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# Sokaogon Chippewa Community

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## Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

Sokaogon Chippewa Community  
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Robert VanZile Jr., Chair  
Roger McGeshick Jr., Vice Chair  
Sonya Smith, Treasurer  
Maia Kegley, Secretary  
Leelyn VanZile, Council Member I  
Caleb McGeshick, Council Member II

Location: Forest County, northern Wisconsin



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## Tribal Statistics

There are currently 1,377 Sokaogon Chippewa Community Tribal Members. Population breakdown of the tribe is as follows:

- 17 and under = 348
- Ages 18 - 64 = 967
- 65 and older = 62
- The total number of enrolled members residing on the reservation is 468

The Mole Lake Reservation totals 4,904.2 acres

- Reservation 1,930 acres
- Trust Land 1,320 acres
- Fee Land 172 acres
- Fee Land (NMC Purchase) 1,482.2 acres

The Sokaogon Chippewa Community is the 13<sup>th</sup> largest employer in Forest County, employing more than 235 people of diverse skills.

## Tribal Government

The Sokaogon Chippewa Community is governed by a six member council.

- The council meets monthly or as required
- Decision making is by majority rule
- Elections are held annually for council members not holding officer positions
- Officer elections are held every two years

The Sokaogon Chippewa Community is a sovereign nation chartered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Federally recognized as a Native American Tribe/Nation, and operates under a ratified constitution.

## Brief History

Under the provisions of the 1934 Reorganization Act, 1,745 acres of land were purchased for the Mole Lake Reservation. This area lies in southwestern Forest County, near Crandon. In 1930, a roll had been taken in the Mole Lake area and 199 Indians were determined to be in this band.

According to tribal history, these Indians had been promised this land by a treaty signed with Franklin Pierce. This agent, who was to confirm the treaty and secure the land for them, drowned on his return trip from Washington. The tribe, to this day, actively pursues any knowledge or document to support their claim to the original treaty lands.

Before the reservation was incorporated, the Mole Lake Chippewa lived in extreme poverty. These Chippewa welcomed the Reorganization Act and accepted a constitution on October 8, 1938.

At that time, the principle means of gaining a livelihood for this group were boat building, wild rice, wreath greens, selling souvenir bows and arrows, and other novelties. The soil, a sandy loam with gravel outcroppings, yields fair crops of potatoes, short season vegetables, oats, clover, and timothy hay. The game on the reservation included deer, bear, fox, muskrats, and water fowl.

With the advent of gambling casinos and bingo, the tribe has continued with an age-old Chippewa tradition of playing games of chance. The introduction of bingo and casinos drastically altered unemployment on the reservation. Rates fell from 80% to 10% within a couple of years. The surrounding communities have also benefited financially and reduced their dependency on federal aid.

Today, the Sokaogon Chippewa Community continues to harvest wild rice and spear fish in traditional ways. And now, utilizing state of the art technology, they continue to protect the resources of their environment for future generations. The tribe continues to use its money wisely by investing in cultural preservation and restoration projects, environmental planning of their resources, education of their community members, and social programs that enhance the general health and welfare of the Sokaogon Chippewa Community.

## **Tribal Services**

### **Law Enforcement**

- The Sokaogon Chippewa Community does not have a law enforcement entity
- The Sokaogon Chippewa Community has an agreement with the Forest County Sheriff to provide law enforcement services

### **Court System**

- Four Judges
- One Prosecutor
- One Attorney
- One Clerk of Courts
- One Guardian ad Litem

### **Education**

- Mole Lake Reservation children are educated in the Crandon and Wabeno School Districts
- Higher Education Financial Assistance
- DOT Employee Training
- Nicolet College Extension Courses

### **Healthcare**

- Mole Lake Health Clinic
- Diabetes Program
- Honoring Our Children
- Well Women
- AODA
- Medicaid Outreach
- Walk-in Urgent Care
- Child Care
- Immunizations
- Family Practice Based Health Care

## **Housing**

- 27 multi-family units
- 126 single family units

## **Social Services**

- Domestic Abuse Support Services
- TRAILS Youth Group
- Family Violence Prevention
- Childcare Development Funds
- Daycare
- Wisconsin Shares W-2 Childcare
- Food Share
- Food Share Employment Training
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- General Assistance
- Native Employment Works
- Workforce Investment Act
- Kinship Care
- Medical Assistance/Badger Care
- MA Transportation
- Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program
- Weatherization
- Keep Wisconsin Warm Funds
- Funded through a variety of sources including tribal funds
- Non-tribal members comprise 20% of those receiving tribal services

## **Administration**

- Human Resources
- Accounting
- Cultural Preservation
- Information Technology
- Environmental Protection
- Roads Maintenance
- Commodities Distribution
- Solid Waste Disposal
- Marketing and Tourism

## **Economic Enterprises**

The Sokaogon Chippewa Community has a limited economic base that is highly dependent on tourism dollars. Plans are underway to improve the utility infrastructure which will allow for a diversification of business enterprises to begin.

- Mole Lake Casino and Bingo
- Mole Lake New Business Incubator (Nijii)
- Sokaogon Chippewa Community C-Store
- Café Manoomin Restaurant
- New in 2008 - 75 Room Hotel with Pool Facilities Attached to Casino
- New in 2008 1.3 million Youth Center