

2020 State of the Band- District III Presentation

I would like to welcome our Elders and Band Membership to the 2020 State of the Band. Thank you to our Veterans for the presentation of the Flags. Thank you to Cedar Creek Drum and the singers.

I would like to go over the great things that I have worked on in the Brookston District and for Fond du Lac as a whole. Before I do that though, I would like to say that our community has had to deal with its share of sorrow that has come with the good. First I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to the families that have lost loved ones this past year; I also have had to deal with that sorrow after losing a brother.

Our communities felt like we were dealing with tragic events after tragic events. We lost two young men and a young lady in a matter of weeks that had tremendous effects on our community. It was difficult to see on the faces of the young ones of having to cope with the loss of a family member and friend. I had also traveled to the community of the young lady and to see the same sorrow on the faces of her family and community. I will say that support that our Prevention Intervention Team showed our community in a time of need speaks volumes to the integrity and the love of our communities that this staff has. I would like to say Chi Miigwech to Don Wiesen and his Prevention Intervention staff for the support they showed our community, Chi Miigwech also to the Brookston Center Staff.

We then had to deal with an incident that no one ever wants to hear and that is an “active shooter” incident. Although the incident

happened in another District, the ripples were felt throughout all of our communities. Unfortunately some of those ripples still plague our Band Members, communities and unfortunately our young ones. I certainly appreciate the quick response from Fond du Lac Police Department and the surrounding Law Enforcement Agencies; I also appreciate the response from our Min No Aya Win Mental Health staff that responded to address the needs of those directly at the incident, but also to our employees and the children that were affected by this event. We had previously recognized the quick response by our Cloquet Community Center staff for their quick action to account for the children and move them into the gymnasium. Chi Miigwech to all those I have just mentioned and the other staff that I may have forgot, for the service to the Band.

We would think that this would be enough for a community to endure, but then one of our Band Members had been violently taken from us. We not only lost a Band Member, but a friend and neighbor. I had asked that we act swiftly in banishing this murderer from Band Lands and from doing any type of business with Fond du Lac Enterprises. Chi Miigwech to my colleagues for supporting this action! Chi Miigwech to the Min No Aya Win Mental Health staff for once again responding where needed to assist the community.

I mention these incidents and to show no disrespect to the families that were involved, but to show that we as a community and a community made up of staff members, came together to show support and empathy to those that needed it and needed us. So to our community I say Chi Miigwech for being you!

I will now touch on the great things that I/we have worked on that moves Brookston and Fond du Lac forward.

We started 2019 off with a historic Inauguration of Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan and again our very own Dennis Olson Jr. selected to be the Commissioner of Higher Education. This is significant to not only Fond du Lac, but also to the 10 other Tribes of Minnesota. The Governor had issued an Executive Order for each of the Commissioners to have meaningful consultation with each Tribe. Fond du Lac has been very engaged with each consultation session of where we are asking the questions and making sure each of the Commissioners understands the Sovereignty of Fond du Lac. We look forward in the coming year to foster the relationships with the Governor's Office and the Commissioners that has been established through meaningful consultation.

I have had the opportunity to meet with our Minnesota Congressional representatives, Senator Tina Smith and Congressman Pete Stauber to discuss the issues that pertain to Fond du Lac. From mining issues, Railroad issues, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Sex Trafficking and Exploitation and most recently Rural Health Care. I will continue to work on these same issues and others in the coming year.

I have been appointed to the Governor's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force. I look forward to the upcoming meetings and the opportunity to work with our Fond du Lac Advocates on addressing the concerns that plagues Indian Country. We need to make sure our fellow Band Members, brothers, sisters, mothers and daughters are educated and aware of very serious issue. This is a great

honor and one that I have been very involved in and will continue to update the Band Membership in the coming year.

We have started to move forward on posting all Fond du Lac Tribal Lands by having community meetings. This issue has been talked about for a long time and the importance of preserving our Natural Resources. We have acquired over 500 acres in the last year and will continue to add to our Tribal Land base.

We have completed the Rural Fire Suppression Project that is located on Highway 2 at the Stoney Brooke River. This will benefit the northern communities of Fond du Lac and now have an adequate fire tanker refill station in order to better protect our resources and properties.

We continue to operate the Bottled Water Program for the Mahnomen Housing Area. This has been a top priority for me as we work to correct the problem with the Disinfection By-Products in the Mahnomen Treatment Plant. I have been assured by the Reservation Business Committee that this project will move forward as planned, regardless of outside funding or not. The Fond du Lac Water/Wastewater Manager Jordan Vandal has been working tirelessly on this issue. We have also received notice just today that Representative Betty McCullum will be willing to assist with efforts of meeting with the various funding agencies. We will continue to have updates in the Fond du Lac Newspaper and Community Meetings with the next one being on March 19, 2020.

We are scheduled to start construction of the \$700+ thousand Mahnomen Trail and Lighting Project this spring. This will be a great addition for the added safety for the community.

We have started discussion of establishing a Fond du Lac Youth Shelter at a recently purchased property in the Brookston District. We can finally have a culturally appropriate place for our children. For years we have talked about a place for Child Protection Emergency Placement Care on Fond du Lac and in the coming year we will move forward to make this a reality.

We continue to work on the Kantonen Road Cabin property and with grant funding we are able to invest approximately \$170 thousand into a High Wire Confidence Course that will be at the property. I will continue to work with the appropriate staff to establish a Culturally Oriented learning camp for youth. So far the Prevention Intervention Manager Don Wiesen, Public Works Staff and Social Services have been a huge help in achieving progress on this project.

I have and will continue to advocate for the utilization of Band Member Owned Small Businesses and the employment of Band Members in the coming year on projects in and around Fond du Lac including the Line 3 project.

I was able to bring back from Washington D.C. some United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration pins for Veterans of the Vietnam War. We had the huge honor to pin I believe 27 Vietnam Veterans at the Veterans Day Honor Dinner. I have just received confirmation today that we are now a member of the Commemorative Partnership Program. This pin is recognizing our Vietnam Veterans for their courage and service to a grateful Nation and welcomes them back home. I will continue to work for our Veterans and strengthening our relationship with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

You can see I have covered several different areas I have been working on and will probably think of something I missed. I would like to end my portion of tonight's State of the Band with saying Chi Miigwech to the Membership for allowing me to be your District III Representative and I will continue to work tirelessly in advancing not only Brookston District, but Fond du Lac.

Roger M. Smith Sr.

District III Brookston Representative.