

# **SECRETARY/TREASURER HERB WEYAUS**

## **STATE OF THE BAND ADDRESS**

**January 12, 2010**

Aniin and happy new year Band members, employees, state elected officials, and all other guests joining us here today. I also warmly welcome the other Mille Lacs Band elected officials: Honorable Chief Executive Marge Anderson, Honorable District I Representative Sandra Blake, Honorable District II Representative Marvin Bruneau, and Honorable District III Representative Harry Davis. Also, welcome to Chief Justice Rayna Mattinas, and judges Clarence Boyd and Kathryn Hedstrom. Miigwetch Hevin Shingobe for the beautiful job singing the National Anthem.

- By the statutory authority and responsibility vested in me, I hereby convene the 14<sup>th</sup> Band Assembly, 1<sup>st</sup> session. Madam Parliamentarian, Sylvia Villebrun, roll call please. We do have a quorum, and at this time I will recess Band Assembly until 1 p.m., when we will reconvene in the Band Assembly Chambers to resume official business. Band Assembly meetings are open to the public.
- With this new year upon us comes a new decade. With a new

decade comes an opportunity to continue our pursuit of health and happiness for all Mille Lacs Band members. Protecting the Band members, our lands, and our financial resources is a responsibility that I and your other elected officials take very seriously.

- As the Secretary/Treasurer of the Band, I am charged with superintending and managing all fiscal operations, planning and budgeting of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. I take this responsibility to heart and manage the Band's finances with honesty, integrity and transparency. Such transparency shows we follow the statutes, we follow the rules, and we follow the law. The last two years have shown we will stand for nothing less than doing what is honest and right.
- The federal investigation into criminal activity within the Mille Lacs Band Department of Community Development has been a long and trying process for all of us. However, it has proven wrongdoing and resulted in two guilty pleas in U.S. Federal Court, by both a former Band employee and contractor. In addition, the two people who pled guilty to stealing over \$1 million from the Band will help identify and bring to justice all other former employees and others involved in this scandal.

- The Band will likely recover \$1 million through insurance proceeds as a result of these crimes. We are confident justice will prevail. Band Assembly is viewing this rough spot as an opportunity to use these and the remaining yet-to-be-named perpetrators, as an example of the extent we will go to protect our Band and its assets. The improvement of internal controls within Community Development, in order to prevent future and similar wrongdoings, is the positive outcome resulting from this very unfortunate situation.

- The United States continues its struggle to overcome one of the worst financial crises since the 1930s. The U.S. has seen 4.2 million job losses in 2009 alone, over 7 million job losses since the recession began, an ongoing weakened housing market, an average unemployment rate of 10%, and a real unemployment rate of 17.3%. Throughout this economic turmoil, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe has continued to thrive and prosper. At this time, I'd like to address the economic state of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

- **The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe's economic state of affairs is robust and resilient.** In March 2009, the stock market began to recover,

rising 19% for the year. Thanks to the advice of the Band's long-time investment advisors from Merrill Lynch, the Band took advantage of the previously falling stock market, and invested a small portion of its financial assets in the stock market. From March 2009 until year end, these investments gained 33% returns, far exceeding our expectations.

- In addition, the rest of the Band's investments gained over 5% in 2009, with no risk in the stock market. I am happy to again report that the Band has never lost money on our investments. In fact, the Band has always made money on our investments and added to our long-term savings. Our goal is to one day gain self-sufficiency from the interest earnings on our investments. When that day comes, we will no longer have to rely on casino revenues to fund our Band government programs.

- Due to the overall tough economic times, the Band's casinos again experienced a slight decline in business and revenues. This was expected, and the government budgets were planned accordingly. We realized that as casino revenues declined, so must government and casino spending.

- The Band government budgets for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 were drafted and approved before the September 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. In order to avoid job losses for our Band members and Band employees, we were

proactive and implemented a two-year, across-the-board wage freeze at the government. As a result of that action, we are proud to say we have not been forced to eliminate any jobs at the government.

- Another challenge that we met this year was to keep Band member per capita payments at the same amount. Knowing how Band members rely on those payments, we worked closely with casino management to delay and eliminate certain capital projects, in order to maintain per capita payments at a stable level.
- Thanks to the hard work and commitment of the district reps and Band members, each district has experienced many successes throughout the year. There continues to be an intense focus on family, culture and education, and an ongoing focus on housing development in all districts.
- District I continued to add new homes in phase II of the Bugg Hill Development, as well as throughout the district. In 2009, the land in Bugg Hill was accepted by the BIA as trust land, held on behalf of the Mille Lacs Band. Also in District I, there were two duplexes and a four-plex added, which are now home to several Band member families. There are plans this spring to continue adding new Elder homes, single-family, and multi-family homes in Bugg Hill II.
- Last spring, a Band-owned halfway house was opened in District I

so Band members can be near home as they continue to heal after completing programs along their path to sobriety. This halfway house has room for eight people.

- Another success in District I was the establishment and opening of the Band Member Legal Aid office. This service is available free of charge to eligible Band members in all districts.
- District I plans for the upcoming year include construction of a new early education facility and a new transfer station building, as well as a supportive housing development and community building.
- Chiminising-Isle saw the addition of several new single-family homes throughout the area, with several more new homes planned for this spring.
- Beginning in 2009, an Elder food service program began in Isle, offering Elders daily lunch delivery or service at the community center.
- Minisinaakwang-East Lake gained a small wind turbine manufacturing facility, Chi Noodin, owned by the Mille Lacs Band. Several Band members gained jobs in 2009 from this new business development opportunity.
- Since East Lake has had a shortage of land for new home development, District II Representative Marvin Bruneau highly

encouraged the Band's recent purchase of 156 acres of land, including some parcels with existing homes. In 2010, these properties will be renovated and provided as housing for Band members in East Lake. Beginning in 2010, many single-family homes will be built throughout East Lake.

- Minisinaakwang Leadership Academy, located in East Lake, continues to provide high-quality education to our Band member children, as well as jobs to many Band member adults.
- In District II, plans are being considered for construction of a new day care facility, to meet the great need of the Band members and their child care needs.
- Ahzhamoog gained a four-plex in 2009 with many new homes and rental units planned in 2010 in the Wise Owl development.
- Ahzhamoog is the home of Pine Grove Leadership Academy. Pine Grove continues to grow the number of Band member students attending by providing high-quality education to our youth and jobs to our Band members. In addition, the Pine Grove Leadership facility was remodeled to improve the learning environment and better serve our Band member students.
- District III Band members were fortunate and gained several new

homes throughout the district, as well as many new homes in the new Zhingwak Oodena housing development. In 2010, there are plans for additional Elder homes and rental units in this new housing development. DIII Representative Harry Davis worked hard with Community Development to obtain funding for these homes.

- As you can see from the accomplishments noted above, the services offered to Band members and achievements by Band programs are too many to name. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of all Mille Lacs Band commissioners and Band employees. Commissioners, would you please stand as I call your name. Please hold your applause.
- John Dunkley, Commissioner of Administration; Carolyn Shaw, Assistant Commissioner of Administration; Don Eubanks, Commissioner of Health and Human Services; Angella Roby, Commissioner of Finance; Curt Kalk, Commissioner of Natural Resources; Jennifer Waltman, Commissioner of Community Development; Dennis Olson, Commissioner of Education; Rjay Brunkow, Solicitor General; and our newest commissioner, Michael Garrow, Commissioner of Corporate Affairs. Please give a warm round of applause for them and their staff's dedication and hard work in serving the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Miigwetch!

- At this time, I'd like to thank my wife Rosalie Noonday, my mother-in-law Rose Noonday, and of course my mom, Jennie Weyaus. My mom is the oldest living Mille Lacs Band member at 95 years old. She is full of knowledge on the history and culture of the Mille Lacs Band people. My mom has given me gifts of a lifetime by teaching me the true value of honesty, preservation of our language and culture, and the importance of helping and caring for other people. Miigwetch.
- I'd also like to thank all of my family and friends for their strong support over the years that I have been in office. I learned long ago, family and friends are the true source of happiness. Miigwetch.
- Band Assembly would like to thank the legislative staff who assist Band members and manage the legislative offices on a daily basis. We are proud of their hard work and dedication to helping fellow Band members. Miigwetch, ladies. Keep up the good work.
- Band Assembly would also like to thank the staff in the Office of Management and Budget. Commissioner Roby and the dedicated, professional staff in OMB work hard every day to provide excellent customer service to Band members, and to the Mille Lacs Band overall. Miigwetch, OMB staff.
- Lastly, we would like to thank all our veterans of war who are with us here today, those who are still serving our country, and those who

gave their lives so that we may enjoy the many opportunities we have been given. Please give a round of applause for all military personnel.

- Your current elected officials have always held tight to our values and belief in honesty and integrity, and only doing what's right. Times are not always easy as an elected official. There are difficult decisions that must be made and done so in the best interest of the Band as a whole. However, I have come to believe, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, and blaming it on you; if you can wait and not be tired by waiting, or being lied about, don't deal in lies or being hated. Don't give way to hating," you will be a true leader.

- Everyday I strive to be a true leader of our people, for our people, the Mille Band members. Like always, I will serve and protect our people, our lands, and our culture, for many years to come.

- Miigwetch for being here with us. Go today in peace and happiness, while looking forward to the many positive opportunities 2010 is sure to bring.

- Miigwetch!