



**Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians
38th Annual State of the Band Address
Delivered by: Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin
Tuesday, January 11, 2022
The Mille Lacs Indian Reservation**

Boozhoo, Aaniin, Anishinabeg-dook. Mino gizhigad noongoom Mandamin indizinakaz, Melanie Benjamin indigoo. Mr. Speaker, Members of the Band Assembly and the Judiciary, and most important -- fellow Band Members of the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe -- I am honored to speak to you today about the State of the Band.

Miigwech to Obisan for speaking on our behalf, so we can begin in a good way; miigwech to the Ceremonial Drum and Waabishkibines for setting the dish; miigwech to the Mille Lacs All Veterans for posting the flags, and Miigwech to the singers today.

This is the second year that the annual State of the Band Address, as required by our Band Statutes, is coming to you virtually so as to protect the health and safety of our Band community. The commissioners have recorded videos to inform you about the goals the Executive Branch met in 2021. We also mailed a detailed Annual Report to Band Members which provides even more data about our work on behalf of Band Members this past year.

Despite the pandemic, we continue to make progress as a Band. This is due, in part, to the strong leadership team that we have in place. I especially want to say Chi Miigwech to Secretary-Treasurer and Speaker of the Band Assembly Sheldon Boyd, who has done an outstanding job serving our community. Also, Miigwech to the Band Assembly Members. There are moments in history that are filled with opportunity. Now is such a time, unlike any other. We now have American Indians serving at the highest Levels of the Biden Administration. This includes includes the first American Indian Secretary of the Interior. The Solicitor, who leads over 400 attorneys at the Department of Interior, is a Member of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa. Many agencies that serve all Americans are now headed by American Indians.

These appointments make a difference. Just one example is that in the past, the Army Corps of Engineers did not consult with us in a proper way on a government-to-government basis about Army Corps projects. Several months ago, I wrote to the new Assistant Secretary of the agency, who is a Member of the Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho.

Within just a few weeks, he flew to Minnesota and we held a government-to-government meeting about protecting our watersheds. In the past, this kind of quick response was unheard of from this agency, but this Assistant Secretary has a cultural understanding of the meaning of water to us that only other indigenous people can fully comprehend.

One of the most important official duties of the Chief Executive is to conduct government-to-government relations with other governments. Our Band has been consulted more times with the Biden Administration in one year than all previous administrations put together.

In 2021, we attended hundreds of consultation sessions held by federal and state Agencies on every topic you can imagine. Even when hundreds of people were present on the zoom meeting and speaking time was limited to just a handful of tribes, I always made certain that I or a commissioner was provided time to talk about our Mille Lacs Band position on these critical issues.

American Indian people are now seated at the tables of power throughout Washington D.C. These are people who understand tribal sovereignty, who know the challenges we face and who do not need a history lesson, because they are one of us.

In Minnesota, our state government has made big strides as well. We don't have to worry anymore about whether the winner of the next governor's race will treat us as a sovereign government, because Governor Tim Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan and the State Legislature have made consultation with tribes permanent in state law. The new state law also requires that state employees go through training to understand tribal governments. Like the federal government, American Indian people are rising in State government. There are American Indian people serving as Lieutenant Governor, serving on the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court and in the State Legislature.

And of course we have other very strong allies. Governor Tim Walz is, without question, the best Governor in the history of Minnesota when it comes to Tribal-State relations and working with tribes. Senator Amy Klobuchar has been a friend and champion for the Band on many issues over the years. Senator Tina Smith is a ball of fire when it comes to fighting for tribes on the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. And last but not least, Congresswoman Betty McCollum from St. Paul is one of the most powerful members of Congress in the nation. Even though we are not in her District, Betty uses her position to go to the mat for our Band, the other Minnesota tribes and all of Indian country – every single day. Chi Miigwech to these wonderful allies.

Many changes happened in 2021 One of the most eye-catching changes is that the State of Minnesota put up road signs marking the federal boundary of the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation. After fighting for state recognition of our boundary for so many decades, I will never forget the moment I saw these signs for the first time. My heart soared. These signs are largely symbolic, but had a deep emotional impact on many of us -- especially our elders -- who have fought this battle most of their lives.

Historic moments come along like this once in a generation. Life always comes down to moments. We must recognize what is possible and seize the day! The question comes down to us. Do we have the wisdom and the will to rise to this historic moment?

To make positive change, we need more community leaders. Leaders are those who dream of a brighter future and inspire others to want that future, too. Sadly, we lost many elders this year to COVID-19 or complications from COVID, and some passed from other causes. Each loss was heart-breaking.

Some were drum-keepers, knowledge-keepers, story-tellers, first-language speakers or artists. Some served as officials in Band government. And some were all of those things, like our former Commissioner of Education Joycelyn Shingobe and former Chief Justice of the Court of

Appeals, David Sam. These losses have been hard to take. Our condolences go out to the family, friends and weh-ehs of those who have passed.

With loss, comes reflection and concern about the future. I have been thinking a great deal about the future of our Band. Our future depends on a new generation of community leaders to step forward.

We are fortunate, because we have many talented Band Members who are leaders, many serving in key positions right now. And we have many emerging leaders who are getting ready for the future. Today, with all these new possibilities, there is no time to waste. I am excited to speak more about that, but first I want to introduce our new leadership team in the Executive Branch.

Our Band Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms and they make up the Chief Executive's Cabinet. I want to acknowledge: Commissioner of Administration Peter Nayquonabe; Assistant Commissioner of Administration Maria Costello; Commissioner of Health and Human Services Nicole Anderson; Commissioner of Natural Resources Kelly Applegate; Commissioner of Community Development Timothy Jackson; Commissioner of Corporate Affairs Joseph Nayquonabe Jr., and Executive Director of Education, Byron Ninham as well as Stephanie Dunkley, Deputy Assistant. Solicitor General Caleb Dog-Eagle and Commissioner of Finance Mel Towle are also key members of our leadership team. Commissioner Towle works in the Legislative Branch, but he provides critical advice to me and the Cabinet.

Chi Miigwech to the team for their hard work and commitment to our Band. A lot happened in 2021. The best news is that our economy is coming back. Our government could not provide programs and services at this level without our gaming and other businesses. The assistance that Band Members receive is only possible when our casinos are making a profit.

With smart business decision-making, wise financial oversight by Speaker Sheldon Boyd, a dedicated workforce and much needed federal help, the Mille Lacs Band is recovering strong. COVID-19 forced us to cut back our workforce at the beginning of the pandemic. The good news is that today, almost all Band-owned businesses are at an all-time high for Band Member employment. Twenty-three percent of Band Member associates are in leadership positions. This includes CEO's, General managers, Vice Presidents, Directors, Managers and Supervisors. There is great opportunity for more Band Members to grow into leadership roles.

Like the rest of the nation, we have a labor shortage. Our casinos and businesses have more jobs open than interested and available workers to fill them. To hire and keep a talented workforce, the Corporate Commission raised many front-line wages and now pay between \$14 and \$20 dollars an hour at Grand Casinos, Wewinabi, Inc., Circle Sage and Grindstone Laundry.

We are also working with the other tribes in Minnesota to look at sports betting, so stay tuned for more news about that in 2022. Makwa Global, which has expertise in government contracting, continues to grow and gain new contracts.

As the biggest employer in east-central Minnesota, the economy of this whole region and the paychecks of about 3000 employees depend on the successful recovery of our businesses.

There were developments for the Band government in federal court this year, as well. Even though the United States and the State of Minnesota recognize our reservation boundary, Mille Lacs County still does not. In 2017 we filed a lawsuit against Mille Lacs County, the County Attorney and County Sheriff because they interfered with the Band's law enforcement authority on the Reservation.

As part of that lawsuit, legal briefs were filed about whether our Reservation, as established in the 1855 Treaty, continues to exist. The United States and the State of Minnesota filed what are called "friend of the court briefs" agreeing with us. They stated that our Reservation still exists.

Mille Lacs County now stands alone. It is the only government arguing that our Reservation was disestablished. Millions and millions of taxpayer dollars have been wasted over the last 30 years of fighting this battle.

This past March, attorneys for both sides delivered oral arguments before a federal judge on the existence of the Reservation. It is possible that a ruling could come in 2022.

In the meantime, our partnerships with other counties are only getting stronger. We hold monthly meetings with Pine County and work together on many issues. We have a solid relationship with Aitkin County and Crow Wing. Most recently, we began working closely with County.

In December, Sherburn County invited Commissioner Kelly Applegate to join the County on a trip to Washington D.C., seeking funding to protect public lands in Sherburn County. There are also burial sites on these lands. For one day, the Mille Lacs Band and Sherburn County walked the halls of Congress together, in support of the same goal. This was history-making, and hopefully the beginning of more projects with county governments.

Collaborations like this are the kind of relationships we want with surrounding counties and which might be possible, someday, with Mille Lacs County...if only their leadership would ever decide to stop fighting every single thing that we do.

Miigwech to Pine, Aitkin, Crow Wing, Sherburn, Ramsey and Hennepin counties for respecting tribal sovereignty and working for the benefit of all our citizens. Also, Miigwech to the cities of Brainerd, Garrison, Onamia, Hinckley, McGregor and Aitkin. We value our government relationships with each of you.

In Health and Human Services, our new clinic fully opened this year. More Band Members can now be seen with shorter waiting time. Our mental health department has continued to grow with the addition of more therapists. Feedback from all communities has been positive. Our Emergency Services Coordinator was acknowledged for his excellent work in food security this year. Congratulations to Dean Reynolds.

Our primary focus in HHS during 2021 has been on serving Band Members during the pandemic and vaccinating as many Band Members – and employees - as possible. Recent data shows that unvaccinated people are 6 times more likely to test positive than vaccinated people; 9 times more likely to land in the hospital; and 14 times more likely to pass away from COVID complications.

According to experts, unvaccinated people who get COVID-19 are more contagious and dangerous to others than are vaccinated people who get breakthrough infections. Unvaccinated people spread more of the virus over a longer period of time.

Last October, after the State of Minnesota, the federal government, and many Indian tribes issued vaccine mandates, I sent a survey to elders to get their advice about whether they wanted a vaccine mandate for employees. A majority – over 80% of our elders - said that all Executive Branch employees should be vaccinated.

According to the Center for Disease Control and almost every vaccine expert in the world there is no evidence that vaccines cause harm. There is plenty of evidence, however, that vaccines can save lives.

American Indians, by far, have the highest COVID-19 mortality rate of any population in the United States. And the majority of loss has been among elders. The bottom line is that vaccinated people are safer around our elders.

So today I am announcing a Vaccine mandate that will go into effect for Executive Branch employees. Beginning on February 1, employees will need to show that they are fully vaccinated. Most of our employees and Band Members will celebrate this mandate. Others might have a different view. I ask everyone to keep in mind that in our culture, protecting the tribe has always been more important than protecting individual preference. This is how we survived the last 500 years and are still here today as Anishinaabe.

As Chief Executive, I took an oath to protect the welfare of our Band. It is my duty to issue this mandate for the Executive Branch. More details will come from the Commissioner of Administration.

In Natural Resources, we experienced both loss and victory. In August, the Minnesota Supreme Court quickly ended our litigation efforts to stop the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline. This was a tough loss, but both the federal and state governments learned that tribes are a force to be reckoned with. The Band is closely watching other projects that could impact the Band. And we will continue engaging in all battles necessary to protect our waters, land, air and wildlife.

We also had an environmental victory in 2021. Every year, the federal EPA requires states to submit a list of polluted waters that need help. For years, the State of Minnesota refused to include polluted wild rice waters on this list. This was about politics -- not health, safety or science.

Last year, for the first time, the EPA conducted meaningful government-to-government consultation with our tribe and others. This means that EPA did not just listen to our opinion. Instead, it actually studied the tribal research submitted by our scientists, heard the perspectives of tribal leaders, and made a decision based on health and science -- not politics.

In this historic move, the EPA ordered the State of Minnesota to include wild rice waters that are polluted on the state's list of impaired waters.

Miigwech to Secretary-Treasurer April McCormick, of the Grand Portage Band of Chippewa, for leading this inter-tribal effort in Minnesota.

Our Education Department has the huge responsibility of providing programming to Band Members from birth through a person's life. In 2021, the Band started a 9th to 12th grade Alternative Learning Program at Nay Ah Shing Schools.

Oshki Maajitaadaa is a year-round program held during and after school that was designed to meet the individual needs of students. This was a major project started by former

Commissioner of Education Joycelyn Shingobe. She would be so proud of it being launched. Congratulations to the 68 adult Band Members who finished their degrees, from the GED's to PHD's, and received awards from the Band. Also, we are very proud of our 84 Band Members who are receiving college scholarships from the Band to support their tuition, fees and books. These are wonderful benefits that most tribes cannot provide to their students.

In Administration, our Anjibimaadizing Program – which means “Changing Lives” – continued to grow in 2021. Despite the complications of the pandemic, more than 300 Band Members received training and education opportunities. This included Adult Basic Education, GED assistance, resume writing, drivers' license assistance and many other services. 112 different courses were attended by Band Member clients -- and 241 Band Members gained on-the-job training through the Work Experience Program. Aanji also did an outstanding job helping Band Members with rental assistance during 2021.

Our numbers tell a story of success, but the real-life stories matter the most. Just 20 months ago, a mom and a dad were in treatment...facing charges of child endangerment. All the children were placed in Foster Care. At that point, the parents decided to change their lives. They both signed up for help with Anji, developed a plan, and today they are both employed. They both earned a driver's license and they have been clean and sober for 20 months. Most important, they have a new home and all of their children back!

This is just one example of the many successes Band Members have achieved through the Anji program. And this kind of success is available to any Band Member who wants to turn their lives around and needs help. As a Band government, we can provide assistance, but the Band Member must provide the will power and the commitment to change their lives. Community Development had a busy year. Housing that was completed or begun in 2021 includes: 35 home renovations for Elders and Disabled Band Members; 24 other home renovations, and 128 Band Members received transitional housing through Mino Bimaadiziwin.

Our Home Loan Program continues to succeed. Currently, 324 Band Members are taking advantage of this program. Qualified Band members receive up to \$220,000 dollars at zero percent interest for 35 years. More than 152 Band Members took out home renovation loans.

A big achievement is that 38 housing units have been transferred to the Aanji program to support Band Members who are working hard to move from poverty to employment. Band Members must be Anji clients and working their programs in order to be eligible for this housing.

A few years ago, Governor Walz appointed me to the Board of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. All of the data proves that the biggest step any person can take to get out of

poverty is to own their own home. For the past several years, I have said we needed a Rent-to-Own program in housing. This was not a project that Community Development could do alone, because all of our Housing Policies must go through our Housing Board.

I am happy to announce that our Executive Branch proposal for a Rent-to-Own program has been approved by the Housing Board, and it has been ratified by the Band Assembly.

In 2022, eligible Band Members living in Band housing will have the opportunity for 100% of their rental payments to go toward purchasing their home. Out of 580 tribes in the United States, we are one of the few that are now able to offer this assistance to our members.

Each year, I deliver directives for the commissioners to carry out in the upcoming year. This year I have two directives for all Commissioners, which the Commissioner of Administration will lead.

During our strategic planning process, a careful review was done of several areas in Band government and changes were recommended for improvement. Those changes are being made. Now, it is time to carefully examine all of our Band policies and procedures to determine whether these policies are actually empowering Band Members to advance -- or empowering employees to say “no” without justification.

In some areas, we have so many forms, red tape and policies that are on the website but are hard to find. It can be difficult for Band Members to get help that is available. I am directing the Administrative Policy Board to conduct a review of all Band policies and procedures in every department and recommend changes where change is needed.

Second, I am directing the Commissioner of Administration to review the way Band Members are served by our workforce and examine best practices for improving how employees interact with Band Members. Every interaction should be a respectful experience. All of our employees should view themselves as solution-focused. This means that instead of making a Band Member justify why the employee should help them, the employee should be working to find solutions for the Band Member.

This is what servant leadership means: Those with power are there to serve others...not to wield power over others. Servant leadership is a phrase invented by a man named Alan Greenleaf, but the concept is actually based on our Anishinaabe values. Servant-leaders treat others with respect, humility, wisdom, love, truth, courage and compassion. We need a workforce of servant-leaders and I direct all commissioners to work together to make that happen.

During 2021, we reached two milestones in language revitalization. First, we published five new books that are written in Ojibwe. This is the first time in modern history that this has been done. We hope this book project helps Band Members expand their knowledge of our practices and what it means to be an Anishinaabe family.

Second, I am happy to announce that the first level of Rosetta Stone Ojibwe Language software will be released this month. It will be free to Mille Lacs Band members and descendants.

Chi miigwech to all the Band elders who worked on these projects along with our younger language-learners. These Band Members have been called “Language Warriors”. They have gifted us with their knowledge through story-telling and speaking. And this is a gift that many future generations will be grateful for.

This project can never replace the knowledge of our first-language speakers, but we are taking another giant step in making sure our language lives on forever. Miigwech to our elders and language experts for their work on this important project!

I spoke earlier about a new generation of leadership. An interesting thing about leadership is, that oftentimes, people who lead do not even know they are leaders. Most leaders are simply people who have vision and take responsibility. Like our Band Delegates who volunteered to work on the Constitutional Reform project with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

These are regular Band Members who saw the Band had a need, so they stepped forward to help. These leaders have just finished a report about our Band’s historic relationship with the MCT, and will be sharing information with Band Members.

When leaders see a problem, they find a solution. While filming for the Ojibwe language project, one of our youth, Bella Nayquonabe, happened to be in the room where filming was taking place. The person who was supposed to speak Ojibwe in that portion of the video was unable to attend, so Bella was recruited on the spot to take her place. Bella immediately said “yes”. She jumped right into the part, speaking Ojibwe. Instead of worrying about whether she could do this, Bella had the courage to seize the opportunity and help solve the problem.

These are great examples of leadership. I invite others to think about this question: Who are you? Are you the one who will say “No, I can’t do it,” or are you the one who has the courage to help lead?

Leaders are people who say, “It’s not about me. It’s about everyone else”. Every Band Member has leadership potential, including our children and youth. We have focused a lot of effort this year on developing our youth leaders.

One example is our Youth Ambassador program that is a partnership between Aanji and Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures. Forty youth participated in the program as interns. These kids learned business strategy, leadership skills, and made connections that will help them succeed. Also, Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan appointed me to her Young Women’s Leadership Committee. The Committee focuses on what we can do as community leaders to empower young women. The Committee had to take an oath that we would commit to these things.

I felt it would be fun to get a Young Women’s Leadership Initiative going here. And so a group of young ladies came together and are now working to hold a conference for young women on the reservation. We are empowering these girls to become leaders by giving them the experience of organizing a conference for 150 young ladies.

They are learning planning, organizing and budgeting skills, teamwork, and they are learning about their own potential to lead. They are also learning that leaders accept responsibility for their community. And that they, alone, are responsible for their choices and everything they want to become. They are learning to seize opportunities.

Sometimes people get trapped into thinking that obstacles prevent them from taking responsibility for their lives. They might blame history, their environment, negative people or even the Band government. We have all been knocked down in life at some point. But what matters is not how many times we are knocked down...but how many times we get up again. We are not products of our environment. We are products of how much we allow the environment to influence us, for good or for bad.

This year, the Band worked with an expert that specializes in planning for tribal governments. Something this expert said may come as a surprise to many: Of all the tribes they have ever worked with, no other tribe in the United States provides as many programs and services for tribal members as the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. They were blown away by the level of services we provide.

All of us can think of a family member or a friend who has come to expect that the government is supposed to take care of all their needs. This is not why the government exists. The government is here to protect our tribe's rights, to make decisions based on what is best for the majority -- not the few -- and to help people lift themselves out of poverty. Government does not actually do the lifting.

Band Members of my generation always get a chuckle when younger Band Members complain of being poor. Many of us older people grew up with real poverty. Our clothes were third-hand or home-made. We only had one new pair of shoes each year. Most of our food came from gardens and harvesting, and most of us even had outhouses, instead of running water. Many of our grand-parents never received a social security check when they retired -- because they worked their whole lives for cash.

Yet you would never hear these older people call themselves poor. They didn't think of themselves that way. They took responsibility for making sure their families had everything they needed and never expected help from any government.

I want Band Members to know this. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is considered a force to be reckoned with in both the state and nationally. We are not people to be pitied. We are not poor or down-trodden. For those who need help, we have all the programs and services anyone could ever need to lift themselves out of poverty.

As Anishinabe -- as a sovereign, self-determined, self-governing tribe -- we have the power, ability and creativity to succeed. We have to get out of that poverty mindset as individuals because the poverty-mindset is the killer of all dreams.

All around us, we see Band Members achieving their dreams and advancing their education. We see people leading healthy lives and gaining new employment, and we see a resurgence of pride in our culture. Young people today proudly introduce themselves in Ojibwe, even in non-Indian settings.

Their Facebook pages include their Anishinabe names. These days, ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts are the norm at national meetings. This is a small representation of our cultural identity, but it was not as common twenty years ago.

At tribal meetings with state leaders and even at the White House, state and federal officials are careful to make certain the meetings begin with an invocation.

Last October, the White House invited Mille Lacs to provide the invocation for a national meeting. I was so proud to listen to Baabiitaw speak for us at this White House meeting. We can have the world our elders wanted where culture, language and tradition blend with modern ways of life. This is the new leadership. Speaker Boyd is a shining example of that. Speaker Boyd was raised by traditional people and he lives his life following our traditional values, teachings and old ways. Yet he has done an amazing job of modernizing the way the Band Assembly functions.

It used to be that Band Assembly would meet in tiny rooms in one of the three districts. Even though these were public meetings, Band Members felt unwelcome. Today any Band Member can tune into the Band Assembly on-line or sit in the meetings in person, and all are welcome. Speaker Boyd often turns his attention to Band Members during these sessions to describe for everyone what is happening. We have never had this much transparency.

The Band Assembly and I sometimes have different ideas about the best approach to fixing a problem. But in thirty years, I have never seen a Band Assembly accomplish this much work and be this productive. Miigwech, Speaker Boyd.

Our leaders have always made policy based on what is best for the tribe to survive. Our Anishinabe values require that we fight for the collective. While we gain new expertise, we value old wisdom. When traditional Anishinabe values and thinking are the basis for decisions, we succeed. This is called seventh-generation thinking. It means making sure we stress the importance of “we”, not “me”.

Our new leaders must know that Culture matters. Wisdom matters. And that above all, we must make certain that our tribe survives another 500 years.

In our museum and in our facilities, there are photos of Band Members from several decades ago. In our history books and our family photos, we see our grandparents when they were young. Their faces and their lives remind us all that we are here for a short moment in time. Their faces also remind us that they are not forgotten. They made sure that we are here today. In their time, they rose to the moment. Whatever challenges they faced, they were stubborn and they were strong. They were non-removable.

Since the tragic discovery of mass graves at boarding schools in Canada, both the federal government and the Catholic Church have begun a dialogue with tribes about the boarding schools in the United States. In December, tribal leaders met with the Archbishop. I told him about a recent news article that quoted a letter from a Boarding School Superintendent in the late 1890's. This man was trying to recruit students from Mille Lacs 130 years ago.

But things did not go his way. In his report to officials in Washington D.C., the recruiter talked about trying to convince Mille Lacs parents to allow their children to go with him -- to boarding school. The recruiter said, “My requests were all met with ‘no’”.

The recruiter also said that Mille Lacs parents made what he called -- “trivial arguments” about why their children should remain home with their parents. The recruiter said that the reasons given by Mille Lacs parents amounted “to nothing”.

He gave examples of what our ancestors said, such as, “We can take care of our children”, and “our children might get sick and die”...and...“we can’t get along without” our children. These were the kinds of concerns – that this recruiter – had called “trivial”. The recruiter finally gave up and ended his report by writing this sentence: “I have never...anywhere... met with the stubborn resistance I had to face with [these] Mille Lacs Indians.”

This recruiter learned a lesson the hard way about our ancestors. 130 years later, we are still as stubborn as ever! We come from strong ancestors who could not be removed. Their lives of leadership must be honored and new community leaders -- of all ages -- need to step forward. This is our time. We are facing new threats, but we have new opportunities. Never forget, we are the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. It is our moment to take on the tough problems.

To fight for our way of life.

To fight for our lands.

To fight any disease that comes along.

Now the next generation must rise to the occasion and seize the day. My administration and I are your public servants. We will always seek to rise to the occasion and serve you in a way that honors our ancestors. We will face the future with the courage of a sovereign nation...of many leaders...that will continue to endure!

Miigwech!