

## NEWS RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Jan. 24, 2008**

### **Chairman urges 500 Band members to ‘keep moving forward’**

*Plans for new fire department, apartments and urban office announced at State of the Band*

TOWER, Minn. – Using language that echoed the presidential candidates’ call for change, the Tribal Chairman of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa urged Band members gathered at the Jan. 24 State of the Band to “keep moving forward” on a new course.

“Now we are at a crossroads in the journey,” Chairman Kevin Leecy said in an address to 500 Band members from across the state. “It’s good to look to the left and to the right at other options. But it would be a mistake to turn back to our old way of doing business.”

The old way of doing business meant relying solely on gaming to generate revenue, making the Band vulnerable to shifts or challenges to that sector, Leecy said. The new way is diversification, reflected in the Band’s increased marketing of Nett Lake Wild Rice, its purchase of WELY end of the road radio, Powerain Car Wash Manufacturing, Inc., and the Y-Store in Tower. Bois Forte has also built a new convenience store in Nett Lake and its small business development program has assisted over 130 Band member entrepreneurs.

To underscore his message, Leecy announced several new initiatives, including the creation of the Bois Forte Urban Office in Minneapolis to better connect metropolitan members to the Band’s government and services. He also announced a \$1 million grant awarded from the Shakopee Mdewankanton Sioux Community Jan. 22 to help create a Bois Forte Vermilion Fire Department.

In addition, Leecy vowed to address housing shortages in 2008, promising to “focus our energies on building apartments in Nett Lake and Vermilion for Bois Forte Band members.” Meanwhile, he noted, the Band continues to study the feasibility of building a Biofuels facility on the reservation. The study, which began last August, will be completed this summer. Leecy expressed confidence in the possibility, saying, “Investigating in the growing renewable energy field this way is a sound financial and environmental decision.”

The State of the Band opened with a traditional pipe ceremony and the prestigious Bois Forte Honor Guard. Spiritual Advisor Gene Goodsky led the invocation and Orr ninth-graders Tiffany Skinaway and Arianna Zappata sang the national anthem.