

MILLE LACS BAND OF OJIBWE

Visitors Guide



A Thriving Tribal Culture in
East Central Minnesota





Welcome to rural East Central Minnesota, the region that the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe has called home for more than 250 years. Known for its signature body of water – Mille Lacs Lake – this area is an outstanding place to visit and appreciate.

The Mille Lacs Band's specific homeland is the Mille Lacs Reservation, where we pride ourselves on protecting our natural resources and preserving our native traditions. The Band also operates many businesses on and around the reservation, including Grand Casino Mille Lacs and Grand Casino Hinckley. These casinos employ more than 3,000 people and attract millions of visitors annually.

This tourism helps local businesses prosper, provides jobs to rural Minnesotans, and generates revenue that the Mille Lacs Band utilizes to improve life for its members and neighbors through programs, services, donations and partnerships.

Read on for more insight into the Band's 4,060 members (including 2,260 who live on the reservation), our status as a sovereign Indian nation with our own government, and our efforts to share our culture and community with others.

History of the Mille Lacs Band

According to recorded oral traditions, the Ojibwe first lived on the Atlantic coast of North America. About 500 years ago, the ancestors of the Mille Lacs Band began migrating west.

By the mid-1700s, the Ojibwe had established themselves by displacing the Dakota in the region around Mille Lacs Lake. They supported themselves by hunting deer, bear, moose, waterfowl, and small game; fishing the area's lakes and streams; gathering wild rice, maple sugar, and berries; and cultivating plants.

Since then, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe's self-sufficient way of life has been affected by changes that have come to its homeland. First, the United States' desire for more land led to a series of treaties – the treaties of 1837, 1847, 1854, 1855, 1863 and 1864 – to acquire land from the Ojibwe. These treaties established an ongoing relationship between the Mille Lacs Band and the United States. They established how the Band and others would share land, fish, and other resources. The Treaty of 1855 also established the Mille Lacs Reservation.

In 1862, the Mille Lacs Band was instrumental in keeping peace among the Ojibwe and then sent many of its young men to serve in the Civil War. Meanwhile, Band leaders struggled with the shifting



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

An Ojibwe family is shown outside their wigwam, a traditional Ojibwe dwelling made with birch bark and natural materials from the area. The baby is tucked inside a traditional cradle board.

federal Indian policy and the timber industry's desire to cut down pine trees located on the Mille Lacs Reservation. The Band continued to deal with the changes while maintaining its religion and culture.

Over the next century, the Mille Lacs Band went through many hardships. Finally, in 1988, the federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act enabled the

Mille Lacs Band and other American Indian tribes to open gaming facilities as a way of promoting economic development and self-sufficiency. To strengthen tribal governments, Congress also passed the Tribal Self Governance Act, which removed some of the bureaucracy that had hindered tribal development.

The Band's cultural traditions remain strong today. We gather maple syrup, berries, and wild rice as our ancestors did. We continue to hunt and fish while respecting the land. The Ojibwe language is taught in the Band's schools. And powwows are still held, popular with both tribal members and non-Indians.



Photo: Minnesota Historical Society

This Ojibwe man is gathering the wild rice found in the shoots that rise above the water.

Our Government

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch, known as the Band Assembly, enacts laws which regulate internal and external affairs of the Mille Lacs Band.



Photo: Duane's Photography

Herb Weyaus, the Band Assembly Speaker, is also Secretary/Treasurer.

Executive Branch

The executive branch implements the Band's laws and administers the Band's programs and services.



The Mille Lacs Band's government center, located in District I of the Mille Lacs Reservation, is home to the Band's three branches of government.

Judicial Branch

The judicial branch upholds the Band's laws and ensures justice is served equally to all Band members.



Alvina Aubele is the Band's Chief Justice.

The Mille Lacs Band is a sovereign Indian nation, which gives us the right to govern ourselves and our territory. We use our sovereignty to improve the lives of Band members and the communities in which they live.

In the 1980s, the Band created a separation of powers form of government similar to the United States federal government. This system actually has American Indian roots; the 14th century Iroquois Confederacy was a model for the U.S. government. The three branches of our government – executive, legislative and judicial – ensure through proper checks and balances that no single person or part of the government has absolute and arbitrary power in any particular area.

The Band has laws to regulate Band affairs. Its judicial branch preserves and maintains justice and accords equal rights, equal protection, and equal opportunity for Band members under Band laws and statutes. The Band's Court of Central Jurisdiction is made up of a District (or trial) Court and a Court of Appeals.

Band members elect the head of the Band's executive branch – the Chief Executive – every four years. The four members of the legislative branch – known as the Band Assembly – also serve four-year terms.

The Speaker of the Assembly is elected by all Band members. Each of the Band Assembly's three Representatives are elected by the people who reside in his or her district; Band members who live off the reservation select a home district and vote for a Representative from that district.

Band leaders are advised by their department commissioners, staffs, and Elder and youth advisory councils. Ojibwe Elders are highly respected for their understanding of how Ojibwe traditions can answer today's most difficult questions, and the youth are encouraged to get involved in their government and culture at a young age.



The Mille Lacs Band has nearly 635 full-time employees. They work at the Band's government center, schools, clinics, community centers, and other facilities.

Our Services to Band Members

The Mille Lacs Band uses a significant portion of its income to provide valuable programs and services to Band members. These programs and services include:

- A Tribal Police Department
- Preschool programs and K-12 schools with approximately 350 students
- Charter schools in District II and District III
- A scholarship program
- A community recreation and sports program focusing on fitness, healthy lifestyles, academics, arts, and cultural activities
- A Workforce Education and Development Center that provides employment assistance and promotes lifelong learning
- Clinics in each reservation district
- A tribal health insurance program called Circle of Health
- Elder services and assisted living units in each reservation district
- Ceremonial buildings

We also have invested in roads, water and wastewater treatment facilities, community facilities, and other infrastructure improvements.



The Nay Ah Shing Schools provide a K-12 curriculum as well as a child care center and a Head Start program. Pictured here is Nay Ah Shing Upper School, which houses 5th- to 12th-grade students.



The Ne-Ia-Shing Clinic, which is operated by the Mille Lacs Band, provides general and specialty care, dental and optometry services, and pharmacy services.



The Mille Lacs Band offers a variety of services and facilities to children and families to promote education and healthy living.

To administer the Band's programs and services, the Chief Executive appoints and the Band Assembly ratifies the following Commissioners for four-year terms:

- Commissioner of Administration
- Assistant Commissioner of Administration
- Commissioner of Corporate Affairs
- Commissioner of Community Development
- Commissioner of Education
- Commissioner of Finance
- Commissioner of Health & Human Services
- Commissioner of Natural Resources

Our Culture and Language

The Mille Lacs Band has long been known for its talented artists and craftspeople. Basketmaking, beading, and using natural materials to create beautiful Ojibwe designs are skills that have been handed down from one generation to the next. The Mille Lacs Band is also proud to have murals gracing the walls of its government center and the Nay Ah Shing Upper School, both located in District I of the reservation near Onamia.

The school's mosaic mural took five years and 232,000 ceramic tiles to create. It is the largest mosaic mural of its kind in Minnesota. The 10' by 55' artwork, created by 1,000 students and visitors from around the world, depicts Indian life and its relationship to nature and culture. It celebrates the great respect Ojibwe people have for the natural world through images of Mille Lacs Lake, figures of drummers and dancers, and floral and beadwork motifs.



This mural contains 232,000 ceramic tiles and is the creation of more than 1,000 students and visitors to the Nay Ah Shing Upper School.

The painted mural at the government center is titled "Journey Through Time" and follows the Band's struggles and triumphs from its beginnings to the present day.

The floral motif contained in this visitors guide is inspired by the stitch work of Mille Lacs Band Elder Margaret Hill. The background is reminiscent of the native birch bark that Band members have used for centuries to make canoes, baskets, and other items. Many handmade arts and crafts of the Ojibwe People are on display at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum,



The mural at the Band's government center – painted by Band member artist Steve Premo – depicts the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe's struggles and triumphs over several centuries.

located on the west edge of Mille Lacs Lake along Highway 169 and across from Grand Casino Mille Lacs.

The Ojibwe Language

The Mille Lacs Band is working hard to preserve the Ojibwe language through its schools and special language programming. While visiting reservation communities, you may hear the following common Ojibwe phrases, and you may even want to try them out yourself:

- Aniin (pronounced ah-neen) or Boozhoo (pronounced boo-zhoo) – hello
- Mii gwetch (pronounced me-gwetch) – thank you
- Gah wha ba min mina wha (pronounced gah-wah-bah-min meenuh-wah) – see you again

Annual Powwows

The Mille Lacs Band has two annual powwows that the public is invited to attend:

- Mille Lacs Band Powwow – Third weekend in August

Iskigamizigan Powwow Grounds, located on the west side of Mille Lacs Lake, 12 miles north of Onamia on Highway 169

- AMVETS Powwow – Veterans Day weekend

District I Community Center, located on the east side of Highway 169 across from Grand Casino Mille Lacs

Mille Lacs Band Businesses and Sites to Visit

The Band has worked hard to diversify its economy, provide a variety of employment opportunities for Band members and other local residents, and offer quality services to visitors. While in the reservation area, you may want to visit some of the following Band-owned businesses:

- **Grand Casino Mille Lacs**, which features an adjoining hotel, four restaurants, an Events & Convention Center, and various Band and Band-member owned retail businesses
- **Grand Casino Hinckley**, which features three hotels, four restaurants and a lounge, an Events & Convention Center, and various Band and Band-member owned retail businesses
- **Grand National Golf Course**, Hinckley
- **Eddy's Resort**, Onamia
- **Grand Market** grocery store, Onamia
- **Grand Makwa Cinema**, Onamia
- **MLB Convenience store**, Onamia
- **East Lake Convenience store** and laundromat, McGregor
- **Crossroads Convenience store** and laundromat, Hinckley

The Mille Lacs Band's convenience stores proudly sell Band-harvested wild rice.

- **Subway** restaurant, Onamia
- **Grand Ventures Travel, Inc.**, Onamia
- **Woodlands National Bank**, Onamia, as well as Hinckley, Sturgeon Lake, and Grand Market branches

For More Information

To learn more about the Mille Lacs Band, you may visit the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post or the government center, which are located on the east side of Highway 169 across from Grand Casino Mille Lacs. You may also visit the Band's Web site at www.millelacsojibwe.org for more information about Ojibwe culture and history.

The Band's history book, *Against the Tide of American History: The Story of the Mille Lacs Anishinabe*, is available at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and the Band's government center.

A video about the Band's history, *The Woodlands: The Story of the Mille Lacs Ojibwe*, is available for purchase through the Band's Web site, www.millelacsojibwe.org.



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777 Lady Luck Drive
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www.grandcasinosmn.com



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mille Lacs Indian Museum
operated by the
Minnesota Historical Society
43411 Oodena Dr.
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www.mnhs.org



The Mille Lacs Reservation



The Mille Lacs Reservation is located in East Central Minnesota and is divided into three districts.

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