

Dee Ann Mayo

Good afternoon. My name is Dee Ann Mayo. I am currently the tribal vice president for Lac du Flambeau. Jim asked me to be a part of this panel, which I'm honored to do so. I am honored to reflect back on my history dealing with our treaty rights. I am of that generation when the treaty rights issues were at its peak up in the northwoods in the mid and late 1980s.

We weren't taught a lot about our treaties through grade school nor in high school. I learned pretty quickly of the impact of the treaty rights in my senior year of high school. It was a hard time. I've learned from those experiences. I brought my two children here today. I told myself I wouldn't be emotional.

I was watching the webcast yesterday, watching Tom up here speaking and it just reminded me a lot of hard feelings that we had in our community, our surrounding community and in our high school. I had walked in one day to one of our English classes where two teachers were talking about how bad it was because Indians were killing all the deer. It happened to be my English teachers, one of whom was married to an activist in the PARR group. I was very vocal back then as I am today. When my friends could not handle that kind of environment, they just dropped out of school.

I was in an environmental science class with a very vocal, out-spoken teacher that one day decided to debate the Indian treaty rights. I walked into the class that day and he had the room separated. And he said, "We're going to debate this issue today." I thought, "Fine, this is an opportunity to educate my classmates from three to four years, I'm gonna take it and let them know what the true facts are." Although his showcase was spear fishing at that time, most of the questions from the rest of the class were geared to Indians getting everything free; free housing, free cars, everyone on AFDC. So, it was an opportunity to tell them the facts the best they could. That was my introduction to treaties.

I graduated from high school and then, my significant other and I decided to actively exercise our treaty rights. We went out to get our fish. That's when the landings were really hostile. We had people in our face, fake spearers, women calling us every name you could think of, telling us "How would you like it if we speared your baby?" They compared a fish to my kid. So, again, I was awakened to the reality of how racial, how misinformed people were. I also had questions about how can they value a fish over another human life. So, that inspired me to go on and see what I could do to help educate and help try to minimize the impacts for the future kids and generations so they didn't have to go through that again.

That pushed me to get involved with the natural resource field. I went into our fisheries program as a technician, and started giving back what I'd taken. We were taught that if you're going to take something, you have to find a way to give something back. Whether it's through doing work in that area, or if it's through going out to speak and standing up for those things. Those are the ways you give back and fight for what is right. I continued on for years in our water resource program working for our environmental department because with those rights does come the responsibility to protect those rights. I want my kids, Hunter and Kennedy here today with me, and my grandchild, he'll be a year old next month, to be able to enjoy those things, those resources that we all got to enjoy.

I contributed by getting involved in our natural resource program and working and pushing for those efforts because we can't eat polluted fish, or drink polluted water. We need to do something now to protect those things, and that is how it is done. We need to teach them, to

motivate them, to get out and see and experience the things that mean so much to us and brought us here today.

It has always been my foundation, and our community's strength, that we rely on our treaties, our treaty resources and the exercise of those rights. It's a strong basis of our Lac du Flambeau community and tribe. Through this whole time, we saw the obstacles before us. Our community really stepped in. Even when I was in high school, our tribal government made sure that we were all safe. They stepped in even when those teachers were talking that way and were pushing things. They made sure our kids would at least get the essential education that is owed to them.

One of the fundamental goals I have is to protect those treaty rights and resources. When our community was established, there was such a tension with our county governments. In the late 1990s, we established a Tribal County Concerns Committee that would work on treaty rights issues, issues with our law enforcement and our court issues and also other issues. That was something our community worked towards. We still have that committee today, where we can give input and keep the communication lines going.

We've had many different programs established. We pushed hard to get our language program in at that very same high school that we ship our kids to. We have our language program in our grade school and also other resources coming in. I applaud Fred Maulson and GLIFWC for doing a great job with our grade school kids by educating them and providing opportunities for them to be able to go out and be prepared to exercise those rights. It's a great role model. It has pushed our Natural Resource Department to develop youth programs and initiatives to motivate kids into future schooling for natural resources degrees and certifications.

I just want to apologize for talking on, but I will not apologize for standing up for our treaty rights and speaking on their behalf. Again, I'm honored to be able to be up here and to be able to express a little bit about my story and the story of our community. Hopefully, this will help us moving ahead and pressing on, because that's what I think we are doing. *Miigwech*.