

2024 State of the Band Brookston

We would like to welcome all of our Band Members, Fond du Lac Honor Guard, Fond du Lac Royalty, drum groups Cedar Creek and The Good Boys and The Ojibway School Band. We welcome our invited guests that have graciously joined us this evening and for those that are joining us via ZOOM.

We would like to first offer our sincere condolences to the families that have lost loved ones over this past year. We all know the difficulties in navigating through these emotional times for individuals and families and we hope for the strength that you will need.

We have had not only a historic year in the Brookston District, but a very historic and victorious year for Fond du Lac as a whole.

These accomplishments and victories could not happen without our dedicated and very capable staff in the various divisions for the Fond du Lac Band.

We are again happy to report that the Regional Water Project is complete. We have reported throughout the project on the progress made and the end result is that the households that are served have the best water in Northeast Minnesota. This also provides a very needed addition of a water supply system for fire protection for a rural area. Again, we thank the Public Works Manager Jordan Vandal, Water/Waste Water Manager

Adam Thompson, Michael LaFave Water/Waste Water Lead Operator, and Alex Isham, Kris Cloud and Eric Rabideaux Water/Wastewater Operators. If we have forgotten anyone in this Department we apologize, but these folks are amazing at what they do and their knowledge of the operations of the water treatment plant is simply amazing. Chi Miigwech for all that you folks do for Fond du Lac.

We have also completed and have occupied our very first Brookston Elderly building consisting of 5 units. These units overlook the Stoney Brook River in Brookston and has a stunning view all day long. Chi Miigwech to Housing Director Mary Diver and Michael Murray, who is a newly retired Projects Manager.

We have also selected the site for the start of our very own buffalo herd that could range in numbers of 15+. This project will be at what was once the location of the “turkey farm” and also near the apple orchard on Jokela and Kultala Roads. We will welcome home mashkode bizhike. Chi Miigwech to Marcia Eiyinch our Agriculture Director.

We are moving forward in the planning stages with our state-of-the-art BioMass project that will heat the Brookston Center and have the possibility of heating the local housing area. Chi Miigwech to Bruno Zagar our Environmental Specialist/ Energy Projects Manager and Steve Douglas our Tribal Facilities Operations Director

We also have had a very huge and historic victory for not only Fond du Lac, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe or the 11 sovereign Tribal Nations of Minnesota, but a very huge victory for all of Indian Country!!! Little Fond du Lac roughly 4,200 strong, took down a global mining conglomerate, Glencore. The owners of Northmet (Polymet) mining. Fond du Lac was the first Tribe ever to have an Army Corp of Engineers Permit revoked as the wastewater would violate the Band's water quality standards as we have a designation as a Down Stream State. It doesn't end there either, we also had a victory in the Minnesota Supreme Court that ruled in the Band's favor that Minnesota Pollution Control Agencies decision to issue a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) was arbitrary and capricious and MPCA did not genuinely engage in a reasoned decision making. These were huge and historic victories for Indian Country. We certainly could not have had this success without the staff of Resource Management, our Legal Division lead by Sean Copeland and our outside counsel Vanessa Ray-Hodge of Sonosky Law Firm. Chi Miigwech to Resource Management Director Reggie Defoe, Nancy Schuldt our Water Projects Coordinator, Rick Gitar our Water Regulatory Specialist, Retiree Wayne Dupuis our former Environmental Director and all the others that fought for the Band. After this victory it is now our staff that become the recognized experts in their fields.

Through these victories some on the outside have stated that the Band was against mining, we have always held that we are

against irresponsible mining! Mining that would have a negative impact on our natural resources and our water quality standards. We will continue to advocate for keeping our resources pristine. Resources that are enjoyed by all, both Indian and Non-Indian. Simply put.....This is Our Way of Life!!!

We also joined our brothers and sisters from Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe and Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa to oppose the expansion of Lutsen Mountain Ski Area. We held that this would have a negative impact on one of the largest sugar maple stands in the Arrowhead Region. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) findings through Tribal Consultation found there would be significant impacts to Tribal resources and cultural impacts. In the end the US Forest Service issued a "No Action" decision that would stop the project in its entirety. Chi Miigwech to the Tribal Leadership from Bois Forte and Grand Portage and their staff, once again our Legal Department and our Resource Management Staff of Reggie Defoe, Tom Howes, Nancy Schuldt and others and our outside counsel Sara Van Norman.

We have returned to Lake Superior to once again harvest Lake Trout after a 169-year absence. Several Band Members have gone through special training on how to safely and correctly set nets. Chi Miigwech to our Fisheries Department for this training and the training to come in the future, and for Chairman Dupuis and Jax Kettlehut in setting the first net.

We have successfully lobbied the Secretary of State about establishing polling sites here on Fond du Lac in areas that disenfranchise our community members. We are happy to report that with the help of Secretary of State Steve Simon it is now written into law that Tribes can request a “Pop Up” polling site for at the very least one day. We are in the process of making that request to St. Louis County for the voters of Brevator Township. Granted it is 1 day, it is a start that can be built upon.

We have completed and implemented our wage study and have made roughly a \$11m investment into our staff and Band Members in order for delivery of services to our Membership. This has been a very long and arduous task by all staff in Human Resources, Finance, Enterprises and Programs. This will bring Fond du Lac to the comparable market and have a system to continuously update with the market.

As you can see Fond du Lac had a very productive year with staff carrying out the business of the Band. We know that as you look through the program booklet you will see all the amazing things our Divisions and staff have worked on and we apologize that we may not have mentioned all of them. Chi Miigwech to all of our staff for their service to the Band and our Membership.

Chi Miigwech to my colleagues on Fond du Lac RBC for sitting through many meetings discussing the various issues we have mentioned and various other issues not mentioned. For making

hard decisions on a multitude of topics with regard to these victories. These are victories that all of Fond du Lac can be proud of!!!

In the coming year we will continue to advocate for not only our Band Membership, but also at times for Indian Country. We will always stand with our brothers and sisters and ask them to stand with Fond du Lac when it comes to exercising and protecting Tribal Sovereignty with the utmost tenacity.

We will continue to work on the very important issue for Fond du Lac of navigating through the process of licensing our Tribal Youth Shelter and finally opening the doors.

We will continue to work with the University of Minnesota on the returning to the Band 3,400 acres of land that makes up the Cloquet Forestry Center. This has been continually worked on by many current and former Reservation Business Committee Members and staff. This land is within reach and when complete we will celebrate together. Chi Miigwech to all current and former Reservation Business Committee Members and staff for your resolve on this matter.

We will continue the fight to return our ancestors to resting spots that will no longer be disturbed. With the help and the expertise of our very own Tribal Monitors and Tribal Survey teams. Chi Miigwech to Lance Northbird and the staff he works with.

We will welcome Tribal Consultation with local governments to assist on projects in the Brookston District for a possible marina/campground. Discussions that will ensure that all Band Ordinances are followed for the protection of the environment. Projects that will employ Band Members through our TERO program.

We will continue to look at other Economic Development opportunities that will bring jobs to an impoverished employment area with fair market wages.

We will continue to advocate for fair treatment of our children's education, to level the playing field within our school districts where we have Tribal Consultation. We have discussed and are committed to establishing our very own Youth Commission to have their voice in decision making and at times assist in advocating for the Band. They will participate in visits to the halls of Congress and participate at the National Congress of American Indians Conferences and in other important forums. This is a true commitment to the future of Fond du Lac!!

Over the last year this administration has worked closely together in establishing processes that ensures that we all are aware and approve any and all hiring/contracting with individuals and organizations going forward. We will continue with our commitment of transparency.

We will end this presentation with what we think is very important. During the presentation the word "I" was never

used. The word “WE” is used as we are all very important and we are all in this together moving forward.

Chi Miigwech for allowing us to serve the Fond du Lac Band and may the Creator watch over each and everyone of us and our families.