



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians

*Executive Branch of Tribal Government
Office of the Chief Executive*

Via E-mail

March 3, 2026

Sheldon Boyd, Speaker of the Assembly
Carolyn Beaulieu, District I Representative
Wendy Merrill, District II Representative
Harry Davis, District III Representative

Re: Nomination Letter for Carla Big Bear to Serve as Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

Dear Band Assembly:

Aaniin. It is with great pleasure that I nominate Carla Big Bear to serve as Commissioner of Health & Human Services ("HHS") for a term ending June 30, 2029.

Carla is an enrolled member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe who has dedicated more than 20 years of service to Band government. She brings leadership, strong administrative oversight, and a deep understanding of Band governance and regulatory systems. She also brings the education, supervisory experience, and operational discipline necessary to plan, direct, monitor, and review the activities and operations of the Health and Human Services Department in accordance with Band values and tribal self-governance principles.

Carla holds a Master's Degree in Tribal Administration and Governance from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from St. Cloud State University. Her graduate training provides an extensive base of knowledge in tribal sovereignty, public administration theory, Band governance structures, strategic planning, and policy implementation. This educational foundation aligns directly with the statutory responsibilities of the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, including development and implementation of departmental strategic plans, interpretation and application of Band policies, and coordination of programs within a self-governance framework.

Carla has served as the Band's Tribal Police Officer Manager for more than nine years. She has been a mainstay in an agency that is tasked with the challenging and vital responsibility of looking after the safety and security of our community members. Carla has been central in not only carrying out the daily mission of Tribal Police, but also ensuring the agency's reliability over the years. The fact that she has been so stable and accountable in this role demonstrates her readiness for an increased level of responsibility.

In serving as Tribal Police Office Manager, Carla prepares and manages departmental budgets, supervises staff, develops and refines administrative procedures, and ensures compliance with state and federal regulations. She acts as Terminal Access Coordinator with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and the United States Department of Justice, demonstrating

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high-level regulatory oversight and accountability. These responsibilities mirror the Commissioner's duty to supervise subordinate management staff, manage operational budgets, enforce Band rules and regulations, and ensure compliance with applicable federal laws relating to program delivery.

Prior to working for Tribal Police, Carla served the Band as a Grant Writer and Grant Compliance Manager for five years, from 2010-2016. Given the large number of grants that the Health and Human Services Department relies on for its operations, Carla's deep experience in grant writing and compliance will provide significant value to the department. She has overseen complex grant funding mechanisms, prepared detailed budgets and justifications, ensured compliance with federal and state funding requirements, and maintained reporting obligations. The Health and Human Services Department operates within similarly complex funding and reimbursement structures. Carla's demonstrated ability to track, modify, and manage operational budgets and grant-funded programs directly supports the Commissioner's responsibility to oversee funding mechanisms and maintain fiscal stewardship.

Carla also previously served the Band as a Director of the Tribal Child Support Program, from 2007-2009. While in this role, Carla developed statutes, built program infrastructure, supervised staff, prepared departmental budgets, and worked directly with the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement to establish and maintain the Band's Child Support Enforcement Program. This experience reflects her ability to develop new programs, interpret and implement Band policy, manage services impacting families, and coordinate with federal agencies—all core functions of the Commissioner of Health and Human Services. Carla also has experience working within Tribal Court and youth-focused educational programming, which further strengthens her understanding of the continuum of services affecting family stability, Elder care, public health, and community well-being.

The Commissioner of Health and Human Services must exercise independent judgment in complex decision-making situations and must balance competing priorities while safeguarding the health and welfare of Band members. Throughout her career, Carla has demonstrated steady leadership in high-responsibility environments requiring sound judgment, regulatory compliance, conflict resolution, and interdepartmental coordination. She has demonstrated the ability to build consensus, maintain cooperative working relationships, and communicate effectively with federal, state, tribal, and community stakeholders. For all of these reasons, I believe that Carla will be able to step into the role of Commissioner of Health and Human Services and take the department to new heights, with increased accountability across all divisions.

Importantly, through Carla's educational background and long-standing service to the Mille Lacs Band, she possesses a cultural awareness and sensitivity to community members' needs that professionals in a public health or related field may not completely understand. Carla's Master's degree in Tribal Administration and Governance—combined with two decades of Band service—positions her to lead Health and Human Services in a manner that honors Band values,

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strengthens coordinated public health models, and advances strategic planning efforts that improve service delivery to our members.

For these reasons, I respectfully submit the nomination of Carla Big Bear as Commissioner of Health and Human Services and request confirmation by the Band Assembly.

Miigwech for your consideration,



Virgil Wind
Chief Executive

CC:

Caleb Dogeagle, Solicitor General
Jared Miller, Legislative Counsel
Danielle Smith, Parliamentarian / Clerk of the Assembly

Enclosure:

Carla Big Bear's Resume