



MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE

Executive Branch of Tribal Government

December 21, 2022

Dear Band Members,

Each year, the Chief Executive is required by Title 4, §6 (i) of our Band Statutes to *“present to the Band Assembly an annual State of the Band Address on the second Tuesday of January of each calendar year.”* I am excited that for the first time since the global pandemic began, the 2023 State of the Band Address will be held in-person as well as live-streamed in a virtual environment on January 10, 2023.

This Annual State of the Band Report has been prepared as a written accompaniment to the State of the Band Address. There is only so much time to convey all progress we achieved together last year, so this report goes into more detail about the excellent work that has been done on your behalf during 2022.

I hope you will take time to read the report and, if you are unable to attend in person, to view the on-line State of the Band Address, which will also include informative videos from each of the Commissioners. Additionally, the full text of my State of the Band Address will be printed in the February edition of the Inaajimowin. We want all Band Members to have as much information as possible about what is happening in every area of Band government.

As 2022 has come to a close, I want to thank Secretary-Treasurer Sheldon Boyd, who has done a wonderful job superintending the Band’s finances and leading our Legislative Branch this year. Miigwech to the Band Assembly and our commissioners as well for your hard work. Finally, miigwech to Band Members for the sacrifices you have made to protect our community in 2022.

The only way to get through hard times is by remaining unified and working together. Let us continue into 2023 with strength and a commitment to persevere as the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

Miigwech,

Melanie Benjamin
Chief Executive

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ADMINISTRATION

Aanjibimaadizing

Aanjibimaadizing, which means "changing lives" in our Ojibwe language, is operated as a division of the Mille Lacs Band's Department of Administration. The goals of the program are centered on our mission statement:

To assist our fellow Anishinaabe with education, training, work experiences, cultural participation, and support services to be prosperous and change their life.

Aanjibimaadizing helps to empower participants to end dependency on government assistance with an acquired purpose or an occupation that will contribute to the well-being of their community and family. Our services support obtaining and retaining employment, improving or creating a position of job readiness, and addressing barriers that prevent our clients from simply filling their employability development plan. Aanjibimaadizing has offices in the Urban area, District I, District II, and District III. Youth Services are provided in all districts. The offices are open to walk-in clients. Clients can also call, email, or apply online at www.aanji.org in this new age of virtual services.

Division Chief's Award

Aanjibimaadizing was awarded the Division Chief's Award at the 42nd National Indian and Native American Employment and Training Conference (NINAETC) in the spring of 2022. The nomination for the award cited Aanji's excellence in service as demonstrated by its statistical and narrative reports. NINAETC serves the needs of a broad membership of Indian and Native American tribal governments, consortia, and organizations as a representative voice of consensus on national employment and training issues. There are 72 tribal programs that operate as grantees under PL 102-477 nationally. Each year one PL 102-477 program grantee receives the Division Chief's Award.

Aanjibimaadizing Training Center

The former clinic building on Migizi Drive was designated to Aanjibimaadizing to pursue our efforts of having an independent training center. The program has operated in this building since October, 2020. All DI staff and services are located within this building, except for a facilitator office by the housing units on Ookwemin Loop.

The building will be going through a major renovation to provide those services, which include confidential case plan meetings and one-on-one employment and training support, as well as allowing for separate offices, social distancing, and more space to provide training and educational services. Several interior spaces have been redesigned to complement and enhance our services, including a complete commercial kitchen, a multi-purpose room for cultural activities, a modern classroom for client education, and a versatile space for Ge-Niigaanizijig activities.

In the spring of 2022, Phase 1 of the construction remodel began and is scheduled to be completed by December 2022. Phase 2 will begin immediately after and is scheduled to be completed by March 2023.

The renovation involves new flooring throughout the building, new LED lighting, new ceiling tiles, new doors, windows, and paint. The HVAC and DATA systems will be upgraded to include new wiring, duct work, and efficient, automated controls. On the exterior, new stucco and trim, upgraded exterior lighting, sidewalks, asphalt, and landscaping will be installed. Finally, to complete the transformation, new, contemporary furniture will be installed throughout the building.

Youth Services — Ge-niigaanizijig

There are currently 384 youth in the program. Over the past year, there have been a total of 496 youth that have participated. Services are provided to youth ages six (6), or who have entered kindergarten, up to age twenty (20). Ge-niigaanizijig (in the Ojibwe language means “our potential leaders”) provides programming that helps children make healthy choices that lead to self-sufficiency as adults. The curriculum is designed around four themes: Culture, Community, Career, and Education. The staff have been trained in a model of intervention and prevention called *Check and Connect*. This training has helped staff be empowered in their role as a mentor/role model to youth and gives them insight in ways to positively intervene and support children in their education, physical activity, and social emotional development.

Due to COVID-19, during 2022, group sizes were still limited in size. But multiple different types of camps, events, sports and activities were offered. Some events offered included a Youth Fashion Show, Veterinary Clinic, two Timberwolves Basketball camps, two basketball camps with Noah Dahlman, Trades Camp, Birchbark picking, wild ricing, sugar bush, attending a Twins game, a summer internship program, and multiple other activities. Ge-niigaanizijig plans several program improvements including, but not limited to: data collection and entry, using *Check and Connect*, lesson planning to support the four themes, and consistency across programming.

	District I	District II	District IIA	District III	Urban
Youth Participants	81	29	34	30	N/A
Teen Participants	75	26	30	48	31
Total	156	55	64	78	31

Education

We have placed a high value target for our youth in regards to education. We value the accomplishments of our members during their time in school and incentivize any awards, honor rolls, and letter grade improvement that our members earn. During the 2022 – 2023 school year, 40 youth were on the honor roll. We had 16 of our members graduate from high school. Eight of our youth started college this year. Aanjibimaadizing also had eight teens attend their new Summer Internship Program, and 27 took part in the Casino Intern Program.

Youth Support Services

Ge-niigaanizijig provides a variety of support services that help youth to reach the goals that they have set with their mentors. This includes support for driver’s education, support related to employment, musical instruments, and academic enrichment. Aanjibimaadizing provides technology to students as a support if it is not provided by their school. Through our program, 24 members have completed driver’s education and 17 received their driving permit.

Career Explorations

Career Explorations is available for youth ages 16 – 24. This program functions like WEX and serves as a job training program for youth. Over the past year, there have been 11 youth that have participated in this option.

MLCV Youth Ambassadors

The Ge-Niigaanizijig program has partnered with the Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures program again this year to offer internships at the casinos. A total of 27 youth participated in the program, marking down another great year for this partnership. Youth were exposed to the inner workings of the casino, learned business strategy, leadership skills, and made network connections that will help them succeed in the many different business and school environments.

Camps

Three camps were offered this summer: a Vet Clinic, 21st Century Camp, and Trade Camp, which were very popular. Thirty-seven youth participated.

Summer Food Program

In summer 2022, Aanjibimaadizing once again provided the Summer Food Program in partnership with Nay Ah Shing Schools for families. Youth were able to eat meals at Nay Ah Shing school, Chiminising, Aazhoomog, and Meshakwad for free during this summer.

Ojibwemowin and Traditional Teachings

One of Ge-Niigaanizijig's goals is to include Ojibwe Language and Culture teachings into our lessons and activities. Samantha Peet from D2 has led the instruction of Ojibwemowin along with assistance from James Clark. There have been 110 youth participating in these classes and have been learning more each lesson. We also encourage and incentivize traditional teaching participation. In place of our group activities, our members can choose to participate in a traditional activity and receive a higher incentive pay. Three hundred and eleven (311) youth took part in traditional activities that included sewing ribbon skirts, drum making, quilting, beading, creating regalia, sugar bushing, birch bark picking, moccasin making, and attending powwows and ceremonial dances.

Sports

Former Ge-Niigaanizijig Fitness Coordinator, Tim Taggart, worked with our members and their families throughout the summer. Over the course of the summer, there were 188 regular participants for sports that included golf, kickball, softball, volleyball, basketball and a football camp. During PowWow weekend at Mille Lacs, we held a MMIW 5k run that had 77 participants.

Timberwolves Partnership/Noah Dahlman Camp

Aanjibimaadizing has had a 3-year partnership with the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx basketball teams. In this partnership, we offered life and basketball skill clinics with the youth attending a Timberwolves game afterward and two large basketball clinics on the reservation at the Community Centers in D1 and D3. These events were well attended. Parents and youth all had positive experiences and good things to say about their work with the Timberwolves team.

Noah Dahlman's mental toughness for basketball camp was offered and held at Meshakwad community center and the D1 community center in summer 2022. Noah Dahlman is a current professional basketball player for the Lithuanian basketball team. He played his high school career at Braham High School. We had a total of 70 youth attend his basketball camp.

Child Care Services

Aanjibimaadizing provides child care assistance to TANF and other clients that helps pay for child care so clients can retain their employment. Child care is not limited to site-based care. Family, friends, and neighbors (FFN) are eligible to receive child care funds to offer services to our clients. During Fiscal Year 2022, child care assistance in the amount \$161,562 was provided to 51 families and 98 children:

	District I	District II	District III	% Increase from FY21
Number of children	74	10	14	31%
Number of families	38	6	7	36%

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Quality Improvements

The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) provides quality support for child care stability where Mille Lacs Band member children attend. Three child cares received grant funding from Aanjibimaadizing: Kidz Zone, All Star, and Mille Lacs Early Education. One of the providers shared that keeping her child care open during COVID was very challenging, so when she received the CCDF check, she cried.

Aanjibimaadizing manages the CCDF for Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (MLBO).

Facilitated Services

Aanjibimaadizing Facilitators work to provide specialized services that empower clients. This can include client goals such as reuniting with their children, obtaining housing, and managing recovery. Our Facilitators are currently working with 64 families. In FY22, 17 families were reunited, 49 families have secured housing, and 20 families moved into permanent housing.

Pandemic Assistance Programs

The amount of pandemic assistance that Aanjibimaadizing has distributed to date totals over \$4,313,067.48.

COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program (CERA and CERA-HUD)

The COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program (CERA) provided direct assistance for renter Households with Mille Lacs Band members in the household that have experienced or are at risk of financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The assistance is meant to help prevent homelessness and maintain housing stability. Previously, the federal Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program distributed \$1.78 million in funds.

A second round of funding, CERA-HUD, was offered after the first round closed. The CERA-HUD program distributed \$1.17 million in funds in FY21. Aanjibimaadizing has distributed a total of \$2,965,319 amount of CERA/CERA-HUD funding.

Pandemic Economic Assistance Funds (PEAF)

Pandemic Economic Assistance Funds (PEAF) is non-recurring short-term benefits. It may be received no more than four times and must be for different emergency situations each time. To be eligible, you must be an Aanjibimaadizing client. \$717,736 in funds have been distributed by Aanjibimaadizing. This has gone towards school expenses and a winter clothing allowance.

Housing Assistance Fund (HAF)

The Housing Assistance Fund Program (HAF) provides direct assistance for Households with a mortgage with Mille Lacs Band members in the household that have experienced or are at risk of financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mortgage and utility payments are allowable under these funds. The assistance is meant to help prevent homelessness and maintain housing stability. The Program is funded through the federal Treasury program. \$685,391 in funds have been distributed by Aanjibimaadizing in FY22.

Training and Development

Aanjibimaadizing offers multiple training and education opportunities for clients. During the past year, over 700 people have used classroom services. This includes Adult Basic Education, GED assistance, resume writing, driver’s license assistance, and educational testing as well as a variety of trainings related to job security, overcoming barriers, and family stability. To help protect our clients, many services and courses are offered online when possible. In FY22, Aanjibimaadizing had people attend 126 different courses. Forty-two of these were hosted by Aanjibimaadizing throughout all of the districts, with over 284 sessions offered.

FY22 number of client contacts by the instruction team from each district:

District I	District II	District IIA	District III	Urban
2,163	887	182	613	437

Pine Technical College

Aanjibimaadizing partnered with Pine Technical and Community College again this year to offer Administrative Assistant, Automotive Technician, Certified Nursing Assistant, Parenting Piece by Piece, PCA, ServSafe, Small Engine Repair, and Soft Skills courses. Through the three years we’ve been working with Pine Tech, 142 people have completed their courses.

Website

To better disseminate program information and trainings to our clients, Aanjibimaadizing has developed a training and resource website at www.aanji.org. Continually a work in progress, this website is maintained by the Instructional Team where clients can access online courses they have developed and online learning tools. Online applications for Aanjibimaadizing and the programs it offers can be found there as well. Please visit www.aanji.org.

Work Experience Program (WEX)

The Aanjibimaadizing WEX offerings are designed to give participants the opportunity to test and demonstrate work readiness that supports their career plans. Each participant should have a current resume on file which they are developing through training and work experience placements. During FY22, 127 WEX Participants worked a total of 45,276 hours.

	District I	District II	District IIA	District III	Urban
Number of WEX Participants During FY22	40	28	5	17	37

Ojibwe Language and Culture

Aanjibimaadizing continues to make significant increases with developing Ojibwe language and cultural resources. The program has a team dedicated to the establishment of long-term successful Ojibwe language instruction and cultural teachings. An Ojibwe Coordinator and four Cultural Apprentices were hired this year to teach critical cultural skills needed for ceremonies. We are committed to Ojibwe language proficiency and creating access to the language for the benefit of all our people.

Aanjibimaadizing also offers a variety of Ojibwe language and cultural classes including well-being resources such as offering tobacco, smudging, coming-of-age/puberty information for young men and ladies, and other aspects of cultural knowledge, crafts, and traditional medicine. In addition to this, four videos are being created to demonstrate the history, traditions and process of seasonal activities, preserving the skills, and language used with them.

Ojibwe Language and Culture

Due to COVID-19, work with Elders has continued virtually or in one-on-one sessions using masks and social distancing protocols. In FY22, 110 hours of audio have been collected, nine articles have been published in the Innajimowin, and 11 elder recordings have been archived on the aanji.org cultural website. Our teams are working to save the language. Some tribes have no living fluent speakers. The MLBO is working to see that we create another generation of speakers and that our most respected population of Band members—our Elders—get to see that their work has not gone undervalued. They will soon be able to hear children speaking Ojibwe again.

Rosetta Stone

The first level of Rosetta Stone was released to MLBO members in January 2022 and opened to the public March 1. To date, over 3,438 licenses have been assigned from over 126 tribes across the nation. Nearly 25,000 hours have been spent on the application learning Ojibwe. We are looking forward to completion of the second level in 2023.

Naming Ceremonies

During FY22, the program assisted 72 people with obtaining their Anishinaabe name. Our goal is to help our families and youth embrace their Anishinaabe self and practice what we have been given to get spiritual support and wellness.

Mille Lacs Band Suicide Prevention Project

In the spring of 2021, Aanjibimaadizing began organizing a task force of Mille Lacs Band members and employees to begin organizing a Suicide Prevention Project. American Indians have the highest rate of suicide in Minnesota. Aitkin County is ranked 1st in Minnesota for the highest suicide rate of any county; Mille Lacs County ranks in the top five; Pine County, 13th. Youth ages 15–34 make up 55% of people who die by suicide among American Indians in Minnesota.

We are working to build suicide awareness and increase capacity with culturally specific mental health care services, support systems, and guidance to ensure the whole community knows how to intervene and help. In FY22, Aanjibimaadizing presented Suicide Prevention at four schools and held a Suicide Prevention Workshop.

Program Outcomes

Other Program Outcomes

- Aanjibimaadizing became merit certified and is now able to administer SNAP
- A community elder commented that Aanjibimaadizing was the best thing to happen to the reservation
- After remodeling and hiring two staff, the Aanji Garage opened as a training and vehicle service center for Mille Lacs Band Departments
- Construction began on the former clinic to renovate it into a training center
- Online applications were developed for all program services (Aanji adult and youth programming, Rosetta Stone, CHAP, CERA, CERA-HUD, HAF, and PEAf)
- Rosetta Stone launched with 3,438 current licenses in use by members of 128 tribal nations
- 110 hours of audio (oral histories) have been collected
- Nine cultural articles have been published in the Innajimowin
- 11 elder recordings have been archived
- Currently there are 437 active Adult Employment, Education, and Training clients and 16 TANF clients
- In total, there have been 837 adult clients this past year
- \$251,780.64 were paid in support services
- 127 WEX participants provided 45,276 hours of labor to the community and local businesses as they learned job skills
- Facilitated services assisted with reuniting 17 families
- 49 families secured housing
- 20 families moved into permanent housing
- Aanjibimaadizing distributed \$4,313,067 in special COVID-19 related funds since the start of the pandemic
- Distributed Toys for Tots
- Childcare assistance was expanded with a 36% increase in families served
- Supported Mille Lacs Early Education
- Supported construction at the D2 Head Start Child Care Remodel
- New playground in Lake Lena is being built for Ge-Niigaanizijig and the community to use
- Ge-Niigaanizijig expanded to Urban area and currently has 384 youth in the program
- \$487,552 in youth support services were distributed
- 77 people participated in the MMIW run
- 943 youth participated in Ge-Niigaanizijig sports and fitness programs
- 284 youth participated in clubs, camps, and clinics
- A youth-led fashion show was held
- Offered a holiday food and gift card giveaway for youth families
- 14 dog houses were built by youth and distributed to community members
- Summer Internship program was successfully started
- Nine youth are learning how to make meals in Cooking Club
- 40 youth were on the honor roll
- 16 youth graduated and eight started college
- 24 youth completed driver's education and 17 received their permits
- 11 youth participated in Career Explorations, a job training program
- There were 27 MLCV Youth Ambassadors

- Suicide Prevention training and resources were developed and shared with MLB communities, employees, and four schools
- Provided opportunities for youth and Band members to attend Timberwolves games
- Transported multiple clients to treatment
- Held 2nd Annual Winter Clothing Drive
- Instructors helped 725 clients with an average of 18 clients assists per day
- 942 clients participated in 126 different training courses offered
- 142 clients were assisted in earning certifications through Pine Technical and Community College
- 443 clients were assisted with reinstatement fees and obtaining their MN driver's license
- Expanded small business development by providing funding to more than 20 clients in FY22

Client Successes

A client has worked very hard trying to get employed. They are now employed full time and so thankful they have been given the chance to work.

Their children are their first priority and know they are loved.

I see so many of our clients working hard on getting their GED. I am so proud of them and look forward to watching the opportunities it will bring them.

They keep a positive attitude and are working to find a place to call home for their family.

Our youth have been working so hard at catching up from the effects of the pandemic. Attendance has improved and they are doing a great job making up credits that have been missed and graduating on time.

Coming out of treatment, they are truly a different person and are trying very hard to be good parent and stay on the right track.

A client is working toward their goals and working with WEX while they work on getting the clearance to get a job at the casino.

It is so exciting to see them succeed and doing so good.

They have already shown so much progress — their outlook on life is amazing!

The gratitude our clients have, not just for the help we are able to offer but for everything in their lives, is so inspiring.

Supporting clients through the treatment and recovery process — watching it give hope to other family members who also enter treatment as a result.

Helping families meet their goals so they could reunite with their children.

Youth are getting accustomed to — and succeeding — with online activities.

At the WEWIN conference, Mille Lacs Band participants were asked to list things that they were proud of in our community. Aanjibimaadizing, Ge-Niigaanizijig, and First Language Speakers were ranked as the top 3 of the 21 items.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Aanjibimaadizing program is committed to community member success in every unique case. To see all of the potential our clients and youth hold is amazing. We have added what Elders have said are the most important aspects of our lives: our language and our culture. We are devoted to the work of guiding *gidinawemaaganinaanig* (our relatives) to a place of wellness, self-sufficiency, and an anchored identity as Anishinaabe.

Child Support

The mission of the Mille Lacs Band Tribal Child Support Enforcement Office (TCSE) is to assist families within the jurisdiction areas to provide well-rounded services to promote healthy family relationships and financially protected children. Services provided include paternity establishment, establishing child support orders, modifying existing child support orders, and enforcing child support orders.

The TCSO has six employees when fully staffed. This year, we were operating with only three employees. The total number of open cases during FY22 was 1,691 and the amount of child support collected and distributed for the year was \$1,956,030.18.

FY 23 Goals

We are working on some proposed statute revisions that we feel will allow us to provide better service to our clients in the near future. It is our hope that when the time comes, we will be able to get Band member input and support. We are also working on improving communications with our clients by providing information that will help clients better understand their case status and inform about available options. We will also provide updated information about our department in the near future.

We are actively recruiting for the vacant positions in our department; our goal is to be fully staffed by January 2023.

Please watch the Inaajimowin for further updates and information.

For any questions or concerns, please contact the Child Support Director, Ann Stafford, at 320-532-7591 for further discussion.

Self-Governance Elder Supplemental Income Program

The BIA Self-Governance funding agreement was amended last year and is likely to be amended this upcoming fiscal year at the request of the federal partners. Applications will be developed related to 105(I) leasing, a new program which is not necessarily a traditional lease but an agreement between the Band and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to reimburse facility costs. Costs may be reimbursed when a facility or part of a facility is used to carry out the negotiated programs, services, functions, and activities on behalf of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This is also a leasing opportunity the Band has been looking into with Indian Health Service to cover programs provided under our IHS Self-Governance Agreement.

The Elder Supplemental Income program is under Self-Governance, with the cost provided for by a special Elder endowment fund. The program serves around 400 Elders, and the spending for the program is on target with last year's numbers and should remain consistent in the foreseeable future. The cost-of-living increase for the upcoming year is going to be 8.7%, which is the published rate issued by the Social Security Administration.

Human Resources

The Human Resources Team is dedicated to assisting all employees and departments of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Currently, the Band employs 696 full-time regular, 28 part-time regular and 74 temporary employees.

2022 Highlights

- Continued COVID-19 Safety Training updates
- Implemented Middle Management Leadership series
- Interview process continued fully electronic or via conference call

2023 Goals

- Hire additional Human Resources employees to assist in increased employee encounters
- Personnel files fully scanned into Laserfiche
- Enhanced onboarding experience for employees at all levels; all current supervisors to complete the Leadership series
- Obtain a copy of the Bluestone evaluation report and begin implementing recommended process changes

Government Affairs

The mission of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Government Affairs Department is to assist in preserving, protecting, and defending the inherent sovereign rights, authority, and interests of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and its membership through effective inter-governmental relations, advocacy, and communications with external governments and others. The Office of Government Affairs is committed to promoting and maintaining the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe as a respected tribal sovereign nation, regional business leader, and ally at the local, state, and federal levels. We actively engage other governments and communities through effective strategic advocacy and collaboration for the benefit of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and its neighbors.

State Government Relations

The Office of Government Affairs works closely with the Chief Executive, who is the only Band official authorized by Band Statutes to conduct external relations with other governments. Government Affairs also works with appointed officials as authorized by the Chief Executive to assist in developing and maintaining healthy government-to-government relationships with external governmental entities. With respect to state government: Executive Order 19-24, signed by Governor Tim Walz early in 2019, affirms the government-to-government relationship between the State of Minnesota and Minnesota Tribal Nations, and it requires state agencies to develop consultation policies and procedures and to conduct timely and meaningful consultation sessions with Tribal Nations. In 2021 the principles of Executive Order 19-24 were codified into state law; insuring timely and meaningful government-to-government consultation between state agencies and Tribal Nations would continue beyond the Walz/Flanagan

Administration. This tribally led legislative initiative expanded the list of state agencies and/or sub-agencies that are now required to develop consultation policies and designate tribal liaisons to maintain and improve those relationships.

The Government Affairs team is charged with helping to maintain connectivity with all areas of state government; including state agency tribal liaisons and other key staff. Government Affairs team members also assist in facilitating annual state agency consultation sessions with Band officials. In 2022 Minnesota State agency consultation sessions with the Mille Lacs Band included: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Department of Administration, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), Department of Commerce, Department of Labor and Industry, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and others.

Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, and their staff have been tremendous partners with Minnesota's 11 Tribal Nations throughout the pandemic and throughout their first term in office. The Chief Executive and other MLBO staff, including Government Affairs, continue to work closely with the Governor and Lt. Governor's offices, including their Tribal State Relations Office, which still hold regular conference calls with Tribal leaders regarding a variety of important topics. The Chief Executive leads these calls for the Band with staff support and follow-up from Government Affairs and other Band departments. These calls assist state agency staff and others in providing informational updates to tribes and to help resolve issues by maintaining direct access to tribal liaisons and agency leadership.

State Legislative Advocacy

In 2022 the Minnesota Legislature returned to its work with mostly in-person floor sessions and committee activities. However, election year politics and what some would call "the Trump phenomenon" eventually derailed the process; resulting in an end of session deadlock for Minnesota legislators. Even with a \$7.9 billion state revenue surplus, the partisan divide was too great and law makers failed to reach a global agreement or even pass a bonding before the legislature adjourned.

Many opportunities were missed as a result of the failure of legislators and the Governor to reach an agreement at the end of the 2022 legislative session.

The Government Affairs team worked with other Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe staff, a variety of state agency staff, and legislators to move several legislative initiatives in 2022.

An appropriation request for \$2 million dollars to continue the development of the Child Welfare Initiative at Mille Lacs was advanced in 2022 in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). The Child Welfare Initiative is a collaborative with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and several tribes designed to help improve child protective services administration, reduce out-of-home placements and to create a more culturally sensitive model.

Although this appropriation request made it into omnibus bills in both the House and Senate, the failure of legislators to reach a final compromise on a majority of agency proposals meant this provision died along with several other legislative initiatives advanced by the Band.

The Government Affairs team also worked with Band DNR and the Minnesota Department of Administration to address an issue of concern regarding items of cultural significance that were

unearthed during an archeological dig in 2021 on the Mille Lacs reservation. Instead of following federal law—most specifically, the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) which establishes that tribes have jurisdiction over any American Indian remains or items of cultural significance that are unearthed within the exterior boundaries of a reservation—the Minnesota Office of the State Archeologist removed items for authentication without consulting with the Band. As a result of this encroachment, we worked with Minnesota Department of Administration, the Office of the State Archeologist and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council to craft legislative language that would reference NAGPRA in state law and avoid any confusion or encroachment moving forward. This legislative proposal also failed to pass in the absence of an end-of-session deal.

Federal Government Relations

On the federal level, the 2021 year saw one of the busiest times in recent memory, fueled by the excitement of the new Biden Administration with its new officials and new directions being pursued on improved federal Indian policies. Huge new rounds of COVID-19 relief funds were shaped and then delivered in 2021, at unprecedented levels to Indian Country. The Mille Lacs Band, through Band leadership, actively worked to make sure the Mille Lacs Band received its fair share of this federal assistance under terms that were administratively practical and worthwhile. That took a lot of meetings, letters, and lobbying. Band leadership teamed up with friends in the Biden Administration and on Capitol Hill to ensure that a full tribal share of the COVID-19 funding went to the independent, sovereign Mille Lacs Band as a separate Indian tribal government, despite the Interior Department’s ambiguous listing of the Band in the Federal Register.

The Office of Government Affairs also helped prepare four different “congressionally directed spending” requests, formerly known as “earmarks,” for Mille Lacs Band projects ranging from broadband to small business incubation to water sewer infrastructure. While those requests remain pending and unresolved because of the U.S. Congress standoff over the fiscal year appropriations packages, the work done on those project requests puts the Mille Lacs Band at the front of the line awaiting the distribution of infrastructure and other pandemic recovery program funds that have already been appropriated.

The Band scored another victory in 2021 when the Biden Administration appointed Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin to serve on the federal-tribal negotiated rule-making committee to implement the recently enacted tribal amendments to the Self-Governance Act. The Band had labored for years to lobby those amendments through the process, and when they were finally enacted late in 2020, the Band’s efforts were recognized with this appointment. The Band was also instrumental in bringing national attention to the longstanding challenge of reconciling the many terrible experiences of children in Indian boarding schools and has worked with the U.S. Interior Department to identify ways to bring about healing and justice from those memories. Among other accomplishments, the Band leadership worked with the Biden Administration to ensure quick action to reverse the damage the Trump Administration had made to the *Carcieri* analysis of the “under federal jurisdiction” status of the Band and many other tribes; we are proud to report that this question was once again resolved in 2021 as a non-issue and the Interior Secretary can and should now begin to more quickly accept land into trust for the Mille Lacs Band.

Band Member and External Communications

Our Government Affairs/Communications team continues to adapt to the ever-changing landscape full of communication methodology. The Team has met some of the challenges by expanding our offerings to include periodic email updates. This email news service has grown to 1,475 subscribers — a 31%

growth in the past year. The overall open rate across all emails remains extremely high, at 42.38%, and the click-through rate (meaning Band members engaging with the links) has grown to 7.59%. Band members can register to receive this information by sending a request to news@millelacsband.com.

The Government Affairs team continues to provide support to other Mille Lacs Band staff and departments to develop effective messaging campaigns and to ensure Band members have access to the important information they need for services and program offerings.

An example of adapting to the changing communication landscape is the number of video messages. Video messages at the beginning of the pandemic were produced daily to provide Band members with the fluidity of the pandemic and what it means to Band members. While the pandemic lingers on and information continues to change, the video messaging has been averaging one or two videos per week in the last few months for a total of 85 videos this year compared to 200 video messages in 2021.

The Mille Lacs Band YouTube Channel continues to be utilized as a source for Band member information. Today, that channel has 1,858 subscribers (1,452 subscribers last year) and is continuing steady growth. The Band's YouTube channel receives an average of 2,500 views monthly. This is down substantially from last year largely due to a decrease in the number of videos produced combined with the national trends. However, there is an increase in viewer retention (watching a video from beginning to end) by creating shorter, more entertaining, yet informative videos such as the HAWK Crosswalk Demo video that received over 16,000 impressions. With that, 90% of views were from non-subscribers. The YouTube channel remains to be an important communication tool for Band member information. The most viewed videos continue to be the Chief Executive Update and updates from the District I Representative. This YouTube channel is a place to house the videos where they can live for an unlimited amount of time. For example, the number one video on the channel remains 'The Jingle Dress Tradition,' which boasted 16,101 views in 2022. That video was posted in October of 2018.

Social media posts and other Band member communication efforts have grown substantially over the past year. Facebook continues to be an important source of information for Band members and non-Band members alike. The Mille Lacs Band Facebook page has grown to 8,274 followers, compared to 7,609 for the same time period last year. The average monthly reach on Facebook is sitting at 16,102 per month. The end result is more information getting out to more individuals than ever before.

In 2021 the Mille Lacs Band contracted with Red Circle Agency to develop a new Mille Lacs Band website.

While that website continues to evolve, it remains a place to house a wide variety of information for Band members, including job openings, news, events, contact information, access to programs and services, applications for federal programs, and more. Two major advancements of the new website include the ability for Band members to log in to access certain government information in a secure way, and the ability to watch livestreams of Band Assembly meetings through the website.

The 2022 website statistics are as follows:

- 99,000 Users up 9.3% over prior year
- 154,000 Sessions
- Annual Page Views 401,626 YTD (317,004 Unique)

Top Pages:

- Home (67,868 pageviews)

- Jobs (24,377 pageviews)
- Directory (17,217 pageviews)
- Login (16,541 pageviews)
- Tribal Register (9,357 pageviews)
- Members (8,956 pageviews)
 - Members Live Streaming is number 11 with 6,120 pageviews, 3,798 unique.
- Users: 60.29% Desktop, 38.35% Mobile, 1.35% Tablet

As we have expanded our communications efforts to include videos and social media, the Office of Government Affairs continues to produce our monthly newsletter, *Ojibwe Inaajimowin*, (meaning “the story as it is told” in Ojibwe). 2023 marks the 25th volume — or 25 years — of the *Ojibwe Inaajimowin* — The “Newspaper of the Mille Lacs Band.” The newsletter has been a significant means of connection between Band members and their government. The *Inaajimowin* has continued to expand over the last five years, and we do our best to deliver timely and relevant news as well as entertaining and inspiring stories about your fellow Band members. We also provide opportunities for Band member writers and photographers to earn income by submitting stories and photographs, and we are always on the lookout for new freelancers. The newsletter remains an important information source for our Elders and others who still enjoy receiving their news in a more traditional format.

The *Inaajimowin* has also launched a website (Inaajimowin.com) dedicated to keeping Band members informed. Currently, the website is formatted with a look of a blog with stories changing frequently to keep the website fresh. Archives of past issues of the *Inaajimowin* can also be found on the *Inaajimowin* website. New this past year are photo galleries where Band members can find all of the “extra” photos that do not fit in the printed edition. Hundreds of photos are housed within the galleries that help to tell the stories of the people of the Mille Lacs Band.

The Inaajimowin website statistics are as follows:

- 12,000 Visitors
- 9,800 Unique Visitors
- 20,000 page views

Top Pages:

- Home 3,412 pageviews
- Wiidigendiwin 1,776 pageviews
- Galleries 1757 pageviews
- Obituaries 1,627 pageviews
- Archive 1,571 pageviews

As we continue to assist departments in their efforts to communicate new developments and programming via social media, the website, the newsletter, and Band member letters, we are also adjusting our methodology accordingly to meet these new needs by delivering information as it happens — in real time. Our communications team has worked diligently with elected and appointed officials to ensure that important information is made available to Band members in a timely. We have also worked closely with other staff to share information on important developments needing to be communicated to Band members and Band employees immediately, and we continue to help facilitate these communications efforts.

Media Relations

Another important function of the Government Affairs team is to protect the public reputation of the Mille Lacs Band through media relations. Whenever reporters or media outlets reach out to the Band seeking comment on issues, Government Affairs staff and consultants handle those inquiries. In addition, Government Affairs staff will develop press releases and other media materials when the Band has news it wants to proactively share with media and the public.

We also continue our work of informing or correcting the record with local, state, and national external media outlets about Band government and the many amazing projects and efforts that are still underway even while we battle this pandemic.

During a media inquiry, Government Affairs staff will help to:

- Coordinate with the appropriate elected or appointed officials for the Band based on the topic of the inquiry.
- Provide counsel on whether a response is warranted, and what the best approach might be.
- Develop talking points, media statements, or press releases, if needed.
- Provide media training and interview practice to prepare for an interview.
- Sit in on the interview to document questions and interject, if needed.
- Conduct any necessary follow-up to ensure the reporter got what they needed, captured accurate quotes, etc.
- Follow up with media outlets after the fact if coverage is inaccurate and corrections are warranted.

Examples of issues that have received widespread media coverage from the Mille Lacs Band in 2022 continues to include the law enforcement agreement with Mille Lacs County and the related lawsuit.

The Government Affairs team knows that communication is a key to successfully navigating and relaying information to Band members. Ideas are always welcome. You are invited to send any and all ideas to: news@millelacsband.com.

Urban Office

2022 brought us back to some semblance of normalcy. Our doors opened back up. Community events resumed. Events our MLBO Urban Office hosted this year: 10 monthly community meetings, trunk-or-treat, Halloween party, children's holiday gift distribution, holiday party, back-to-school backpack and school supply distribution, Toys for Tots, American Indian Month Open House, SNAP/Secondhand Hounds pet (vaccination, spay/neuter) clinic, CPR/First Aid/Car seat safety/NARCAN training classes, Veterans Day dinner to honor our vets, and Elder lunch and bingo. We also provided rooms for our urban Elders for our DI August powwow and provided a charter bus for our urban Band members to attend the MLCV Fall Fest. Summer family fun was encouraged by giving out tickets to the MN Twins games and to the MN State Fair. We also processed 328 tribal IDs and 19 hunting/fishing licenses. We are looking forward to the year ahead and hoping to do even more events to bring our community together.

Grants

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe currently has 106 active grant awards; many of these run for multiple years of programming. The Grants Department submitted **15 new grant applications** in collaboration with various MLBO departments for fiscal year 2022.

Of the **15 applications submitted**, six were for new program enhancements, and nine for continuation of current programs. From the 15 applications, there were eight awarded grants, resulting in a 53% success rate for MLBO. Seven applications are pending decisions at the time of this report being published. Many of our grant funds have been carried over from previous years due to interruptions in services through COVID-19.

Awarded prior to FY 2022: \$34,979,619.22 (98 existing awards)

Awarded FY 2022: \$2,871,700.00 (8 new awards)

The current total of grant funds to date is **\$37,851,319.22 (106 active awards)**

New Pending Awards: \$11,622,585.00 (7 awards pending approval from agency)

Examples of grants received for annual continuation:

- Federal and State Head Start Programming
- Title IV Elder Nutrition — To provide congregate dining and delivered meals to Elder participants
- Tribal Child Support Enforcement — To offer fund collection and case management of MLBO member child support cases
- Indian Housing Block Grant — reduced rate of rental units for low-income families, repairs of low-income rental units, and weatherization of those units.

Examples of new grants applied for:

- Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Aftercare — New initiative beginning 2023 for SUD Department; for more information, stay tuned to the Inaajimowin
- Dislocated Worker Grant — For Aanjibimaadizing to provide additional opportunities for professional certifications

Community Centers

District 1

District I Community Aquatic and Fitness Center finally opened its doors in March of this year. The soft opening was just for Band member Elders, and was operating as such until May 9 of this year. The center was then opened to all Band members and families and all MLBO employees and families. Since the opening, memberships have been steadily increasing as the months progressed. Currently, there are 500 active members that are on paid memberships. This number is steadily going up with each month. The center also hosts various meetings and events during each and every month. There are usually weekly bookings for the Executive Conference room for various meetings. There are weekly trainings that occur in the party room from various branches within the MLBO. With collaboration from the DI Representative, there are many different events that have been hosted at the center, ranging from Round Dances and holiday events. Also, in collaboration with the Native American Indigenous Games committee, there have been multiple events held at the center with more to come. It is in the plans that

all monthly community meetings will be moved to this center. There are also multiple events planned at the center in the upcoming months.

This state-of-the-art facility comes with an amazing workout area fully furnished with multiple treadmills, bikes, rowers, pinned weight machines, free-weights, dumbbells, battle ropes, and much more. The workout area also includes free-hanging heavy bags, speed bags, and much more. The workout area also includes a boxing ring. Just outside the fitness area is a walking/running track that circles the basketball court downstairs. As we move to the lower level, the facility has a fully operational swimming pool, therapy pool, and a wading pad area inside the pool area. The lower level also includes a fully furnished game room with pool tables, air hockey, foosball, dart boards, and a ping-pong table. The lower level also has a fully furnished computer lab. Also on the lower level is a kitchen, an office room, and a golf simulator room. Inside the gym area are six basketball hoops, a Dr. Dish All Star machine, and a retractable volleyball net. On the floor of the gym is a state-of-the-art design truly encompassing the beauty that is within the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

Within the staff of the center are multiple personal trainers who have gained a clientele and have been doing personal training sessions, physical therapy sessions, and water aerobics sessions. It is in the plans to further add classes and clientele for those looking for personal training.

There are multiple reasons why this center is truly state-of-the-art and truly a community amenity to have. With so much accomplished in the little time since the facility has been operational, the possibilities are endless for truly encompassing what the center was built for and that is bringing the community together.

District II Minisinaakwaang

Minisinaakwaang Community Center has completed the renovations from 2021. The community center septic was updated and replaced to allow expansion and to sustain the existing buildings. Early Education expansion has started and is hoped to be finished for the 2023 school year to serve the infants and toddlers. With COVID-19 restrictions lifted, the community center has opened the gym for community members to come on the first and third Sundays of each month. The new ceremonial building is complete and has new lighting for the parking lot. We look forward to a safe and happy 2023 year.

District IIa Chiminising

Chiminising Community Center continues to provide services to DIIa/Isle area Mille Lacs Band members. Services include daily lunch delivery to Mille Lacs Band Elders residing in the Isle/DIIa community, fitness room, computer lab, and Wi-Fi access. In 2021, Chiminising Community Center was remodeled with new flooring, energy-efficient lighting, and a surveillance system.

Current programming and services:

- Elder Services provides lunch delivery to Elders residing within the Isle/DIIa community.
- DII/DIIa Representative provides services for East Lake and Isle Band members with access to their offices in both districts.
- Fitness center equipped with sauna.
- Several Mille Lacs Band departments and programs provide outreach services weekly. Please see our monthly newsletter for correct dates and times.
- Ge-Niigaanizijig — Chiminising staff coordinates with Ge-Niigaanizijig youth mentors to help provide program services to area youth ages 6-21.

District III Aazhoomog Community Center

During the COVID-19 months, we were open and followed the guidelines in place. We are now fully open for Band members and community. We are here to serve our Band members with the best of intentions.

In October, the new playground was completed and available to the community, and the clinic opened at the end of October and began seeing clients regularly. Health & Human Services is working to provide additional health care providers at the DIII clinic location.

The Department of Natural Resources Resource Management Officer, Vanessa Gibbs, continues to issue Deer Stamps, Fire, Harvesting Walleye, and Wild Rice permits. Our Administration Receptionist goes above and beyond to assist our community members in assuring all paperwork is routed to the proper location with a smile!

The District Representative, Harry Davis, along with his assistant, Monica Benjamin, are working diligently to organize many activities and events for Band members and their families. We appreciate the great job they are doing!

Aanjibimaadizing has assigned a Wex worker to our area and we hope to continue having that support, as well as giving the opportunity to have Band members learn and gain experience in the administration area.

Our Program Administrator, Roberta Martin, oversees the building and is also available to provide transportation to Elders as may be needed. They should contact the center to make any arrangements they may need.

Meshakwad

Our goal is to provide fitness programming as a tool for healthy behaviors, physical fitness, and personal growth. The staff at Meshakwad want to see everyone walk through the door determined and walk out feeling great and like they've achieved their goals.

Meshakwad opened its doors and membership program in November of 2018. Since opening, the center has hosted some large-scale events and partnered with local organizations and school districts. The staff are anticipating and planning for expanded programming in the future.

Meshakwad currently has three Certified Personal Trainers on staff.

Robert Livingston Jr., Matthew Hatfield, and Cayman Audie are all certified by the Native American Fitness Council.

Current partnerships/programming:

- MLB DAR (Sliver Gloves & Golden Gloves Boxing Matches)
- Local Pickleball league
- Hinckley Chamber of Commerce
- Pine County (HHS, Probation, MN DOC)
- Several Band programs utilize the space for classes and meetings
- Ge-Niigaanizijig — The team at Meshakwad work with their mentors to create a great environment and are creating some fun programs to do with the kids
- Native American Fitness Council, who trains the trainers and certifies Fitness Training in programs specifically made for the Native American cultures and fitness levels/types

In January 2022, Meshakwad hosted the Silver Gloves Region 4 Championship tournament. This tournament was an opportunity for youth boxers from South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin to advance to the national championships.

In June 2022, Meshakwad hosted the Meeting of the Clans Boxing Tournament. This tournament was an opportunity for Native Youth boxers from all over the world to come together and compete in our own special tournament.

As of October 2022, Meshakwad currently has a little over 1,300 members. Most of our current members are from Hinckley, Sandstone, Pine City, Brook Park, and Mora.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Community Development Department consists of Housing, Facilities, Project Management, Home Loan Program, Public Works and Earthworks. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Community Development Department is determined to provide quality service to band members who reside within District I, II and III. As we cautiously worked under the recommendations from the Federal Government addressing the additional variants, the Community Development Department was able to continue working towards repairing damaged homes, provide housing rental maintenance, safe roads, garbage pick-up, clean water, and operable sewage systems.

Housing Department

Currently, the Band's Housing Department has 513 rental units (247 Regular Rent, 115 Low Rent, 134 Elder Rentals, and 17 CMD owned units). This past year 3,249 work orders were issued and completed by our Housing Maintenance staff of 16 full-time employees. This reflects an increase of work orders over the prior year of 13%. Housing Maintenance continues to strive toward the goal of providing employment and training across all districts of the reservation. We work with the Aanjibimaadizing department to offer employment to their clients and provide on-the-job training within the Housing Maintenance Department to further their careers in this trade. The Resident Services Department provides monthly training opportunities for Band members to educate them on basic home maintenance and financial budgeting skills. The Housing Department provides labor to assist Public Works with community clean-up projects.

Over the past five years, the Housing Department has consistently applied and enforced Mille Lacs Band approved Policies and Legislative statutes. These policies command application for the health, safety, and welfare of our communities and members. While the Housing Department views these policies necessary, additional efforts are afforded, when possible, to remedy any violations. The Housing Department is willing to offer additional assistance or resources to avoid any negative actions.

The rental program is a large part of each District's community. The Housing Department believes our efforts have changed the communities and neighborhoods for the better. Our members feel safe and secure enough to take pride in their own lawn care and decor, holiday decorating, and additional efforts to enhance curb appeal, making their community their own.

Property Management and Resident Services have performed 64 move-ins to rental units in our communities, 102 inspections, and offered nine training classes.

Housing Initiative (HI) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants fund our Band-managed carpentry crews (force account). Through these funding sources, the Housing Department has completed 33 homes, with an additional eight homes currently being remodeled. Because these projects were funded through the HI and HUD budgets, significant cost-savings were realized to the Band and afforded additional job opportunities for Band members.

The Weatherization Department manages a grant program through the State of Minnesota's Energy Assistance program that addresses energy conservation. This grant funding is used to service Band members through energy auditing, energy retrofitting, and inspecting work performed conforming to the Federal Government and State of Minnesota's guidelines. Eight housing units were served (with an average cost of \$7,500.00 per unit) in 2022. It should be noted that the Mille Lacs Band is the only tribal nation in the State of Minnesota that has the capacity to administer all required obligations to this grant.

Housing Department Collaboration

Zakab Biinjia

The Housing Department is in their second year of working with the Zakab Biinjina Program. The Housing Department has provided the program with 38 units to support a sober and drug-free living opportunity with the goal to build a stable residence and family reunification. The Housing Department looks forward to continued collaboration with Zakab Biinjia program; to support our members who are determined to come back into the community being responsible, healthy, and strong leaders of their families in addition to being contributors to the Mille Lacs Band community.

The Housing Departments' belief is that this partnership will break generational trauma and support the next seven generations. Through cross-departmental goals and collaboration, the Housing Department looks forward to accepting all successful Band members into the rental program in an expedited manner, if they so choose.

To date, the Housing Department has accepted eight successful participants of the Zakab Biinjia program into rental units. Housing staff continues to work with the Aanjibimaadizing Department to utilize any and all grants supporting renters and homeowners during this unprecedented time. For application information, please see the Aanjibimaadizing Department section of this report.

Family Healing to Wellness Court (FHTWC)

Another cross-departmental benefit to the Mille Lacs Band members is the collaboration of the Housing Department with the Central Court of Jurisdiction's Healing and Wellness Court. The Housing Department is working with many internal departments and serves as a member to the steering committee discussing positive alternatives and solutions in support of our Band member families facing displacement and families seeking reunification.

Tribal Access Program for Crime Information (TAP)

This program will expedite our criminal background checks for approval or disapproval from the Housing rental applications.

Housing Board

Per Band Statute, the Housing Board is an advisory board that works in partnership with the Commissioner of Community Development and the Executive Director of the Housing Department. The Housing Board has oversight responsibilities to ensure the department is following housing policies. The

board works in partnership with the Commissioner of Community Development to ensure all band members are treated fairly and equitably.

The Housing Board currently has a full quorum — when questions on policy matters arise, residents can present their grievances in front of the Housing Board. These grievances either confirm or deny all concerns filed by our residents to ensure the Housing Department followed applicable policies. The Housing Department attends all Housing Board meetings and explains the Housing Department’s policies and provides documentation to reinforce the Housing Department’s consistent position and application of policy. All Band rental residents are afforded the grievance process.

2022 Highlights

FY 2021 to 2022 proved an increase in work orders of 13%; however, the Housing Department’s initiative of education and consistency in applying policies realized a billable work orders’ significant decrease for costs of services by 41%. Comparing 2021 to 2022, the Housing Maintenance Department went well beyond the program’s responsibility and serviced 502 private work orders at a cost of \$102,349.42. This includes the additional requests to provide service in maintaining not only the rental program stock, but also private homes owned by Mille Lacs Band members, outside of the Housing Department’s direct responsibility.

2023 Goals

- The Housing Department shall continue its collaboration with the Healing to Wellness Court program, Zakub and Aanji-WEX program. We will expedite the housing application/ background process by utilizing the Tribal Access Program (“TAP”).
- Continue to build positive relationships with the community and members.
- The Housing Department shall continue to improve air and water quality in its rental units.
- Create a training program for HVAC, plumbing, and electrician certification for band members through a partnership with the Aanjibimaadizing.

Payments Received for Department Services

Note: These numbers do NOT include any adjustments, waived amounts, transfers from deposits to rent, or work orders for damages.

- Regular Rent: \$668,983.25
- Low Rent: \$141,313.15
- Work Orders: \$64,937.38 (total payments received)

Housing Department — Legal

2022 Highlights:

- The Housing Department reformed the drafting of complaints and letters, background checks, and Housing Board processes. The changes created clear and concise language so the processes are consistent and easily understood.
- The department continues to enforce the Housing Department’s policies.
- Revised the Minobimaadizing’s guiding principles and strives to collaborate with the Aanji program.

2023 Goals:

- Initiate, revise, and update the following Housing Department policies, as necessary, in the areas of:
 - Admission policy
 - Occupancy policy
 - Drug policy
- Continue collaboration and support Minobimaadizing. Assist in developing policies to support immediate homelessness and provide permanent housing opportunities.

Home Loan Program

The Home Loan Program provides financing for qualified Band members up to \$220,000 at zero percent interest for 35 years.

- 318 total mortgage loans, valued at a total of \$30,838,393.99.

Renovation Loan Program

The Home Renovation Loan Program provides financing for approved homeowners to renovate and/or improve their primary residence.

- 140 total renovation loans, valued at \$2,089,074.58.

Planning and Project Management

The Planning Department works with local, state, and federal jurisdictions to advocate for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe interests. The Project Management team oversees all phases of government-funded construction projects, which include civic buildings, commercial renovations, new home construction, home renovation, parks, road construction, and infrastructure. Project Management also assists Band departments with building emergencies, insurance fixes/claims, and troubleshooting. The Elder renovation construction program including emergency repairs is also administered by Project Management.

Board/Committee Activities

Members of the Planning Department represent the Band on various boards and committees at the regional, state, and national level that impact the Band. The following are some of the boards and committees on which we serve:

1. MnDOT District I Transportation Advisory Board
2. MnDOT District III Transportation Advisory Board
3. Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Committee
4. East Central Regional Development Commission Board
5. East Central Regional Development Commission — Transportation Advisory Board
6. East Central Regional Development Commission — Transit Advisory Board
7. MnDOT — Pedestrian & Bicyclist Taskforce
8. Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation
9. BIA Midwest Regional Representative on the Tribal Transportation Program Coordinating Committee
10. MnDOT Transportation Alternative Program Scoring Committee
11. MnDOT ATIP Development Committee

2022 Accomplishments:

Below is a list of the FY 2022 projects that were undertaken. The Planning Department will continue to look for partnership opportunities with other governmental units and also continue to look for grant funding sources for road, bike, and pedestrian projects.

PLANNING & PROJECT MANAGEMENT 2022 REPORT

(The status of some projects in process are shown as estimated for 12/31/22.)

Project Management

(Staff includes one Director, one Project Manager, one Compliance Officer, and one Coordinator.)

New Commercial Construction

DI:

HHS RV Storage Building Architecture: plans completed
\$54,000.00

HHS RV Storage Building Construction: posted and contracted
\$1,419,883.00

DIII:

DIII Head Start Facility Architecture: plans completed
\$110,500.00

DIII Head Start Facility Construction: posted and pursuing negotiated procurement with second-lowest bidder due to construction delay caused by budgeting

Commercial Renovations

DI:

Architecture/engineering for Old Clinic DOL remodel: construction administration ongoing
\$59,500.00

DOL Facility remodel (Old NIS Clinic): contracted, started with phase I completed
\$2,687,141.00

Architecture for Tribal Courts remodel (Old DOL Area in GC LL): completed
\$74,375.00

Tribal Courts remodel construction: contracted and completed
\$987,747.90

Mille Lacs Marine remodel completed
\$114,282.28

NAS Schools Remodel Architecture: contracted, plans ready to post for construction
\$246,010.00

Old DI Community Center metal roof: posting RFP and contracting

DII:

East Lake Ceremonial Building remodel: completed
\$396,380.00

Architecture for East Lake Head Start expansion: construction administration
\$48,055.00

East Lake Head Start expansion construction: contracted and started
\$1,596,050.00

DIII:

Lake Lena Community Center Playground: contracted and completed
\$132,356.00

Lake Lena Head Start Fence: posted and contracted
\$24,500.00

Infrastructure

DI:

1 septic system replaced for Band rental
\$24,960.00

1 private septic system posted for bid, contracted, and replaced with I.H.S. funds
\$20,395.00

Sealed 2 wells at demo sites
\$2,997.00

Posted RFP and contracted for private onsite well and holding tank install through I.H.S.

DII:

East Lake CC septic replacement posted for bid, contracted, and completed
\$149,470.04

1 I.H.S. septic replacement completed for EL Band Elder unit
\$24,990.00

1 private EL I.H.S. septic system replacement reposted for bid, contracted, and completed
\$36,000.00

1 I.H.S. septic replacement reposted for bid, contracted, and completed for EL Band rental
\$30,295.00

Sealed 1 well at demo site in DIIa
\$2,583.00

DIII:

1 septic replacement posted for bid and contracted for Band rental
\$26,834.00

1 well sealed at demo site in Hinckley
\$6,200.00

Completed septic design for new construction site in LL, but project didn't move forward
\$675.00

Residential Renovations

Housing Homes:

DI:

1 disabled quad fire insurance claim posted for bid, contracted, and completed
\$211,400.00

7 rental and 2 Elder completed
\$1,112,594.72

3 rental and 3 Elder posted for bid, contracted, and scheduled to reach substantial completion

\$962,196.00

1 rental and 1 low-rent posted for bid, contracted, and scheduled to start

\$415,600.00

2 Elder roofing projects scheduled to be completed

\$22,906.00

1 rental garage construction posted for bid but contract denied

\$49,800.00

3 rental scoped and posted for bid, which did not move forward

5 low-rent scoped but projects did not move forward

DIIa:

1 rental completed

\$150,871.76

DII EL:

2 rentals started and completed

\$299,217.00

2 rentals scoped and posted for bid, which may need to be reposted

1 rental and 1 low-rent scoped and posted for bid, which did not move forward

4 rentals scoped but projects did not move forward

DIII H:

1 rental posted for bid and contracted

\$85,500.00

1 small rental posted for bid, contracted, and started

\$49,750.00

1 fence for Elder unit posted for bid and contracted

\$19,750.00

1 rental unit reroof completed

\$10,400.00

1 low-rent garage relocation scoped and posted for bid which did not move forward

DIII LL:

Quad fire reconstruction and repair insurance claim posted for bid and contracted

\$385,500.00

2 regular rental and 1 low-rent scoped and posted for bid, which did not move forward

1 regular rental and 1 low-rent scoped, which did not move forward

Private Elder and Disabled Renovations:

DI:

1 emergency Elder mechanical completed

\$15,470.00

1 disabled completed

\$64,100.00

5 emergency Elder posted for bid, contracted, and completed

\$103,091.00

4 emergency Elder reimbursements processed

\$7,176.17

1 Elder fence project scoped and contracted

\$11,645.00

1 regular Elder scoped and posted, which will need to be revised and reposted

1 emergency Elder scoped and posted, which may need to be divided into 2 projects with scope reduction
1 disabled scoped and posted, which will need to be reposted in spring

DIII:

1 disabled completed
\$15,500.00
1 regular Elder posted for bid, contracted, and completed
\$58,857.10
1 emergency Elder heating posted for bid, contracted, and completed
\$14,850.00
1 Elder emergency water intrusion scoped and bid but placed on hold by homeowner
Seeking bids for second phase of Elder emergency heating project

Urban:

1 regular Elder rehab completed
\$64,259.20
2 emergency Elder posted for bid, contracted, and completed
\$36,390.00
2 emergency Elder reimbursements processed
\$3,192.00
1 regular Elder posted for bid, contracted, and started
\$41,000.00
1 emergency Elder posted for bid and contracted
\$24,929.25
Continued to seek bids for emergency Elder concrete replacement

Planning & Project Management 2022 Report

(The status of some projects in process are shown as estimated for 12/31/22)

Project Management (Staff includes 1 Director, 1 Project Manager, 1 Compliance Officer & 1 Coordinator)

New Commercial Construction

DI:

HHS RV Storage Building Architecture: plans completed	\$54,000.00
HHS RV Storage Building Construction: posted & contracted	\$1,419,883.00

DIII:

D3 Headstart Facility Architecture: plans completed	\$110,500.00
D3 Headstart Facility Construction: posted & pursuing negotiated procurement with 2 nd lowest bidder due to construction delay caused by budgeting	

Commercial Renovations

DI:

Architecture/ Engineering for Old Clinic DOL Remodel: construction administration ongoing	\$59,500.00
DOL Facility Remodel (Old NIS Clinic): contracted, started w/ Phase I completed	\$2,687,141.00
Architecture for Tribal Courts Remodel (Old DOL Area in GC LL): completed	\$74,375.00
Tribal Courts Remodel Construction: contracted & completed	\$987,747.90
Mille Lacs Marine Remodel completed	\$114,282.28
NAS Schools Remodel Architecture: contracted, plans ready to post for construction	\$246,010.00
Old DI Community Center Metal Roof: posting rfp & contracting	

DII:

East Lake Ceremonial Building Remodel: completed	\$396,380.00
Architecture for East Lake Headstart Expansion: construction administration	\$48,055.00
East Lake Headstart Expansion Construction: contracted & started	\$1,596,050.00

DIII:

Lake Lena Community Center Playground: contracted & completed	\$132,356.00
Lake Lena Headstart Fence: posted & contracted	\$24,500.00

Infrastructure

DI:

1 septic system replaced for Band rental	\$24,960.00
1 private septic system posted for bid, contracted & replaced with I.H.S. funds	\$20,395.00
Sealed 2 wells at demo sites	\$2,997.00
Posted rfp and contracted for private onsite well & holding tank install thru I.H.S.	

DII:

East Lake CC septic replacement posted for bid, contracted & completed	\$149,470.04
1 I.H.S. septic replacement completed for EL Band elder unit	\$24,990.00
1 private EL I.H.S. septic system replacement reposted for bid, contracted & completed	\$36,000.00
1 I.H.S. septic replacement reposted for bid, contracted & completed for EL Band rental	\$30,295.00
Sealed 1 well at demo site in DIIa	\$2,583.00

Earthworks

(Staff includes one Supervisor and one Technician)

Regular activities include plowing DIII roads and designated driveways; mowing and maintaining ZOIII ballfield; brushing and maintenance of DIII ditch and park areas; digging graves in DII and DIII; assistance with DIII Community Clean-Up Event; assistance for Housing and Project Management complete to small projects; maintaining and repairing vehicles and equipment.

Demolition Projects

<u>DI</u> : 7 demolition sites	\$50,062.00 (Does not include labor or equipment costs)
<u>DIIa</u> : 2 demolition sites	\$6,850.00 (Does not include labor or equipment costs)
<u>DIII</u> : 2 demolition sites	\$8,010.00 (Does not include labor or equipment costs)

Yards for Housing Homes

<u>DI</u> : 1 rental unit	\$1,560.00 (black dirt cost only)
<u>DIII</u> : 2 low-rent units	\$3,900.00 (black dirt cost only)

Other Activities/ Projects

- Dig/assist with repair of 3 water/well lines
- Demo concrete for DIII TRR carpenter crew on Eagle Feather rehab
- DIII Memorial Day storm tree clean up
- Assistance with 2022 DIII Spring Clean-Up
- Remove trees and shrubs for DOL remodel project at old NIS Clinic
- Tree removal at 27058 Hwy 48, Hinckley, for new DIII Salt Shed construction

FY2023 Goals:

- Carry out activities associated with the FY 2023 housing initiative budget and Elder and handicap renovation program. This involves home construction as well as home renovation projects.
- Start construction on Head Start expansion in District II — East Lake and District III — Hinckley.
- Continue commercial renovation projects including courts expansion and old DI clinic renovation.
- Continue to be a resource for Government Center, School, Health and Human Services maintenance staff for troubleshooting and managing heavy maintenance projects.
- Continue to incorporate green products and technology in projects where opportunity presents.
- The planning department will continue to look for partnership opportunities with other governmental units and also continue to look for grant funding sources for road, bike, safety, and pedestrian projects.

Public Works

The Public Works Department oversees road maintenance, water, wastewater, and solid waste in all three districts. Each year, all three districts participate in a spring cleaning. Solid Waste provides dumpsters in designated areas for Band members to use so they can clean their homes and yards. 2022 Annual Community Clean-Up saw another record year of collection. Currently, the Solid Waste department services 800 customers which include Elder, residential, and commercial properties in the service area.

2022 Highlights

- Performed weekly collection of solid waste for subscribed Band members
- Conducted annual community cleanup for all three districts
- Water/wastewater infrastructure operated and maintained in all three districts
- Maintained Reservation roads in all three districts
- Paving/snow plowing
- District I and District II Pow Wow Grounds improvements and maintenance

2022 Projects

- IHS onsite well and septic grant: \$200,000
- Community Clean-Up: \$100,000
- Van Gordon BIA Road Paving (DIII): \$350,000
- I.H.S. Lift Station Improvement Project District I
- I.H.S. East Lake WTP grant application
- New software for solid waste routes in all three districts
- Decrease number of past-due accounts for solid waste removal customers

Goals for 2022/2023

- State certification in water/wastewater for all employees
- Planning and engineering for painting Bugg Hill Water Tower
- Connect Sher water lines to Ataage water lines
- Decrease number of past-due accounts for solid waste removal customers

Mino Bimaadiziwin

The Mino Bimaadiziwin (the “Mino”) assists Band Members and their families who are at risk of, or who are already experiencing, homelessness. The Mino’s staff will also help to reintegrate their residents back into the Community by helping them obtain and maintain safe, affordable housing and by linking them to the mainstream, community-based services they need.

Purpose

The Mino gives Band members and their families a warm, safe place to live while looking for permanent affordable housing. The Mino staff will also help Band members and their families gain access to the resources, skills, and opportunities to find a permanent place to call “Home.” During 2022, the Mino Bimaadiziwin Hotel has serviced 127 Mille Lacs Band members with move-ins and move-outs. The Mino staff has been assisting residents with transportation to food shelves in the local community area, as well as in applying for Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe services such as Medical Assistance, Food Support, Aanjibimaadizing Programs, and transporting Elders to meetings at the ALU and residents and their young children to clinic appointments.

2022 Highlights

- 26 current occupants
- 88 move-ins during 2022
- 73 move-outs during 2022
- 16 move-outs due to residents obtaining permanent housing
- 127 total people serviced during 2022

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mission Statement: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) develops and implements wildlife, fish, and forestry improvement activities and regulates hunting, fishing, and gathering on the Reservation. It also protects and preserves cultural knowledge and practices as natural resources and provides many other services, including environmental protection, natural resource permits, historical preservation, and tribal enrollment.

Kelly Applegate currently serves the Band as the Commissioner of Natural Resources.

Office of the Commissioner of Natural Resources

Tamarack Mine: A threat to our way of life

The Mille Lacs Band Department of Natural Resources is working to protect our people, land, water, and resources from the threats of a proposed nickel mine located just 1.3 miles away from the Round Lake neighborhood of the District II community of the Mille Lacs Band. Making the Band's voice heard in this issue is a major focus for the department. The Band's professional staff at the DNR are hard at work to defend the interests of our people. This environmental injustice is yet another example of the exploitation of resources near tribal lands, where the Band's resources are at risk as collateral damage.

A new name for District III lake

The Mille Lacs Band Department of Natural Resources is very proud to have actively participated in the renaming of an offensively named lake in Pine County. This initiative was put forth by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, under secretarial order 3404, declaring "sq_ _ _" as a derogatory term and ordering the formation of the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force. The new accepted name of the lake is *Manidoons Zaaga'igan Zhaawanong*, a name in Ojibwemowin, thereby honoring the land and acknowledging the surrounding Anishinaabe community. Our *ikwewag*, our women, are the foundation of our communities, providing life, family, and stability even in turbulent times, creating sacred times and spaces for healing and joy. We must honor our women and their presence in all of our lives.

Mille Lacs Band and Sherburne County: A partnership to showcase

The Mille Lacs Band Department of Natural Resources has developed an important relationship with Sherburne County as they pursue the formation of a County Park that has many cultural resources on the property. Sherburne County has done an excellent job consulting with the Band as the project moves forward and recognizes the Band's sovereignty and cultural knowledge. The Band's Tribal Historic Preservation Office is participating in a grant to survey and document the cultural features of the site. These surveys will be used to recognize, protect, and guide decision making as the park planning moves forward. This example of a county government building a positive relationship with the Band shows the great things that can be achieved through cooperation. In Tribal-State Relations Training this past spring, the Chief Executive was able to highlight the great work between the Band and Sherburne County.

Agriculture

As the Mille Lacs Band Agriculture department continues to grow and develop, we are focused on delivering different opportunities for community outreach and involvement by experimenting with new food sovereignty-driven projects. We are also focusing on commercial/large-scale agriculture practices. This year, the department was able to secure grants for the purchasing of a full line of hay harvesting equipment. The new equipment will be used for demonstrations and educational uses as well as field and property maintenance throughout the districts. The Agriculture division has many ongoing projects and collaborations, including our partnership with Central Lakes College and the University of Minnesota. The Greenhouse located at the Iskigamizigan pow wow grounds is slated to be remodeled and will be up and running before the 2023 growing season. This fall, the Leonard Sam Memorial Apple Orchard was opened to the public; for the first time in years, many families, students, and community members came out and harvested delicious organic apples. The Agriculture division has a new home. The new building will house the department's seed bank and hydroponics operations as well provide a place to house the Agriculture division staff. 2023 will be all about community outreach, demonstrations, and food sovereignty. We look forward to classes and various other teaching opportunities regarding tribal agriculture in 2023!

Archives

The Mille Lacs Band Archive was established for the purpose of preserving and making available historical records relative to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and its interactions with various external agencies and individuals as well as internal departments, branches, and constituent members. External agencies include: The State of Minnesota, businesses, donors, fraternal organizations, and the United States Government.

Project highlights from the past year include providing MCT with machine readable (i.e., searchable) historical documents that will allow them to more accurately manage membership roles and assist the office of the Revisor of Statutes by providing digital copies of past Resolutions, Ordinances, Commissioner's Orders, and Opinions of the Solicitor to create a book called Official Acts. The Archive continues to assist the Tribal Historic Preservation Office with research and proper care of repatriated objects.

The Archive's department also worked on a special project called Towards Recognition and University-Tribal Healing, or TRUTH Project. The TRUTH Project is a collaborative effort between the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the University of Minnesota that convened a TRUTH Task Force with the assistance of the 11 Minnesota tribes to release a report which detailed findings and recommendations for the University on bettering their relations with the Tribal Nations in Minnesota. A report was presented in June of 2022.

Cultural Resources

Cultural Grounds

Tribal Members from all three districts and the Urban area utilize our District I Cultural Grounds for traditional medicine gathering as well as traditional well-being events. Wigwam and sweat lodge construction have been taught to Community Members at the grounds. Other events by season:

Spring

Cultural Resources instructed tribal youth in the harvesting methods of Giigoonh (fish). We also harvested and processed over 300 lbs. of cleaned Ogaa (walleye), which were distributed to Elders throughout the three (3) districts and the Urban area. Cultural Resources set up and assisted in three (3) Sugarbush camps throughout the districts. We taught over 200 area school youth in maple syrup tapping, gathering, and preparation methods. Cultural Resources taught area youth about traditional Mashkiki (medicine) gathering and uses. Some of the Mashkiki gathered this past spring were giizhik (cedar) and mashkodewashk (sage), wazhashkwedow (chaga), mashkiigobagwaaboo (swamp tea), and zhingob (balsam). Wigwam and sweat lodge construction was taught to community members at the Cultural Grounds.

Summer

Cultural Resources/Grounds hosted tribal members from all three districts and the Urban area who utilized the Cultural Grounds for traditional Mashkiki (medicine) gathering and instruction. Cultural Resources/Grounds hosted two (2) sessions of Mide' throughout the summer months, where over 100 participants attended. Cultural Resources provided numerous families throughout the three districts with firewood, food, and Mashkiki as well as hosting traditional well-being events. Cultural Resources added many new additions to the grounds, which included a new traditional healing lodge, a new road, eight electrical hook-ups for campers, resurfacing the dock, and new sitting benches throughout the grounds.

Fall

Cultural Resources instructed over 200 youth from Nay Ah Shing, Onamia, Isle, and Hinckley/Finlayson Schools, as well as youth from the Ge-Niigaanizijig programs on how to gather Manoomin from Lake Onamia. We also taught these youth how to traditionally prepare the Manoomin at camps in Isle, Hinckley, and at the Cultural Grounds. Cultural Resources instructed Nay Ah Shing School youth how to dress-out, cut up, and package Waawaashkeshi. Cultural Resources taught area youth how to set nets for tullibee and how to prepare and smoke them.

Winter

Cultural Resources instructed youth from surrounding communities on ice fishing and spearing techniques. Cultural Resources held a traditional snowshoe building event as well as a snare and trapping event.

Enrollments

The Enrollments department may be small in the number of employees, but they carry a very large responsibility for the Band membership. The staff administrate the following: process enrollment applications, family history research (lineage), produce Tribal IDs, provide specified mailing lists per department requests, process minor trust distribution applications, and complete Certificates of Indian Blood as requested. They follow very strict policies in processing applications and requests prior to being presented to leadership of the Band. As of September 30, 2022, there are 4,914 enrolled Mille Lacs Band members. Band members per district:

- District I: 1,731
- District II: 229
- District IIa: 155
- District III: 640

- Urban: 894
- In-State: 785
- Out-of-State: 480
- **Total: 4,914**

The Enrollments staff, along with the licensing agents in District II, District III, and Urban office issue Tribal ID cards. If an ID card is expired, there is no fee for Band members to receive a new ID. There is no charge for IDs for: Elders, veterans, and disabled Band members. The more often an ID is issued for an individual, the more the new ID costs. And always keep your Tribal ID in a safe place.

Environmental

Brownfields 128 (a)

DNR/Environmental — Brownfields Program is in the process of developing a clean-up plan for soil and groundwater contaminants at the former Mille Lacs Marina. The clean-up would be targeting a section of contamination and future efforts will be continued when funding is available. In addition, the program has been reviewing Band-owned property for potential sites and/or education opportunities. The health and safety of our communities are our top priorities when redeveloping and determining Brownfields sites.

Underground Storage Tanks (UST)

The Tribal Environmental Protection Agency Credentialed Underground Storage Tank inspector conducted a combination of four Compliance Assistance Visits and eight Tri-annual Inspections on Tribally owned service stations and a privately owned service station on the Mille Lacs, Shakopee, and Prairie Island reservations. On June 9, 2022, the Tribal Inspector conducted a joint inspection with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency at one privately owned resort on Mille Lacs Lake. These visits and inspections assist tribes to stay in compliance with EPA regulations to protect the environment and to ensure safe groundwater/drinking water for our communities.

Water Quality

The Water Quality Program collected 57 surface water samples and conducted a total of 918 analyses for Mille Lacs, Ogechie, and Onamia lakes. The data collection is part of the Mille Lacs Lake Long-Term Trend Analysis, which began in 2005. Staff continued participation with the Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group and are also on the Rum River One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The 1W1P plan was completed in 2022 and adopted by Band Assembly, allowing MLBO tribal representation on the Rum River Watershed Joint Powers Entity. Water quality improvement funding will be available starting in 2023. Staff are also currently involved in similar watershed-based planning efforts in watersheds that include Band resources.

The Water Quality Program also continued use of the two CD3 waterless cleaning systems obtained via a BIA Invasive Species Grant. These portable CD3 units were then deployed at multiple boat landings, including state public accesses, empowering boaters to clean, drain, and dry their watercraft and dispose of unused bait to curb the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). The program also continued a collaboration with Mille Lacs County by performing operation and maintenance of another CD3 Unit, purchased by the county with Minnesota AIS Prevention Aid funds, located at the Shaw Bush Kung public water access.

Due to the pandemic and precautions associated with COVID-19, the number of drinking water analyses performed on samples collected from Band member homes was again significantly reduced, similar to 2020 and 2021. Deteriorating conditions of the water quality laboratory compounded these problems, necessitating a new location; a building has been identified and the facility is being readied. Samples are typically analyzed for E. coli, total coliform bacteria, nitrates, iron, and hardness.

The program also continued participation in the Kawa Gidaa-naanaagadawendaamin Manoomin (first we must consider Manoomin/Psiij (wild rice)) interdisciplinary research project with the University of Minnesota and other tribes. The project aims to identify and address the multitude of environmental threats to manoomin with the ultimate goal of protecting tribal resource sovereignty. Surface and groundwater elevation sensors were once again placed in Lake Ogechie and Swamp Lake in 2022. Some of the research has been analyzed and presented in various papers and presentations. The stream channel that exists in Swamp Lake was dredged by Minnesota DNR in early spring of 2021 after years of collaboration with the Band, but beaver once again dammed the drainage, hampering attempts to keep water elevations low and for manoomin to reestablish. In 2022, the department also partnered with the Nature Conservancy, Minnesota DNR, and other tribes and formed a collaboration to establish a process to delineate and monitor manoomin density stands throughout the state. MLBO DNR staff hosted a training session on Lake Onamia and subsequent surveys were conducted on lakes such as Ogechie, Dean, and Mallard.

General Environmental Programs

The MLBO DNR Environmental staff, along with Commissioner Kelly Applegate and Executive Director Susan Klapel, continues the many consultation opportunities with State and Federal entities regarding activities and permitting that may affect tribal trust resources. Additionally, staff have also been participants in many tribal listening sessions and other meetings to learn how to access the funding offered through the passage of the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act. The Environmental Protection Agency will be making significant investments in the health, equity, and resilience of American communities through unprecedented funding for pollution prevention, improving the nation's waters, cleaning up legacy pollution, waste and recycling, and clean energy.

Air

The Mille Lacs Band Air Program has continued its collaboration with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) with continuous ozone monitoring on the Reservation from March 1 to November 1, 2022. The program was awarded American Rescue Plan funds through USEPA to acquire a PM_{2.5} monitor in District III, and, with coordination with the MPCA, begin monitoring. The program has been actively participating in the State Climate Change strategy discussions. The program provided technical and logistical support in the Band's effort in countering the Tamarack Project in District II. The program together with the Environmental Initiatives Program was awarded an Electric Vehicle Charging Station Demonstration Project through the University of Minnesota Clean Energy Resources Teams — the first tribe in Minnesota to be awarded through their program. The program has been assisting in WHCNA, NOAA, USDA, DHS, DOD, DOI, USEPA, and DOE tribal consultation sessions. The program has been guiding the governance of the Midwest Tribal Energy Resources Association. Together with the Office of the Solicitor General successfully claimed as Volkswagen Settlement Beneficiary, and has been assisting Community Development in acquiring a replacement plow/dump truck. The program was appointed by the USEPA Region 5 Tribal Operations Committee to serve on the national E-Enterprise Leadership Council in streamlining environmental data management. Program has been providing informational support to the Grants Office in assisting in putting together a School Bus Program application and a

Tribal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act funding application to replace and upgrade Nay Ah Shing School's busses.

Land Management

Fee to Trust

The Band has 3,648.03 acres of land held in trust within the Mille Lacs Reservation Boundary. The Band owns 17,818 acres of simple fee property across all three districts, including near Urban. Currently, DNR staff are analyzing lands to determine next steps in developing an F2T application submission strategy. Below are three (3) properties that are in different phases of F2T status:

- Holmberg: 40 acres (Mille Lacs County) — Step 10: Preparing Analysis and Notice of Decision.
- Dunkley: 9.28 acres (Pine County) — Step 11: Providing a Notice of the Decision.
- Willmus: 3,218.18 acres (Morrison County) — Step 11: Providing Notice of the Decision at appealed to IBIA since March 12, 2017.

Land Buy-Back Program

DNR offers land buy-back to allotment owners, providing the opportunity to sell their allotment shares to the Band. Many allotments have multiple interested parties, so this effort will minimize potential probate issues in the future.

Leases

Land Management processes residential, agricultural, and commercial leases to Band members in consideration by the Band Assembly. The Land Management department often works with the Housing department in issuing leases to their current housing rental stock.

Property Maintenance/Acquisition

DNR staff continues to work with the Environmental staff on addressing slope, run-off, planting, and maintenance needs at several sites that fall under the DNR. With consideration of a decrease in revenues due to the pandemic, the need to continue other department initiatives and changes in staff/land acquisitions have not been a priority in 2022. Land Management currently has potential acquisitions to move forward on before 2023, including a vacant land acquisition in District I.

Probate

The primary mission of the Division of Probate Services is to compile inventories of Indian Trust assets and family information, and to coordinate the timely distribution of trust assets along with BIA, the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA), the Division of Land Titles and Records (DLTR), and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA).

The trust asset probate process is complex and involves Tribal and several federal agencies. The process begins once the death of a Mille Lacs Band member, who owns trust assets, is reported to the Probate Specialist, at which point they will be entered into the Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The probate staff member will create the decedent's probate package by gathering documents and information pertaining to the decedent's estate, including the names of potential heirs, and a will, if one exists, is provided electronically to BIA through TAAMS. Once the probate package is complete, it is transferred to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) to be adjudicated and for a final probate decision to be issued. After the final probate decision is issued and the appeal period expires, the BIA Division of Land Titles and Records distributes any trust or

restricted land and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) distributes any trust funds from the estate account.

Ten probate cases have been researched and completed and have been sent to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for review and will be forwarded to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) for approval. Once cases are completed, they will be submitted to the BIA for approval and then sent to the Office of Hearings and Appeals for review and a Probate Hearing date will be set by the Administrative Law Judge or the Attorney Decision Maker.

Staff is currently working on 49 open cases, along with the cases on the current backlog list of those who have recently inherited trust assets.

As of October 24, 2022, there have been 50 Band members who have passed away this year. This is 30 less deaths than 2021, 31 less deaths than 2020, and 6 more than 2019.

Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)

The Mille Lacs Band Tribal Historic Preservation Office is responsible for the preservation of cultural/religious sites, repatriation of ancestral belongings and remains, and consultation with federal departments and other tribal nations on any projects we deem to have impact on any cultural landmarks within the State of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, and any other territories Ojibwe nations may have occupied or have cultural connections with. This year has been a year full of accomplishment and success, from bringing ancestors and their funerary belongings back home where they may continue their journey, free from the imprisonment that is the archives holdings in universities and institutions where many of our ancestors are still held in cardboard boxes and metal lockers, to preserving and protecting any cultural sites or landmarks where our ancestors may rest or places they have visited in order to keep learning the important lessons they have to teach us. We also work very extensively and frequently to develop and maintain close relationships with other nations' THPOs and work together on preserving sites that we may share culturally or historically.

The Mille Lacs THPO department's work this year includes the repatriation of 19 bandolier bags and other ancestral belongings originating in Mille Lacs from the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The THPO office has also worked closely with MnDOT to give emphasis on protecting and preserving numerous sites inside, around, and outside of the boundaries of the Reservation; MnDOT will consult and consider all of our suggestions in order to mitigate and completely avoid the disturbance of culturally significant sites and landmarks. This summer, we have worked with the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area in preserving landmarks along the Mississippi along with developing a plan on future conservation of sensitive areas near and on the river. We have also worked closely on our relationship with Sherburne County to consult for work on park preservation and an interpretive center. We also provided a training in spring where we provided 10 Mille Lacs Band members Cultural Resource Monitoring and Tribal Archaeology training so we can be sure that we can have Band members monitoring areas that are important to them.

Work involving repatriation and preservation is work that comes with many limitations and regulations that are designed by institutions to keep us from returning ancestors and their belongings; however, while attending the Association on American Indian Affairs Repatriation Conference, Melanie O'Brian announced a draft proposal for new NAGPRA regulations that the Mille Lacs Band and other communities nationwide will be a consultant on for the next 90 days. We hope this is a step forward in

creating new regulations that will finally put pressure on Universities and Institutions to come forward to tribal communities and begin returning our ancestors through consultations with said communities. Along with repatriation work inside the United States, we are also working on international repatriation efforts to hold institutions in other countries.

Resource Management

Chronic Wasting Disease

The Mille Lacs Band DNR is playing an active role in monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) by partnering with other bands and the University of Minnesota in a project organized by the Grand Portage Band. The project has two main focuses: One is surveillance of CWD, with tribes collecting deer heads and submitting those for testing. The other portion is a community outreach project in which hunters and community members will be interviewed about their thoughts on CWD and what it means to them.

Fisheries

2022 was met with many challenges that were out of Fisheries' control. These included failing aerators, extreme drought and heat, a tough winter (thick ice/deep snow), and COVID-19. Despite all the challenges, fisheries managed to accomplish even more work than previous years, which ended up making it a groundbreaking year for us. In the winter, Fisheries, along with the much-appreciated and needed help from our Wildlands department, operated free spear-house rentals to Band members and their families. In spring, the department was awarded significant 2021 COVID-19 relief and Tribal Fish and Wildlife Grant funds to revolutionize our fisheries department by upgrading our infrastructure (office, aerators, boats, fish processing, etc.), continuing our fish tracking study, planning for the creation of a state-of-the-art indoor recirculating fish system that can grow plants, and funding projects that will improve both Mille Lacs Lake and other Mille Lacs Band fisheries. We also conducted a variety of other fisheries activities, which included retrieving 73 fish listening devices and transmitter tagging 20 Muskie, 20 juvenile walleye, and 20 smallmouth bass for tracking. We also habitat mapped Mille Lacs Lake to identify key habitats that our sacred fish species rely upon. Of course, we represented your interests in many meetings with the Minnesota DNR regarding the Ogaa quota, always making sure tribal sovereignty is respected and that your wishes are represented and voiced over treaty rights issues that impact your fisheries.

Hatchery

Setbacks were seen from the drought and extreme heat. As a result, the hatchery took most of 2022 to adapt our existing equipment/infrastructure to the Minnesota new climate change pattern. More specifically, we upgraded our hatchery intake pump and bought a much bigger one to keep water flow fast enough. We extended and removed our existing hatchery intake structure and replaced it in deeper water by purchasing over 300 feet of PVC cold weather-resistant hosing, which will keep our hatchery water temperatures stable and eliminate our dreaded debris issues. In addition, proper aeration of fish ponds left walleyes from previous years' operations bigger and ready to be stocked into Nammacher's Lake this fall. We have also reared millions of fathead minnows and have begun planning for a free Band member bait tank! Two Band member youth were hired as interns and got the opportunity to get hands-on training and job experience — job openings which will be posted in late winter of 2023. The future is looking bright, with 2022 being a good funding year. We hope to take our hatchery department to the next level and continue to provide Band members with quality hatchery services.

Licensing

The Licensing Agents in District I, District II, and District III provide a lot of information about exercising treaty rights to our communities. These staff don't just issue Band IDs and harvest licenses. They are constantly researching Band law, the Conservation Code of 1837, learning the layout of our lands in all of our districts, assisting with the development of new department initiatives such as creating Google docs for pertinent staff to access, partnering with GLIFWC on various treaty rights questions, developing a harvester text alert system for the spring harvest, sharing knowledge with other staff members in an effort to cross-train more staff within the DNR, helping develop FAQ sheets, partnering with local refuges on projects to benefit communities, attending CWD lymph node removal training, and continuously promoting and advocating for community members in exercising their treaty rights.

Ma'iingan Technical Committee

The State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is updating their wolf plan with input from tribal biologists and tribal natural resources leaders. The importance of this is driven by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service proposal to delist wolves from the Endangered Species Act once again. Delisting would hand wolf management activities over to the tribes and state. The Mille Lacs Band DNR participates in the technical committee that is reviewing the plan and providing necessary recommendations to safeguard our brother ma'iingan. Early this year, the Mille Lacs Band DNR will reach out to our cultural leaders, Elders, Band members, and some members of the ma'iingan clan in an effort to provide sound recommendations in our consultation efforts with the state.

Manoomin

The Mille Lacs Band DNR has provided input and partnership in several manoomin studies. Staff coordinates with GLIFWC on treaty issues related to harvest and protection of manoomin. Good examples of this work are the coordination of aerial photos, preharvest outlook on rice beds, and addressing threats to rice beds on or near Mille Lacs tribal communities.

The Band DNR also works in partnership with the University of Minnesota College of Science & Engineering under a special Grand Challenges Grant. There has been a wealth of cultural understanding bridged between all the participants working together. This understanding helps non-tribal people better understand why we, as Anishinaabe, fiercely protect our sacred manoomin.

The Band DNR is excited about the award of a Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) grant that was submitted by the State of Minnesota DNR for wild rice monitoring, in which the Band is an important collaborator. We have been involved in providing input into the grant application, and even participated in a trial run of the presentation of the grant. This will be a great way to create a baseline inventory of manoomin beds on lakes and rivers to track declines or expansions of rice habitat.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The Band DNR is actively involved in the potential creation of a Minnesota Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee. This new committee would create unique "set-aside" funding for the tribes in Minnesota under the US Department of Agriculture NRCS program. This exciting funding opportunity could be an essential way to fund our department projects in times of decreased revenue during the pandemic.

Wildland

First and foremost, the Wildland crew strives to protect Band lands and community from wildfires. The crew spends many hours in the spring and fall prepping fire breaks, responding to wildfires in the community, and providing aid to state responders in areas that are near our Reservation boundaries.

This year, Jamaal Baird, George Morrow, and Elijah Staples went on multiple out-of-state fire assignments. Each of them went to Oklahoma and to the southwest United States to provide aid in wildfire suppression. This year's local fire season started out with a lot of moisture that made for a much slower fire season than last year's. The fire crew also hosted an important Engine Operator course put on by the BIA this fall for the Midwest region. Miigwech to George Morrow III, Jamaal Baird, Elijah Staples, Marvin Staples, Jacob Horbacz, Jordan Williams, Nathan Tulenchik, Daryl Aubid, and Azhibik Aubid for your bravery and service.

Members of the Wildland crew has often delivered wood at varying hours, seven days a week. In between protecting the communities from fire and harvesting/delivering firewood, the crews helped plant trees, restoring forest along Mille Lacs Lake. Crew members also coordinated the annual tree giveaway and put on fire safety and prevention presentations to elementary schools within our communities. They build/repair docks on Band lands waterways, work with USDA to put up emerald ash borer early detection traps (all districts), maintain property access roads on Band lands, create and maintain trails, clean culverts that get plugged by beavers in an effort to prevent flooding, keep forest inventory data up to date for BIA documentation, and plow some Band-owned properties. The Wildland department has also committed to teaming up with the NRCS to work on enhancing habitat for sharp-tail grouse and restoring native vegetation over the next few years.

Crew members from all three districts came to help the city of Garrison in a shoreline vegetation clean-up project. In District III, there is an ongoing project to manage oak wilt that was founded this summer with the help of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. District I Wildland Crew will be visible in the community this fall conducting a fuel reduction project in the community and prepping for this coming fall and next spring's fire seasons. The District II Wildland crew covers many additional duties, and their hard work does not go unnoticed.

2023 Initiatives for Department of Natural Resources

Land Management Plan:

- In person Treaty Right Celebration.
- Reactivate Federated Cultural Resource Board.
- Establish a livestock program in agriculture division.
- Water structure at the 3000 land property getting repairs for the water fowl habitat.
- Increased due diligence in efforts to curb mining close to our Tribal Lands.
- Working toward Treatment As a State for Mille Lacs Bands Water Quality Standards.
- Establish a community gardening club.
- Rebuilding the enrollments files.

EDUCATION

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Education Department

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Education Department is happy to see the shift back to in-person education in this past year. The following sections provide an overview of the activities and opportunities taking place within the department at Nay Ah Shing Schools, Nay Ah Shing School's Ojibwe Language Program, Mille Lacs Early Education, and the Mille Lacs Band Scholarship Program.

NAY AH SHING SCHOOLS (NASS)

Nay Ah Shing Schools is an accredited school providing instruction to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12. As of the October 2022 third week count, we serve a total of 151 students.

NASS Class of 2022

Nay Ah Shing Schools is proud to share that we had three students graduate in 2022. One student graduated early as an 11th grader. This student completed all of their credit requirements by taking college courses through Post-Secondary Education Opportunities (PSEO) in addition to completing regular high school courses. Two graduates were through our new Oshki-Maajitaadaa Alternative Learning Program. These students completed project-based learning, community service projects, and self-paced learning. All three students have plans to continue their education.

Accreditation

During the 2021-2022 school year, Nay Ah Shing Schools participated in a schoolwide accreditation review. School accreditation is pivotal in leveraging education quality and continuous improvement.

The findings of the Engagement Review Team were organized by the ratings from performance standards and levels of impact within the rubric; Initiate, Improve, and Impact. Using the standards, the review team provided valuable feedback to Nay Ah Shing Schools by identifying both strengths and opportunities to guide school improvement.

Strengths highlighted by the team were:

- The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the mission of “teaching the Ojibwe Language, Culture, Tradition, History, and Skills to live in two cultures.”
- NASS has a well-established governing authority with a strong vision and organizational structure that supports the stability of the school.
- Provides personalized and equitable learning opportunities and services are provided to meet the needs of all learners.
- NASS has committed to a supervision and evaluation process linked to professional development.

Areas identified as needing improvement were:

- Need to establish a formal mentoring and induction program to facilitate learning from and with colleagues.
- Limited opportunities for parents and school personnel to develop meaningful and sustainable partnerships.
- Evidence of collection, analysis, and use of student assessment data when making instructional and academic decisions.

Our next steps, upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report, will be to review and share the findings with stakeholders, develop plans to address areas of improvement, use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the continuous improvement efforts, and take the time to reflect and celebrate all of our successes noted!

Curriculum

We continue to strive to meet our students' needs academically and strengthen the academic programming for all Nay Ah Shing Schools. Our curriculum teams have been working hard to research best practices and evidence-based instruction in both Language Arts and Math.

Last year, grades K-6 implemented a new Language Arts curriculum, Benchmark Reading. One advantage of the program is that it provides students a seamless transition to online learning if needed. The intervention component also supports students who may need extra support or skill work.

This fall, all students in grades K-12 will use our new math curriculum, Eureka Math. While we are only months into classroom instruction, feedback from staff and students has been very positive. Our Leadership team and Professional Learning Communities continue to monitor both individual and classroom progress on a regular basis.

School-Wide Behavior Supports

In a collaborative effort to build a positive school community and support our K-5 students socially and emotionally, several supports are in place schoolwide. Our Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) teaches students behavior expectations in all areas of our school through modeling and practice.

In addition to PBIS, the Abinoojiiyag building incorporates the seven teachings, and activities are planned around monthly themes both schoolwide and in individual classrooms. A new addition to our PBIS team this year is the Abinoojiiyag Student Council, with student representatives elected from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classrooms. Student Council meets formally once per month and allows for student participation in school-wide decisions. Student representatives plan and execute fun and engaging school-wide activities.

Grades K-5 also use the Responsive Classroom (RC), with an emphasis on Morning Meeting to support students with social and academic competencies. The RC approach helps create conditions for students to be successful by coupling a strong belief system and practical practices.

Grades 6-12 are also focused on including student voice and ownership in our school. Our Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS)/Restorative Practices (RP) staff team worked with homeroom teachers to create a student representative program. Grade-level student representatives are voted on to represent their peers. These students meet with the staff PBIS/RP team over lunch twice a month to discuss how things are going at school, plan incentives, work through student concerns, review school expectations, and build relationships between school and student leaders. This team is working on building relationships with the community and meets regularly with the Chief of Tribal Police, staff from Aanjibimaadizing and therapists from the Mille Lacs Band Health and Human Services.

The 6-12th grade staff have spent the year working with consultants to train on Restorative Practices (RP). Restorative Practices focuses on building and maintaining community in a way that honors the importance of relationships amongst all members in the community; as well as practices to repair relationships when harm has been caused. RP addresses the needs of all people impacted by the harm. By using restorative practices in the school, people get to know one another and build relationships with

each other, which is a key element to learning, bullying prevention, and creating a positive school climate for students and adults.

Nay Ah Shing Schools opened an Alternative Learning Program called Oshki-Maajitaadaa, which means “a new start together.” This program is designed to provide an opportunity for students to graduate from high school on an alternative path that is designed based on their individual needs. During the school day, Oshki-Maajitaadaa serves students in grades 9-12 and up to age 21. The program is also able to serve older students through a part-time or after-school option. Two students graduated from the Oshki-Maajitaadaa Alternative Learning Program in the ‘21/’22 school year.

Nay Ah Shing School's special education department has been in a growing year. There was staff changeover and restructuring as staff retired, left, or changed roles. The education team has continued to build upon the partnerships within the school in an effort to identify and remove barriers to student success. A district-wide team applied for and received a grant to provide a research-based intervention called check & connect with a goal of increasing graduation rates for students on Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Special education staff are expanding partnerships with classroom teachers as they learn the new language arts/reading curriculum that has an intervention and remediation piece built in. Some special education service minutes are provided in an inclusive co-teaching model and some through a pull-out resource room for more intensive instruction.

At the high school level, the addition of the alternative learning program Oshki-Maajitaadaa provided another educational opportunity for students with and without an IEP to graduate. Special education teachers provided services to students with IEPs within this program.

Special education teachers participate in grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), special education Child Study Team (CST) meetings, and, when needed, a Student Support Team (SST) that plans and implements interventions for students identified as “at risk.”

Summer School 2022 provided multiple opportunities for students in grades K-12 to work on academics, credit recovery, and project-based learning. Students in grades K-2 worked in classroom groups, and grades 3-8 split into rotating groups. Groups involved an introduction to theater and set design, creative arts, Family and Consumer Science (FACS), and cultural arts. Additional programming included kindergarten readiness, kindergarten recovery, and golf. Students in grades 9-12 and the Oshki-Maajitaadaa alternative learning program worked on credit recovery and work-based internships in partnership with Aanjibimaadizing.

Coming Soon

Our staff is actively engaged in goal-setting for improving our program of instruction. Our school-wide goals for the 2022-2023 school year are:

By the end of SY 2022-23, Nay Ah Shing Schools Leadership Team and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will identify and execute a system for tracking student academic achievement results using NWEA, MCA, Benchmark, grade-level curriculum, and Achieve3000 Lexile levels to monitor longitudinal student success in grades K-12.

By the end of SY 22-23, Nay Ah Shing Schools Leadership Team will increase parent and family engagement opportunities through Parent Action Committee, Family Activity Nights, Volunteering, and School-Wide Assemblies.

In addition, Nay Ah Shing Schools will soon be getting a much-needed facelift. We are currently in phase 1 of our project, which involves identifying building needs in collaboration with members of Community Development and a team of architects. Projects would include window and door replacements, painting, replacing flooring, landscaping, etc. We are hoping to have most of the construction completed by next fall.

Nay Ah Shing Schools Ojibwe Language Program

The Nay Ah Shing Schools Ojibwe Language Program is actively engaged in rebuilding. Reflecting the trend in education in the post-COVID-19 era, we faced staffing challenges in the last year with a number of staff leaving their positions for other opportunities. Many of the remaining teachers and staff have taken initiative and filled in when needed. We have eight dedicated staff teaching Ojibwe Language and Culture to all students, ranging from babies to high school. In 2019, we had a Comprehensive Needs Assessment that aimed to identify school-wide culturally responsive practices, perspectives, and knowledge and the staff's ability to integrate that into the greater curriculum across all grade levels at NASS. Shortly after that was completed, the pandemic hit and much of the follow-up work on that was put on hold. We look forward to continuing this initiative.

This year, we have had opportunities for collaboration. We have been able to bring our MS/HS students to various Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Department of Natural Resources demonstrations. Students have had the chance to participate in traditional practices of food harvesting. We plan to continue this great working relationship between the schools and the Mille Lacs Band Department of Natural Resources. Nay Ah Shing Schools is also a stakeholder in Midwest Indigenous Immersion Network (MIIN). We have monthly meetings with other Ojibwe programs across Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Canada. Later this year, we will participate in networking events and shared professional development training. Being a part of this network allows for staff to reach out and talk with other Ojibwe language teachers to share struggles, triumphs, and more. The sharing of curriculum is also made possible through this collaboration.

As a department, we have identified the following needs for the future: more staff, including a Curriculum Specialist, developing and defining Ojibwe Language Standards across K-12 Ojibwe Language classrooms, an Elder Advisory Board, and Adult Ojibwe Language Classes.

Mille Lacs Early Education

The mission of the Mille Lacs Early Education (MLEE) is "to support children, families, and community by providing and promoting education, Ojibwe culture, parent involvement, socialization, and life skills with resources and quality programming" (MLEE Policy Council).

The Mille Lacs Early Education program opened its doors in 1965. The Head Start program was developed then as "...a comprehensive child development program that would help communities meet the needs of disadvantaged preschool children." (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs/about/history-of-head-start>) MLEE offers a high-quality early childhood education experience during the day from September through June for Head Start and September through July for Early Head Start students.

Creative Curriculum, the curriculum utilized by MLEE, is research-based and focuses on the development of social-emotional skills, physical development, language, cognition, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts. Children enrolled in Head Start are learning every day and preparing for academic success in elementary school.

Early Head Start focuses on the same learning areas as Head Start and adapts them to serve children ages 6 weeks to three years, with an emphasis on relationship building with MLEE staff.

In addition to learning at school, both Head Start (HS) and Early Head Start (EHS) programming encourages strong parent involvement. This involvement provides support as parents develop skills needed to advocate for their children when they are school-aged.

Both of these programs, EHS and HS, must follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS). These policies and regulations define standards and the minimum requirements for an EHS/HS program. In addition, these are federal laws that regulate classroom space and equipment, staffing, curriculum, transportation, disability services, nutrition, health and safety, and enrollment criteria. Failure to follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards will result in a program being found to be noncompliant and can lead to a loss of federal funding.

Enrollment

As of August 2022, MLEE has funding to enroll 53 children in Federal Head Start, 24 in State of Minnesota Head Start, 4 in State of Minnesota Early Head Start, and 104 in Federal Early Head Start, with 24 of these spots being Home Based. Currently, there are 72 children enrolled in Early Head Start and 67 children enrolled in Head Start. There are no children funded by the Mille Lacs Band at this time.

All children enrolled in MLEE are expected to maintain an average daily attendance of 85%. Attendance can be affected by illness, vacation, weather, and COVID-19 decisions. A wait list is maintained in all three districts.

Program Goals

Listed below are the program goals for MLEE:

1. Have staff, families, and community organizations interact on a regular basis to increase community involvement.
 - a. Increase attendance at Policy Council meetings by 5% each year.
 - b. Increase participation at Family Events by 5% each year.
 - c. Increase the number of family referrals to needed service by 5% each year and track the usage (ex.: HVs, P/T Conferences, etc.).
 - d. Improve Parent Education through culturally appropriate training.
2. Increase the use of Ojibwe language and Ojibwe cultural practices in the program [MLEE], with families and in the community.
 - a. Offer Ojibwe language classes per month at the site or in the community with 10% of parents/staff.
 - b. Label classroom items in Ojibwe and use the labeled words at least 10 times per day as observed by observation.
 - c. 90% of children who graduate [MLEE] Head Start will be able to count to 10 in Ojibwe and introduce themselves in Ojibwe.
 - d. Plan an Ojibwe cultural activity each week on the lesson plan, 90% of the time.
3. Improve the health and wellness of the children, families, and the community in a holistic way.

- a. Have 80% of children current with health requirements at the end of the year and increase 2% each year.
 - b. Educate parents about the importance of well-child checks through parent groups, using [the] “What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick” book; have 25% of parents use [the] book and class each [school] year.
 - c. Offer a healthy cook and/or movement activity once a month with 10% of families attending, increasing by 2% each [school] year. Use a monthly tracking calendar for families and staff; those who complete and turn in will be entered in a drawing.
 - d. Use a monthly tracking calendar of activities for families and staff; those who complete 15 out of the 30 and turn it in each month will be entered in a monthly drawing.
4. Increase staff hiring and retention, while decreasing staff turnover.
 - a. Hire qualified staff and retain them for a minimum of three years.
 - b. Increase staff starting wages by \$3 by 12/1/22.
 - c. Secure funding for staff incentives for the next 2 years.
 - d. Promote staff wellness by instituting Wellness Wednesday in fall 2022.
 - e. Decrease staff turnover by 5% annually.

Classrooms

Mille Lacs Early Education has both Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) classrooms in each of the three districts. District I: Wewinabi Early Education has nine Early Head Start classrooms and four Head Start classrooms. Currently, the Ojibwe Language Immersion classroom is closed due to lack of teaching staff. District II: East Lake Early Education has one Head Start classroom and one Early Head Start classroom. District III: Lake Lena Early Education has one Head Start classroom, one Early Head Start classroom, and one Home Based Early Head Start classroom.

In the EHS rooms, the educational emphasis is on building trust, secure relationships, self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-help skills. The development of these social emotional skills greatly influences the development of skills and abilities as they enter preschool and beyond. Because of this, we use Teaching Strategies: Creative Curriculum — Infant, Toddlers, and Twos (IT2s). This curriculum is relationship-based, and therefore very relevant.

In order to facilitate social emotional well-being, staff use observations and response techniques. Through observation, staff is able to respond to the individual needs of each child.

In the Head Start classrooms, the emphasis is studies. The Head Start classroom uses Teaching Strategies: Creative Curriculum: Preschool. This curriculum is widely used throughout the nation. In addition, it is comprehensive, research-based, and research-proven, and features exploration/discovery as a way of learning. It is proven to increase “kindergarten readiness.”

In both HS and EHS classrooms at MLEE, the children are assessed three times a year in order to guide instruction and individualize based on each child’s needs/skill level.

There are many opportunities for family involvement at MLEE. Family activities regarding child development, mental health, nutrition, safety topics, and culture are held. Pipe and pow-wow are held monthly for children and parents. We have a “Drop Everything and Read” event annually in April to promote literacy. Parent Policy Council and classroom activities are open to interested parents.

MLEE currently has 44 teachers on staff and will need to hire approximately 20 additional teachers to fully staff the rooms that are currently open. At this time, four classrooms, along with the school-age child care room, are closed due to lack of staff.

Many researchers have highlighted the importance of preschool education. This year, new research came out that demonstrated positive large-scale results of the federal Head Start program through generations. This was the first study done that looked at intergenerational effects of early childhood development. Increases were seen in educational attainment, which corresponds to an increase in wages. Decreases were seen in criminal engagement. It also revealed improvement in the home environments of generations to follow. This information has shown that analyses of Head Start and similar early childhood interventions have underestimated long-term multi-generational benefits.

Expansion in our East Lake and the Hinckley areas continues this year in our efforts to offer more opportunities for early education. At Mille Lacs Early Education, we are happy and proud to support the children and families in our community with education, culture, and skills that will be reflected within the Mille Lacs Band for generations to come.

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Scholarship Program

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Scholarship Program is proud to report the following accomplishments of our scholars. All numbers are accurate as of the printing of this report, as scholarship applications and achievements arrive weekly.

Education Enrichment Program

A total of seventy-one (71) members received support for a number of educational programs that enriched their knowledge or promoted their professional development. These included professional conference participation, Emergency Technician training, driving instruction, chemical dependency certification, and application fees for professional licenses.

Academic Achievement Awards:

Degree or Program	No of Students
High School Diploma/General Equivalency Diploma	47
Qualifying Certifications	2
Associate Degrees	14
Bachelor Degrees	8
Masters/Doctorate Degrees	5
Total Students	76

Current Higher Education Students

We currently support the Higher Education of 113 students, of which 69 are Mille Lacs Band members and 44 are descendants. Of all students, 86 are full-time students, and 27 are part-time.

For all 260 members and descendants we supported this year, we congratulate you for the hard work and effort you put forth during a dynamic time. We know that COVID-19 has been a struggle for those in school. And to our graduates, we wish you the best of luck as you move forward with your career goals.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

2022 Annual Report

The past few years, Health and Human Services has been focused on stabilization, alignment, and building a solid foundation for the future. This process required a deep dive into the services we provide through program evaluation, process/workflow development, and a heavy focus on internal operations.

During the process of stabilization and rebuilding our foundation, we were also working through the COVID-19 pandemic; this had its challenges as well. We had to prioritize testing, vaccinations, and changing guidelines all while ensuring client/patient access to both health and human service programs.

2022 has been an eventful year for the Health and Human Services division and we continue to strive for excellence. As we look forward to 2023, we are excited for the work we will be doing to increase access to mental health services as well as the implementation of care teams in District II and District III.

Human Services

Elder Disability:

The Elder Disability Department continues to work toward providing services that will allow our vulnerable adult population to live as independently as possible. We have been working closely with our partners in the Waivered Services Department to ensure that eligible Band members are able to access services through their county of residence. Work continues in conjunction with Waivered Services department, contracted consultant, and Minnesota DHS to improve cooperation between the Mille Lacs Band and the surrounding counties. We are developing a solid working relationship with Saint Louis County, which we intend to use as a model to work with all counties in the future. Preserving tribal sovereignty while promoting cooperation with state and county agencies is moving in a positive direction.

Currently, our department manages eight adult guardianships, and regularly assists 40+ other Elder/disabled individuals in the community. Recently appointed guardian of a Band member in the Metro area whose previous guardian had passed away in January. Our department currently has two more guardianship cases pending: one in Mille Lacs County, and one in Hennepin County.

With the award of APS grant through DHS, we have reestablished our Adult Protection Screening team. We have created an internal process for cross reporting the State MAARC reports. This allows us to offer Band members services in addition to the services provided by the County of Jurisdiction as determined by the State of Minnesota. Our goal is to be able to assist our Band member vulnerable adults. Overall, it

has been a very productive year, and we look forward to offering more services that are comprehensive to our Elder and vulnerable adult population in conjunction with the Waivered Services department.

Waivered Services Program:

What is waivered services, you may be asking yourself? Medicaid is a program that you apply for to become eligible to have supports brought to you in your home to help with showering, brushing your hair/teeth, tidying up around the house, home modifications, help with shopping, mowing/shoveling, etc. There are six different types of waivers that one may qualify for. The main requirement is that you must meet a level of care a nursing home would provide. This does NOT mean you will be shipped off to a nursing home! Our program's goal is to keep you living safely at home for as long as you want to with the necessary supports. Waivers are always your choice!

Waivered Services department focuses on Elder and disabled adult waiver health care enrollment. We are dedicated in assisting our community members to stay in their home while at the same time staying safe and healthy. We are currently working on the foundation of our department: Getting billing implemented, contracts with the State and Counties, policies and procedures, and staff training.

Our department is 100% funded by the Money Follows the Person Tribal Initiative state grant. With our grant, we will be working towards becoming a self-sustainable department through health care billing.

This past year, we hired a Waivered Services Benefits Coordinator that has been working in the community conducting outreach of our program in all of our districts, working one-on-one with potential clients to inform them of the process while assisting them through the challenging process of applying for programs and services. Our Benefits Coordinator helps to remove barriers in applying for services while keeping a close relationship with the client to stay aware of any new needs that arise.

For 2022, we have worked with 33 clients and have successfully enrolled two clients for waivered services.

We have launched our device checkout program. We have 15 Microsoft Surface Pros, and our clients and potential clients can check these out for a specific period to help alleviate any barriers to connect with family and friends, attend telehealth appointments, or complete paperwork or other virtual tasks for health care and program requirements. Please reach out to our department at 320-532-7850 if you are interested in this program.

Over the next year, we will be hiring another Waivered Services Benefits Coordinator to allow our program to reach more community members. We will be continuing our work with State and County officials to make agreements and to iron out issues that arise.

If you or someone you know may be interested in this program or have any questions, please give us a call at 320-532-7850.

Elder Services:

Elder Services 2021-2022 goals:

- Transportation
- Specialized services, including collaboration with health services to ensure Elder needs are being met

- Handicap-accessible home updates
- Staff training on cultural needs of Elders
- Respite for grandchildren
- All MLB Elders obtain living wills and health care directives

Elder Services has achieved transportation, a small lending closet, staff training on cultural needs to the Elders, living wills, and health care directives.

Although all our goals have not been met, Elder Services continues to make great strides to become more accessible and to assist the MLB Elders to ensure their needs are met. In addition, we have:

- Refresher course to kitchen staff on friendly dementia training
- All Elder Services staff is “Serv safe” certified
- Assistance for Elders who have great mobility difficulties on over-the-phone assistance; e.g., energy application and intake forms
- 24-hour Elder emergency assistance

Emergency Services:

Number of Emergency Services Loans: 2,978 loans were processed, totaling \$685,532.88

Food Distribution:

Number of FDPIR food packages: 358 FDPIR food packages were distributed or delivered

Food Shelf:

Number of Food Shelf packages: 497 food shelf packages distributed or delivered for a total of 39,457 pounds

Family Services:

The Mille Lacs Band Family Services serves Mille Lacs Band members, descendants, and community by providing overall supervision, interaction, and engagement related to child protection matters while following Indian Child Welfare Act and the Mille Lacs Band Tribal Statutes.

Family Services currently employs 25 staff members: (1) Child Protection Supervisor (Vacant); (2) Lead Social Workers; (6) Social Workers, (1 Urban, 1 Truancy, 4 social workers); (4) ICWA Support Aides (1 Urban, 1 Vital Records, 2 support aides); (1) Lead Investigator; (1) Investigator, (vacant); (1) Intake/Referral Specialist; (1) ILS Youth Coordinator; (1) Foster Care Supervisor; (4) Foster Care Licensors; (1) Tribal Initiative Planning Coordinator; (1) Data Specialist; (1) Policy Specialist; (1) Director of Family Services; (1) Administrative Assistant.

The Department is actively recruiting candidates to fill social worker positions. Family Services has developed partnerships with colleges to support Title IV-E Social Worker internships. At this time, Family Services does not have any interns, but has high hopes of recruiting interns for spring 2023.

In this past year, the department for the first time has two Band members in key leadership role positions. Of the 25 employees, 10 are Mille Lacs Band members and five are enrolled in a federally recognized tribe or descendent of a member of a federally recognized tribe. During the year, the department faced barriers of retaining and hiring social workers. The department, at one point, had

three social workers doing case management. The department had no other option but to defer 12 newly opened cases to the counties (one Hennepin and 11 Mille Lacs). At the end of August, the department and leadership met with Band Assembly to request a change in MLB Statutes. A bill was introduced to change the requirement that social workers must have a current and valid social worker license to be employed with Mille Lacs Band Family Services. This bill passed and the department is now able to recruit more social workers to fill the vacant positions within the department. It is the intention of the department to transfer these 12 cases back into tribal court once the child protection service area builds capacity. In addition, Family Services has created a comprehensive training program for onboarding new social workers. The training is relevant and culturally sensitive. The intensive 5-week program's intent is to acclimate new social workers to ICWA best practices. Cultural awareness training is also part of the training to ensure that cultural practices and the Mille Lacs Band seven values are well understood. Newly hired social workers will begin to get cases assigned after successfully completing the required course work. Supervisors will closely monitor their case management. Caseworkers are offered several days of in-service training to continually upgrade their knowledge and skills. Recently, the department staff and leadership participated in setting a dish at a ceremonial drum in Mille Lacs for children in out-of-home placement. The department intends to practice cultural traditions more frequently, which also includes staff participation and involvement. It is a goal of the department to use our cultural practices to aid in the decision-making process as we work persistently on bringing our Band member children home. The department has formed an internal working group, the culture group, that will work on development of policies and procedures related to cultural connectedness for our children in out-of-home placement. Many of our Band member children in out-of-home placement are not experiencing or have knowledge of the cultural traditions and it is our full intention to bridge that gap. It is the goal of the culture group to develop and implement ideas to keep our Band member children connected to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe culture and traditions.

Intake/Investigations

The Intake and Referral Specialist will identify whether child protection reports meet the statute for abuse or neglect. Intakes are processed within 24 hours of receipt, barring holidays where the Tribe is closed. If the Tribe is closed, calls are routed to the On-Call Social Worker. Reports that are found to meet tribal statutes for child endangerment are screened in and assigned to one of three categories: Child Protection Investigation, Family Assessment Investigation, or Facilities Investigation (Foster Care Homes).

Family Services Investigators perform either investigations or family assessments for abuse and neglect reports.

During an assessment, an Investigator will determine whether support services or interventions are needed and what type and intensity of interventions and supports are necessary. An investigation is completed if a child is in immediate or significant danger or the family will not participate in an assessment or take steps to ensure safety of the child.

During an investigation, the Investigator makes one of two determinations: That child protection services are needed to ensure the child's safety in the future, or the child was abused or neglected. When child protective services are needed to ensure the child's safety, the investigation turns into case management where a child protection social worker will be assigned to work with the family. A CHIPS petition may be filed if either determination is made.

Over the past year, the department reports the following data:
387 new intakes came through our office between 1/1/22 and 10/17/22
127 screened out and/or deferred to county
126 investigations/assessments
253 screened out/deferred/investigations/assessments
120 closed and 1 open assessment; the other five are assigned to FC and/or a SW
1 Protective Services Agreement
12 exclusive jurisdiction cases deferred to the county (one Hennepin and 11 MLC)
7 removals

Child Protection

Child protection works to support the safety, health, and spiritual strength of the Mille Lacs Band children and families we serve.

When there is evidence of abuse, but the child's safety can be assured, safety plans and strength-based approaches are used to keep families together and prevent out-of-home placement. The offending caregiver may be asked to move out of the home or the family may receive counseling and other safety services.

Should a child be deemed in need of protective services and removed from the home, the case is assigned a social worker and an out-of-home placement plan is developed. Relative placement is ideal and considered before substitute care is sought. Siblings are placed together when possible. The social worker's position is to ensure the wellbeing of the child. Services and case plans are established to reestablish and restore the family unit. Social workers must demonstrate active efforts in reunification, including but not limited to providing services, support to the family, and facilitating visits with the child and the parent, or caregiver, from which the child was removed.

Currently, there are 90 primary cases and 102 monitoring cases open. Of the primary cases, five originated in Aitkin County, four in Crow Wing County, four in Hennepin County, 20 in Pine County, and 63 in Mille Lacs County. Of these, we have nine children on a trial home visit, which will likely result in reunification. In addition, there are 19 truancy cases opened with the Band.

Over the past year, CPS workers closed 67 cases. Of these, 30 cases resulted in reunification, 34 went into guardianship, and three aged out of the system.

The department has plenty of reunification stories in which families have worked hard and deserve the highest honor for their achievements. In particular, a case started out under protective supervision, things didn't get better, and all four kids were eventually removed. Immediately, the parent admitted themselves into treatment. The parent worked very hard and began to utilize the Band resources. The parent began to work with the Wex program, had obtained Band housing, set up mental health services for the children through the Band, and continued outpatient longer than needed just to stay engaged. After nine months, the child protection case will close. The growth and strength that these families have is remarkable. CPS Social Workers work diligently to help Mille Lacs Band families get resources they need to stay together and, if necessary, help with reunification and family restoration.

Foster Care

The Foster Care Department currently oversees and operates 35 Guardianship cases, one Adoption case, and 42 Licensed Foster homes in District I, II, IIa, III, and the Urban Area. Foster homes are at the lowest count within the past five years, coming from 70+ licensed homes to a low of 42 licensed MLB homes.

The numbers breakdown:

DI has 27 licensed homes: 19 homes have children placed, 8 do not have children placed.

DII has 4 licensed homes: 3 homes have children placed, 1 does not have any children placed.

DIIa has 3 licensed homes: 3 homes do not have any children placed.

DIII H has 6 licensed homes: 4 homes have children placed, 2 do not have any children placed.

DIII LL has 2 licensed homes: 2 homes have children placed.

Urban has 0 licensed homes.

Of the licensed 42 homes, only 19 currently have children placed, and the majority of the 23 homes without children are licensed for relative care only or have already received guardianship of relative children with no other interest to take other children who may not be related. We are only operating with two available homes who will take in any and all children, at any time; otherwise, we have no choice but to place children into county homes or facilities.

The bigger issue is trying to find a licensed home on Fridays at 5 p.m., or weekends for emergency placements while families are undergoing a crisis situation, leaving the children without a guardian to provide care. The main reason why we are having a shortage of open homes is the community isn't interested at this time. The department did present to each district at the community meetings during the month of May on the importance of being a foster home provider.

However, there is yet a bigger issue we are facing as a Tribe, which is that we currently have a count of about 166 children who are placed outside of Mille Lacs, either placed in non-Native homes, surrounding county licensed homes, or in facility placement, including a few children who remain on-run status. Now is the time we need to bring these Band member children back home, and we need families to reinvest time to reunite the children back to their homelands here in the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe so they can reunite with their families, community, and cultural ties/heritage.

The Foster Care department has, for the first time ever, (4) four proficient and fully trained licensors who are ready and available to help families become licensed. A couple of reasons why families cannot become licensed: one is having a positive UA result, and the second is not being able to pass a background check.

THC (marijuana) is a huge issue in combination with legalization of marijuana that is coming soon. Currently there is zero tolerance for marijuana when testing for illegal substances, amongst many other illegal substances.

Criminal background checks is the second biggest reason why families don't become licensed. Band Statutes state that any person with one felony, or three or more gross misdemeanor convictions within the past five (5) years, will not be eligible for licensure; however, if a person has changed their character and is willing to put forth the effort to prove and deem their character, then they may be permitted to obtain licensure with approval from the Band Assembly only.

If a person chooses to become a foster parent, there will be a lot of paperwork to fill out, with required trainings to attend, and participation in foster parent orientation sessions. The foster parent must also adhere to monthly home visits in which licensors and social workers will complete in-person visits to the home for licensing compliance. The home visits also assess whether the children continue to be a good fit. Some typical outcomes of children in out-of-home placement include relative care, foster homes, or temporary facility placement.

Initiative

Currently, when a child protection case opens, there are two social workers involved, one from the Band and one from the county. The Band is involved as we have jurisdiction and ultimately custody and authority of the child; the county is involved because they are financially responsible in the case and there are milestones that cases must meet in order to capture full funding (for the county). County-tribal political tensions are frequently carried over into child protection cases and this can affect the clients in a number of ways. Mille Lacs Band Family Services continues to work towards becoming an Initiative tribe, meaning our Family Services Department would operate autonomously, with zero county involvement. Red Lake, White Earth, and Leech Lake are currently operating as Initiative tribes, and their communities benefit greatly.

Mille Lacs' Initiative will include a heavy focus on prevention and early intervention on potential child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment matters. We will also be required to provide all services and functions related to child protection, intake and investigations, and foster care in-house.

This past year, we have retained our team of three full-time staff (a Planning Coordinator, a Policy Specialist, and a Data Specialist) as well as brought in two temporary employees to assist with file and system clean-up. We made site visits to the impacted counties and reviewed files on approximately 200 children to project budgetary needs of the program and assuming full fiscal responsibility. We meet with the Department of Human Services weekly as a small group, and monthly with DHS Leadership and FS/Human Services Leadership. In the spring of 2022, Initiative staff went to the State capital and visited with elected officials to advocate the importance of Legislative funding for planning and implementation of the Mille Lacs Bands' Initiative. We secured funding for a Family Preservation Supervisor, three Family Preservation Case Managers, and a Title IV-E Supervisor.

Independent Living Skills

Research shows that youth transitioning from out-of-home placement are more likely to have poor outcomes involving the criminal justice system, graduation rates, health problems, and homelessness — to name a few. In our efforts to combat poor outcomes, Family Services hired a Youth Transitions Coordinator. The primary focus is working with youth on skills and providing services that have proven to increase the chances of a successful transition from foster care. We call this program ILS, or Independent Living Skills. The Independent Living Skills program is designed to support and encourage youth between the ages of 14-18 who are in foster care or have experienced out-of-home placement. Independent living plans are created with youth, are always youth-driven, and encompass building a guide for the youth, who deems what their own success plan will look like. ILS helps the youth to create goals and look into the future of what they want to accomplish in life. Some factors include obtaining a high school diploma, transportation, such as working towards getting a license, and cultural connectedness. The following are target areas of the ILS program that a youth must consider when creating their ILS plans: Educational, Vocational or Employment Planning, Transportation, Health Care

Planning and Medical Coverage, Planning for Housing, Money Management, Social and Recreational Skills, Establishing and Maintaining Connections, Vital Documents, and Cultural Activities.

The immediate goals can be achieved, and the incentives will vary. The incentives still give the youth opportunity to learn and build upon already existing skills that the youth has. For example, a youth may choose to do a sibling shopping session where they would learn money management and shopping skills for budgeting, distinguishing between needs and wants, comparing prices, and being practical with purchases. This is a good opportunity for the youth to learn social skills, such as modeling healthy communication, boundary setting, practicing ordering food at restaurants, and interacting with employees. There is opportunity for youth to do cooking sessions, how to plan a healthy meal, food safety, meal preparation, grocery shopping, budgeting, etc. The ILS program shadows and coaches youth as they learn to obtain vital records such as birth certificates, social security cards, and tribal and state identification cards, open a bank account, complete applications or paperwork, schedule their own appointments, pay bills, etc. The ILS program has contracted with a driver's education instructor, who assists youth in preparing for the knowledge exam test, and a tutor to help youth with their academic studies. The ILS program has assisted youth with purchasing furniture and appliances for their dorm rooms and apartments. There are many vital components of being an independent adult, and the ILS program teaches our youth these types of things in preparation for adulthood.

In this past year, a Youth Transitions Coordinator has helped a youth transition to college. The youth, now an adult, maintained their goal of attending college. The youth maintained good grades, had a great school attendance record, obtained their driver's permit and eventually their driver's license, and continued to achieve their academic goals, all while dealing with the angst of out-of-home placement. This youth had set themselves up for success using the tools at their disposal. The youth wanted to better their own life and did not want to succumb to the challenges of peer pressure. The youth has become quite successful and is attending college today. We have youth who were provided with bikes to get to work while they are working on obtaining their driver's license. Another youth, who doesn't live in the area, was able to attend Big Drum ceremony, learned to bead, and is in the process of finishing sewing their first ribbon shirt.

Over the past year, the ILS program has served 10 youth between the ages of 14-17 years old, five youth between the ages of 18-20 years old, three youth that went into Extended Foster Care, three youth identifying as LGBTQ, and two expecting or parenting.

Victim Services Program

The Victim Services Department, formerly known as Family Violence Prevention Program, has eight programs — Victims of Crime, Sexual Assault, Elder Abuse, Safe Harbor, Women's Shelter, Community Advocacy, Domestic Violence Transformation, and Child Advocacy Center — that serve victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Stalking, Dating Violence, Elder Abuse, Sexually Exploited Youth, Human Trafficking, and General Crime.

The Domestic Violence Transformation Program (DATP), formerly known as Batterers' Prevention Program, is aimed at assisting those who use violence within their personal relationships. Working with participants of the DATP course, we hope that by sharing knowledge, increasing accountability, and supporting change that we will make the women safer within the community. In doing so, we are re-establishing the traditional viewpoint that women should be respected, and they should play a balanced role within the tribal community.

The Victim Services Department has had many projects going over the last year. Victim Services is now their own Safe Harbor Regional Navigator. The role of a Safe Harbor Regional Navigator is to connect youth with services and serve as points of contact for their communities. Services can range from street outreach and case management for any runaway, homeless, at-risk, and exploited youth. Between the Regional Navigator and Advocates, they will also provide sex trafficking prevention education.

Our Sexual Assault Program holds Virtual Book Support Groups that are held weekly via zoom to encourage participation for those that have transportation issues or work commitments. Books are self-help titles, and discussions revolve around trauma, the use of cultural practices, and becoming comfortable with our individual identities. New books come out every 8-10 weeks. IMAGEN Girls Empowerment Group continues with much success. Groups are held with an Elder mentor present. The groups provide cultural teachings, social/emotional learning/issues, skill building, field trips, and camp.

The Victims of Crime Program has compiled an eight-week healthy relationships group to educate youth on key components needed for healthy relationships of all kinds, including but not limited to dating, friendships, and family relationships. Facts and statistics on crimes such as stalking, teen dating violence, and Elder abuse have been distributed to the community throughout the year. Also, facts and information on crime victim rights and youth violence prevention.

Our Community Advocacy program put on a “Taco ’bout Domestic Violence” event in all districts to bring awareness to domestic violence.

The Child Advocacy Center newly added to the Victim Services Department will be able to provide a safe visit/safe exchange service that will play a critical role in fostering the safety of children during a time of increased danger when the parents separate. As a program, we recognize that the process of separating from and leaving an abusive partner can increase rather than diminish danger. Batterers often use visitation and exchange of children as an opportunity to inflict additional emotional, physical, and/or psychological abuse.

Victim Services quickly became acclimated in providing the same level of advocacy in a teleworking manner during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since our operational effect didn’t suffer, we found that it made an easy transition for us to be able to provide mobile advocacy. One of the most significant advantages is advocates can provide flexible meeting locations for services rather than clients coming to the office for services. We found that is much easier for some victims/survivors to access services, as they didn’t have to worry about daycare and transportation.

The Victim Services Department is 90% Grant-Funded/No Revenue Potential — Services are voluntary, and no revenue can be made from advocacy services. Being that Victim Services is grant-funded, we are required to assist victims/survivors state-wide and will assist any Band member no matter their location.

Human Services

Finance:

Health Services has remained fully sustainable, requesting no further funding from the Band despite the transition into a larger facility with additional expenses and the modifications of working through a pandemic. Strong financial management resonates throughout HHS, as we strive to safeguard the Band’s assets.

Completed 105(l) leases for new Health and Human Services building and will explore if this will be an option for additional Health and Human Services buildings.

Client/patient encounter rates have increased, and billable services, including telehealth services, have been added. COVID-19 testing is being scheduled and documented, capturing revenue as an encounter.

Medicaid continues to be the primary third-party payer; revenue cycle and client access work closely with the Circle of Health team to support Band members getting signed up for coverage.

COVID-19 funding sources supported the purchase of a mobile medical clinic and garage; this will increase access to COVID-19 testing and medical services to all districts. Additional changes in revenue management include transition to a new billing, clearing house to support software upgrades, and substance disorder has moved from paper to electronic billing.

Finance Coordinator position established to streamline accounts payable and payroll to a centralized function for Health and Human Services. An electronic payroll system will be piloted with Human Services with beta testing planned in 2023.

Quality and Compliance:

To support increased clinical growth, a Manager of Quality and a Credentialing Manager are new positions. A document management platform is being implemented; the software will support policy development and enhance efficiency of the policy review and approval process. Access to policies and procedures will support employees in doing their work consistently, effectively, and in compliance with organizational and regulatory expectations.

The Quality and Compliance department was engaged in multiple quality improvement and policy review projects, including mandated reporting and post exposures to blood-borne pathogens, both aligned with federal regulations guiding professional practice in Health and Human Services.

A compliance review was completed for the Comprehensive Home Care license and the services provided under that license. The focus of this review was to ensure home care services are being provided in a manner consistent with the expectations of the license and with quality of care as the main priority.

Information Technology and Informatics:

Completed Year One of a three-year strategic plan focused on aligning HHS platforms with industry and regulatory standards. Security upgrades are near completion and new anti-virus software is being deployed. Security awareness training has been implemented quarterly and multi-factor authentication is being implemented. Migration to Office 365 is complete.

Pharmacy and dental equipment have planned upgrades. A vendor has been selected to move from RPMS electronic medical record to a platform that will support inter-operability across multiple health systems providing care to our Band members.

Two computer training rooms are being planned to support training to the new electronic health record and to offer space for employees to complete training requirements.

Pharmacy:

Completed recertification of 340B drug program and renewed all third-party agreements. Worked collaboratively to support dental department transitions to e-scribing in Dentrix. Supported vaccine clinics and is collaborating with compliance and Home Care to re-align medication delivery with Home Care licensure.

Dental:

Dental volumes have increased and more patients are insured, allowing for better revenue capture. The addition of the ability to make crowns in-house has provided decreased expenses and enhance revenue potential to the department as well as decreased dental staff downtime. Revenues for dental were \$762,993.00, a 50% increase and marking the highest revenue capture to date.

Facilities:

Men's Halfway House renovation will be completed by end of 2022. Continued work is being done to align workflow processes and establish standardized job descriptions at market competitive rates to ensure buildings are maintained, clean, and safe for all visitors.

Clinic Services:

Clinical services is establishing care teams in all districts; they will link closely to case management and senior housing. In preparation to move to an integrated medical record, the Champs (Nightingale Notes) contract will not be renewed. All policies for the Assisted Living Units are being reviewed in support of moving to a model of independent senior living.

COVID-19 boosters and flu shots are scheduled and offered in all districts. Clinic lab team will be working collaboratively with Wellness Court to offer specimen collection services with the goal to add cardiology outreach in early 2023; the lab is working with HIS Regional Office to secure the support of a medical technician to guide the team in preparation of lab facilities.

Maternal child health services are being re-aligned to ensure cohesiveness within the program. There are three staff currently in family spirit training as well as the WIC Coordinator. Currently, the team is setting up WIC visiting rooms within clinic spaces in all districts.

During 2022, Health Services added a position of clinic transporter. This has been a very successful addition to services, which has resulted in a second transporter being added to the team to ensure community members are able to get to important medical appointments.

Clinic services is working closely with behavioral health to support program bridging and case management. The RN at Four Winds will also be overseeing the Men's Halfway House, providing better alignment across behavioral health programs. Additionally, a psychiatrist-led mental health team is being put in place on contract to support access to services while internal infrastructure and capacity are being built.

Behavioral Health:

2022 has been a year of change for Behavioral Health. There has been a lot of work done on the evaluation of service delivery, efficiency, and gaps. The team is currently working very hard to meet department needs and community needs.

Focus areas:

- Pause CTSS program to further evaluate program foundation and processes.
- Creating direct access and walk-in assessments for substance disorder programs.
- Increasing collaboration across HHS departments, while working to help staff re-envision BH department as a continuum of care for clients.
- Developing Treatment/Care Planning across departments
- Increasing mental health therapist capacity.
- Develop mental health screening process that can direct referrals to appropriate level of care/need.
- Develop case consultation to support practitioners to evaluate effectiveness of therapy strategies with a goal to increase client outcomes.
- Develop BH Case Management.
- Develop counselor-training track with Fond du Lac Tribal College and Hazelden to increase availability of Native counselors to stabilize the workforce. Currently, four BH staff will start LADC education in the spring of 2023.
- Develop two intake positions.
- Implement billing and documentation audits.



The Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures (MLCV) was established in 1991 by Title 16 of the Mille Lacs Band Statutes:

- (a) to exercise a more effective form of commerce;
- (b) to control and manage the economic affairs of the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians;
- (c) to establish and operate commercial enterprises as it may deem to be for the benefit of the Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians;
- (d) to make sound business and economic development decisions in a way that is insulated from day-to-day political considerations faced by Band-elected leaders;
- (e) to avail the Band of the benefits of engaging in business and economic development without subjecting the Band government, qua government, to erosion of Band sovereignty;
- (f) to insulate Band assets from liability assumed in the conduct of business operations of MLCV or as wholly owned subsidiary thereof; and
- (g) for any other purposes set forth in the Charter or bylaws of MLCV that are not inconsistent with the title.

An Overview

Welcome to the State of the Band Annual Report! The following will serve as a comprehensive summary of our most recent efforts to support and serve the tribe with our business portfolio.

At present, Gaming, Tribal Economy Investing, and Government Contracting make up the primary backbone of our business activities. Within that, it is the responsibility of MLCV's companies to actively produce resources, create job opportunities, and provide services for the tribe and its members.

As we learned through the lasting and dramatic impact of the global pandemic, most companies can no longer rest on their laurels to succeed. This holds especially true for MLCV and every vertical of our operation. Thankfully, we utilized this unprecedented cultural and economic shift to our advantage, not just competitively adapting to the times but stepping ahead of them when we can.

Notably, some of these shifts shaped our approach to MLCV talent. Despite the challenges of a limited labor market and wage increases, we made strategic efforts to meet the market head-on and put a premium on finding and retaining the best of the best. Grand Casino Mille Lacs, Grand Casino Hinckley, Wewinabi, Inc., Circle Sage, and Grindstone Laundry all chose to invest in their people with competitive pay, benefits, and employee development.

As we look to the near future, our most significant revitalization and evolution will happen in hospitality. Working directly with Band Assembly, we plan to present a new proposal outlining a substantial

remodeling of our Grand Casino hotels and our hotels in Minneapolis and St. Paul. These won't just be aesthetic face-lifts to our properties. They'll be based on extensive research we've gathered on our Guests and their needs so we can provide an ambitiously tailored hospitality experience across our portfolio that builds lasting and significant revenue for the tribe.

As you'll see below, this is just scratching the surface of MLCV's multi-pronged efforts to transcend the constraints of such unpredictable times. We look forward to continuing our work and moving us that much closer to building a model tribal economy for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley

Our casinos have served as a guiding force through the economic fluctuations imposed by the pandemic and its continuous ripple effects. Even in the face of labor shortages, both properties configured their own internal efficiencies to rise to the endless demands of hospitality, entertainment, and dining. While innovating our gaming offerings, they re-opened flagship restaurants, put on sold-out concerts, created special giveaways, drew in new Guests, and provided exceptional customer service at every turn—to name a few of their achievements.

The foundational hard work of our Associates in recent times has been crucial to the long-term vision and success of MLCV as we begin positioning Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley as premier gaming and entertainment destinations in Minnesota and the greater Midwest.

Youth Ambassador Program

Among Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley's many achievements, they successfully continued the Youth Ambassador program for Mille Lacs Band youth this year. The program aims to provide our youth with an opportunity for career exploration and skill-building for future jobs. Recently, the program created Youth Ambassador leadership roles to close the gap between young band members and workplace leadership, improving our ability to develop the youth while ensuring they enjoyed the process professionally.

This program gives our MLCV businesses a tangible and meaningful stake in the Mille Lacs Band educational system. They develop and train potential future Associates while creating customized hands-on guidance and mentorship for each youth. Ultimately, 120 Mille Lacs Band youth worked for our gaming entities this past summer, with one (1) at Big Sandy Resort, two (2) at MLCV, one (1) at Wewinabi, 47 at Grand Casino Hinckley, and 69 at Grand Casino Mille Lacs.

Intern Program

MLCV and their businesses employed 15 MLB interns in the summer of 2022. They had the opportunity to work directly with executive leadership and on projects that allowed them to contribute to the success of MLCV. Each intern was able to apply for their position within the organization for 30–90-day periods based on their expectations for the internship. Each intern participated in key projects, events, and working sessions to learn, develop, and experience a corporate work environment.

Hospitality

The hospitality industry was projected to have a lengthy recovery from the pandemic. Estimates placed pre-pandemic business outcomes to not happen until 2025. As we emerged from the pandemic, MLCV moved from using an external hotel management company to bringing the hotel management function

in-house to Maadaadizi. This allowed Maadaadizi to strengthen the strategic plan and incorporate a flexible business model based on the demands of the market as it continues to rebound from the pandemic. Based on MLCV and Maadaadizi's strategies and strong leadership, MLCV projects a rebound prior to 2025.

The hospitality market recovery is dependent on business travel events, meetings, and some employees returning to the workplace. This is improving but has not made a full recovery at this time. Tourism is our second important lever necessary for growth of business, which is making a recovery, and is projected to make a full recovery by 2024.

Sustainable Energy

To help us chart a sustainable path forward through the global climate crisis, MLCV has spearheaded pivotal solar projects across our portfolio. Considering that electric costs continue to rise while the value of renewable energy credits increases, and the Inflation Reduction Act allows for tax credit opportunities—it's vital we do so.

In June this year, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and MLCV held a ribbon cutting ceremony for a 3.35 GWh solar array east of the Grand National Golf Course in Hinckley, Minnesota. The solar array will save Grand Casino Hinckley over \$3.3 million in energy costs over 30 years and sequester significant CO2 emissions—equivalent to planting 204,870 trees. As we broker partnerships with experts in the fields of energy and sustainability, more groundbreaking projects like this will continue.

Makwa Global

Makwa Global has seen tremendous growth and development as a tribal enterprise this year due to its remarkable ability to solicit government projects on a global scale. Because of this, it has broadened its toolbox to include IT, Cyber Training, and Construction professional services. Focusing on sole source efforts will help Makwa Global secure competitive 8(a) work in the next 24–36 months.

Recent contracts of note include the Diplomatic Security Overseas Support Services Program and the Criminal Justice Expertise Program. Both have a four-plus year period of performance. Currently, Makwa Global has 28 operational activities, including but not limited to Anti-Terrorism Assistance, Counterterrorism, and Rapid Engineering and Construction. Regionally, there are currently active operations in Duluth and Cook, Minnesota. Any further details of Makwa Global contracts are confidential due to security measures.

Mille Lacs Tribal Economy Business Incubator

The Mille Lacs Tribal Economy Business Incubator (TEBI) is a project created by MLCV to build a successful pipeline of entrepreneurs and connect them with critical resources in the region. Both Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe members and Mille Lacs Tribal Economy citizens (Native American and non-Native American) have access to it. The incubator assists businesses beyond the launch phase and provides them with the tools to achieve and maintain long-term stability and growth.

This year, a notable win for MLCV was our coordination of a \$3,197,400 Federal Economic Development Administration grant and a \$1,300,000 Congressionally Directed Spending grant (administered through a Housing and Urban Development fund) for incubators in Onamia and Hinckley. As a result of these incubators, the economic and social well-being of our tribe will be enhanced through job creation, local dollar circulation, and community building.

Enterprise Academy

Furthering our initiatives to foster strong entrepreneurs, MLCV has continued its partnership with the Initiative Foundation to recruit budding entrepreneurs from the Mille Lacs Tribal Economy, including Mille Lacs Band Members, for a 12-week Enterprise Academy. The Academy helps participants learn directly from business experts and create individualized business plans.

Of the 22 entrepreneurs that participated in our Enterprise Academy cohorts this year, 16 were Mille Lacs Band Members. Since the program's inception in 2020, 37 Mille Lacs Band Members have completed the program. This is a significant step toward building a robust entrepreneur ecosystem, creating greater industry diversity, and helping tribal people participate in the regional economy more meaningfully.

For more information on how to apply for a spot in future cohorts, Band members can email Dustin Goslin at dgoslin@mlcv.com or Beth Gruber at bgruber@mlcv.com.

Red Willow Estates

Red Willow Estates is a 30-unit townhome community comprised of 22 two-bedroom units and eight (8) three-bedroom units. Both unit types have one and a half baths, an attached garage, energy-efficient features, and appliances. With an emphasis on family-friendly amenities, residents will have easy access to the Soo Line Recreation Trail, a beautiful community garden, a new basketball court, a playground, and an outdoor community gathering area outfitted with grills, a fire pit, benches, picnic tables, and a covered shelter. There will be Ojibwe-inspired landscaping themes throughout. Construction began in the spring of 2022 and will finish in June 2023.

Mission Creek Estates

Mission Creek Estates is a 40-unit apartment complex offering 10 one-bedroom units, 20 two-bedroom units, and 10 three-bedroom units. The three-bedroom units will have one and a half baths, while the rest will have one bath per unit. The project will include premium finishes, stainless steel appliances, centralized laundry, and a meeting room with a kitchenette. It will also boast numerous energy efficiency features, including a full solar roof array. The project has room for 28 garages and a small play area, too.

MLCV expects to break ground in the summer of 2023 and complete this project in mid-2024.

Onamia Childcare Center

According to a 2021 report from the Center for Rural Policy and Development, child care availability is one of the top three issues obstructing people's return to the workforce. Central Minnesota alone has a 56% gap between the availability needed and the current licensed capacity. This shortage of child care has resulted in Mille Lacs County ranking at 69 out of 87 counties in childcare per capita across the state.

But with MLCV's care and ingenuity, we plan to fix that with the creation of the Onamia Childcare Center. It will be a 5,700-square-foot center with up to 63 childcare spots, including space for 12 infants, 21 toddlers, and 30 preschool children. The center is a unique collaboration between several of our entities, all with full support from the City of Onamia. Check out the breakdown below:

Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe: offering an existing building for the project.

MLCV: serving as the developer.

Circle Sage Property Management: serving as the property manager.

Mille Lacs Health System: serving as the meal caterer for the new center.

Kids Zone Childcare: serving as the childcare business operator.

Initiative Foundation and First Children’s Finance: serving as childcare advisors.

In consultation with the MLBO Grants team, MLCV applied for a grant from the MN Dept of Employment & Economic Development (DEED) to get the project underway. MLCV was awarded \$536,970 by DEED in March 2022. MLCV is scheduled to begin construction in spring 2023 and complete the project by fall 2023.

Broadband

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, MLCV recognized the dire need for reliable and affordable internet connectivity for the Mille Lacs Tribal Economy. So, MLCV quickly aligned itself with the Blandin Foundation—a private entity whose mission is to fund a more equitable future for rural Minnesotans—to determine how they could utilize Blandin’s expertise in helping improve and adopt broadband access.

In March of 2021, MLCV began a 15-week journey through Blandin’s “Community Broadband Resources: Accelerate!” program. The Mille Lacs Tribal Economy Cohort was attended by interested stakeholders representing local governments, grant writers, education institutes, healthcare systems, and most importantly, two local internet service providers.

Continuing to learn about rural connectivity, MLCV received a \$6,670 grant from the Initiative Foundation to study the Starlink satellite internet technology developed by Elon Musk. MLCV has been researching and gathering data regarding ease of installation, customer service, upload and download speeds, weather impact, topography, and the use of multi-devices on the system.

MLCV also collaborated with Pine County to submit a request to the Congressional Directed Spending program to bring FTTP (fiber to the premise) broadband service to Census Tract 9504 (the City of Hinckley out to the Lake Lena community), which has historically been underserved and had limited internet access. 2,440 households within Census Tract 9504 will now enjoy a better quality of life with reliable and affordable broadband service. Congressman Stauber supported the submission, and Pine County received an award of \$5,576,250 to complete the project.

Our next step is completing a feasibility study for the entire Mille Lacs Tribal Economy to understand the current situation, develop better mapping through the “last mile,” and find ways to work in partnership to affect change. MLCV has received a \$100,000 grant from the Blandin Foundation to assist in completing the study.

SLOTCO

SLOTCO is an MLCV-founded company built to help tribal casinos improve their gaming experience and increase revenue by leasing high-performing slot machines, supplementing them with advanced data science resources, and infusing capital when needed.

The first contract for SLOTCO included the delivery of slot machines in the fall of 2022, and the second contract will deliver machines to Grand Portage Casino. To date, SLOTCO has approximately ten tribes in the Midwest, Southwest, and Northwest with signed non-disclosure agreements.

This is the first step in bridging long-lasting and lucrative relationships with small-to-medium-sized tribal casinos across the country and introducing the value of doing business with SLOTCO to the gaming industry at large. Having kept pace with its business plan for 2022, SLOTCO is also on track to meet its business plan for 2023.

Community Engagement

Time and time again, creating an earnest dialogue with influencers in our community has contributed to the larger successes of MLCV. In 2019, honoring that exchange fruitfully began when MLCV started the Bi-wiidoopamishinaang (Elder Gathering) initiative. This once-per-month meeting held at a time chosen by the Elders allows MLCV to share updates on initiatives and gain invaluable feedback from Elders in the community. After a brief break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bii-wiidoopamishinaang gatherings thankfully began again in July 2022. The events continue to be well-attended, and MLCV has already greatly benefited from implementing the knowledge and insight gained from these exchanges.

MLCV also proudly brought back the annual Fall Feast on November 17, 2022. We hosted nearly 1,200 community members for an evening of updates and a delicious meal. New this year was the addition of an open house at the MLCV building for community members to tour and meet staff. We look forward to doing it again next year!

OFFICE OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL

Department Overview

The Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) is one of two divisions that comprise the Department of Justice (DOJ), which also includes the Tribal Police Department. 24 MLBS § 1053. The DOJ functions within the Executive Branch of Government and principally operates from offices located at the Government Center. MLBS § 1051. The Solicitor General serves as the administrative supervisor of the DOJ and the head of the OSG.

The Solicitor General serves as lead Interior Legal Counsel of the Mille Lacs Band, and not solely as legal representative of the Executive Branch of government. 4 MLBS § 16(a); 24 MLBS § 1054(b). The Solicitor General is not considered an executive officer. 4 MLBS § 4. Consequently, the Solicitor General does not sit on the Administration Policy Board. 4 MLBS § 9(a). The Solicitor General, nonetheless, must adhere to the tribal Ethics Code due to his or her status as an appointed official. 6 MLBS § 1153(a) and ethics and rules of the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct.

The OSG does not provide direct legal services to Band members, but rather represents the Band government and its employees, provided such individuals are acting in an official capacity. 4 MLBS § 18(f); 24 MLBS § 1054(b). The primary responsibility of the OSG is the objective interpretation, application, and enforcement of Band law. 4 MLBS § 19(a-b); 24 MLBS § 1054(f). The OSG maintains absolute independence in the performance of this obligation to ensure the full and fair application of the law and maintain the integrity of the office. 4 MLBS § 18(b).

The authority of the Solicitor General finds its expression in several statutory titles, but principally in Titles 4 and 24, respectively entitled “Executive Branch” and “Judicial Proceedings.” The Solicitor General is responsible for representing the executive and legislative branches in the MLB Court of Central Jurisdiction. 2 MLBS § 1108(b); 4 MLBS § 16(a). This duty also extends within other courts of competent jurisdiction. 4 MLBS § 18(a, c).

Highlights for 2022

The Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) is currently comprised of a total of nine attorneys and three support staff who are dedicated to serving our communities. Caleb Dogeagle has served as the Band’s Solicitor General since May of 2019. The OSG works hard to increase and expand services to many departments and programs for the Band. The OSG plans to improve upon and continue the trend into 2023 and beyond. Some of the increased services were focused on the Department of Natural Resources, Education, Housing Department, Human Resources, Community Development, Health and Human Services, the Aanjibimaadizing Program, grants and contract reviews, protecting and advocating for children and families, updating and creating policies, participation in the creation of the Healing to Wellness Court, and increased participation in community and cultural events.

OSG worked to improve school attendance issues with families, collaborated with Family Services to streamline the process for Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) notices, continued to work towards an updated Tribal Gaming Regulatory Act, and worked towards updated child support statute and policy revisions.

The Band should have a final ruling from Judge Nelson in the ongoing litigation with Mille Lacs County at the Federal District Court level either before the State of the Band or in the coming months. Mille Lacs County has indicated their intent to appeal any adverse ruling. Nonetheless, the OSG remains confident in our position and will continue to advocate for the sovereign authority of the Band.

To help fight against the opioid epidemic, we filed a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and distributors back in 2019. The opioid case has progressed slowly as the federal courts await the outcome of a similar “test case” being litigated in Oklahoma by the Cherokee Nation. That case was paused in October of 2022 while the parties discuss a potential settlement. The opioid case is very large and complex and will likely settle before what would undoubtedly be a long trial. In fact, in 2022 two settlements were reached to resolve all opioid litigation against the three largest pharmaceutical distributors and one manufacturer, Johnson and Johnson. The settlements include funds to combat the crisis, such as treatment and prevention programs. More settlements are likely to come in 2023 along with distribution schedules for the funds.

The Band received a grant to fund a Special Assistant United States Attorney position to prosecute crimes from the Reservation in federal court. That position started in 2020 has boosted law enforcement efforts on the Reservation and increased ability for law enforcement to meet the needs of our communities. The Solicitor General was sworn in as a Special Assistant United States Attorney to enhance the prosecution of major crimes, especially drug-related crimes, increase public safety, and exercise the Band’s sovereignty. The SAUSA grant has led to increased collaboration and access to the United States Attorney’s Office and federal law enforcement agencies.

OSG applied for and obtained access to the Minnesota Court Information System through the Minnesota Government Access program. Additionally, the Band was approved for the Department of Justice Tribal Access Program (TAP). The TAP will allow the Band to more effectively serve and protect our

communities by ensuring the exchange of critical data across the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) and other national crime information systems. The Band will get the TAP kiosk and should begin using it in early 2023.

MILLE LACS TRIBAL POLICE

Overview

To ensure the safety and security of Band members and local communities, the Mille Lacs Band has a Tribal Police Department, which began in 1984 with one officer. Today, there are currently 22 full-time POST Board certified officers. The Tribal Police Department is located at the Mille Lacs Band Government Center. In addition to the police officers, the department also employs the Emergency Management Coordinator, the Office Manager/Dispatch Supervisor, and four Dispatchers.

The Tribal Police Department exercises police authority under federal, state, and tribal law. Its federal and inherent tribal jurisdiction extends throughout the Reservation and to off-Reservation trust lands. It also has concurrent jurisdiction with the Mille Lacs and Pine County Sheriffs under state law. Within Mille Lacs County, the department has state law jurisdiction over all persons on trust lands, all tribal members within the boundaries of the Reservation, and all persons within the boundaries of the Reservation who commit or attempt to commit a crime in the presence of a Band police officer. Within Pine County, the department has state law jurisdiction over all persons on the Band's trust and fee lands as designated in an agreement with Pine County. The department also has certain out-of-jurisdiction authority under state law.

In 1953, Congress enacted Public Law 280, in part because of the absence of adequate tribal institutions for law enforcement. Public Law 280 applies to six states, including Minnesota. It required the state to assume criminal jurisdiction over all Indian Reservations within the state with the exception of Red Lake and Bois Forte. That jurisdiction does not extend, however, to statutes the courts classify as "civil-regulatory" rather than "criminal-prohibitory" under Public Law 280.

According to Minnesota Statute 626.90, the Tribal Police Department's jurisdiction is tied in part to the boundaries of the Reservation as defined by the Treaty of February 22, 1855. The 1855 Reservation includes the townships of Kathio, South Harbor, and Isle Harbor in Mille Lacs County. Additional Mille Lacs Band trust lands are located in Aitkin and Pine counties and considered informal Reservations.

An individual can be charged initially through state court. The County Attorney and the US Attorney work collaboratively to conclude whether the case should be tried in state court or federal court to ensure the best outcome for the safety of the community. To have the US Attorney's office actively reviewing these cases in the short time period of six months is a good indication of the hard work and dedication of our Mille Lacs Tribal Police officers, and we continue to be proactive in combating the opioid epidemic.

We work in collaboration with agencies around the state. Tribal Investigators facilitate quarterly meetings with Investigators from other tribal police departments and state and federal representatives that include Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), U.S. Attorney's Office, Department of Corrections (DOC), and Minneapolis Police Department. The meetings give law enforcement an opportunity to share

important information. The relationships that we have with other agencies allows us to be more effective and efficient when investigating and preventing crime on the Reservation.

The Mille Lacs Tribal Police Department is dedicated to protecting and serving the community and is relentless and unwavering in their commitment to investigating drug-related crimes, particularly those relating to the opioid epidemic.

We continue to provide a proactive approach to public safety and preventing and controlling crime by continuing to educate and provide crime prevention information. We are actively investigating several cases for potential Federal and State charging, and the U.S. Attorney's Office has expressed interest in prosecuting these cases.

Below is a brief summary of the highlighted Federal and State cases that resulted in large drug seizures and arrests:

- Case 1: Related to a traffic stop, a woman who resides in Brainerd, MN, was in possession with intent to distribute 178.14 grams of Methamphetamines and 4.10 grams of Hallucinate Mushrooms within the District I area. This woman has been charged in Mille Lacs County Court for 1st Degree Drug Sales and 1st Degree Drug Possession of a Controlled Substance. Penalty if convicted is 30 years in prison.
- Case 2: Related to a traffic stop, a woman who resides in St. Cloud, MN, was in possession with intent to distribute 64.56 grams of Cocaine, while in possession of a handgun. The woman was charged in Mille Lacs County Court for 1st Degree Drug Possession of a Controlled Substance, while possessing a firearm. Penalty if convicted is up to 40 years in prison.

There have been three drug cases resolved in U.S. District Court in 2022 that have been previously charged. These cases include:

- Case 1: A man who resides in Minneapolis, MN, was arrested and charged with possession with intent to sell Heroin within the District I area between 2017 – 2019. This case was presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office and charged through U.S. District Court. The man pled guilty to Drug Conspiracy charges and has been sentenced in March 2022 to 13 years in prison.
- Case 2: A man who resided in Las Vegas, NV, was arrested after he retrieved a postal package in Minnesota, sent to himself from Nevada. The package was destined for District 1 of the Mille Lacs Reservation. This case was presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office and charged through U.S. District Court. The man was found guilty in Federal Court for drug possession and sentenced in July 2022 to 160 months in prison and five years parole.
- Case 3: Related to a traffic stop, a woman who resides in Onamia, MN, was in possession with intent to distribute 178.95 grams of Heroin within the District I area in 2000. This case was presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office and charged through U.S. District Court. The woman pled guilty in Federal Court for drug possession and sentenced in June 2022 to 9 years in prison and five years parole.

As of November 2022, Mille Lacs Band Tribal Police had generated 179 drug-related cases. During these investigations, 98 arrests were made, six (6) vehicles had been forfeited, and nine (9) firearms were

seized. A total of 2.21 pounds of Marijuana, 1.16 pounds of Methamphetamines, 45.88 grams of Heroin, and .918 pounds of Fentanyl were seized. The street value seized totaled \$81,159.00.

Mille Lacs Tribal Police Department has generated 7,450 Incident Complaint Reports (ICRs) from January 1, 2022, to November 21, 2022. Below is a breakdown of the most frequent calls and more serious calls for service that generate an Incident Complaint Report:

Offense	2019	2020	2021	2022
Agency Assist	758	742	778	823
Aggravated Assault	6	8	4	3
Community Contact	567	1,786	290	402
Death Investigation	6	11	10	7
Domestic Nonviolent	13	3	5	3
Domestic	57	49	30	26
Drugs	219	207	133	179
Family/Children	470	385	290	290
Firearms Complaints	26	36	17	35
Homicide	0	1	0	0
Juvenile Complaints	124	30	23	66
Overdose	61	78	75	50
Robbery	3	4	0	2
Search Warrant	6	6	2	4
Sex Offense	14	7	1	8
Simple Assault	48	33	47	33
Traffic Stops	1130	1134	957	853
Truancy	191	233	267	294
Warrant Arrests	659	471	385	171

Band Member Legal Services

<https://millelacsband.com/services/legal-Services>

Office: 320-532-7798

Overview:

Band Member Legal Services is organized exclusively for the purpose of providing Mille Lacs Band Members with access to legal services for criminal and civil matters. Band Member Legal Services helps protect clients' constitutional rights by assisting them through the legal process and making sure there has been fair due process and that the police, social service agencies, county and state agencies, schools, and other institutions are not discriminating against our clients. We assist the Court System, both State and Tribal Court, by helping to promote efficiency, proper filings, and ensuring fairness and due process to all participants.

Band Member Legal Services educates clients about Estate Planning and Probate to help Elders deal with Elder Law matters and allow for the administration of probate cases in Tribal Court. Most clients cannot afford an attorney and would not do a probate without Legal Services. This also helps keep homes on

the Reservation titled to the proper person because without a probate, the home never transfers into a new owner's name. In addition, we assist clients when family members die without a will.

Purpose:

To provide Band Members with legal representation in Tribal Court on civil and criminal matters.

To provide Band Members with legal representation in State Court to protect their civil rights and ensure fairness in the Court system in civil and criminal matters.

To provide education, outreach, communication, and advocacy on legal issues for Mille Lacs Band Members.

Highlights:

Band Member Legal Services has provided assistance on 622 new civil intakes. These are direct services provided to Band Members who are calling the Legal Services office seeking assistance with matters involving family court, probate court, civil litigation matters, and brief service matters.

Band Member Legal Services has provided assistance to 541 new criminal intakes. These are direct services provided to Band Members who are contacting the Legal Services office seeking assistance with matters involving criminal court.

Band Member Legal Services is excited to announce that we have joined the Healing to Wellness Court Team. This is an opportunity provided to Band Members that are faced with an open child protection matter to seek the supportive services of a court designed to provide a healing path to reunification.

Band Member Legal Services is happy to announce several Band Members have entered into the County Drug Treatment Court system. We have several individuals that are successfully engaged in this program. These individuals receive transitional services in a judicially supervised setting. Treatment Courts represent a shift in the way courts are handling certain offenders and working with key stakeholders in the justice system. In this approach, the court works closely with prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, social workers, and other justice system partners to develop a strategy that will pressure an offender into completing a treatment program and abstaining from repeating the behaviors that brought them to court. We are proud to share that we have an individual that has become a leader in this program and is now offering assistance to others in the program as well as giving back to communities through outreach and personal connections across the state.

Band Member Legal Services has one managing attorney and two staff attorneys that can assist in criminal and civil matters. Band Member Legal Services contracts with three private attorneys to provide legal representation to Band Members when party conflicts arise. This is to ensure that Band Member Legal Services can assist as many Band Members as possible with legal representation to ensure Band Members' Constitutional rights and due process. Legal representation often includes assistance with navigating the Band's service programs to ensure that Band Members are accessing all available resources to regain their lives in a manner that improves the overall health and welfare of families and community.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Band Member Legal Services is offering in-person meetings by appointment only. At this time, the courts are continuing zoom and phone appearances, but are expected to return to in-person appearances in the near future. If you are in need of legal

representation, have a legal question, or would like assistance in completing legal documents, please continue to contact Band Member Legal Services for assistance.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

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

Mille Lacs Band Government Center

320-532-4181

Tribal Police Department Dispatch

320-532-3430

Chief Executive Office

Stephanie Dunkley, 320-630-7573

Court Administrator

Gilda Burr, 320-532-7401

Legislative Affairs Director/Legislative Inquiries

Brianna Boyd, work 320-532-7536, cell 320-630-8702, fax 320-532-7506

Band Assembly Inquiries

Darcie Big Bear

Parliamentarian/Clerk of the Assembly

work 320-532-7420

Darcie.bigbear2@millelacsband.com

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Deanna Sam, 320-279-0178 or 320-532-7498 to make appointment

Non-Emergency Phone:

320-630-2994

Addiction/Behavioral Health

800-709-6445, ext. 7776.

Domestic violence:

(c) 320-630-2499

Women's Shelter

866-867-4006

Commissioner of Administration

Asst. Commissioner of Administration

Maria Costello, 763-260-0164

Commissioner of Community Development

Commissioner of DNR

Kelly Applegate, 763-221-0320

Commissioner of Education

Niiyo Gonzalez, 320-362-4245

Commissioner of Finance

Mel Towle, 320-532-7475

Commissioner of HHS

Nicole Anderson, 320-364-9969

Housing Emergency On-Call

DI and DIIa, 320-630-2498

DII, 320-630-2492

DIII, 320-630-2497

Dan Boyd, Housing Director, 320-630-2620

Brian Schienost, Public Works Director, 320-630-2620

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

Mille Lacs Band Family Services:

Foster Care, 320-630-2663

Social Worker, 320-630-2444; 800-709- 6445, ext. 7588;

Family Violence Prevention: District I, 320-532-4780; East Lake, 218-768-4412;

Aazhoomog, 320-384-0149; Hinckley, 320-384-4613

Toll-free 24-hour crisis line, 866-867-4006.