

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

May 21, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **TRIBE REAFFIRMS OWNERSHIP OF SIX TOWN ROADS**

Beginning in the early 1970s, the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians began efforts to regain ownership of our lands and roads under President William Wildcat's administration. Our efforts were revitalized in 2015 after the Tribe began research of relevant documents from the Town of Lac du Flambeau, the United States government, and Tribal archives that showed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) allocated funding for the construction of various roads on the Reservation beginning in the early 1900s and continuing to 1970.

Some of the BIA documents showed that when road construction was complete, the roads were entrusted to the Town of Lac du Flambeau for maintenance with the clear understanding that ownership remained with the Tribe and the BIA. Previous Town chairs have acknowledged and documented the true ownership, also recognizing that federal funding for road upgrades were contingent on the roads remaining in Tribal or BIA ownership.

Over the last generation, the Tribe and the Town of Lac du Flambeau have had many disputes over expired easements and rights-of-way, with each side taking different stances concerning ownership and control. Where disputes existed over ownership, the Tribe had the understanding the Town of Lac du Flambeau was also maintaining records, but it seems their efforts were marginal. The Town has shown little regard or interest in working with the Tribe to ensure safe roads for the entire Reservation community.

As the Tribe continues to locate documentation solidifying Tribal ownership of Reservation roads, records have been obtained showing the approval of land leases to the federal government gathered by Indian Agents, as they were called at that time, to fund the design and building of roads on the Lac du Flambeau Reservation. It is documented that the Town of Lac du Flambeau accepted these agreements, with the same understanding that ownership remained with the Tribe and the BIA, and the Town would continue to maintain these roads.

"Over many years, the Tribe has made repeated efforts to work with the Town of Lac du Flambeau. The safety of the roads on the Reservation is of the utmost importance to myself and the Tribal Council. We want what's best for the entire Reservation community, and we thought that having government-to-government relations with the Town of Lac du Flambeau would be in everyone's best interest. However, our efforts have been met with untrue accusations, and a complete lack of respect for our burial sites, our Tribal programs and our laws," said President Joseph Wildcat, Sr.

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**Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians**

Joseph Wildcat, Sr., President

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On May 13, 2019, the Tribal Council passed six resolutions reaffirming the Tribe's ownership and public authority of six public roads: Cemetery Road, East Fence Lake Road, Little Trout Lake Road, Old Prairie Road, Pokegama Lake Trail and Wayman Lane.

A copy of the resolutions and a Notice to Quit providing notification of the Tribe's resumption of public authority effective June 3, 2019, has been delivered to the Town of Lac du Flambeau.

As the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians assumes public authority of these six roads, residents will see no changes or restrictions to access of their property.

"The Tribal Council has been consistent in sharing our intent of regaining rightful ownership of Reservation roads, and that we are not setting roadblocks for any resident. These issues relate to governmental authority of ownership between the Tribe, the Town of Lac du Flambeau and the United States, and we are pleased to be moving forward and resolving these issues," continued President Wildcat.

If a resident has questions or concerns, please contact President Joseph Wildcat, Sr., or Vice President George Thompson at 715-588-3303.

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