



WHITE EARTH RESERVATION

CHAIRMAN Michael Fairbanks **SECRETARY-TREASURER** Leonard Alan Roy
DISTRICT I Raymond Auginaush, Sr. **DISTRICT II** Kathy Goodwin **DISTRICT III** Eugene "Umsy" Tibbetts

March 13th, 2020

White Earth Band Members,

As many are aware, the Minnesota Department of Human Service (MDHS) notified tribal administrators in 2019 that there was an "overpayment" made to some opioid treatment programs. Both White Earth Reservation and Leech Lake Reservation were impacted by this oversight which totaled \$29 million.

The current Minnesota state statute requires MDHS to retrieve these overpayments from any entity that has been overpaid. Nevertheless, Governor Walz indicated that the tribes impacted should be held harmless and that neither the tribes, nor any of their employees, were at fault.

For White Earth, our staff did exactly what they were supposed to do by reaching out to MDHS for guidance. After the payment errors were identified, the RBC and I went to work on multiple fronts to protect the nation's assets; including: working with Chairman Jackson and Leech Lake to ensure a coordinated tribal response, collaborating with various White Earth programs and legal staff to develop the strongest possible negotiating position, and meeting multiple times with Governor Walz, MDHS, and state legislators to resolve this issue.

Through this hard work, I am very pleased to report that Governor Walz announced supplemental budget recommendations that includes the entire overpayment amount to both Leech Lake and White Earth. Meaning, White Earth and Leech Lake would not have to repay the overpayments made to the tribes.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Governor Walz, legislators, and MDHS staff. Through their diligence in developing this supplemental budget and their acknowledgment of White Earth's sovereignty, good faith and transparent government-to-government consultation were able to transpire. Today is a good day for the White Earth Nation.

Mii gwech,

Michael Fairbanks
Chairman