



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians
Executive Branch of Tribal Government
Office of the Chief Executive

January 15, 2026

Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

**Re: Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Requests Tribal Consultation and Expresses Concerns
Regarding ICE Activity on Tribal Land and Against Band Members**

Dear Secretary Noem,

On behalf of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (“the Band”), I am writing as the elected Chief Executive of the Band to express our extreme concern and objection to the recent reports of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity involving the arrest and detention of Tribal members in ongoing operations, and to request government-to-government consultation as to future actions of the ICE agents deployed in Minnesota that may impact our Band members, communities, and properties.

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is a federally recognized Tribal Nation with inherent sovereignty and a government-to-government relationship with the United States. We have more than 5,100 enrolled Band members. Our members have lived for many generations in the east-central Minnesota region, which today encompasses three Districts throughout East Central Minnesota. In addition to these communities, we have a notable urban population of Band members in Minneapolis, where the Band maintains an established urban office in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to service their needs.

We observe with growing concern the events unfolding in Minneapolis. Our community was alarmed to learn that ICE had violently arrested a US citizen descendant of the Red Lake Nation—our Ojibwe cousins. These concerns grew even more pressing, and our community even more worried, as we noted the arrest and detainment of four Oglala Sioux Tribe members in Minneapolis that remain in ICE custody to this day. We object to the conditions our cousins were subjected to in the strongest possible terms. ICE cannot place U.S. citizens in immigration detention, including tribal members, after their citizenship is verified. As the state and communities grapple with the tragic shooting in south Minneapolis, we should be very careful not to compound one shocking tragedy with more violations of civil rights or treaty obligations. We speak with confidence, knowing that many Minnesota Tribes have already issued statements echoing their own concerns and objections, because of the implications of the detainments on tribal sovereignty. We echo their words as we press you to acknowledge our concerns. We all want to ensure our tribal members are treated with the respect required by the United States’ treaty obligations.

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The federal government has a clear trust responsibility to tribal nations, as well as well-established obligations under federal law and policy to consult with tribes on actions that may affect their citizens, lands, or governmental interests. Meaningful consultation is not discretionary. Before undertaking or expanding enforcement actions that impact tribal citizens or occur on or near tribal lands, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must consult with and work collaboratively with tribal governments. This promise was established in the DHS Tribal Consultation Policy, which states: “DHS recognizes that agency policies, programs, and services may directly or indirectly impact Indian Tribes and is committed to regularly and meaningfully collaborating, communicating, and cooperating with Indian Tribes with regard to policies that have Tribal Implications.” In DHS’s Tribal Consultation Directive, tribal implication is defined as “Exist[ing] when a proposed regulation, policy, legislative recommendation, or planned action causes, or is likely to cause, a substantial direct effect on (a) the self-government, trust interests, or other rights of a Tribal Nation; (b) the relationship between the Federal Government and Tribal Nations; or (c) the distribution of power and responsibilities between the Federal Government and Tribal Nations.” Entry onto reservation lands or property operated by the tribal government without notice or agreement undermines the government-to-government relationship and erodes trust with tribal governments.

We also raise the importance of proper recognition of tribal identification. DHS itself recognizes that Tribal IDs are compliant with TSA’s REAL ID standards, and thus are valid government-issued identification. These IDs identify tribal members as US citizens. Failure to recognize these documents places tribal citizens at risk of wrongful detention and violates longstanding federal policy recognizing tribes as sovereign governments. As we have seen from numerous independently verified reports the methods by which ICE detain suspects, failure to properly acknowledge these IDs as legitimate also puts our Band members at risk of violence.

Such actions are unacceptable—but the very idea of detaining American Indians is also in of itself unacceptable. We do not live in an authoritarian state. We should not need the “proper papers” to go about our daily business. It stands to reason, then, that the Tribal members who were detained previously were not subject to a thorough legal investigation that established their presence in the country was illegal. The very idea of that is as preposterous as it is ironic; they are indeed more American than most Anglo-Americans. Although we are not privy to the details of their detainment, we can gather that they were arrested by virtue of the color of their skin or by their proximity in some manner to an alleged illegal immigrant. Neither reason gives any cause for ICE to detain them.

The Mille Lacs Band is deeply concerned about the violence and civil rights violations perpetuated by ICE agents in Minnesota. We strongly urge the DHS to engage in consultation with Tribal Nations and the Mille Lacs Band in particular to clarify policies and prevent any potential harm to tribal communities and their members by continued action in the State of Minnesota. We are currently engaging with our U.S. Senators and Congressional delegation to ensure all federal agencies uphold their trust and treaty obligations. We expect DHS to work with tribes in good faith to address these issues promptly and transparently.

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Virgil Wind
Chief Executive
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

CC: David Flute (Tribal Advisor to DHS Secretary Noem)