent to various institutions, including the Library of Congress, where now the Mille Lacs Band Statutes take a place on the shelves among other nations for historical record.

Again, staff made this a reality and surpasses what I had in mind.

The impact of the Investment Committee is generational. Concerning establishment of the Investment Committee has significance that cannot be overstated at this point.

There are various types of investments: personal, retirement 401k, family fortunes for example. And there are the Institutional Investments of organizations and governments, large entities that have specific needs and industry standards.

Institutional-size investments in best practice have a diverse group of professionals overseeing the portfolio because of the size and diversity, called investment boards.

During this first term, there was an independent analysis of Mille Lacs Band investments that gave sound reason for the law that now mandates an Investment Committee.

The need was clear.

The same laws that applied 35 years ago when then Secretary-Treasurer Doug Sam and OMB oversaw a total government budget of some \$2 million and had accounts at Onamia Bank for payroll, etc., simply were inadequate for the size and complexities of our current government and investments after 30 years of gaming revenue.

A Landmark Financial Event. A New Beginning.

Now a financial event took place just last week that marks a new era for the investments of the Mille Lacs Band.

In order for this event to be possible, major financial structures needed to be in place.

"PEOPLE IN POWER SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO BE COMFORTABLE. THOSE IN POWER NEED TO BE WATCHED AND CONSTANTLY EVALUATED BY THOSE NOT IN POWER TO GUARD AGAINST THE TENDENCIES OF HUMAN NATURE." ~ SHELDON BOYD

Title 17 Chapter 3 Institutional Investment Committee was signed into law. And contracts with Verus Investments and Northern Trust Bank, two investment companies that best fit our needs, were ratified by Band Assembly.

These changes have essentially redefined the position of Secretary-Treasurer moving forward.

Our Investment Committee currently consists of seven members; Secretary-Treasurer as the Chair, Commissioner of Finance Mel Towle as Vice Chair, Band member from District III Kathryn Davis, Madame Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin,

who is a non-voting member because of Division of Powers, and three to five investment professionals with years of experience in Amy Jensen, Andy Christiansen, and Carol Peterfeso.

Keep in mind that Amy, Andy, and Carol are volunteering their expertise and time to the welfare of the people of the Mille Lacs Band, and history needs to recognize these inaugural committee members for their kindness. These are our friends.

This last year, after months of evaluation and planning beginning on January 3, 2023, the investment portfolios of the Mille Lacs Band began a transfer process from existing financial institutions Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley to Northern Trust Bank.

Verus Investments will now be advising on the management of our investments, ending a decades-long investment structure that demanded better oversight, fee structure, and accountability to the Mille Lacs Band Assembly fulfilling the duties of the Secretary-Treasurer.

Now I take this time and I want all Band members to recognize the leaders behind this landmark financial event; Commissioner of Finance Mel Towle and Chris Waite of OMB.

Mel and Chris have worked tirelessly over these past months with the finance teams of Ann Westriech of Verus, and Karson Wattles of Northern Trust Bank to prepare for this change to move investment management in a more positive and accountable direction.

These investments are the financial security for coming generations.

Investments was a mountain that led to a new beginning. In closing, why didn't we just leave things as they were? Could've just took my check and said "Investments are fine, we're making money."

Why try to conquer this mountain? Investments may not quite be on the same level as treaties and Reservation boundaries, but it's close.

Just as fighting to get the treaty recognized wasn't quite on par with negotiating those treaties and agreeing to the Reservation boundaries, now that's pressure.

My point is, those people long ago didn't back down either.

Our grandparents survived and stood up when it was their turn. And it also took friends to help them through those times, they didn't do it alone.

When they were burned out of their village by Murray Beach and many of our grandparents ran north along the shore to around here someplace, a man from Onamia fed them and helped along the way.

Batiste Sam told me about why they built the Four Seasons Room at the museum: "Because we didn't want people to forget."

My mom, Grace Boyd, recalling how she was cheated out of land. With the payment, she bought a pack of cigarettes.

My Dad, Raining Boyd, refused to sell his allotment when people came and told him he would lose it to taxes. He was being lied to, because it's nontaxable.

People all around this room have similar stories.

The horror stories of the boarding school era where the talked of angels but sent demons.

People getting off the wagons in White Earth and walking back to Mille Lacs, refusing to leave this home.

We were fought every inch of the way to be in this room this morning. I mentioned these unpleasant memories to point out that all along the way, there were people who helped us get to today.

What helps me is knowing there are still people today who care about us, our communities, our past, and the work ahead of us.

There is a word I would like to leave you with this morning as we all look to the future — friendship.

Stay humble and be kind.

Now before we move, on I would like to recognize Mel Towle, Chris Waite, Katy Radunz, Joni Wall, and the OMB staff for keeping this government running.

And to the elected officials and staff for exercising their authority and making this time period incredibly productive.

I call to order the 3rd Session of the 20th Band Assembly on Tuesday, January 10, 2023.



During his address at the State of the Band on January 10, 2023 Secretary Treasurer Sheldon Boyd said, "We were fought every inch of the way to be in this room this morning. I mentioned these unpleasant memories to point out that all along the way there were people who helped us get to today."

STATE OF THE BAND ADDRESS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE MELANIE BENJAMIN DELIVERS THE 38TH ANNUAL STATE OF THE BAND ADDRESS

Boozhoo, Aaniin, Anishinabeg-dook. Mino gizhigad noongoom Mandamin indizinakaz, Melanie Benjamin indigoo. Mr. Speaker, Members of the Band Assembly and the Judiciary, and most important, fellow Band members of the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

This is a wonderful day. For the first time since the pandemic began, we are able to gather here together for this event, in person. And it feels good!

Miigwech to Obisan for speaking on our behalf, so we can begin in a good way; to the Ceremonial Drum and Waabishkibines for setting the dish; to the Mille Lacs All Veterans for posting the flags, and to the singers today.

And finally, welcome to our other community members, our Band family members, neighbors, friends, employees, dignitaries and guests, and everyone watching on live-stream, you are all warmly welcome today.

By Band Statute, the Chief Executive must provide a report on the State of the Band to the Band Assembly on the second Tuesday of January each year. This report is meant to inform the Band Assembly of our work from the past year and our goals for the future.

When I attended my first State of the Band Address in 1990, there were only about 100 people in the room. And that was a lot for a government gathering. Across all departments, we had only about 80 employees back then, and our meal was potluck. It was possible for Chief Executive Gahbow to provide details about all areas of government in about 30 minutes.

Today, we have about 800 government employees, instead of 80. They are hard-working, devoted people, so there is a lot to report on about our Band. On your tables, you will find a copy of our Annual Report of the State of the Band. This report is 73 pages long. If I were to tell you about all the information in this report, it would take exactly 511 minutes, or eight and a half hours.

So, sit back, get comfortable, and maybe we will all be home by 7 p.m.

I'm not going to keep you here all day, but I want to be clear that it is not possible for me to summarize all of our work from 2022. It isn't even possible to just summarize the highlights. Instead, the State of the Band Report includes detailed information about much of the work we've been doing in the Executive Branch.

So, at this time, Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members of the Assembly, I hereby submit to you, for the official record, the 2022 Annual Report of the State of our Band.

I urge the Band Assembly to carefully study this report with a fine-toothed comb, because it tells the story of how each dollar you appropriated for the Executive Branch in 2022 was used to benefit Band members. And it lays the foundation for how we will move forward in 2023. The commissioners and I will be happy to discuss this and answer any questions at the next three-branch meeting.

Band members, I invite and encourage you, too, to please take this report home and read it carefully, so that you have all the information you need to know about the work done on your behalf, and all the opportunities available.

I am scheduling a community meeting for all Band members early this year, which our commissioners will all attend. We will be ready to answer your questions about this report.

Today, I will limit my remarks to information about the State of our Band that you will not find in the written report.

In many respects, the State of our Band depends on the state of our nation. Inflation, COVID-19, food insecurity, affordable housing, racial equity, voting rights, and the national opioid epidemic — these are all things our country is facing that



Governor Tim Walz provides a pre-recorded message for Band members during the annual State of the Band Address January 10, 2023.

directly impact our Band. The State of our Band also depends on the state of our Band members and how you all contribute to our Band. I will highlight some of your great work today as well.

Federal and State elections also impact our Band. Minnesotans have once again voted for Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan as our Governor and Lieutenant Governor, for Keith Ellison as our Attorney General, Julie Blaha as our State Auditor, and Steve Simon our State Auditor. Miigwech, Auditor Blaha, for being with us today.

I have said this many times, but I am going to say it again: Of all the governors and state leaders I have ever worked with going back to the late 1980s, I have never known any Administration to be this supportive of tribal rights and true partners with tribes as this State team. Chi Miigwech!

I also want to thank our congressional delegation; Senator Klobuchar, Senator Smith, Congressman Stauber, Congresswoman McCollum, and the rest of our delegation for your wonderful support.

There have been changes at the federal level, with the Republicans taking control of the House of Representatives and the Senate taken over by the Democrats. The Chief Executive at Mille Lacs is charged by Band Statute with conducting external relations with all other governments, which is the most time-consuming duty of this position.

While the political parties might have changed, our goal remains the same, which is to work with both political parties and independents to get as much done for our people as we can. When our diplomatic relations with the federal and state governments are strong, Band members benefit from new opportunities, and protection of our rights.

The year ahead will be a time of rapid change, as tribes everywhere deal with new problems, old problems, and unmet needs. But we can thrive in a world of change if we remain true to our values and are ready to face any challenge. All challenges must be faced together, squarely, and with courage. I pledge to you that we will meet these challenges with the best that is in us.

ECONOMY

2022 was a year of recovery for our businesses, which have remained competitive. Our economy grows stronger every day. We have a record number of Band members in leadership positions in our businesses, like Wewinabi, where about half the employees are Mille Lacs Band members.

Makwa Global, our government contracting arm, has tripled its revenue and landed their biggest contract yet — which will support future growth. And our latest venture, SLOTCO, has



Senator Tina Smith addressing Band members as she attends the annual State of the Band Address at Grand Casino Mille Lacs on January 10, 2023.

contracted with its first tribal casinos, and several others are in the pipeline.

The Mille Lacs Band does not have a tax-base like other governments, so our government is dependent on revenue from our businesses, federal contracts, state contracts, and grants.

With Senator Tina Smith and Congresswoman Betty McCollum fighting for the MCT Bands, we were relieved to receive a fair allocation of American Rescue plan and COVID-19 relief funding. Chi Miigwech to Senator Smith, who always fights for Mille Lacs Band members and who is here today.

Also, I am so proud of our Grants Department, because in 2022, over half of the grants that we applied for were approved. This rate of success is almost unheard of, for any tribe.

Miigwech to our Grants Director and her hardworking staff. And miigwech to Commissioner of Corporate Affairs Joe Nayquonabe Jr. and his team. Because of their leadership and the hard work of their teams, the Band members have not experienced a decline in direct services due to the pandemic.

DNR

Protecting our natural resources from external threats was a major focus of 2022 and will continue. Under the outstanding leadership of Commissioner Kelly Applegate, the Band is more heavily engaged in defending our sovereignty, tribal rights, and resources than in recent memory on many issues. Commissioner Applegate never seems to stop working.

There is one project that Band members need to pay close attention to. There is a proposed nickel mine near Tamarack, just 1.3 miles away from our Band lands near Round Lake in District II.

Nickel mining is a major threat to the environment. The practice has a consistent track record of harming water quality in water-rich places — exactly the area where the proposed mine is located. Aitkin county is one of the wettest areas of Minnesota. And to date, the mining company, Talon Metals, has made claims of responsible mining but has not provided data to prove those claims. This mine poses a serious threat to our citizens, water, resources, and our medicines.

This is a challenge that we faced head-on in 2022. We mobilized our forces to get the attention of the Department of Energy and the White House, to make sure we have a seat at the table. There were times when we had to remind federal officials that their legal trust responsibility is to us — not the foreign corporations and mining companies. I have met with the U.S. Secretary of Energy twice about this topic. I have talked to the Secretary of Interior, provided testimony to the

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STATE OF THE BAND ADDRESS from page 8

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and had a meeting at the White House.

Underneath the earth near District II, we are told there is one of the largest high-quality sources of nickel in the world. There is national and international pressure to take that nickel out of the earth. They say they need it to support batteries for electric vehicles. They even call this “green nickel” as if nickel mining is friendly for the environment.

But nickel mining is one of the most toxic forms of mining in the world. It produces acid mine drainage that contaminates water. Even the dust that blows off the nickel into the air while it is being brought up from the ground or transported can cause toxic poison and harm waters and resources.

Talon Metals’ headquarters are in the British Virgin Islands. It has partnered on the Tamarack Mine project with Rio Tinto, an international mining conglomerate, that is headquartered in the United Kingdom and Australia. Rio Tinto has a track record of past practices that have damaged the environment.

We need to caution the world about swapping one source of pollution for another. We believe that we can help create a green economy without relying on practices that threaten our most precious resource that gives us life: our water.

With strong support from the Band Assembly, we are doing whatever we can to make sure that Band members are not collateral damage from mining pollution.

I also want to make it clear that the Mille Lacs Band supports electric vehicles as a way of reducing carbon. We were the first tribe in Minnesota to receive an Electric Vehicle Charging Station award, through a demonstration project at the University of Minnesota.

We just don’t believe that nickel is the only way to create electric batteries. Tesla, which is owned by Elon Musk, already has a contract to purchase nickel from Tamarack. But I don’t know many Band members who could ever afford to buy a Tesla. We will continue to support electric vehicles and green energy, but nickel mining is not a green industry.

We are also doing our part to fight climate change with renewable energy. Our latest efforts include a solar energy project that was installed at Grand Casino Hinckley last year. This project will save over \$3.3 million dollars in energy costs and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

EDUCATION

Our education department went above and beyond this year. We shifted back to in-person education, and Nay Ah Shing Schools received excellent scores from an outside, independent agency review. Our strong commitment to teaching Ojibwe language, culture, and history was acknowledged, as well as the many opportunities and services we provide to all learners and their families.

Many Band members achieved learning milestones in 2022. With support from Nay Ah Shing and the PSEO program at Central Lakes College, Chase Sam was able to complete her junior and senior year of high school in just one year. And when she graduated early, she had college credits. Chase is also a very talented artist. Nay Ah Shing educators brought her art to the attention of Rosetta Stone, which was so impressed that they



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin provides the annual State of the Band Address on January 10, 2023.

recruited and hired Chase to create digital art for the Rosetta Stone Ojibwe Language app. Congratulations, Chase!

Aanjibimaadizing, which is our 477 Program, also played a big role in education this year. Forty of our youth in Aanji made the honor roll, 16 graduated from high school, and eight started college.

Through our Education program, 113 students are receiving scholarships from the Band, including 69 Band members and 44 descendants. Many are doing great things.

While studying at the University of Minnesota, Alicia de la Cruz heard about a fellowship with the Bell Museum of Natural History, which was seeking artists for their residence program. Known for her beautiful bead work, Alicia found the courage to apply for a fellowship.

She was selected for the Artist in Residence Fellowship at the Bell Museum. Her project combines beaded art with science and nature to teach others about the need to protect endangered plants — especially those plants important for our culture.

Band member Brian Dorr just received his PhD from the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. Congratulations to Dr. Dorr! Both Tawnya Stewart and District II Representative Wendy Merrill achieved their Master’s degree in Business Administration — both of them now have two master’s degrees.

And our three Band member attorneys continue to make valuable contributions to the Band. Aarik Robertson and Syngen Kanassatega are both members of our Legal Services Board of Directors, and Sarah Oquist is the Chair of Woodlands National Bank. Sarah is also in high demand as a motivational speaker and just emceed our girls leadership conference.

Syngen also serves as my Legal and Policy Counsel in the Office of the Chief Executive. He is very humble person, but I just have to give him a shout-out. I work closely with Syngen every day and depend on his expert advice regarding our Band statutes, legal research, and policy. He is a brilliant attorney as well as a Drumkeeper who keeps our culture close. He is a role model to many.

But what I did not know about him until recently, is that he has another status called “TicToc famous!”

I don’t know much about TicToc so I’m not totally sure what that means, but I was told he has over 33,000 followers! They watch and learn from his serious talks about federal Indian law and history as well as his very funny videos poking fun at many things.

Miigwech to all our Band member attorneys for their hard work.

Our Band is fortunate to have so many talented, intelligent people as Band members. The challenge is creating a path for jobs in the fields where we need Band members working the most. Like education, the medical profession, and science and technology, to name just a few.

Several years ago, I challenged Corporate Commissioner Joe Nayquonabe to create a strategic plan to increase Band member leadership in our businesses. At that time, only a handful of Band members were in key leadership positions at the Corporate Commission. He put a plan together to grow our own leaders through professional development, supporting their education and creating opportunities for our youth to observe and to learn about running our businesses.

That plan worked, and it’s still working. Today, more Band members are in leadership positions than ever before. I commend Commissioner Nayquonabe for making that happen.

For 2023, I hereby direct Commissioner Nicole Anderson and Commissioner Niijo Gonzalez to work together to do the same thing for Band members in the Medical, Human Services, Science, and Education fields. We have a Mille Lacs blueprint that worked at Corporate. We just need to customize it for other professions.

And we need to start young. I just attended a speech event at Pine City High School, and was so impressed and proud to see many Band 7th graders at the front of the room, giving brilliant speeches with confidence!

Public speaking is an important leadership skill. The time to begin preparing our youth for professional careers is right now. But family plays the most critical role. We all need to support

and nurture the gifts and dreams of our youth.

And by the way, I invited one of the young ladies from the speech event to attend today and critique my speech. So, if I seem nervous when I flub up, it’s because there could be a very tough 7th grade critic in the audience.

We also need a solid strategic plan that overhauls how we educate, motivate, and compensate our hard-working employees. I have my fingers crossed hoping that we might have a new Commissioner of Administration confirmed by the Band Assembly within just a few days.

If confirmed, his job will be to take the best recommendations of our contractor, Bluestone, who we have been working with, customize these for our needs, and put a plan together that launches our Band government forward as one of the best tribal employers in the United States. That will be no small task, but it is very possible.

In fact, that’s what Commissioner Anderson did in HHS. She took the contractor’s recommendations, made changes, and built a unique plan that is designed for the Band’s needs. I direct the other commissioners to follow in that path in the coming year.

YOUTH

No generation was more impacted by COVID-19 than our youth. Their paths were severely interrupted during the time of their lives when the biggest growth, change, and learning is supposed to happen. Mental health has become the second biggest public health crisis after COVID-19.

Throughout Indian Country, a majority of Native youth have struggled with depression and anxiety. In a local study, 58% of Native youth in Mille Lacs County and 67% in Pine County have experienced depression or anxiety.

This is not a comfortable topic to talk about, but we must, because it is a crisis. There are many ways we can help our youth as a government, community, and as families. But sometimes, professional mental health support is what is needed to save lives.

After one of our youth approached Commissioner Anderson concerned about some of her friends, we agreed that offering intensive mental health services to our youth in every district has to be a priority. In 2023, HHS is already expanding these services. But we have to speed up growth of youth mental health services in all three districts.

Since COVID-19 began, the demand for mental health in our country has skyrocketed. The average American may need to wait six months — or even up to one year — for a first appointment with a psychiatrist. We are committed to doing much better than that for our youth. HHS’s goal is to provide psychiatrists or counselors who can offer immediate support whenever a child or young person is in crisis to get them any medical attention they need.

Education, Human Services, Aanjibimaadizing, and Tribal Courts must all work together closely to help identify kids in crisis who may be suffering in silence.

Recognizing this crisis, we worked very hard in 2022 to increase youth outreach in almost every area.

Last year, I announced that I had been working with a group of youth to plan a youth leadership conference designed by

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Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan taking a group selfie at the 2022 Young Women’s Leadership conference, “Finding your Oshkiniigikwe SuperPower.”

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young women for young women. With support from Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, this conference was a huge success. It was called, "Finding your Oshkiniigikwe SuperPower." The purpose was to help girls discover their talents and choose a good path for their life's journey.

Over 160 Band youth participated. We even had a couple of women from St. Croix attend, Eileen Skinaway and her daughter. And they are looking forward to the second event! The day was packed with events and breakout sessions with inspirational speakers such as Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. There were breakout sessions about how to write your own music, create your own video game, and sew a ribbon skirt.

Miigwech to our youth committee members who worked so hard to plan this conference: Shaylynn DeCoteau, Aleah Hill, Mercedes Misquadace, Jazlene White, Roylynn Benjamin, Nindaanis Benjamin, Joscelyn Skinaway, Tammy Gahbow, and Angelique White.

And of course, this could not have happened without our adult mentors who volunteered their time. Besides myself, they were Baabiitaw Boyd, Valerie Harrington, Andrea Bolin, Beth Gruber, Cheyanne Peet, LeAnn Benjamin, Brandi Smith, Chandell Boyd, and Kim Sam.

Miigwech to all. You made a very important impact on 160 youth.

Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures put a new focus on a Youth Ambassador Program. 120 youth worked for our gaming entities, giving them opportunities to explore careers and build skills for their academic and professional life. It also gave Corporate staff a chance to listen to and learn from our youth. MLCV also created a youth Intern Program.

In Aanjibimaadizing, nearly 500 youth participated in our Youth Services Program. So many camps, events, sports, and activities were offered. Financial incentives were created for youth, recognizing the awards, honor rolls, and letter grade improvement that Aanji youth earned. 110 youth participated in culture and language classes through Aanji, 311 youth took part in traditional activities, and 188 participated in sports provided through Aanji. The Mille Lacs Band now has one of the best youth programs in all of Indian country.

Aanji has been a game-changer for not just our youth, but also the adults who are served. There are 72 other tribes in the United States that operate 477 programs like Aanji. Each year, the federal government chooses one program for a national award for excellence. In 2022, of these 72 tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs nominated our Aanji program, which won this national award for outstanding service. Three years ago, our 477 program was in need of attention. Just three years later, we are the best in the nation.

Miigwech to Baabiitaw Boyd, Tammi Wickstrom, the Aanji staff, and everyone who has any involvement with Aanji, for your dedication, hard work, and devotion to our kids. I also want to thank our Education, Human Services, and other staff who work with our youth. You all work around the clock — sometimes at the expense of your own health and personal lives. We are very grateful for all that you do.

OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN

There is another challenge we face involving our children. As of October, 214 Mille Lacs Band children were placed outside the home in 2022 by court order.

Five years ago, we had over 70 licensed Band member foster care homes. At last count, we had about 40. Only about one half of these homes have children placed, because the remaining homes are only licensed to take in relatives. The majority of the homes without children are licensed for relative care only, or have already received guardianship of relative children.

Right now, there are very few Band foster homes that can take in a child who is not a relative. This means that our children are being sent to other homes outside the Band or even facilities.

For our oldest generation of Band members living today, there were boarding schools that stripped our children of their culture and identity and caused generational trauma. Today, our youngest generation faces a similar loss of culture when they are sent to foster homes outside the Band.

This is not a problem our Band government can solve. I'm asking every Band member to look inside of your heart, your home, your family, and your time, and to think about whether

you might be able to open your home to a Band child in need who has nowhere else to go except outside of our community.

The whole point of the Indian Child Welfare Act was to empower tribes to keep Indian children in our communities. That only works if the community has homes willing to take the children in.

This is a major commitment for any family to make, so I also want to take this moment to thank the current Band families who provide foster care today. You are true heroes for our children and our Band. Chi Miigwech.

We are a very generous people, and we are fortunate to have many Band members who live their lives finding ways to help their fellow Band members. When they see a problem, they try to solve it.

One of those people is Asinikwe Sam, who was the founder of the Women's Healing Circle, which celebrated its one-year anniversary of bringing Native women together weekly as a supportive circle. Together, they help each other deal with grief, loss, breaking the cycles of trauma. They learn and practice traditions and crafts, promote healing and support each other through life's challenges.

Another person is Dan Wind. We lost many Band Elders to the pandemic, including Elders who taught the game of Makiz-

"TOGETHER, I KNOW WE WILL OVERCOME OUR CHALLENGES AND NEVER LOSE HOPE, BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN OUR BAND MEMBERS AND WHO WE ARE. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, STRONG, AND COURAGEOUS PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE BLOOD OF WARRIORS. "

in to young men. Makizin is a traditional game that the federal government once banned. Many years ago, some of our Elders brought it back. Makizin has been important in the healing journey of many men. Last year, Dan Wind devoted himself to doing his part to keep the game alive. He spent time fund-raising prize money for a Makizin Ataagewin Tournament to honor the memories of Elmer Nayquonabe, Perry Benjamin, Larry Wade, and David "Amik" Sam, and to make sure the game lives on.

Miigwech to Asinikwe Sam, Dan Wind, and all the other Band members who quietly step up to help others in need of healing without expecting anything in return.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

In Community Development, our focus has been on addressing our housing shortage. In 2023, we can expect housing and structures that are more accessible for Elders and those with disabilities. With the housing initiative budget and Elder and handicap renovation program, homes will be constructed and renovated that address many different needs.

Some very good news is that our neighborhoods are getting safer. Tribal Police have worked hard to remove some of the biggest drug dealers from our community. Under the Tribal Law and Order Act, the U.S. Department of Justice has taken over prosecution of certain major crimes that are committed on the Mille Lacs Reservation.

With our SAUSA grant, the Solicitor General and U.S. Attorney have been able to target outsiders from big cities intending to bring enormous quantities of poisonous drugs into our communities. Recently, one major dealer was arrested in the cities who had five pounds of meth and heroin laced with fentanyl. These drugs were meant to be delivered to the Mille Lacs Reservation. Hundreds of thousands of dollars of drugs that kill people were stopped from coming into our homelands. Miigwech to our Tribal Police, Solicitor General Dogeagle, and U.S. Attorney Andy Lugar and his staff for making our communities safer.

In 2023, a major public safety priority for the Band must be to continue investing in neighborhood safety by increasing street-lighting in all districts, which I also ask the Band Assembly to support. As our Housing Director Dan Boyd has been saying, we need to light up our communities.

Communities also become safe when our community members and youth have a place to gather. With our beautiful new community center now open in District I, it is high time that we call it something besides "The New Community Center"! Under our Band Statutes, one duty of the Chief Executive is to serve as legal Custodian of all Band Property. I am happy to announce a contest for naming the new community center, open to District I Band members of all ages. You will find details about this contest in the next Band newspaper, and more about the exciting prize.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Many years ago, the late Jim Clark talked about how language and culture were the only solution to the problems in our community. He told me and many others that when people lose their language and culture, they can lose their spirits and go down bad paths.

Language revitalization has been one of my key initiatives since I first took office, not because we are living in the past, not because we are nostalgic, and not because we want to force people to live their lives a certain way. We are focused on language and culture because they are what make us Anishinaabe. Language and culture save lives.

The root cause of addiction, poverty, homelessness, and violence is loss of identity. This can be traced back 150 years, when federal policies tried to strip us of our language, traditions, ceremonies, and culture.

Today, even the federal government — which was once guilty of trying to destroy our culture and language — is stating that revitalizing our language and culture is critical for reversing the problems our people face in Indian country. The health and scientific community know this is true. Every Band member who has ever turned to language and culture to save their lives knows this is true.

Several weeks ago, the White House held a Tribal Nations Summit, and nearly every tribe in America was in attendance. There were several panel discussions, and one focused on Language Revitalization.

I was invited, along with the Chairman of the Cherokee Nation, to serve on a panel with Secretary Deb Haaland of the U.S. Department of Interior and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona. The topic was language revitalization.

The White House announced a new initiative, meant to help save Native languages. For Band members who are not living healthy lives and have tried everything else, language and culture have proven time and again to be the remedy.

In 2023, we will expand our language and culture efforts to work with the local public schools in each district. Ojibwe language instruction should be offered to our students in all public schools. This is now possible with our Rosetta Stone program. The Rosetta Stone project is not just benefitting Band members — Ojibwe-speaking tribes throughout the entire Great Lakes region and Canada are also using our program to revitalize Ojibwe for their communities.

Chi miigwech to all our Elders and voice actors who made this project possible, like Shirley Boyd, Joe Nayquonabe Sr., Betty Sam, Carol Nickaboine, and every other Band member who helped with this project.

During 2023, we will also continue our efforts to fully transform Nay Ah Shing into a true immersion school. Our new Commissioner of Education, Niijo Gonzalez, has expertise in Ojibwe immersion schools and is devoted to making this happen.

I also want to thank those in our community who have been inspirational for our youth and young adults to live healthy lives. Sports have always played a big role in how we support health and wellness and in how we come together to celebrate and support our young people.

One Band member who made a name for himself this year as an athlete is Montana Davis, who is an up-and-coming name in jujitsu and won a major tournament this year. Montana tried the sport and fell in love with it, and with training and commitment, he is excelling as an athlete. Congratulations, Montana.

We also have many young Band member athletes who were recruited or are being recruited right now to play in college sports like basketball and football.

And we have many Band member coaches who use their free time to support our youth. One Band member who made

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a name for himself as a boxer when he was young is District III Representative Harry Davis. District III members know him well, but many of you in Districts I and II may not realize that over 30 years ago, Harry created the first youth boxing club in his front yard, and for the past 30 years, Harry has probably taught at least 100 youth the fundamentals of boxing.

He continues to lead the youth boxing club to this day, quietly coaching and inspiring our kids in District III at the Davis Gym, where they learn about commitment, hard work, and pride in themselves. Miigwech, Representative Davis.

I also want to acknowledge Representative Virgil Wind's commitment to our youth and education. In his spare time away from the Band Assembly, he is still a leader of the Onamia School Board. Miigwech, Representative Wind, for your commitment to our youth and education.

ENROLLMENT

In 2022, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribes held a non-binding referendum election on the topic of enrollment. Non-binding means that the election results did not have the force of law.

The ballots contained two questions. The first was whether or not the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe should do away with blood quantum as a way of deciding who is eligible for membership. The second question asked whether each of the six bands should be given the authority to make its own sovereign decision about how it will decide who is eligible for enrollment.

A majority of MCT voters answered "yes" to both questions. But again, this was a non-binding referendum election.

On November 23, the MCT received final approval to hold a Secretarial Election about enrollment that WILL have binding results. This is huge news. It is possible this election could happen as early as May of 2023. So, we need to prepare. The MCT is using addresses from enrollment offices for sending out ballots. If you did not receive a ballot in the last election, there is an enrollment table outside this room. Please check with enrollments as soon as possible to confirm whether they have your correct mailing address.

I also want to thank our Mille Lacs Band delegates, who have put so much work into this process and conducted hundreds of hours of researching the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe and our Band's relationship with it. They have been calling for the creation of a Sovereignty Commission. There was good effort by the Band Assembly to add a Sovereignty Commission to our Statutes, but for several reasons, that bill did not move forward.

To simplify the process, this morning, I signed an Executive Order creating a Sovereignty Commission for Band members to continue this research and provide recommendations to the Band. A public meeting will be held for all Band members on this topic in February.

BIGGEST VICTORY FROM 2022 — RESERVATION BOUNDARY

There are times of emergency, when a nation and its leaders must bring their energies to bear on a single urgent task.

That was the duty our leaders faced in 1837, when they secured our rights to hunt, fish, and gather on millions of acres of land ceded to the United States.

That was the duty of our leaders in 1855, when they secured our Reservation on Mille Lacs Lake as our permanent home.

That was the duty our people faced from 1863 to 1925, when, despite massive theft of our timber and our land, and then the burning of our villages by the Mille Lacs County Sheriff, many Band members refused to abandon our Reservation. And we became known as the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band.

And that was the duty Art Gahbow faced in the 1970s and 1980s, when he led the Band out of poverty and into opportunity with our first casinos, and that was the duty Marge Anderson faced in the 1990s, when she defended our 1837 Treaty rights all the way to the Supreme Court.

More recently, we as leaders have faced the duty of defending the very existence of our Reservation from attacks by Mille Lacs County.

With persistence, diplomacy, and committed legal representation, we took down barriers put up in front of us, one by one.

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and the United States created our Reservation of approximately 61,000 acres in the Treaty of 1855. Under the Constitution, treaties are the supreme law of the land. After years of conflict created by Mille Lacs County, which interfered with our public safety because they believed our Reservation no longer existed, we finally had no choice but to file a lawsuit in Federal District Court in 2017. After decades of challenging whether our Reservation exists, the county finally got its answer.

March 4, 2022, will go down in history as the day that the Federal District Court ruled that our Treaty of 1855 is, indeed, the supreme law of the land: The Mille Lacs Reservation boundaries remain exactly as they were promised to us.

If you have not read Judge Susan Richard Nelson's decision, I highly recommend it. So much of our proud history is in



the pages of that decision.

There is one story that really caught my attention. One of our leaders, Shaboshkung, repeated the story of President Lincoln's promise to us. Shaboshkung said that President Lincoln told the Mille Lacs leaders to "Sit quiet where you are."

What the phrase "sit quiet" meant was "be peaceful." Shaboshkung said these words: "Why we were told this was because we had always been quiet and peaceable. They told us we might stay here a thousand years if we wished to. For 10 years, we will sit quiet here. Then for 100 years, and for 1,000 years. And if there be even one Mille Lacs living, then he will stay quietly by Mille Lacs."

Our ancestors refused to leave. Shawboshkung and other leaders fought for our homelands their entire lives. In the 1970s, a tribal Elder named George Bedausky gave a copy of Kappler's Treaties to Chief Executive Arthur Gahbow and DNR Commissioner Don Wedll. George had marked a page with the Mille Lacs Band's rights under the Treaties of 1837 and 1855. He knew they still existed. Chief Executive Gahbow promised George that he would continue the fight of our ancestors to have our rights recognized.

I worked for Chief Executive Art Gahbow and Chief Executive Marge Anderson. When Mille Lacs County began attacking the existence of our Reservation in the 1990s, we all knew that our job was to fight to preserve the Reservation promised to us in our treaties, just as our ancestors had done.

Mille Lacs Band members did stay for 10 years, and then for 100 years, and we are now into another 100 years of refusing to leave. And we will remain for another 1,000 years and more. These are our homelands, now and forever.

Judge Nelson ended her ruling with these words:

"Over the course of more than 160 years, Congress 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."

It is possible that the County will appeal this decision to the

U.S. Court of Appeals. Time will tell. This means we may need to keep fighting for our homelands.

Every generation has a defining point. For our generation, it was the fight to defend our homelands.

CONCLUSION

2022 was a year to remember for many reasons. As a community, we experienced some tragic loss. As a government, we made some important gains.

We are now in a cycle where the sun's path across the sky lasts a little longer each day, bringing more warmth and light. Our spiritual leaders tell us that there are powerful manidoog in both the sun and moon. Every day when the sun is highest in the sky — that manidoo looks down to check on us and take care of us. The manidoo in the moon has the power of correction and takes care of each of us when we need help and something has been forgotten or done in a way that is incorrect.

The sun that lights up our day and the moon that lights up our nights are both taking care of us at all times no matter how disconnected we might feel or how heavy things get.

The light creates energy that flows through, making us function as human beings. I was told that we are all so connected by that energy and our ancestors that we can experience discomfort when others are uncomfortable, without even having that knowledge in our minds. Whether we feel joy or anger toward another person, we are deeply connected to one another. Nothing can ever change that.

It is our duty to try to do good work and be mindful and compassionate, and embrace the gifts given to us. We were meant to be in the sun and to receive help from the manidoog. This help is always there for us. That is where we can find hope.

One hundred and fifty years ago, when Shawboshkung and our leaders gave the President an ultimatum, they vowed that we would never give up our

homelands even if there was only one Mille Lacs Band member left standing.

Think about the times they were living in, when nearly everything had been stolen from them. There was no help from government, no programs, no services.

It is not Band government programs that have sustained us in our homelands across three districts for hundreds of years.

It's not money or goods and services. None of that existed when our ancestors stood up to the United States of America. They spoke truth to power, daring anyone to challenge their resolve. That absolutely amazing strength and courage in the face of losing nearly everything else came from somewhere.

It came from the blood of their ancestors before them and because they knew who they were. Their cultural and spiritual identity as Anishinaabe was nearly all they had left behind and it was more than enough for them to fight for their way of life for generations of grandchildren who would come after them.

We are those generations. Their courage is why every one of us is here today. Like them, we can challenge injustice and fight for our rights. We can be self-determined, taking care of our families and one another. We can do these things if we hold our culture, language, and traditions strong.

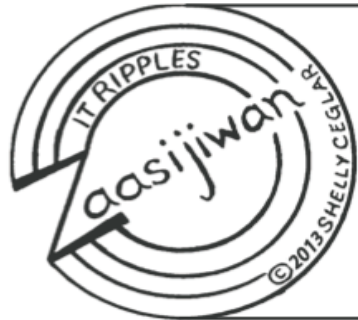
Shawboshkung knew who he was. Embracing and being proud of who we are is what will sustain generations of grandchildren who come after us, through whatever battles lay ahead.

As we move through 2023, let us continue to work for progress, to seek out healing and hope, and to fight to protect our Band when we must.

Together, I know we will overcome our challenges and never lose hope, because I believe in our Band members and who we are. You are beautiful, strong and courageous people who have the blood of warriors. You all have gifts we were given from the manidoog, who are here for us all the time.

Together, let us walk together into the future with hope in our hearts, with the protection of our culture and the courage of our ancestors. Working together, we will create the better future we all seek for this generation and the next to come.

Miigwech.



Biboong—When it is Winter

"Biboong, Manidoo-Giizisoon idash Gichi-Manidoo-Giizis idash Namebini-Giizis ongow giizisoon izhinikaazowag. Biboong, niwii-kopigozimin megwaayaak. Giikiyosewag, ininiwag. Gii-aagimikewag gaye. Gakina gegoo gii-nitaawigwaasowag ingiw ikwewag. Gii-mazinigwaasowag. Gii-tibaajimowag idash gii-aadizookewag. Gii-zhooskwajiwewag ingiw abinoojiiyag. Gii-kagwejikaniidiwag gii-aagimosewaad. Geyaabi naasaab niwiikwajitoomin noongom. Gichi-Miigwech!"

("When it is winter, Little Spirit-Moon (December) and Great-Spirit-Moon (January) and Sucker-Moon (February) these moons/months they are called. When it is winter, we did move inland in the woods. They hunted, the men. They made snowshoes also. Everything they knew how to sew, those women. They did beading/embroidering. They told stories and they told sacred stories. They went sliding those children. They raced each other when they snowshoed. Still yet the same, we try to do things today. Great-thank-you!")

Bezhig—1

OJIBWEMOWIN (Ojibwe Language)

Double vowel system of writing Ojibwemowin.
—Long vowels: AA, E, II, OO
Waabooz—as in father
Miigwech—as in jay
Aaniin—as in seen
Mooz—as in moon

—Short Vowels: A, I, O
Dash—as in about
Ingiw—as in tin
Niizho—as in only

—A glottal stop is a voiceless nasal sound as in A'aw.

—Respectfully enlist an elder for help in pronunciation and dialect differences.

4 Verbs

Root Verb & They
VAI—verb, animate, intransitive.
Root command:
Waabi!—S/he sees.
Waabiwag.—They see.
VAI/He/She verb takes no object.
VTI—verb, transitive, inanimate.
Root: Waabandan!—See it!
Owaabandaanaawaa(n).—They see it (them).
Owaabandaanaawaan iniw apabiwinaan.
They see em those chairs.
VTA—verb, transitive, animate. Root:
Waabam!—See him/her!
Owaabamaawaan i'iw amikwan.—
They see h/h that beaver.

Niizh—2

Circle the 10 underlined Ojibwe words in the letter maze. (Translations below)

A. Gisinaa agwajiiing. Gichi-noodin gaye dash ningiikajimin
B. Gii-kimiwan bijiinaago. Gii-soogipon awasonaago miinawaa.
C. Zaaga'iganing gashkadin. Gii-maajaawag ingiw zhiishiibag.
D. Ani-biboong, manisewag. Mishiiwaati goon omanisaadaanaawaan.
E. Omanisawaawaan nimishoomis waasa iwidi megwaayaak.
F. Ozzhigewag. Odoozhitooanaawaa waakaa'igan. Odoozhitawaawaan dewe'iganan.
G. Baanimaa wii-piindigenisewag idash wii-boodawewag.

O I A G
H W A A S A
A I Z S I E S
' D N H S A D I
T I N K A ' A G S
K O I A N A J S A I
E I O D N W H B H Y G
B I J I I N A A G O E N
M I S N B A A N I M A A
J I B M A N I S E W A G
G Z H I I S H I I B A G

Niswi—3

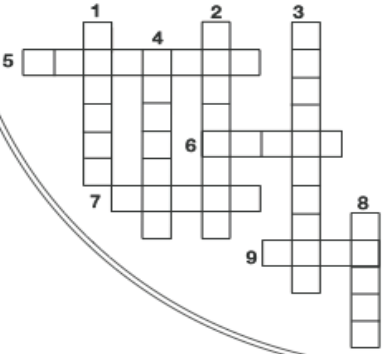
IKIDOWIN ODAMINOWIN (word play)

Down:

1. It is winter.
2. later
3. outside
4. women
8. something

Across:

5. men
6. S/he goes.
7. Basket, box
9. also



Online Resources
ojibwe.lib.umn.edu
www.umich.edu/~ojibwe/
www.glifwc.org/

Niiwin—4

Verb Inflections cont.- B-form/Conjuncts

VAI root dakobijige.—S/he ties/binds. Aaniin dekokobijigewaad jiimaaning? What are they tying on the canoe? VTI root dakobidoon! Tie it! Aandi dekokobidoowaad i'iw makak? Where are they tying it that box? VTA root dakobizh! Aandi dekokobizhigowaad ingiw zenibaayag? Where are they tying them those ribbons? Who, what, where, why—type questions use b-form grammar.

Goojitoo! Try it!

- Translation below.
1. Aandi waa-izhaa _____ waabang?
 2. Wiidookaage _____ idash zhoomiingweni _____.
 3. Aaniindi gaa-biin _____ iniw amikoonsan?
 4. Ikwewag _____ gii-waabandaan _____ i'iw makizin nibaawigamigong bijiinaago.
 5. Nimaamaa dash nindede _____ wii-waabam _____ i'iw makwan waazhaang waabang.

Translations:

Niizh—2 A. It is cold outside. It is very-windy also and we are cold. B. It did-rain yesterday. It did-snow the day before yesterday again/also. C. On the lake it is freezing over. They did leave those ducks. D. As winter approaches they cut firewood. Dry wood pieces they cut them for firewood. E. They cut firewood for him, my grandpa far off over there in the woods. F. They make things. They build it a house. They build him/her a drum. G. Later they will bring the firewood inside and they will build a fire.

Niswi—3 Down: 1. bibeon 2. baanimaa 3. megwaayaak 4. Ikwewag 8. gegoo Across: 5. Ininiwag 6. izhaa 7. makak 9. gaye

Niiwin—4 1. Where will they be going tomorrow? (-waad). 2. They help and they smile. (-wag). 3. Where did they bring them those baby beavers? (igowaad). 4. The women they did-see it that shoe in the sleeping room/bedroom yesterday. (o- -aawaa). 5. My mother and my father they want to-see him/her that bear in the den tomorrow. (o- -aawaa)

There are various Ojibwe dialects; check for correct usage in your area. Note that the English translation will lose its natural flow as in any world language translation. This may be reproduced for classroom use only. All other uses by author's written permission. Some spellings and translations from *The Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* by John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm. All inquiries can be made to MAZINA'IGAN, P.O. Box 9, Odanah, WI 54861 lynn@glifwc.org.

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NAME THE NEW DISTRICT I COMMUNITY CENTER

Contest entry deadline is February 10, 2023



Announcing the contest to name the new District I Community Center.

"With our beautiful new community center now open in District I, it is high time that we call it something besides 'The New Community Center,'" said Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin at the 2023 State of the Band Address, explaining that under Band Statutes the Chief Executive is the legal custodian of all Band property. "I am happy to announce a contest for naming the new community center, open to District I Band members of all ages."

The contest deadline is February 10, 2023.

The contest winner who submits the winning name will be the recipient of a Miigwech gift helping to name the new building and announced in the March 2023 newspaper.

Note: Several Band Members submitted ideas at the State of the Band Address and at a community meeting, but many people did not include their names or contact information. Please follow the guidelines listed here and resubmit your idea with your contact information so we can notify you if your idea is selected.

The purpose of the contest is to generate as many unique names as possible for the selection committee to choose from.

Contest Requirements and Guidelines:

All entries must be emailed to: nora.benjamin@millelacs-band.com by Monday, February 10, 2023.

The contest is open to all District I Band Members currently living in District I.

There is no age restriction.

Each District I Band member may submit up to three suggested names.

Contact information (address, email address or phone number for calling or texting) must be included for each person who enters the contest so we can notify you if your entry is the winner.

The winning name will reflect the specialness of this place where our ancestors chose to make their home that has cultural value and meaning. Please do not suggest a person's name for the building, whether living or passed away.

Mille Lacs Band Higher Education Survey

Your input is invaluable! Please take a few minutes to give us insight on what you think. You will be entered into a drawing and contacted by email provided if drawn.

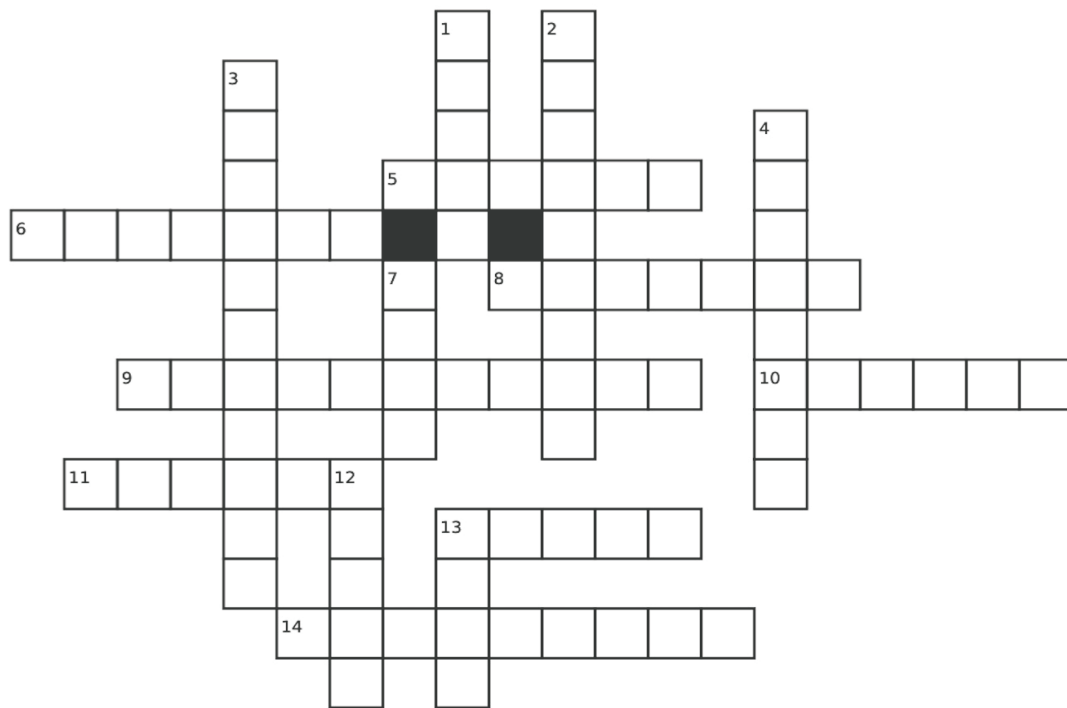
Your individual data is private and will only be shared within the program. Information gathered as a whole will be shared with Management and Leadership.



Aim your camera and follow the link that appears. MIIGWECH!

AZHAWAAKWASING IKIDOWINAN NAMEBINI-GIIZIS 2023

By NAZHIKE, MILLE LACS BAND MEMBER



Down:

1. My foot.
2. H/her chest.
3. My elbow.
4. Your nose.
7. H/her arm.
12. Your foot.
13. H/her foot.

Across:

5. Your leg.
6. Your knee.
8. Your stomach.
9. My head.
10. My hand.
11. H/her ear.
13. H/her hand.
14. Your hands. (Plural)

GIDINWEWINAAN — OUR WAY OF SOUND

By NAZHIKE, MILLE LACS BAND MEMBER

Do you know Giiyaaw? Do you know your body? Knowing our vessel allows us to give it gratitude. Our bodies are on loan from the Earth and we are given each piece of it for a reason. Knowing your body is the start of knowing yourself. See if you can change the rest words for body parts following these examples:

Nininj = My hand.

(Nih ninj)

Gininjiin = Your hands.

(Plural) (Gih ninj)

Oninj = His/her hand.

(Oh ninj)

Nizid = My foot.

(Nih zid)

Gizid = Your foot.

(Gih zid)

Ozid = His/her foot.

(Oh zid)

Nishtigwaan = My head.

(Nih shtig gwahn)

Gimisdad = Your stomach.

(Gih miss sud)

Onik = His/her arm.

(Oh nik)

Gikaad = Your leg.

(Gih kahd)

Otawag = His/her ear.

(Oh tuh wug)

Gijaanzh = Your nose.

(Gih jahnzh)

Nindooskwan = My elbow.

(Nin dew skwun)

Okaakigan = His/her chest.

(Oh kah kih gun)

Gigidig = Your knee.

(Gih gih dig)

ONJIDAA VS. ANISHAA

By NAZHIKE, MILLE LACS BAND MEMBER

As Anishinaabe, there are a few implications of colonization we need to quickly come to terms with if we are going to save who we are. We are going to learn a lot more about trauma in the coming years, and with this new enlightenment will come a responsibility. A responsibility to our ancestors, past and future. We have been told our way of life, our customs, and our language are dying. Maybe through a sort of oppressed acknowledgment of those statements, we just let it be so. Regardless, some of our Elders warned us, taught us, and attempted to keep the topic on the forefront of our minds. There has been a ray of hope like a campfire in the distance in the darkest dark of night for our spirits as they tried to guide us to fulfill our purpose. Empty promises by politicians and social disregard would eventually lead us to our current condition. A condition that we have been in for the better part of three decades. Our Elders are being sent to Gaagige-minawaanigo-ziwining (the land of everlasting happiness). We have options. Anishinaabe always have options. We can either stand back and let it be. Let the customs our grandparents and their grandparents relied on for blessings and bimaadiziwin fade away. Or, we can fight the implications set forth by colonization, by tapping into the resiliency granted to us by the manidoog.

I would hope that it is not our intention to stand by and let everything about who we are fade away just for us to be fully immersed in a world where the talk about Anishinaabe is in the past tense. Although physically, through blood quantum or other types of physical lineage recognition, we may survive, but who we are is in jeopardy. Who we are is more than physical. It's a mindset that has a certain world outlook. It's an emotional sense of connection to our ancestors and relatives. It's also a spiritual connection that must be maintained. There is an action verb intonation to our way of life. Our language demonstrates it by mostly consisting of verbs. Our life, customs and way of being are action-based. If our actions reflect Anishinaabe lzhitwaawin, then that is who we are being. I hope our



intention is to demonstrate Anishinaabe lzhitwaawin to each other. Demonstrate it to our manidoog so they can see our willingness to accept their gifts. Through doing so, they will fill in the gaps of which we lost.

There is a story out there in Anishinaabe Country that talks about our gifts. We are given many tools to use in order to sustain our lives. We have the gift of asemaa, which comes in many shapes, forms and manners. We have ceremonies, which come in many methods, teachings, and variances. Practically, we have names, clans, pipes, and drums. We also have manidoog like the sun, moon, and trees that have agreed to help us. The story goes that when the creator doesn't hear the language being spoken, witness the ceremonies being performed, or see the footprints of moccasins on the land, the world would come to an end, again.

The manidoog have placed plenty of ways to sustain our lives. There is this next generation that heard about our elders. They read their books, listened to their recordings, and

watched their videos. As they grow, they will come searching for more. That is going to put pressure on us to be the Elders that we lost. How are we going to be? Waive them off saying that we were never taught about that? Share what we have, knowing that we never sought out more? Or, are we going to seek out what we can now to build up our spirits in order to have that knowledge when the next generation comes along seeking that same knowledge?

Anishinaabe have a duty. It is a great responsibility along with being a great honor to save our way of life. A way of life our ancestors survived to pass on. They were put through much harsher hardships than we face today. Their villages were burnt to the ground. They were stripped of our way of life through schools, an activity still going on today in Public as well as Tribal schools. Crazy. They were starved, corralled, and shipped many miles away with only walking being the method of transportation. They came back to save what we are letting go today. It is our duty to honor their sacrifice, make sacrifices of our own to ensure our future ancestors have what we have. Are we going to Onjidaa, be purposeful/intentional, or Anishaa, without purpose/for nothing, when it comes to our contribution to who we are? Our people depend on it, for we shall cease to exist otherwise.

Miigwech.

JOE'S JOURNEY: WHEN I BEGAN TALKING (MAAJI-GAAGIIGIDOYAN)

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

This month, I'd like to tell the story of how I started talking at the dances. Sometimes, people will ask me about the first time I ever started talking at the ceremonial dances and dishes. It must have been about almost 30 years ago while I was attending a dance and a well-respected Elder said to us younger guys, "Some of you better start learning how to do this; we won't be around forever." I have been to the dances all my life, and I have sat on them since I was about 8 years old. But up to that point in life, I was almost distracted while attending and thus not paying close attention. I never was worried that these guys speaking wouldn't be around forever and felt I didn't need to learn the talks. Every once in a while, I would pick up a thing or two. Looking back, I wish that I would have listened better.

When I was at that dance, one of the ladies that sat on the drum offered me asemaa and asked me to talk for the bundles. I began by looking around the dance hall for anyone else that could do it. I couldn't see anyone that would be able to, so with that I looked at her and said, "yeah I can do that." Then I could feel those words re-enter my mind. When I got up, I was so nervous, seeing many of those Elder women that aren't around anymore, I was sweating and almost having second thoughts about speaking. Then I remember some things my uncle and other old men used to say and went for it. It was a short and sweet to-the-point kind of talk. I kept looking over at them old ladies for their expression, and to my surprise, they were neutral. After I was done, the ceremony went on like normal. After a while, I had some people come up to me and say I did great, and some would let me know some things/spirits to include and/or advice in the future talks. That's where I think I started to really listen to the speakers. After all these decades of going, that is what brought me to truly listen. Shortly after that, I

was put on another drum as a "speaker" position. A few of the Elders that were on that drum told to me, "you can come to us if you need help/advice." I can remember one Elder gentleman even gave me his phone number to talk.

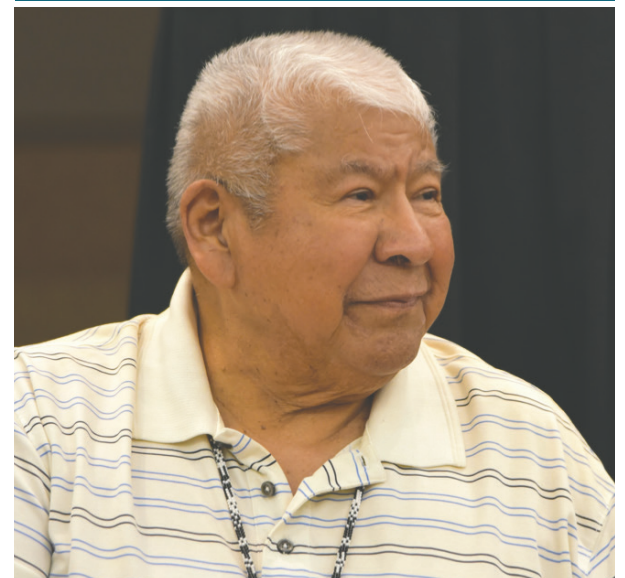
You bet I took it and ran with it, and with that, my talks developed. A nice side effect was that I started going to many other dances, something that I do to this day. I still am learning from those speakers. Learning every time I have approached a speaker, they have been nothing but helpful. One speaker I can remember telling me when I asked if I could use that time, "It's not mine, it's all of ours to use". So, when you hear me talk, those are talks I learned from other people. We are a very verbal people, and we learn a lot from listening to other people. I also don't consider myself a fluent speaker, and I will never stop learning both in my language and in English. Everyone has something to teach the world, and I will be doing that until I am in the grave. I also went and got an education at SCSU where I learned how to talk to our own Native people. Another person I learn from is a Dakota friend while we are on our little road trips. But he is just one among many who teach me and help keeping my talks developing. I am very thankful to all of them and I think everyone should hear what everyone else has to say, because it has helped me develop as a person spiritually and behaviorally. Language is an ongoing learning experience that I wish I would have done years ago. But maybe that is how creator planned for me to do. These are just some things I think about when being asked about my journey through this life. I know for sure that I will keep trying and learning especially, a young man that I am helping to speak for our dances and dishes. I encourage people to learn so that they can understand and speak the language. Sometimes I ask people, "Do you understand what I told you?" And they will tell me, "No." So I tell them, "Come over some time and I will tell you about it," so that people can grow as individuals in our ceremonies. There are no "stupid" questions when it comes

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.



to our ceremonies, language, and your own development, because if we can't answer the question, we will know who to talk to. Continue learning, never stop. I went to a dance down in Menominee this recently and learned some spiritual teachings still at my age.

Miigwech mii iw.

GRA UPDATE EXCLUSION REVIEW PROCESS

The Gaming Regulatory Authority (GRA) wants to keep Band members informed of their rights. If you are excluded from Mille Lacs Band Gaming Enterprises, you have the right for your exclusion to be reviewed annually. To have your exclusion file reviewed, you must submit a written request to the GRA. You may contact Licensing Investigations Director Rachelle Perkes at 320-532-8129 for help with the process or use the "Request for GRA Board Review" form on the Mille Lacs Band/GRA website: <https://millelacsband.com/home/indian-gaming-regulation>. Once the form is completed in full and returned to our office, your exclusion file along with your request will be presented to the GRA Board during a regular board meeting. You will receive notice of date, time, and location to attend this meeting and provide testimony.

Temporary Suspension of Exclusion Process

Exclusion shall never prohibit eligible voters of the Band from entering non-gaming floor areas of a Gaming Enterprise for the purpose of exercising voting rights or attending tribal, political, or community meetings held in the convention/meeting areas of the Gaming Enterprise. Nor shall exclusion prevent Band employees from attending mandatory work-related meetings in the convention/meeting areas of the Gaming Enterprise during work hours.

The Executive Director of the Office of Gaming Regulation and Compliance (OGR&C) may issue a temporary suspension of exclusion for reasons other than stated above. This means, if you are excluded and wish to be on property for an event, an emergency placement, or other critical need, you may ask for your exclusion to be temporarily lifted for a matter of hours or sometimes days. Reminder: this process also applies to Government Center departments hoping to emergency house excluded Band members for any length of time. Requests need to be in writing to the Executive Director, tkozumplik@mlbgra.com, and include name, date of birth, reason for request, location, date, and time frame you wish to be on any property of the Gaming Enterprises.

The Executive Director will forward the request for temporary suspension to the Corporate Commissioner and the General Manager(s) of the Gaming Enterprise(s), at which time, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures and/or the Gaming Enterprise may comment, in writing, on the request for temporary suspension. The Executive Director will make a recommendation either temporarily lifting the exclusion or denying the request by Compliance Recommendation. If the Executive Director makes a Recommendation in favor of the request for temporary suspension of exclusion, the temporary suspension of exclusion

GAMING REGULATORY AUTHORITY



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

will take effect immediately.

For more information on exclusion processes, you may contact Rachelle Perkes (320-532-8129) or Krista Tretter (320-532-8135).

More information and contact numbers can be found at <https://millelacsband.com/home/indian-gaming-regulation>. You can also LIKE us on Facebook at Mille Lacs Band GRA. GRA Board meetings are open to the public. This month's meetings are at 9 a.m. on Thursday, February 2, and Thursday, February 16, via Microsoft Teams.

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. You can also LIKE us on Facebook at Mille Lacs Band GRA. GRA Board meetings are open to the public. If you have any questions, please call 320-532-8196 or email jtretter@mlbgra.com.

BAND MEMBER SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS

MEET NICOLE SAWYER

By MILLE LACS CORPORATE VENTURES

Known for her infectious laugh, stellar work ethic, and dedication to her family, Nicole Sawyer is a walking example of Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures' (MLCV) seven core values. Throughout her life and career, she has exhibited the qualities of bravery, honesty, humility, truth, wisdom, respect, and love. In this month's edition of "Spotlight on Success," you are invited to come along on Nicole's inspirational journey.

In March, Nicole will celebrate 27 years of service at MLCV and organizations within the portfolio. Early in her career, Nicole held positions as a laundry attendant, an executive receptionist, and an admin in the food and beverage department. In 2000, she found her niche in the Talent (Human Resources) department. Due to her ability to be extremely detail-oriented, dependable, and efficient, Nicole continued to grow her responsibilities and skills within the department.

Even though her career continued to grow, Nicole aspired for more. She made the decision to continue her education and enrolled at the College of St. Scholastica to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management and Organized Behavior. She attended school while working full-time and being a doting mother of four young children. Thanks to her grit and determination, she graduated in 2011.

"I didn't care if it meant taking one class at a time. I told myself that I was going to graduate, no matter what," Nicole explains. "It was important for me to do better for my family," she continued.

After more than 20 years of experience within the Talent department, it would have been easy to stay the course. But those who know Nicole know she's never one to back down from a new challenge. So, when she saw an open position within the legal department, she bravely jumped at the chance to try something new.

Today, Nicole is the executive legal coordinator for MLCV. The core responsibility for the role is to oversee the contract administration process for MLCV and all the other businesses within the portfolio. She is the liaison between vendors and the organization to ensure contracts are executed properly.

"It's totally out of the norm, after working in human resources for so long to completely change, not only the department that I worked in, but to change the fields. I saw an opportunity to grow the role and make it my own," says Nicole.

In less than a year, Nicole has already accomplished her goal of making the role her own. She has been asked to work on special projects along with her role's regular duties. Two of those special projects are the annual leadership conferences that MLCV hosts — the National Leadership Development Conference and the MLCV Leadership Conference.

"My days always vary. I am enjoying learning the different processes and meeting new people that I haven't had the chance to work with before. I also get to help others by sharing what I have learned," she says.

While Nicole has an accomplished career, it is her role as a mother that she holds as close to her heart as her biggest achievement. Nicole and her husband, Robbie Sawyer (SLOT-CO COO), are proud parents to seven children. Ashley, Justine, Kylee, Brea, Alivia, Deacon, and Peyton are her driving force in life. "My children mean the world to me. They give me the drive to do better for myself and for them," shares Nicole.

Perhaps the most exciting new adventure Nicole has undertaken is becoming grandma to Trey (2) and Carson (1). As with her children, Nicole cherishes her relationship with her two young grandsons. "I get to see them every day. I either go to them, or they come over. If I don't see them, we FaceTime,"



she says joyfully.

"One of the reasons I love working for MLCV is that we are truly a family-first company. I get to be present with my kids and grandkids," she explains. Now that her children are starting their careers, they seem to be following in their mom and dad's footsteps.

Currently, Justine works for the Band in the human resources department, Kylee works in the Urban office, and Brea works in food and beverage at Grand Casino. Alivia has her sights set on becoming a junior ambassador.

"I know they want to further their schooling, too. After that, I see one or two of them joining the organization," says Nicole. As they prepare to take the next steps in their professional careers, Nicole has some wise insights that apply to everyone.

"As you get older, you see how fast life is, so it is important to stay open-minded to change and opportunities," she says.

Through experience, Nicole knows how important being a life-long learner is and encourages the next generation to do the same: "Show up every day and learn all you can."

The positive example Nicole sets is felt in the office, but more importantly, at home. The love for her family continues to drive Nicole to exceed personally and professionally. As an organization, we are lucky to be a part of Nicole's journey and look forward to seeing where her talents take her next.



ASK AUNTIE



Hi Auntie,

This is a really hard question to ask. I feel like an idiot for not knowing my language. I feel like I don't know who I am and sometimes I feel like other people who speak it don't understand that it's not easy for me to learn. I am a sophomore in high school and I never really took interest in my culture or language. It was just something I knew of, but didn't really understand. But now, I am starting to become interested in it. Maybe it's because I am getting older or wanting to understand ceremonies more. Sometimes when I am attending a dance or event and there is someone speaking Ojibwe I feel lost because I don't understand what they're saying. Lately, I feel like my spirit or something inside me is overwhelmingly trying to hear the language or the songs. I never learned anything when I was younger even though I had parents and grandparents that could share their knowledge. I didn't take advantage of it. I never tried to drum even when I would find myself humming the songs I hear at the dance hall. I feel like something is pushing me to learn and I don't know where to begin to learn. Auntie can you help me with learning Ojibwe so I can understand and respect my ancestors, culture, and language. Thank you.

Aaniin Nindoozhim,

Wow! What an amazing letter. Your letter gave me big Auntie energy ho-wah! First, I want to say that I am very proud of you for writing that letter and I totally understand the difficulty you shared. Auntie understands a majority of our language and can say basic words, but I am far from being a master of our language. Nindoozhim, I also have felt like you in many things that haven't come easily or naturally when I was trying to learn something new. Pre-disclosure: I am not an expert and the advice I am giving you is the way that I would try to learn the language. You will have to make it work for you as we are all different learners.

The first thing I would do is put some asemaa out and ask the Creator to help you to remember the language. With anything you want to learn, you have to put time and energy into it. You need to set aside specific time to learn throughout the day. You should speak it every day. I would go to the Mille Lacs Band Aanjibimaadizing website and enroll in the Rosetta Stone program. Rosetta Stone is an amazing tool and resource to learn our language.

I would search for as many Anishinaabe Ojibwe language classes in our area. You could work with the scholarship program to see if you can use educational enrichment funds to cover a college course at Fond du Lac Tribal Community College to take one of their Anishinaabe language classes while earning credits for college. You could find an Ojibwe language symposium, also offered by Fond du Lac Tribal Community College. There are YouTube videos you can listen to by Elders and other Ojibwe language teachers like Lee Obizaan Staples. I would attend an Ojibwe language table. I would purchase an Ojibwe language dictionary or find it online. Do you have any grandparents or Elders that you can go to and offer them asemaa for some guidance on learning? I would be respectful and understanding if there is any apprehension when asking for help. It wasn't too long ago that our people were punished for speaking our language. When we are learning we have to also remember and hold space for our ancestors who fought to keep our culture and language alive. You also mentioned that you feel lost and I just want to remind you that you are never lost. The Creator and your helpers are always with you.

It was difficult for me to read that you feel like an idiot for not knowing or understanding. I want you to know that you are not an idiot; in fact, you are brave and smart, Nindoozhim. It's easy to not try and you are putting effort into learning and that is honorable. Speaking and understanding Ojibwe language is already inside of you as an Anishinaabe. At any time you can access that and it will all come back to you. Never give up. You can do it. You could become the person speaking at the events for invocation and you can be the person speaking at drum ceremonies. If you put effort into learning, you could also learn so much by sharing what you're learning with your family or friends.

Miigwech for writing. You have reminded me that I also need to put more effort into our language. Keep learning Nindoozhim!

With love, Auntie.

"Namanj igo ge-inwegwen a'aw waa-nitaa-ojibwemod, booch igo da-nisidotaagod iniw manidoon."

Whatever dialect you learn or however you learn to speak Ojibwe, the Creator will always understand you, no matter how you sound. (Larry "Amik" Smallwood)

AROUND THE RESERVATION COATS FOR KIDS

OPERATION WARM

On Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, members of the Minneapolis Fire Department gifted Nay Ah Shing students with warm coats donated by the MFD through Operation Warm and Minneapolis Coats for Kids. Miigwech to Justin Johnson, MFD and Band member Paul Sam, a Chief Firefighter with MFD for helping the kids stay warm this winter.

District I Representative Virgil Wind along with Paul Sam and the Nay Ah Shing staff helped students find the perfect fit. Remaining coats were sent to Pine Grove and the outer districts.

Operation Warm's motto #morethanacoat means more than just physical warmth, it also means emotional warmth, the confidence to socialize and succeed, and hope of a brighter future.

See more photos at Inaajimowin.com/galleries.



MEKWENIMINJIG

THE ONES WHO ARE REMEMBERED

NEYAANAKWAD, COLEMAN WEOUS



Neyaanakwad, Coleman Weous, age 38 of Onamia, Minn. passed away on December 28, 2022. Visitation was at 6 p.m. on Saturday, December 31, 2022, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation. A Funeral Ceremony was held at 10 a.m. on Sunday, January 1, 2023, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation, with Obizaan officiating. Interment was in the Vineland Burial Grounds. Arrangements are with the Shelley Funeral Chapel of Onamia.

Neyaanakwad, Coleman Weous was born on September 10, 1984, in Onamia, Minnesota. He liked to spend his time playing video games, listening to music, and going to the casino. Coleman was always dressed sharp and was known for his unique shoes. He loved being with his friends and family and enjoyed making them laugh and smile.

Coleman is survived by his mother, Lorna Weous, and father, Terry Smith; brother, Preston (Kelly Friend) Smith Sr., sister, Clarissa Smith; aunts, Arlene Weous, Carmen Weous, Deanna Weous, Colleen Lueck, and Lori Weous; uncles, Carl Weous and Toby Weous.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Elleraine and Tony; cousins, Willy, Tone, and Jayar.

NAZHIBEINESIIKWE DARLENE ANN BARBOUR



Darlene Ann Barbour "Nazhikebinesiikwe" was born on July 5, 1946, to Annie Murphy and Ned Weyaus in Onamia, Minn. She journeyed into the Spirit World January 17, 2023.

For years, Darlene was a teacher who taught Adult Basic Education at American Indian OIC. She taught many people and helped them earn their GED, often taking people under her wing, encouraging them to be all that they can be. She was a pillar in the Native community for many years and the matriarch of her family.

Darlene was a very strong and independent woman who was a great role model and example for us and others. She was a kind and caring person who was led by generosity. Always willing to meet any need one might have. Hungry? She'd feed you. Tired? She'd offer you a bedroom to sleep in. Cold? She'd buy you a new jacket. Not only generous, but a caregiver also. Even as a single grandmother of three, she was looking to help moms in crisis by doing respite care, taking care of other children in her home for a few days while their mothers got much-needed rest.

Over her life, she looked after and took in many of her nieces and nephews and anyone who needed her help. Her favorite pastime was gambling at the casino — and yes, she

MIGIZI, WAYLON BOYD

Migizi, Waylon Boyd, age 30, of Onamia, Minn. passed away on January 27, 2023. Visitation was at 6 p.m. on Monday, January 30, 2023, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Reservation. Funeral ceremony was held at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2023, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Reservation, with Obizaan officiating. Interment was in the Vineland Burial Grounds.

OZHAAWAASHKOBINESIIKWE, DONNA GILMORE



Ozhaawaashkobinesiiikwe, Donna Gilmore, age 75 of Onamia, MN passed away on December 17, 2022. A funeral service was held at 10 a.m. on Friday, December 23, 2022, at the District I Community Center on the Mille Lacs Reservation with Alan Hardy officiating. Interment was in the St. Mary and Joseph's Cemetery in Sawyer, Minn.

Ozhaawaashkobinesiiikwe, Donna loved to spend her time with her family, playing at the casino, joking, laughing, watching old western movies, listening to Elvis, and with her pets. She was always smiling and joking with someone. Donna worked as a bartender, security guard/bouncer, grocery attendant, waitress, nurse's aid, sandwich artist, MLB AM Vets. She loved going to pow-wows and dancing jingle in her early years and later watching the younger family members dance. She loved to drive; whether it was a long trip or short, she would jump in her little blue rez van.

Donna Lou (Shabaiash) Gilmore is survived by her sons, Preston Sr., Larry, and David; daughters, Dawn and Michelle; brother, Anthony; niece, Morningstar; nephew, James III; and many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Jesse Houle; father, George Shabaiash; brothers, Wesley, Rodney, Russell, Eugene, James Jr., and Jay; sisters, Darlene, Marge, Francis, Baby Girl; and grandmother, Waazhushk.

was a lucky lady. More often than not, she was a winner. Her passing is a great loss for our family and community. She will be greatly missed.

Darlene is survived by her grandchildren: Eddie Lopez, Andrew Barbour, Lili Tiwari, and Vinay Tiwari (grandson-in-law); her sister: Elizabeth Peterson, great grandson's: Jonathan Barbour Jr., and Thomas and Charles Harrison and many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents: Ned and Annie; daughter: Bonnie May Barbour; sister: Evelyn Murphy; brother: Walter Weyaus Sr.; and grandson Jonathan Barbour Sr.

A visitation was held on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Church of Gichitwaa Kateri in Minneapolis, Minn.

A funeral service was held on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at 10 a.m. at Church of Gichitwaa Kateri in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Shawn Phillips officiated. Drum Group was Hoka Hey. Honorary casket bearers were Vinay Tiwari, Robert Sam, Les DeCoteau, P.J. Johnson, Joel Sanchez, Andre Amos.

Casket bearers were Elizabeth Peterson, Renee Carreon, Winona Spaulding, Christine Hassard, Eddie Lopez, Lili Tiwari, Jonathan Barbour Jr., Bob Sierra, Semira Kimpson, Juana Davila

Online condolences can be directed to <http://www.thechilsonfuneralhome.com>.

MEKWENIMINJIG

THE ONES WHO ARE REMEMBERED

AROUND THE RESERVATION TRADITIONS LIVE ON IN DISTRICT II

By AMIKOGAABAWIIKWE, ADRIENNE BENJAMIN

On Wednesday, January 11, community members in the Chiminising community were treated to an evening of good food and even better laughs at the first Family Fun Night event of the year. District II Representative Wendy Merrill hosted a storytelling event with a potluck which included a best dish contest. When asked why she wanted to host these events, Merrill said, "I wanted more involvement in the communities and to just bring everyone together. I also invited all districts and our friends in the broader community as well so that no one felt excluded. We always aim to serve our Band members, but we have many folks in the communities who may not be Band members but are our friends, loved ones, and even allies. I want to bring everyone together around issues, not turn away. Everyone's input and thoughts are important. It's also important to just have fun with each other in our community as well, and this particular evening was a great opportunity for that."

There were three different categories for the potluck contest: Appetizer, Main Dish, and Dessert. For fairness, the event was judged by folks from other districts, George Morrow, Richard Hill, and Rebecca Churchill.

Here is the list of winners and the list of folks you might want to invite to your next get-together:

- Appetizer: Chicken Nachos by Raina Killspotted
- Main Dish: Hawaiian Pineapple Chicken Soup by Taria Aubid
- Dessert: Brownies by District III Ge-niigaanizijig Youth

After the delightful meal, folks settled in to hear traditional winter stories by treasured Minisinaakwaang Elder, David "Niib" Aubid. Niib told a handful of joyful stories to a curious and entranced crowd of all ages. During one story, Niib walked around the crowd and handed out golden foil "rocks" to young people in the crowd. Inside of them were beautiful paper butterflies with large wings that could be placed on a finger like a ring. Kids were flying their butterflies around the gym as Niib continued his story. It was an adorable sight.

Niib is truly a gifted and animated storyteller who understands the language level of his crowd. His storytelling style is one of a true teacher and caretaker of the language, who through the actions and theatrics of his performance gave the audience confidence in their ability to understand what was happening and quick bilingual translations to keep up as well. He invited participation in song and in parts of the stories where there were repeated phrases, and he challenged the audience to some simple Ojibwe translations. Of course, as is customary with these stories, there is always a lesson to be learned. Niib missed no steps in hammering his points and



Storyteller David "Niib" Aubid entertains the crowd in Chiminising.

life lessons home whether through humor or props. If you ever have the opportunity to see Niib at a storytelling event, make it a priority for you and your family. You won't be disappointed, and you might even gain some unexpected confidence in your Ojibwe language knowledge and learning potential.

The list of some of those stories is as follows: (printed and written with permission from Niib)

- The Gift of the Feather
- The Legend of the Four Directions featuring Nazhike-awaasanang, Zhaawanesii, and Giwediniibnesii.
- Dancing with Closed Eyes
- Ojiiganang the Fisher Star Constellation



George Morrow and his son share a cute moment with story props provided by Niib.



FEBRUARY 2007 INAAJIMOWIN

In December, participants in the Nay Ah Shing Boys of Summer program made a quilt that they presented to Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin at the State of the Band Address. Donna Benson, Nay Ah Shing Crafts Instructor, sewed on the back of the blanket and reinforced the kids' hand-stitching with her sewing machine. It was fun watching the students thread their needles and stitch. They worked long, hard hours to make this blanket and are very proud of the finished product. The boys (and a few girls) meet weekly and do community projects, homework, and fun activities. Nay Ah Shing Athletic and Activities Director Bugs Haskin plans all the activities and is assisted by her daughter "Squig" (Jericho Sayles), Nay Ah Shing Parent Liaison Coordinator. Tribal Police and Conservation Officers also assist with the activities and are mentors and role models to the program participants.

BACK IN TIME 10 years ago — 2013

The Bird Man of Mille Lacs

By Deborah Locke Staff Writer

While vacationing in Corpus Christi, Texas, early in February, Kelly Applegate spotted a purple martin. The two-ounce martins, with a wing span of up to 14 inches, are now on their way north from Brazil.

Who knows, maybe that very bird summers along the shores of Mille Lacs Lake. Maybe that bird would become the object of study by the Minnesota Purple Martin Working Group, of which the Mille Lacs Band is a member. That study shows that since 1966, Minnesota's purple martin population has declined by 80 percent.

Kelly, a Mille Lacs Band member, is a wildlife biologist and fisheries technician. He's worked at the Band's Natural Resources division since 2006. A study of the bird's migrating patterns started in 2007 and includes scientists from York University in Toronto, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Audubon Society, and Kelly himself.

With his fascination for and protective nature toward the birds, not to mention his encyclopedic knowledge, it's fitting to dub Kelly a present-day bird man of Minnesota.

Native ties

The little birds first forged a bond with American Indians long ago. Their natural habitat, the hollowed industry barons in the 1800s. So purple martins from the southeastern United States overcame that loss by nesting in hollowed out gourds used to store grain by southeastern tribes.

"Martins have always been here," Kelly said. "They've adapted with humans and a changing landscape."

As more Europeans settled throughout the country, the idea of a multi-compartment martin house was born. The birds abandoned nesting in hollowed out trees and today, 100 percent of martins are dependent on humans for housing. In the 1950s and 1960s, thousands of back yards throughout the U.S. contained a flagpole and a martin house.

Kelly said that recent research shows that the ideal martin house is 12 inches long to prevent hawks, owls and other predators from entering. The martins are also sensitive to location: they will not nest near tall trees where predators hide.

Sparrow encroachment

Then came the late 1970s and the martin multi-house in so many suburban yards went out of fashion. Fewer houses meant fewer martins. In addition, the population of year-round European starlings and the English house sparrow increased greatly so the birds competed for the same housing.

Unpredictable and harsh spring weather creates challenges for the birds that are due back in Minnesota in mid-April: a severe cold snap damages the bird's ability to catch insects or keep babies warm during an unseasonably cold spring. When the birds become desperate, humans step in, leaving feeders with meal worm, crickets or scrambled eggs. A normal martin life span is five to seven years, although Kelly knows of a bird that lived to the ripe old age of 13.

The martins require various levels of management, Kelly said. The birds he works with are in houses that are lowered on a cable. Each week he opens the houses to count eggs and band birds. Kelly bands 800 to 1,000 birds each year with numbers large enough to be read with a telescope. There are five main colonies in the Mille Lacs area, all along the shoreline and all on tribal property.

Eddy's martins

The most visible martins to a tourist's eye take up summer residence in the 18 units behind Eddy's Resort, where geolocator deployments take place. That may sound like a military maneuver, and in some respects, it is. The birds receive a fingernail-size device that's tied on. The geolocators measure the amount of sunlight, which tells scientists where the birds travel. Most purple martins go to Brazil for the winter months, and with a stopover in Yucatan on their way back and forth to North America.

That means the purple martins have something else in common with American Indians: flexibility. Mille Lacs Band members live everywhere throughout the United States, in cities, small towns, on reservations, in rural areas. Martins do the same, from the Amazon River to the Mille Lacs Lake shoreline, adapting as they go. And like Indians on a lot of reservations, they have a housing shortage.

Want to help? Kelly said he'd be happy to advise anyone on how to put up martin housing. Call him at 320-532-7747.

TRIBAL NOTEBOARD

FEBRUARY ELDER BIRTHDAYS

Allen Charles Bush
 Steven Douglas InYan Mata
 Ryan Duane Pendegayosh
 Michael Mondel Sam
 Dennis Duane Thomas
 Sheila Marie Walters
 Bruce Alan Anderson
 Laura Ann Ashcroft
 Mahlon Scott Barnes
 Della Jo Benjamin
 Maurice Wayne Benjamin
 Melanie Ann Benjamin
 Steven Benjamin
 Debra Jean Blake
 Sandra Lee Blake
 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 Graves
 Mary Louise Hoffer
 Richard Nolan Holm
 Donald Ray Houle
 Sharon Louise Howard
 Colleen Michele Johnson
 Ronald James Johnson
 Kurt Drew Keller
 Susan Marie Klapel
 Carolyn Dawn Lewis
 Ornorfo 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
 Alan Pindegayosh

Ellen Marie Roth
 Bette Sam
 Darrell Duane Sam
 Gladys Diane Sam
 James Allan Sam
 Pauline Marie Sam
 Kelvin Ray Shingobe
 Bennie David St. John
 Edward Louis St. John
 Stanley Conrad St. John
 Richard Jay Staples
 Robert Lee Staples
 Gary Marshall Thomas
 Russell Harvey Thomas
 Kenny Jack Towle
 Michael Leo Towle
 Valetta Irene Towle
 Ramona Joyce Washington
 Patrick Weyaus
 Marilyn Jean Whitney
 Rose Marie Wind
 Wendy Lee Wind
 Dorothy May Wistrom

HAPPY FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Happy birthday **Chris Jr.** on February 7, with love from the Harrington family • Happy birthday **Baby Jacob** on February 13, with love from the Harrington Family • Happy birthday **Jacob** on February 16, with love from the Harrington Family • Happy birthday **Princess** on February 22, with love from Auntie Val • Happy birthday **Braelyn** on February 22, love, Dad, Daphne, Payton, Eric, Wes, Waase, Bryn, Tryn, Galli, Bam, Binesikwe, 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.

NOTES

If you would rather not have your name included in the Elder birthday list, please contact 320-630-8195 or email news@millelacsband.com before the 15th of the month preceding your birthday.

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

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.

Send calendar items to news@millelacsband.com or call 320-630-8195.

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

Deputy Assistant: Baabiitaw Boyd: 218-670-0745

Commissioners:

Administration: 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

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 320-532-8928

Enrollments: 320-532-7730

Drug Tip HOTLINE call or text 320-630-2458.

CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE THE NEXT GENERATION

The District I Legislative Office is please to celebrate the next generation. New babies are welcomed into the community of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.



ABOVE: Linsday Misquadace-Berg and Jaxtyn received a Celebration of Life baby basket on Friday, January 20, 2022. Jaxtyn Carmelo Berg was born on October 4, 2022. He weighed 8 lbs., 13 ozs. and measured 22 inches long. Parents are Lindsay Misquadage-Berg and Jason Berg. Jaxtyn joins brother Jordan, and sisters Sydney and Kadence Misquadace.

BELOW: Erica Garbow came in with her baby boy Kayce Leonard Mattinas to receive a baby basket. Kayce was born on December 19, 2022, weighing 8 lbs., 2 oz. and was 21 inches long. Parents are Erica Garbow and the late Winston Mattinas. He joins one sister Maria, and two brothers Harry and Winston.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>The Rez NA 6 p.m. regularly held in the Aanjibimaadizing building is temporarily being held at the 17222 Ataage Drive location while Aanjibimaadizing is under construction.</p> <div style="background-color: #f9c996; padding: 10px;"> <p>DRUG TIP HOTLINE</p> <p>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.</p>  </div>			<p>1</p> <p>Storytelling Family Fun Night at Minisinaakwaang 6 p.m.</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>2</p> <p>Groundhog Day</p> <p>Men's group 6 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p>	<p>7</p> <p>First Tuesday SNAP see page 7</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>8</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>9</p> <p>Men's group 6 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>12</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>District IIa Community Meeting Chiminising 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Red Brick AA/NA Meeting 6 p.m. at Red Brick.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>District II Community Meeting Minisinaakwaang 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>District III Community Meeting Grand Casino Hinckley 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Men's group 6 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>19</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>22</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>23</p> <p>Men's group 6 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p> <p>Wellbriety 6 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>
<p>26</p> <p>Wellbriety Talking Circle 10 a.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Migizi Meeting 7 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p> <p>Women's group 5:30 p.m. Old District I Community Center</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Zooming towards Recovery NA 8 p.m. via Zoom conference.</p>	<p>ELDERS NEEDED!</p> <p>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 two-hour video interview to share your memories, please email news@millelacsband.com or call 320-630-8195.</p> <p>SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!</p> <p>The Government Affairs Department, which is in charge of communications with Band members, is compiling a list of email addresses so we can send weekly news summaries and breaking news updates to Band members. Send your email address to news@millelacsband.com so we can add you to the list.</p>			

Looking for a job? Millelacsband.com is updated regularly with job postings. Check it out!

O J I B W E

I N A A J I M O W I N

NAMEBIBI-GIIZIS FEBRUARY 2023 | VOLUME 25 | NUMBER 2

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



2023 STATE OF THE BAND

THE FULL TEXT OF THE STATE OF THE BAND ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE CAN BE FOUND BEGINNING ON PAGE 8

JUDGE RULES IN FAVOR OF THE BAND
page 1

MCT ENROLLMENT CHANGE PROCESS
page 2

COATS FOR KIDS OPERATION WARM
page 16

STORYTELLING TRADITIONS
page 17

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

Batterers 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 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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