



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians

Executive Branch of Tribal Government

Office of the Chief Executive

Via E-mail

Virgil Wind
Chief Executive
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
43408 Oodena Drive
Onamia, MN 56359

September 25, 2024

Attorney General Keith Ellison
445 Minnesota Street, Suite 1400
St. Paul, MN 55101-2131

Re: Brian K. Pippitt

Dear Attorney General Ellison:

As the Chief Executive of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe I write to you today to request an update in the case of one of our enrolled tribal members, Brian K. Pippitt.

I understand that your office's Conviction Review Unit has conducted a comprehensive two-year investigation of this case and has concluded that Mr. Pippitt is innocent and should be released from prison and returned to our community. I also understand that the local prosecutor in Aitkin County had previously agreed to cooperate with your Conviction Review Unit and to turn Mr. Pippitt's case over to your office.

Nevertheless, Mr. Pippitt remains in prison, and it appears that the local prosecutor and sheriff are now fighting to keep him there.

As I am sure you are aware, indigenous people are significantly overrepresented in Minnesota prisons. Despite comprising just over 1% of the state's population, we make up 9.3% of its prisoners. Against this backdrop, Mr. Pippitt's continued imprisonment stands as another example of unequal justice in Minnesota. Mr. Pippitt is 62 years old. It is long past time for him to come home to his community.

Governor Walz has said that he will not intervene in the case absent a written request from you, and that you have not made any such request.

I would greatly appreciate having the opportunity to discuss this matter with you, so that I can better understand what your intentions are with this case, including whether you will be making a written request for transfer of the case. I am available by phone at (320) 630-1428 or by e-mail at virgil.wind@millelacsband.com.

Letter from Chief Executive Virgil Wind to Attorney General Keith Ellison

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In closing, as I think about Mr. Pippitt's case, I am reminded of the statement you made when you launched the Conviction Review Unit:

"The prosecutor's job is not to exact the greatest possible punishment. It is not to win at all costs. The prosecutor's job is to be a minister of justice," said Attorney General Keith Ellison. "We strive for perfection but know our system is imperfect. *We will fearlessly review cases to make sure justice was served, and if not, to right those wrongs.* Prosecutions where justice is not served hurt everyone and benefit no one except the true perpetrator."

I believe this is a wrong that is in your power to right. I look forward to discussing a swift and amicable solution with you soon.

Sincerely,



Virgil Wind
Chief Executive
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe