

**TRIBAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
December 12, 2024**

A Regular Tribal Executive Committee meeting was called to order by President Michael LaRoque on December 12, 2024 at 3:26 pm, at Grand Casino Hinckley, Hinckley, Minnesota.

Invocation: Jeff Brunette

Roll call: Michael Fairbanks, Chairman, White Earth; Mike LaRoque, Secretary-Treasurer; White Earth; April McCormick, Secretary-Treasurer, Grand Portage; Catherine Chavers, Chairwoman, Bois Forte; Tara Geshick, Secretary-Treasurer, Bois Forte; Bruce Savage, Chairman, Fond du Lac; Robert Abramowski, Secretary-Treasurer, Fond du Lac; Faron Jackson, Chairman, Leech Lake; Leonard Fineday, Secretary-Treasurer, Leech Lake; Virgil Wind, Chief Executive, Mille Lacs; Sheldon Boyd, Secretary-Treasurer, Mille Lacs.

Zoom: Tara Geshick, Bois Forte
Sheldon Boyd, Secretary-Treasurer, Mille Lacs

Others: Shannon Heisler, Enrollment Coordinator, White Earth; Bobby Norby, Enrollment Clerk, Leech Lake; Dawn Jackson, Enrollment Coordinator, Leech Lake; Richard Jones, Administrative Assistant, Leech Lake; Phil Brodeen, Legal, MCT; Luke Warnsholz, Executive Director, MCT; Chris Murray, Legal, Leech Lake; Ben S, Legal, Leech Lake; Jamie Edwards, Mille Lacs; Chris Haugen, Leech Lake; Eugene Sommers, Rep., White Earth; Shena Matrious, Mille Lacs; Darla Roache, Mille Lacs; Leon Staples, Rep., Leech Lake; Caleb Dogeagle, Solicitor General, Mille Lacs, Steve White, Rep., Leech Lake; Sally Fineday, Delegate, Leech Lake; Cheryl, Delegate, Fond du Lac; Wally Dupuis, Rep., Fond du Lac.

Zoom: Al Olson, Ayecia Kemp, Administrative Assistant, White Earth; Carol Janick, Delegate, White Earth; Joaquin Skinaway-Fineday, Jolyn Donnell, BIA-MN Agency; Julie Skinaway Fineday, Julie Skinaway, Michele Beeksma, Michele Palomaki, Mike Swan, Mykee Brown,

AGENDA

President LaRoque noted the presence of a quorum. Motion by Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday to approve the agenda, seconded by Chairwoman Cathy Chavers.

11 For, 0 Against, 0 Silent. Motion Carried.

Introduction of new MCT Executive Director Luke Warnsholz: President LaRoque announced that the TEC hired Luke Warnsholz as the new Executive Director. Executive Warnsholz addressed the audience and shared his background as a member of the White Earth Band. Warnsholz previously served as Executive Director of Bois Forte. Other experience includes starting the

Indian Nations in Gaming Governance program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Currently a doctoral student and will finish his PhD this summer; final study on MCT and Artificial Intelligence. He has spent his first week assessing.

Discussion of Enrollment Amendment: President LaRoque stated that the enrollment amendment was sent out approximately one week ago and requested feedback from TEC members.

MCT Attorney Phil Brodeen addressed MCT audience and explained that the resolution was offered by Leech Lake in advance of the last TEC meeting in October, which addressed language regarding enrollment in the Constitution and in the Enrollment Ordinance. The MCT Constitution requires that MCT members must have “Minnesota Chippewa Indian blood” and the Enrollment Ordinance states “Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Indian blood”. The Leech Lake resolution proposes striking out the word “Tribe” from the Enrollment Ordinance, which Brodeen said would provide Leech Lake with the flexibility to include Red Lake blood when making decisions regarding enrollment.

The following briefly summarizes comments made by each TEC member:

White Earth Chairman Michael Fairbanks: Deferred to White Earth Constitutional Reform Delegation chair, who stated that White Earth supports the resolution.

Fond du Lac Secretary-Treasurer Robert Abrahamson: Personally supports as a step in the right direction, but need the feedback from FDL Band Members.

Fond du Lac Chairman Bruce Savage: Commented that this is a good step forward, but has questions regarding other Chippewa from other federally-recognized tribes outside of Minnesota who live in Minnesota, and has questions about whether the resolution includes those Chippewa.

Leech Lake Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday: Explained the history behind the resolution offered by Leech Lake; the TEC voted 18 months ago to request a Secretarial Election to amend the enrollment criteria so we could accept all Chippewa/Anishinabe blood, which has been held up by the BIA. Leech Lake looked at the plain meaning of the language and the distinction between Minnesota Chippewa Indian blood and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Indian blood. If there is a Band that does not want to change how they are doing things they don’t have to, but Bands that wish to include Minnesota Chippewa blood from outside the MCT can do so and will have administrative backup. He appreciates Chairman Savage’s question and other questions, which they may not have answers to all questions and scenarios, but this is a first step we can take and learn from to move forward to acknowledge Red Lake blood.

Leech Lake Chairman Faron Jackson: He has been working on this issue for 30 years; Leech Lake members are excited about this not as a final product, but as a starting point because changes need to be done in phases. Leech Lake passed a resolution in October unanimously and want to take action. We all have self-determination rights within our homelands and wish to be respectful of that; we are not forcing the hands of other Bands. He discussed the right to govern our own people without needing permission and treaties. If this resolution only impacts Leech Lake, that is okay.

Mille Lacs Band Chief Executive Virgil Wind: Disappointed in the timeline; received the resolution yesterday so no time for legal review. Expressed concerns regarding ample notification; asked whether there is a process of bringing resolutions forward to MCT legal counsel for legal interpretation and how direction is provided. Referenced new MLB Wilder study which found that 92% of MLB members believe any changes to enrollment that impacts MLB must be a decision of MLB. Noted that we haven't done a good job of educating the people about this issue at Mille Lacs; haven't met the needs of current MLB Members. If there are more Leech Lake members, MCT Membership increases, which will increase membership of other Bands as people mix among the Bands and have more children.

Phil Brodeen: Brodeen responded that he takes direction from the Board or the subcommittees, and this instruction came from the Legislative Subcommittee. There is no formal process documenting requests for legal interpretations, but moving forward if we can formalize the process we will. President Michael LaRoque confirmed the Legislative Subcommittee did request that Phil Brodeen look at this.

Mille Lacs Chief Executive Wind: Requested the parameters in which Phil provides an answer or interpretation on an issue and where that legal document is. Phil Brodeen responded that he envisions future resolution going through the way the issue was addressed, meeting dates, legislative history. Brodeen agreed that formalizing a process would be helpful.

Leech Lake Chairman Faron Jackson: Noted that he wasn't on council when MLB adopted the moratorium on Band transfers and was told that was supposed to be temporary, but hasn't seen anything to that effect. I know each tribe has rights to act individually on how to govern our own tribes. This is to – Leech lake shouldn't have to ask permission but exercising our sovereign rights. If MLB wants to keep status quo, we won't question that. We never questioned the moratorium that Mille Lacs did.

Leech Lake Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday: Reiterated that Leech Lake isn't trying to make decisions for other Bands and respects MLB's decision. just like we respect your decision. What other tribes in MN do affects us. We don't have a right to tell them what to do.

Grand Portage Chairman Bobby Deschampe: In agreement with Chief Wind's concerns; didn't receive resolution until last night. Commented that if words are going to be stricken and added, why not just add another section and say that enrollment is within the individual Band's control, not the MCT.

Bois Forte Chairwoman Cathy Chavers: Stated that personally she doesn't like blood quantum - a way of eradicating and dividing us. Noted that BF has not discussed this at the council or membership levels, and would like time to do so. She noted that we represent the people and they need to have input on the decisions; BF currently doesn't have anyone working on constitutional reform. Commented that it should be up to the Bands to decide who they enroll and who they don't, and believes the Bands should be able develop our own constitutions and govern ourselves. She supports the opt in and opt out provision so that each Band can decide what is best for them.

Grand Portage Secretary-Treasurer April McCormick: This is the first time I've ever heard so many TEC members given opportunity to speak, so thank you Mr. President. When the email correspondence came out, I didn't attend the Legislative Subcommittee and called Phil for a briefing. Expecting a briefing packet, I got the ordinance change. We need to understand the issue in its fullness and I felt underprepared. Looking at the changes, it feels like we are striking language without information or data as to how that may impact individuals and families. If we are going to just pick and choose what words we are taking out of an ordinance, why aren't we striking the word "Minnesota" because then that would incorporate all Chippewa blood. I'm not proposing that today, but if we are able to strike language, then how come this wasn't done decades ago. I'm thinking about the ripple effects that a decision could have on individual families. If there is a motion to move on this, I would like to offer a subsidiary motion to commit this to a committee. I question whether that is the Legislative Subcommittee because I don't know if that is what you are really truly tasked with enrollment. I asked an enrollment officer if she could give us some aggregate data about how many people might be impacted and she said she couldn't really tell me because our software doesn't track Red Lake blood, so now we are placing a burden on our families to get excited about something and come into Enrollment Offices and have Enrollment not be able to really tell them how they can track it. I like to think about how it impacts everyone, an important part of effective leadership is looking not only politically but legally for our membership in relationship to one another.

Leach Lake Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday: Stated that striking of words was not arbitrary, but an effort to get the ordinance to comply with the constitution. The change is only to the ordinance, and changes were based on allowing the ordinance to comport with the plain meaning of the constitution (referencing Article II Membership).

Bois Forte Secretary-Treasurer Tara Geshick: Commented that she backs up Cathy's comments regarding BF needing to discuss with members, and not wanting to weigh in on decisions affecting any other nation. She noted that this discussion only reflects male-female relationships and we have not considered other matters like surrogacy, IVF, LGBTQ issues.

Mille Lacs Secretary-Treasurer Sheldon Boyd: Noted that his views reflect the work of the delegates. He stated that he would support initiatives of the individual Bands and if there are any resolutions brought before the body, because of recognition that the tribes have the autonomy to make these decisions, he would vote silent for that reason because he questions whether this body has the authority to make that decision. He asked if, at the time of local Band enrollment, is that enough for a person to automatically begin getting benefits of being an ML member, or is membership a 2 step process requiring MCT? Dual membership – first as a member of a treaty tribe and second as a member of an organization.

President Michael LaRoque: Stated that we are at a fork in the road. Proposed holding off on the resolution until the January meeting, where no discussion would take place – just a vote. He reiterated that this is not a constitutional change, but an enrollment ordinance change.

Leech Lake Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday: We were prepared to move forward today but hearing the conversation and discussion, Bands that did not have information ahead of time, as much as possible we want consensus.

2025 Meetings:

January 27-28 – Fond du Lac

April 28-29 – White Earth July

14 – Grand Portage October

20-21 – Bois Forte

Legislative Dinner discussion of February and March, earlier February is better, date to be determined.

Motion by Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday to adjourn the meeting at 4:43 p.m. Seconded by Chairman Michael Fairbanks. 11 For, 0 Against, 0 Silent. Motion Carried.