



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEMENT REGARDING MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION ON BAY MILLS INDIAN COMMUNITY RESERVATION

BAY MILLS — Bay Mills Indian Community continues to be a leader in Indian Country. The tribe that launched the first tribally-owned gaming establishment in Michigan is now the first tribe in the State of Michigan to legalize the recreational use of marijuana on the reservation.

On April 8, the Bay Mills Executive Council formally adopted an ordinance allowing individuals to cultivate, possess, and use marijuana. The move comes at the direction of the General Tribal Council, the governing body of the tribe. In January, the GTC voted in favor of legalization, authorizing the Executive Council to create an ordinance within 90 days.

BMIC's ordinance mirrors state law in regards to personal possession, cultivation and use. Michigan voters approved recreational marijuana use last November. By mirroring state law, tribal members are now on equal footing with state residents.

Commercial marijuana businesses are not being authorized on the reservation at this time, as marijuana use is not permitted in public. Under the Tribe's new law, only those age 21 and older are permitted to use and possess marijuana. Individuals who have previous convictions in tribal court for marijuana-based offenses can move to have those convictions vacated. BMIC will no longer criminalize marijuana offenses, as long as the guidelines of the ordinance are followed.

“Our tribal government does not necessarily promote the use of marijuana, but we believe that criminalizing it is bad policy,” said BMIC Tribal Chairman Bryan Newland. “Our new tribal law ensures that people on our lands are no longer at risk of prosecution for actions that are lawful everywhere else in Michigan.”

Across the country, several tribes have asserted their sovereign power to legalize recreational marijuana use, but of Michigan's 12 federally recognized tribes, Bay Mills is the first to act.

The National Congress of American Indians also supports these actions, citing, “Indian tribes are sovereign governments with the inherent right to set local laws addressing marijuana, including its medical and industrial uses, according to the public health and economic needs of their unique communities.”

For media inquiries, please contact Shannon Jones at 906-322-9820 or newspaper@baymills.org.