Nimiigwechitaagoz (I thank them)

November was a month of giving thanks, during our Fall Feast held at the Grand Casino Mille Lacs I gave an invocation. During this invocation I included a thank you to the casino employees. I and others give these invocations at community events and at our dances that take place twice a year. During all these invocations we talk about the things we are thankful for. In the spring we are thankful for surviving the winter and for those that keep our road safe. In the fall time we are thankful to have had a good harvest these past seasons and to be able to feed our families in the months to come. Each invocation is unique and special as we give thanks for various reasons.

I gave thanks for the employees this year because, without the casinos and its employees our community would be drastically different. I see and hear many times that the casino employees are underappreciated, complained about, and talked bad about. Sometimes solely based on an employee not being native, which is not fair as these employees help support our community as much as a native employee. Many of these employees have stayed through rough and unpredictable circumstances including COVID-19. With that we need to appreciate the jobs the employees do each and every day. As their jobs allow for the casino to generate revenue that supports the MLBO government and community. This support included our precap checks each month, including the very generous bonus in December that we all received. Per cap is not the only source in which revenue goes to, it also supports sending our children to secondary education, elder trips, interest free home loans, and so many more services. We would be living on a much different reservation if suddenly they closed. Much like life was prior to them being here, life that most members don’t remember, or have never experienced.

No matter where you work at MLCV (Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures), Miigwech. No matter if you are a past employee or current employee you have helped out the community in ways that are both seen and unseen. A big shout out to all of you because your work helps us out so much spiritually and financially.

To those that work across the road in our government, another Miigwech is coming to you all. In addition, I have a few more thanks to give this holiday season. Thank you to police officers for the services they provide in keeping our community safe. Even in the difficult times created by Mille Lacs County. To our educators for giving our children an opportunity to learn and grow. To our health care workers for keeping our community well, especially during COVID-19. To our behavioral health workers for helping our people live a sober and drug free life. To our social workers for being boots on the ground helping our families. To the staff at Aanjibimaadizing who feed, clothe, house, and much more to our band members who are seeking sustainable employment. Lastly, to our legal team who continue to fight for our rights as Anishinaabe people. Without you all we wouldn’t have won the 1999 supreme court case and those fights since.

Any of those not mentioned I apologize for, everyone that works to make this community safer, stronger, and long lasting is deeply in my gratitude. And to those reading this month I wish you a wonderful and safe holiday season. Miigwech, Weweni (thank you, take care).