# Marjorie A. Anderson

Chief Executive
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

## Personal:

- Born Marjorie Ann Davis on April 21, 1932, on the Mille Lacs Reservation.

- Graduated Onamia High School in 1952. Denied the opportunity to continue her schooling, she later began to vigorously pursue the cause of higher education for her people. She eventually completed hundreds of hours in advanced skills training, workshops, and seminars.

- Married Merlin Anderson in 1954. She has three children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

- Currently resides on the Mille Lacs Reservation. She has also lived in Minneapolis.

- Worked in the field of financial record keeping prior to her career in Band government.

- Under the ongoing guidance of Mille Lacs Band Elders, she has become an authority on the history, traditions and culture of her people and is fluent in the Ojibwe language. She believes that a strong connection to tribal heritage, combined with solid education, will provide the tools needed for the future success of the Band's members.

## Career History:

- First woman elected as Chief Executive of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. She was unanimously appointed to this position by the Band Assembly on April 16, 1991, to replace Chairman Arthur Gahbow, who had died suddenly while in office. In 1992, she was elected in her own right to a four-year term as Chief Executive, and in 1996 she was re-elected to a second four-year term. In December 2008, Anderson was elected Chief Executive during a special election.

- Twice elected as the Band's Secretary/Treasurer – the second highest position in Band government – she served at that post from 1987 to 1991. During this period, she successfully restored financial control, accountability, and credibility to her department.

- Served as District I Representative to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe tribal government from 1976 to 1987.

- Served as the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's (MCT) vice president. Also served on the MCT's Education, Housing and Economic Development, and Legislative subcommittees.

- Served two two-year terms as Minneapolis area regional vice president for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and worked on NCAI's National Coordinating Committee to advise the transition team for President Bill Clinton.

- Served two two-year terms as treasurer of the National Unity Caucus, a federal political action committee that involves tribal leaders from around the country.

- Founded the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes (MAST) in 1996 and served as president. MAST is a regional alliance of nearly three dozen tribes from Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin that works to advance, protect and enhance the tribes' mutual interests, treaty rights, sovereignty, and cultures.

- Served two terms as a director of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines.

- Served a four-year term as a Minnesota Housing Finance Agency board member. She was appointed by Governor Jesse Ventura to this agency, which provides housing for low- and moderate-income people.

- Involved in several Indian women leadership organizations and the American Indian Advisory Council on Drugs and Alcohol.

## Career Highlights:

- Presided over the development and adoption of the three-branch system of government that provides a separation of powers in the Mille Lacs Band tribal government that has proven to be extremely effective in promoting thoughtful and deliberate decision-making during Anderson's administration.

- Was at the forefront of a nationwide effort to strengthen tribal self-governance and improve relations between tribal governments and the federal government of the United States. Anderson aggressively pushed for designation of the Mille Lacs Band as one of seven tribes in the country to participate in a self-governance demonstration project which placed control of federal funds allocated for American Indians in the hands of the tribes. This successful demonstration project was made permanent in 1994. Anderson's leadership in the program promoted the ability of tribal governments to make their own determinations about how best to use federal funds and prevented wasteful absorption of those funds by distant federal bureaucracies.

- Guided the Mille Lacs Band in becoming the first tribe in the country to receive equal status as individual states when dealing with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on certain federal projects. Subsequently, the Band has been able to work directly with the EPA on innovative programs that protect and enhance natural resources on the Mille Lacs Reservation.

- Was the driving force behind the opening of Grand Casino Mille Lacs in 1991 and Grand Casino Hinckley in 1992. Her hard work and leadership in this endeavor established Band-owned businesses that have increased the Band's self-sufficiency while creating an economic boom shared by the entire region.

- Continued the bold and courageous political decision to invest Grand Casino revenues in rebuilding the reservation community and securing the future of the Band's children, rather than solely distributing the money to Band members on a per-capita basis.

- Led the Mille Lacs Band in becoming the first tribe in the United States to issue community improvement bonds backed by casino revenues under the Tribal Tax Status Act of 1982. These bonds supplied $20 million to fund reservation construction projects including new schools, a comprehensive clinic, community centers, ceremonial buildings, housing, a water tower, water treatment plant, sewage lagoon system, roads, and other reservation infrastructure.

- Set an effective course for pursuing the Mille Lacs Band's traditional hunting, fishing and gathering rights as included in the Treaty of 1837. She successfully engaged the U.S. Department of Justice to intervene in federal legislation in support of the Band's treaty rights during the 1990s.

- Guided the Mille Lacs Band and national Indian leaders into active and aggressive involvement in public affairs. During her administration, the Band established its Mah Mah Wi No Min Political Fund, which supports political campaigns, public education activities, and voter registration efforts.

- Guided the Mille Lacs Band's Corporate Commission to diversify the Band's economy in order to ensure a healthy economic future for Indians and non-Indians in East Central Minnesota. Diversification ventures included restaurants, stores, and one of the few Indian-owned banks in the country.

## Honors:

- Earned the Indian Child Advocate of the Year award in 1994 for her leadership on the effort to change the income and residency guidelines for the national Indian Head Start program.

- Recognized by the Native American Finance Officers Association in 1994 with a lifetime achievement award for her dedication to opening doors to economic opportunity for Indian tribes and her work to help tribal leaders pursue the rights and privileges of their members.

- Presented with the 1996 Distinguished Achievement Award by the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development for her extraordinary contributions to enhancing the welfare of children in the state and her strong leadership in public service to the community, state and nation.

- Named the 1996 Tribal Leader of the Year by the Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce for her efforts to support, promote, develop and utilize Indian-owned and operated businesses.

- Received an Excellence in Leadership Award at the 1997 International Gaming Business Expo for her vision to create a better way of life for her people.

- Honored as the 1997 Tribal Leader of the Year by the National Congress of American Indians for her nationally recognized leadership and her dedication to American Indian issues.

- Presented with an honorary degree from Hamline University's School of Law and Graduate Schools in 1998.

- Named one of 1998's newsmakers by the *Minnesota Women's Press*.

- Honored with the 1999 Susan B. Anthony Award from the Minnesota Center for Women in Government at Hamline University for her courage as a leader and her contribution to the advancement of women.

- Named to the inaugural list of the 25 most influential women in business in the Twin Cities by *CityBusiness* newspaper.

- Selected by the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* as one of the 100 most influential Minnesotans of the twentieth century.

- Honored with the 2000 Wendell Chino Humanitarian Award for her commitment to peace, fair governance, easing suffering and injustice, and advancing intercultural understanding.

- Honored with the 2010 Bear Award from the Minnesota American Indian Chamber of Commerce for her efforts and commitment to the development and success of American Indian businesses.

- Received the 2011 Woman of Distinction Award from the Minnesota DFL's Women's Hall of Fame for her longtime commitment to DFL politics and government in Minnesota and achievements in strong governance, public service, and the advancement of women.