*Sent to all Members*

February 9, 2025

Dear {%FName%},

The civility modeled by the Sakaogon Chippewa Community on the Mole Lake Indian Reservation in Forest County is an impressive example for Rotary International and our state and federal governments to follow.

Civility may be the missing ingredient in our civic discourse, but not on the 1,500-member reservation led by tribal chair Robert Vanzile, Jr.

The Sakaogon Chippewa Community is forming an impressive coalition of Native and Non-Native representatives of government, education, health care, economic development and natural resource protection. The immediate goal is to extend high speed internet through fiber optics connections to some of the most rural, poor, and underserved parts of Forest and Florence Counties.

Almost five thousand Native and Non-Native residents of Forest and Florence Counties do not have access to fiber or high-speed internet. Tribal leaders recognize extending fiber to the most underserved, poverty-plagued parts of our state opens opportunity for both tribal members and non-native neighbors.

The collaboration and civility modeled by tribal leaders are building positive relationships between people often divided by long-lingering tensions.

Beneficiaries of the cooperation will be students impacted by distance learning, senior citizens who can be both diagnosed and treated for medical conditions from the comfort of their rural homes, and unemployed workers who can find the dignity and self-respect by holding well-paid positions only possible with working remotely. Indigenous language preservation, natural resource protection, affordable housing, economic diversity and research are among the additional benefits.

Rotary International is committed to promoting economic development, environmental protection, education, and health care.

Respecting and supporting what is being modeled on the Mole Lake reservation by the Sakaogon Chippewa Community is worthy of support.

May every Rotarian view what is taking place on the Mole Lake reservation as an opportunity to build goodwill and better friendship with our Indigenous neighbors.

Please stand with me endorsing the Sakaogon Chippewa Community grant application pending with the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Approval of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund grant application will change lives, build better relations and continue modeling civility.

Thank you.

ROGER UTNEHMER
Rotary District 6220
District Governor 2024-25
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