Leech Lake Environmental-Land Department

Community Focused Decision Making
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

- Location: North Central Minnesota
  - Size: 866,062 acres
  - Citizens: 10,352
- Reservation Population: 7,760 (64% Tribal)
- Government Head quarters: Cass Lake
- Government has over 1,600 employees

- Neighbors: Itasca, Cass, Hubbard and Beltrami
Community Outreach

“If our communities and individual community members do not understand why we have environmental regulations then it does not matter how great our written environmental law are, because true environmental protection will come from individual community members being good stewards of the land.”
NEED AND PURPOSE

- Any law or ordinance success relies on individual compliance
- Education of tribal and non tribal community only strengths sovereignty
- Being active and visible in community helps bring awareness
- Help to change the social norms
PARTNERS

ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMER YOUTH
- Established 2009
- Educating future adult community members
- Strengthens relationships amongst participants via mixed age interaction
- Annual individuals directly reached 14
- Outcomes are generational (100 youth can reach estimated 1000 individuals)
- Youth with a better understanding of their environment have a better chance of being good stewards of the land

STEWARDSHIP GUIDE
- Publics guide to understanding LLELD Priorities

LOCAL PARTNERS
- Cass Lake City Council meetings
  - Need Support for Superfund site Clean up
- Local Indian Council meetings
  - Tribal Community drives policy
- Township Meetings
  - Non tribal members have a vested interest
- County Board Meetings
  - Support for funding Brownsfield
- Grass Roots Organizations
  - Organizing “Honor the Earth”

- Must always be open and create trust amongst any partners before moving forward on any issue
Environmental and Health Issues

- Direct Threat to Lifeways
  - Water Surface and Ground
- Clean up of the St. Regis Superfund NPL Site
  - Enforcement of Tribal HSCA
- Deforestation
  - CNF Most Commercialized Forest in country
- Waste Water Infrastructure
  - BIA development lacked long term planning
Environment and Health Successes

- Direct Threat to Lifeways
  - Pipelines Prefer to avoid reservations
- Clean up of the St. Regis Superfund NPL Site
  - EPA Region 5 and LLBO using Tribal HCSA as a ARRA
- Deforestation
  - Joint Decision Making Model
- Waste Water Infrastructure
  - Using EPA 106 funds to identify needs and threats to water resources
What can EPA do?

- Support tribes decisions and defend their inherit authority to make those decisions
- Strive to understand their decision making modules could be different

"It is long past time that the Indian policies of the Federal government began to recognize and build upon the capacities and insights of the Indian people. Both as a matter of Justice and as a matter of enlightened social policy, we must begin to act on the basis of what the Indians themselves have long been telling us. The time has come to break decisively with the past and to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions."  

*President Nixon 1970 Address to U.S. Congress*
WHAT'S THE MY TAKE AWAY?

- Build Human Partnerships
- Community Involvement helps drive solutions
- Trying new things gets new results
Leech Lake Environmental-Land Department Contact

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Only after the last tree has been cut down:
Only when the last river has been poisoned;
Only when the last fish has been caught;
Only then will you realize that money cannot be eaten.