



Whitney Gravelle
Bay Mills Indian Community
Tribal Chairwoman 2021

Building a Better Future Together

Family and friends from Bay Mills, aanii my name is Whitney Gravelle and I am running for Tribal Chairwoman in the 2021 Special Election.

I am the granddaughter of Albert “Big Abe” and Amelia LeBlanc on my mother’s side, and Grace Gravelle on my father’s side. I am the daughter of Evelyene LeBlanc-McPherson and Robert Gravelle.

I was born and raised on the Bay Mills Indian Reservation. I graduated from Brimley High School and went on to Michigan State University where I graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis on International Studies and Political Science. Afterwards, I continued my education at Michigan State University College of Law where I graduated cum laude with a Juris Doctorate in 2016. I also obtained a certificate in Indigenous Law by taking classes focusing on Federal Indian Law; the Indian Child Welfare Act; Tribal Law and Regulation; and Global Perspectives on Indigenous People.

While in law school, I worked for the Udall Congressional Washington DC Internship, the Native American Rights Fund, the Michigan Supreme Court in Justice McCormack’s Chambers, the Michigan Attorney General’s Office in the Indian Child Welfare Section, and in Michigan State University’s Indian Law Clinic.

Upon graduation from law school, I worked in Washington, DC for the United States Department of Justice in the Indian Resource Section. After returning, I served our community as Chief Judge of Bay Mills Tribal Court, and again as the Tribal Attorney for Bay Mills Indian Community. I have handled cases related to the scope of tribal land and jurisdiction, treaty hunting and fishing rights, child welfare advocacy, and the protection of lands held in trust for tribes and individual Indian lands.

When I went away to school, I remember telling my mother “I want to help give back to my community.” At the time, I did not know how or in what way I would give back, but now I can proudly say I want to do it by being your public servant. I believe my education is the best way to give back and help our people. Be it cases, legislation, public policy, or referral regulations, the cornerstone of all policy or legal work adopted by Tribal Nations involves tribal lands, traditions, culture, or history. I am prepared to navigate the complex legal structures that are part of modern day tribal sovereignty.

We live in a beautiful place, filled with a long and strong history as a Tribal Nation. For almost a century, Bay Mills Indian Community has been a leader in Indian Country leading ways to advance sovereignty and self-determination. In the 1950s, our tribe pushed for justice by winning a lawsuit against the federal government for failing to pay for the lands it ‘purchased’ under our treaties. In the 1970s, Bay Mills fought to protect and secure treaty fishing rights in the landmark case *United States v. Michigan*. In the 1980s, we opened the first tribally owned casino in Michigan, and one of the first in the entire United States. In the 1990s, Bay Mills Community College led the charge in education reform throughout the State of Michigan. In 2020, Bay Mills opened up the first tribally owned and operated recreational cannabis dispensary in the United States, and was one of the first tribes to enter into online internet gaming with DraftKings.

Although we face many challenges as a Tribes, I know that together we can accomplish anything. I would be honored to serve Bay Mills Indian Community as we work together to build a brighter and better future for the next seven generations.

Please visit my Facebook page to learn more about my campaign as the days go by, and also to let me know what you’re worried about or would like to see done around Bay Mills. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me if you have a question or want to talk on the phone!

Miigwetch, and remember together we can “Win with Whitney!”