



Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Reservation Business Committee

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Indigenous Voices Echo Through the Halls of the Minnesota State Capitol: American Indian Day on the Hill Celebrates Native Leadership and Advocacy

Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa – Cloquet, Minnesota (May 15, 2024) – On Monday, May 6th, the Minnesota State Capitol resonated with the vibrant voices and powerful presence of Native people from all corners of the state during the annual American Indian Day on the Hill event. Organized by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) and community organizers, this event served as a platform for indigenous voices to be heard, celebrated, and honored.

The event, resurrected four years ago, aims to inspire Native people to consider running for elected office at all levels of government, emphasizing the importance of representation in shaping policies and decisions that affect Native communities. Reflecting on the significance of the event, Shannon Geshick, Executive Director of MIAC and Bois Forte Band of Chippewa member, stated, "It is crucial that we have folks who understand our experiences, our culture, our ways of being, our humor, our trauma, our resilience; and no one can understand those things better than us."

This year's event highlighted a pivotal moment in history with the notable increase in Native representation in Minnesota government. President Robert Larsen of the Lower Sioux Indian Community eloquently summarized the significance, stating, "[There is] Protection of sovereignty through representation." Additionally, the event paid homage to esteemed elders and tribal leaders for their unwavering dedication to their communities. Among those honored were Gertrude Buckanaga, Maria McCoy, Nelda Goodman, President Robert Larsen, and our esteemed Fond du Lac Band Chairman, Kevin Dupuis Sr.

The day was filled with cultural richness and meaningful dialogue, as participants gathered in the rotunda of the state capitol, sharing stories, prayers, and reflections on the importance of Native representation and sovereignty. Peggy Flanagan, Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota, expressed her gratitude for the presence of Native people, stating, "I feel better when you are here." She reflected on the progress being made in Native representation and advocacy, acknowledging the impact of Native voices on policy and partnerships.

Governor Walz highlighted the importance of education and representation, stating, "Children in our schools will now hear the stories of native people from the voices of our native people." He emphasized the need for continued progress and collaboration to address historical injustices and ensure a more inclusive future for all Minnesotans.

As the event concluded, participants left with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment to advocating for Native communities and promoting cultural resilience and sovereignty. With each step forward, Native voices grow stronger, and the impact of their advocacy reverberates throughout the state of Minnesota.

For more information about the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and upcoming events, news and updates, visit <https://mn.gov/indian-affairs/>