

## **Bio for Leonard Fineday, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Secretary/Treasurer**

Leonard “Lenny” Fineday was born in Cass Lake, Minnesota to the late Reverend Leonard F. Fineday and Mary Fineday. He grew up at Portage Lake near Bena, Minnesota and in Cass Lake, Minnesota. He graduated from Cass Lake-Bena High School, from Bethel University (St. Paul) with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, and from Marquette University Law School with a Juris Doctorate. After graduating law school, he passed the Minnesota Bar Exam and has been practicing law since then. Lenny is also a Bush Foundation Native Nation Rebuilder and is passionate about protecting and advancing the inherent sovereignty of the Leech Lake people.

Lenny has a wide array of experience in governance. Prior to being elected to serve as the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Secretary/Treasurer, he has served the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe as Self-Governance Coordinator, Special Projects Coordinator, Government Relations Attorney, Legal Director and Executive Director. Lenny was also the Human Services Director for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. He served the White Earth Nation as Tribal Attorney, Tribal Court Conflicts Judge, and General Counsel. He also served the Red Lake Nation Tribal Court as Juvenile Court Judge.

In addition to this past tribal experience, Lenny was elected president of the Minnesota American Indian Bar Association, an elected member of the Cass Lake City Council, appointed as Secretary of the Leech Lake Tribal College Board of Trustees, and elected as a member of the Cass Lake-Bena School Board. In 2015, he was appointed by Governor Dayton to serve on Minnesota’s Judicial Selection Commission, a post he held until 2019. Lenny is also a member of the Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI) Statewide Advisory Board, and Co-Chairs the CJI ICWA Subcommittee with Associate Supreme Court Justice Anne McKeig. The Children’s Justice Initiative works toward positive outcomes for youth involved in the state court justice system.

In his past work, Lenny has been instrumental in organizing State of Minnesota officials to pass legislation that recognized the State’s responsibility to pay for a \$14 million payment to Leech Lake that was founded on the State’s erroneous advice. Furthermore, in 2013, Lenny worked with members of Minnesota’s congressional delegation on the first Secretarial Transfers legislation. In 2020, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation Restoration Act (Public Law 116-255) was enacted into law resulted in the transfer of more than 11,000 acres of federal Forest Service land back to the Leech Lake Reservation.

In his private practice, Lenny has represented various entities and individuals on matters ranging from corporate formation and financing restructuring to litigation to administrative law proceedings before the Internal Revenue Service and Veteran’s Administration. His financing work has included both traditional and nontraditional lending options, tax credit financing, and federally guaranteed lending. Lenny also serves on the Leadership Council for the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank’s Center for Indian Country Development, where he advises the Center’s work on research and policy initiatives surrounding economic development in Indian Country.

As Secretary/Treasurer for the Leech Lake Reservation Business Committee, Lenny’s goals are to be transparent with respect to the Band’s finances and to gather public input into decision-making, so Band members are aware of decisions before they are made. Lenny is working to ensure compliance with the Budget Ordinance, to minimize audit findings, and to ensure internal controls and quality assurance in all the Band’s programs and operations are in place.

The major policy initiatives Lenny continues to work on include cleaning up the St. Regis Superfund site in Cass Lake, restoring the Band’s trust land base, addressing the rampant substance use disorder within our communities, and expanding housing opportunities for all.