Residents come together to protect Little Earth Housing Complex

We all remember where we were when we heard about the death of George Floyd. It’s a moment in time that touched every corner of Minneapolis, and the Little Earth of United Tribes was no exception.

“I woke up to Facebook one day and saw the video. I knew something was going to happen after that,” said Little Earth resident, Estella LaPointe. “I was home when I saw the Target and Cub being looted which are my stores, that was heartbreaking. Then, a group of people burned the third precinct and everyone was saying they were coming to Little Earth next.”

LaPointe said at that moment she left her house to go stand watch at one of the entrances of Little Earth. She said she stayed out there for 10 hours. She watched residents go in and out of their homes to keep watch as well – collectively, there were hundreds of residences guarding their community from the madness that took place.

“We did not have big machine guns to protect our elders’ and babies’ homes,” LaPointe said. “We came with whatever we had, and we will continue to be here.”

Since that night, a group of Little Earth residents of George Floyd at all the entrances of the housing units every night. At first, the hours were long: 8 p.m. to sunrise. The goal was to stop what was happening in Minneapolis from happening in their own community. The main threats were the out-of-state and out-of-town white supremacists and the Minneapolis Police Department.

“First week was hell,” said Jolene Jones, who’s lived there since 1974, making her the longest residing Little Earth resident. “We took gunfire 5 times, fire from the riot police and the state troopers. In that first week, Little Earth was showing up with large numbers of over 100 residents who were on every street that surrounded the housing. One night, a day or two after the rioting started, a group of peaceful protestors were making their way onto Cedar Ave from 26th. Residents let them know they were entering a private community and managed to reroute them away.

The residents were facing East on 26th St., moving protestors along, and when they turned around to face the West side of the street, they were met with police brutality. Jones said unmarked trucks and buses were blocking the street and the police were in front, shining massive lights at the crowd. The police in riot gear wasted no time throwing stun grenades (more commonly known as flash grenades) and shooting rubber bullets. The crowd of hundreds ran down Cedar Avenue and retreated into the Little Earth Property.

Police were met with hundreds of residents chanting as one voice “We’re peaceful, get out.” The shots continued from about a block and half away. Eventually the police stopped firing on the people. The collective power of the community won in that moment, but the police were back later that night and the night after. Tire slashing and random gunfire at Little Earth took place in the nights that followed.

“It hasn’t been explained to us why that happened,” Jones said. “They say they can’t tell the difference between rioters and protestors (this was before the curfew began) but it took less than 15 residents to reroute them, so were they going to fight the protestors? Did we get caught in the crossfire? Were they going to shoot us all?”

Covid/protests bring food shortages and community support

The burning and damage to Cub Foods and Target stores in south Minneapolis following the death of George Floyd in May turned the Phillips Neighborhood and adjacent areas into what is known as an urban “food desert.”

"If you don’t have transportation or much help to get around to other areas to shop, you really have a problem getting food," said Angel Swan, a former barista at the Pow Wow Grounds coffee shop who responded to neighborhood food shortages by starting what is called a “pop-up” food shelf.

The community response along the American Indian Cultural Corridor on Franklin Avenue is bringing food to the Phillips neighborhood and the streets of Minneapolis have become calmer after the Floyd death that ignited looting and burning in the Twin Cities. But there is no end in sight to how long the COVID-19 crisis will impact life in the neighborhood, or how long it will take for new construction and repairs to bring major food retailers back to the neighborhood.

"Crisis builds communities," said Swan, who is also a Metropolitan State University student. It also builds leadership.

What is emerging along Franklin Avenue corridor could serve as a case study for civic leaders and urban scholars on community-based responses to crises and human needs.

Food access and shopping were problems for elders and others in the Phillips Neighborhood given precautions needed with the COVID-19 pandemic, Swan said. These problems became much worse with the looting and damage. Cub and Target were the two largest nearby area markets for food, household and personal items.

Swan said her initial idea was to collect donated foods for the American Indian Movement (AIM) patrol that protected buildings and walked the streets protecting people and property in the Cultural Corridor area during the unrest.

Three days later, on May 28, when impact on the neighborhood was evident, Swan went to work for the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) as Food and Donations Coordinator for the pop-up food shelf. It took over the All My Relations Arts gallery behind Pow Wow Grounds, 1414 E. Franklin Ave.

Community response and support from well-wishers outside the community was immediate. When the food shelf expanded to serve all needy in the neighborhood, Swan and NACDI staff turned to Facebook to enlist help. A call for food and personal products brought immediate responses, she said. Someone from the neighborhood was a truck driver. A Teamsters Union local delivered a truck load of food. More help was needed so a call for volunteers went out on Facebook.

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Minnesota Department of Health
across the country statues of empire are tumbling. The idols are indeed falling, the American idols that is. This is not just about statues. It is about whose history is celebrated, the history of the oppressor, or the history of the oppressed. It looks like it may be time for a reconciliation.

George Floyd’s death has been the spark of an international movement for human rights and dignity. That spark is seen across the world, and it means that some big statues are coming down. The toppling of the Columbus statue in St. Paul by the American Indian Movement (AIM) leaders was one of many nationally, and the statue toppling has also included some conquistadors. I predict that before we are done a whole bunch of Confederate leaders, some Indian War generals, and some corrupt and genocide complicit governors will also fall. And, it’s about time.

Heads are gonna roll. A Columbus statue was beheaded in Boston, one was removed in Richmond (landing in a lake) and on the June 25 Anniversary of the Little Big Horn, the Columbus statue came down in Denver. That’s after decades of opposition to the City’s proud Columbus Day celebrations. “…The statue was found on its side on the sidewalk Friday morning...” the Denver Post reported.

There should be a way to have this discussion in civil society. But what this spring has taught us is that if the system doesn’t work, and people keep trying to make change, something’s going to give. Now there’s supposed to be a process for removing statues in Minnesota. There’s a board called the CAAP (Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board) and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan (Ojibwe) chairs the CAAP board. However, the CAAP board has not removed a single statue in 52 years. That might need to change. Flanagan had to face reporters after the statue came down, this time by the hands of Mike Forcia, an Ojibwe businessman, community leader and member of AIM.

“I’m not going to perform for folks. I’m not gonna feign sadness. I’m not gonna shed a tear over the loss of a statue that honored someone who by of his own admission sold 9- and 10-year-old girls over sex slavery,” Flanagan said at a news conference. This is a new Minnesota.

They are Falling

Other colonizers are falling as well. Juan De Oñate, a conquistador who became the Governor of New Mexico in 1598, was a brutal man. When his troops needed food, he demanded it of Acoma Pueblo, and when the Pueblo refused and fought back, Oñate ordered the massacre of 800 Acoma people. He also ordered the amputation of the right foot of any adult Acoma man in the village; 24 of them in total. They lived the rest of their lives with stumps. Oñate was recalled to Mexico City in 1666 to account for his conduct, where he was convicted of cruelty to both Natives and colonists and banished from New Mexico for life.

He lived on, however, as a statue. Mounted on a horse, the conquistador wore military regalia and loomed large on Highway 68, out of Santa Fe. On the eve of the 400th anniversary of Oñate’s arrival into the region, December 1997 someone sawed off Oñate’s right foot and left a note saying, “Fair is fair.” This June, that statue came down.

Red Nation, an Indigenous youth group, organized a demonstration at the Oñate statue. Sensing that Oñate’s time had come, officials removed the statue for safe keeping. “It’s a win,” said Luis Pena, who started a petition to remove the statue and stood near the concrete platform covered with blood-red handprints. “Symbols are important, they shape the way we ingest the world … In reclaiming these symbols, we get a chance to tell a side of history that has been left out of the books.”

Another Oñate statue came down in Albuquerque, and now Kit Carson is in question everywhere. Carson, who has National Forests, squares, and more named in his honor, burned the orchards of the Navajo and forced them on the Long Walk to Fort Redondo, many did not return.

Reporter Randall Balmer told a sweet story for the LA Times: “For the first time in many years, we don’t have to stare at Oñate,” Elena Ortiz, a Red Nation leader, told the Santa Fe New Mexican. “The presence of that statue was an act of violence upon Pueblo people from the moment it was put up and now, finally, it’s gone.” When Than Tsídéh, whose name means Sun Bird in the Tewa language, arrived at the Oñate monument, the statue of the Pueblo’s tormentor was already gone.

“I started to sing,” he explained, “in honor of my ancestors who I know were slaughtered by this man.” And then Than Tsídéh did what his long-ago ancestors, (because of Oñate’s cynical brutality) could not. He danced.

Over the past month, NASCAR has banned confederate flags, and the confederate statues are falling. Where do 700 confederate statues go? That’s a good question being asked nationally, and one which we should begin to ask in Minnesota. After all, we should have learned by now that glorifying genocide in art is a bad idea; just take the Walker Art Center’s installation of Sam Durant’s sculpture Scaffold in 2012. The idea that Minnesota institutions can glorify genocide is problematic, and as statues tumble across the world, now is a good time to figure out the next art installations.

I believe that the Walker Art Center replaced the Scaffold with a giant blue chicken. Really, they could have done something monumental, like pay a comparable commission to what they paid Durant to a Native Artist. Our art is beautiful. Let’s replace Columbus with an Indigenous person.

My suggestion for the fallen idols is maybe a Statue Garden of Shame. It could be a learning exercise, sort of like looking at old statues or pictures of Hitler. Don’t keep that stuff around, it’s bad karma.

And for Minnesota, there’s a pretty decent list of folks who might need to take a hike to a new garden spot. I’d like to put Knute Nelson right there on top of that list. Nelson was responsible for the death, misery and theft of the lands of White Earth Anishinaabe people and went on to become governor. Sort of like Onate, but without the massacres. Our deaths took a couple of generations. His statue stands tall at the capital. Let’s use this opportunity to make a new story, bring forth new art and dance together.
Natives face obstacles to voting most everywhere. Is MN different?

**BY LEE EGERSTROM**

Native Americans and Alaskan Natives face obstacles to voting this year, researchers say, and it may be too early to tell if Minnesota will be part of the pack erecting barriers between Native communities and the ballot box.

A multi-year study prepared by the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) and the Native American Voting Rights Coalition (NAVRC), based at Boulder, Colo., found widespread barriers to Native voting that range from voter registration requirements, to actual voting, and to getting votes counted.

In Minnesota, lawsuits have attempted to block state efforts to make voting-by-mail easier during the current coronavirus pandemic. Conflicting state and federal court decisions in June led to a temporary compromise for the state’s Aug. 11 primary election. Barriers to voting by mail and other inconveniences during the COVID-19 will still be in place and potentially may reduce Minnesotans voting in the Nov. 3 general election.

Given voter suppression efforts in other states, however, it is unknown but possible that legal challenges to people’s access to polls in Minnesota will emerge between now and November. Here and everywhere, much is at stake.

“Native American voters have the potential to decide elections,” said Jacqueline De Leon, NARF state attorney and co-author of the report Obstacles at Every Turn. “Forty-four percent of eligible Native Americans are not registered to vote, meaning there are more than 1 million potential Native votes unaccounted for.”

Areas where Native votes can have significant impacts on elections include both Dakotas, Alaska and several Southwest states. They can in neighborhoods and local voting districts of Minnesota as well.

State and county election officials in Minnesota have tried to reduce barriers to voting by encouraging voter registrations and applications to for absentee ballots to vote by mail. Early indications show this is helping.

Risikat Adesaogun, press secretary for Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, said that as of June 25 there were 207,835 Minnesotans who had requested absentee ballots. That compared with 8,964 requests on the same date in 2018 and 7,939 on that date in 2016, the last national election.

This can help keep Minnesotans both healthy and voting this year with the COVID-19 virus a threat to all. At the same time, vote-by-mail isn’t a cure-all for low Native voting turnouts nationwide, said Risikat Adesaogun, press secretary for Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, said that as of June 25 there were 207,835 Minnesotans who had requested absentee ballots. That compared with 8,964 requests on the same date in 2018 and 7,939 on that date in 2016, the last national election.

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Native people do not receive home mail delivery in many parts of the country and cannot vote safely at home, they noted. Language barriers also pose a problem for some voting at home.

Elsewhere, residents of some remote tribal nations need to travel more than 100 miles to either register to vote or to vote at state established polling sites, the authors said. Others have to travel about 100 miles round trip to get state identifications that some state require for voting.

At hearings held during 2017 and 2018, NARF researchers found several common barriers to registering to vote. They included lack of traditional mailing addresses, voter identification requirements, unequal access to online registration (about 90 percent of reservations lack access to broadband Internet), unequal access to in-person voter registration, unequal access to registration on reservation lands, and unequal funding for voter registration efforts on tribal lands.

The report authors found a lot of barriers in various states that included purges of election roles, lack of pre-election information, unequal access to early voting, lack of Native American election workers and unequal access to convenient polling places.

That such barriers exist shouldn’t be surprising. Wisconsin and Georgia held chaotic primary elections this year, partly – at least – the result of trying to conduct elections with the COVID-19 crisis. While the worst stack up of people wanting to vote wasn’t directed at Native Americans, the lack of adequate voting places in Milwaukee did mostly impact people from marginalized communities.

“In the United States, power is available through participatory democracy. If Native Americans can engage fully in the political system – free from the barriers that currently obstruct them – they can reclaim power and participate in America in a way that is fair and just,” De Leon and Landreth said in releasing their report.

Everything, however, can be politicized, including efforts to get out the vote. Especially in an election year.

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota, along with its groups in other states, went to court earlier this year to get states to waive requirements that absentee voters need a notary or registered voter to witness their voting before mailing ballots.

The common expressed reason was COVID-19. An elderly living alone, for instance, isn’t any more likely to want a visitor come in to witness the voting than wanting to go stand in line to vote at a polling place. League efforts, joined by other groups, appear to have prevailed in Virginia and Alabama. A compromise was struck in Minnesota, according to Courthouse News Service, after state and federal judges split decisions on similar cases.

Courthouse News Service (CN) is a California-based news service for law firms and has reporters in most major markets across the country. It reported on June 18 that a Ramsey County judge approved a consent decree between the Secretary of State’s office and a group, the Minnesota Alliance for Retired Americans, which sought to eliminate the witness requirement.

Groups in league with the Alliance included the League of Women Voters, the NAACP and American Civil Liberties Union.

A federal judge, meanwhile, blocked that waiver for the November general election. It was sought by Trump’s re-election campaign and local groups of supporters.

Nothing precludes groups from taking more legal runs at how this year’s elections may be held. Such efforts at vote suppression or other reasons would seem likely, in Minnesota and elsewhere, given how the year is unfolding.
Pipelines: How risky do you wanna be?

BY WINONA LADUKE

Minnesota’s Public Utilities Commission (PUC) continues to be an embarrassment to state regulatory authorities, slogging ahead with what we might call the last tar sands pipeline. On June 25, Little Big Horn Day, the PUC reaffirmed approvals of the Enbridge Line 3 project—route and need. The White Earth Nation, Red Lake Nation, Honor the Earth and other groups continue to oppose Line 3. The sole dissenting vote on PUC is Matthew Schuerger. Valerie Means, the newly appointed member of the commission, held the line.

“There is no question that COVID-19 has presented a number of unique challenges,” said PUC Commissioner Means. However, “COVID disruptions would not change the [long-term oil] forecast.”

Apparently the PUC did not get the memo written by the rest of the oil and insurance industries, nor has it seen the writing on the wall about Enbridge. Insurance industries, nor has it seen the memo written by the rest of the oil and insurance industries, nor has it seen the writing on the wall about Enbridge. Apparently the PUC did not get the memo written by the rest of the oil and insurance industries, nor has it seen the writing on the wall about Enbridge.

Let me explain: In the face of plummeting oil prices, 100,000 workers laid off in the oil industry, cuts or cancellations of tar sands projects, other fossil fuel companies are moving into cut their risk. British Petroleum announced to share holders that it would write down as much as $17.5 billion of oil and gas holdings in its next quarterly report. “Everywhere I have been – inside BP, as well as outside – I have come away with one inescapable conclusion,” Bernard Looney, the chief executive, said in a speech in February, “We have got to change.” Oil and gas aren’t worth what it used to be. Just take the lawsuit filed by Attorney General Keith Ellison on June 24. Ellison filed consumer protection litigation against oil giants ExxonMobil, Koch Industries, and the American Petroleum Institute for their decades-long activities in deceiving the public on climate change. The lawsuit points to evidence that the oil industry has known for seventy years that their products’ greenhouse gas emissions would contribute to a warming planet, calamitous weather pattern changes, and rising sea levels, and they chose to deliberately obscure this information in the interest of profits. Minnesota has a good record on consumer litigation – take the tobacco company lawsuit as an example.

Ellison’s lawsuit aims to hold the oil industry accountable in two ways through financial damages, and by forcing them to disclose information related to pattern changes, and rising sea levels, and they chose to deliberately obscure this information in the interest of profits. Minnesota has a good record on consumer litigation – take the tobacco company lawsuit as an example.

Ellison’s lawsuit aims to hold the oil industry accountable in two ways through financial damages, and by forcing them to disclose information related to the recent damage caused to a part of the oil pipeline. A spill in the Straits of Mackinac could cost the company over $6 billion according to estimates by the Coast Guard. This is posing more of a risk to states and tribes, as Enbridge’s financial wellbeing comes into question.

In May of 2020, Enbridge (after posting $1.4 billion in losses in its first quarter) had layoffs and early buy outs totaling 800 company employees between Canada and the US. Meanwhile, another Enbridge battle is heating up in Wisconsin, where the pipeline company has been forced to create a new corridor outside of the Bad River Reservation. Seeking eminent domain of private lands, the Canadian corporation is now facing challenges at the Wisconsin PUC. And in early July, virtual hearings will be held by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on Enbridge’s proposed new line.

Enbridge has reduced the amount of oil going through it’s main line by at least 300,000 barrels per day, and anticipates more cuts this summer as international and domestic demands for oil plummet. The company does not need Line 3 to replace it, needs it to be closed down. Enbridge itself has said that removing an aging Line 3 (Lines 1 and 2 are also in disarray) will cost the company $2 billion. That’s all jobs. All those guys laid off on the Iron Range could go work for Enbridge to clean up. Let the Ojibwes supervise it. We’re better at taking care of the environment than the rest of those guys.

Minnesota has an opportunity to catch the momentum of the next green economy. Tribes will likely have to provide the leadership, and in that economy, we won’t be fighting about pollution and water. While Enbridge offers money to tribes (Al Monaco made over $14 million last year), that’s about half of what the company offered Red Lake for forty years of trespassing. While they still have the money, let’s make a good choice for our future.

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Domestic violence advocacy service created by Natives for Natives

BY MAURITA BEGAY

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a national nonprofit organization based in Minnesota dedicated to providing advocacy services for domestic violence and dating violence victims in Native American communities. The organization is a collaborative product of The National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center.

The concept of StrongHearts Native Helpline was conceived in 2012 when reports showed that calls from Native American communities were lower in comparison to other communities, despite the well known statistics for higher domestic violence rates in Indian Country.

Staff of The National Domestic Violence Hotline brainstormed ways to better serve the Native American community, “and actually, what advocates from across the country said was, ‘Well, you can’t. You know, that’s not your place – to serve Native Americans. You don’t understand what our lived experience is. You don’t understand what our barriers to justice are.’ And so, they ultimately agreed that it would be most appropriate to form a Native American culturally specific helpline to help Native Americans from our communities,” says Lori Jumper, Director of StrongHearts Native Helpline. According to the StrongHearts Native Helpline website, “Many Native and non-Native violence experts agree that the prevalence of violence in Indian Country is a modern effect of the historical trauma that our people continue to experience... [A 2010 study conducted by the CDC] found that more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women had experienced violence in their lifetime, and one in three had experienced violence within the past year.”

StrongHearts Native Helpline was established in March 2017, and operated in Austin, Texas, where The National Domestic Violence Hotline is based, for two years before moving to Minnesota in the Twin Cities region, due to it being an area that has a native population and more accessible native programming.

At first, StrongHearts Native Helpline provided services only by phone. All of StrongHearts Native Helpline’s advocacy services are available daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Central Time at 1-844-762-8483. If a caller needs services outside of operation hours, they can call The National Domestic Violence Hotline for 24/7 service at 1-800-787-3224.

However, as of May 18, 2020, StrongHearts Native Helpline launched their online chat advocacy services, which provides one-on-one, real-time, confidential sessions with a trained advocate. The launch of this service was pushed forward due to the coronavirus pandemic, as it is a safer method of communication while sheltering in place with an abusive partner. These services can be accessed at https://www.strongheartshelpline.org during operation hours. On the website, there will be a series of non-identifying demographics questions, optional for the user to answer, before pressing the Start Chat button to begin a session. To close a chat at any time, the user can click on the X in the top right corner of the chat window, followed by pressing the End Chat button. To ensure safety, users should clear the online history before withdrawing from their device. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has a similar service available at https://www.thehotline.org.

All advocates of StrongHearts Native Helpline are trained to provide crisis intervention, safety planning, education, advocacy, and referrals to callers, and their training is supplemented with learning how to respond in a culturally sensitive manner in high stress situations. In fact, all of StrongHearts Native Helpline’s advocates are Native American.

“A lot of times they [callers] will ask, ‘Well, are you native?’ And our advocates, we don’t provide a lot of personal information about ourselves, but we will say, ‘Yes. Yeah, I am.’ They brief the caller [about their tribal affiliation] and there’s such a relief that they don’t have to explain their experience. The advocates will often say, ‘And then she just really started to talk and she really opened up when she found out that I was native.’ So, we know just from the reports of our advocates, that our callers really find it valuable to be talking to somebody that understands where they’re coming from,” said Jumper.

The culturally sensitive training that all of StrongHearts Native Helpline advocates receive includes historical and cultural background information that helps to understand the conditions that native communities face today. It’s immensely critical that advocates are able to empathize with the struggle to find help in close-knit communities where there is an imminent fear of judgement or rejection from one’s own friends and family.

Jumper describes the training. “We talk about Native American spirituality, but we certainly can’t teach that in terms of there being 574 Native American tribes, and we all have our own traditions and ceremonies. And, while there may be similarities, each tribe is different, but we do provide them [advocates] with basic training in that understanding our relationship to all living things; that respect that all Native American tribes have... And, in my small town, there were many times that the mainstream program, the non-native program, was like, ‘Well, why don’t you just go to your tribe for help?”

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"Would you believe! Three hundred people volunteered," she said. A family called and asked what was needed at the All My Relations Arts site. "Shelving, we said. They showed up and started measuring walls. Shelving was installed."

Dry goods groceries, paper products and personal hygiene items were dropped off. The food shelf, calling itself the “NACDI Free Market,” needed freezer and refrigeration equipment to expand into handling meats, milk and perishable fruits and vegetables.

A quick fundraising effort followed. A freezer and refrigeration was installed. As to be expected, the flow and quantities of goods to the food shelf were unpredictable. Swann and volunteers formed partnerships with other groups in the neighborhood.

"We are partnered with DIW (Division of Indian Works) officially and we have worked with the different urban tribal offices in the area as well," Swann said. She said people connected to Facebook on the Internet should monitor the American Indian Cultural Corridor Food Distribution Sites for information to monitor needs and see what Native organizations are doing in the neighborhood.

The food shelf also works with Dream of Wild Health. It provides produce from its healthy and Indigenous foods farm at Hugo and it works with urban gardening projects. The Sioux Chef, the Minneapolis-based Indigenous food business started by Sean Sherman, dropped off 200 tomatoes, leeks, peppers and other transplantable vegetable plants for people to start their own urban gardens.

Now, when the food shelf gets products such as diapers, it shares with Little Earth of United Tribes for its families. It also “partners,” or works with senior housing programs as well, Swann said. All this expands community cooperation and further shows what more work and cooperation is needed before things return to “normal,” whatever that means or may mean in the future.

The food scarcity and delivery system for the neighborhood will get a boost in mid-July. The Four Sisters Farmers Market, which would normally be open by now if not for the COVID-19 pandemic, is set to open July 16 in the parking lot in front of the Pow Wow Grounds, said Elizabeth Day, NACDI’s Community Engagement Programs manager. That will make easier access to fresh produce and food products from vendors who operate Native farms and produce locally made and grown foods.

The food shelf itself is getting ready to move a few doors to the east into what is the art gallery at the Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC).

Mary LeGarde, executive director, said initial plans were set to house the market in MAIC’s large gymnasium. That would have help users and staff with proper COVID-19 social distancing.

That plan, however, got changed because Migizi Communications needed use of that space for its summer youth program. Migizi’s new building site on Lake Street was destroyed in the rioting.

LeGarde said the gallery space has advantages by allowing people leaving with food to use a side entrance to return to Franklin Avenue. Meanwhile, MAIC is weighing which of its currently idled programs to restart in July or later, LeGarde said. It does want to get its fitness program restarted among programs shut down by the coronavirus, she said.

The Gathering Café remains closed to the general public but it does serve as the kitchen for MAIC’s ongoing program for feeding elderly.

Colette Lawrence, MAIC’s elder meals delivery coordinator who also heads similar nutrition programming at the Elders Lodge in St. Paul, said center drivers currently deliver meals to 25 elders in the community.

She and LeGarde said they are hopeful the coronavirus threat will lessen and allow more congregate dining soon for elders and others who would normally use the center.

All My Relations Arts will resume as a gallery in October, if current plans survive the summer and whatever other crises may arise, said Angela Two Stars, the gallery’s director.

“I am very proud that the center was able to serve the community in such a rapid response to what was happening in the Cities,” Two Stars said, although she is excited about returning “to serve the community through the arts.”

Food can be picked up from 1 to 3 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in the parking lot at Pow Wow Grounds. Donations for the food shelf are accepted from 3 to 6 p.m. those same days.

As people get ready to visit nontraditional food sites, such as food shelves, and visit Farmers’ Markets, a number of government and health sites offer helpful information for staying healthy. The Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association recommends these site:

https://www.mda.state.mn.us
https://www.health.state.mn.us
https://www.cdc.gov
https://mn.gov/governor/covid-19
https://www.mda.state.mn.us/covid-19/agriculture

The city of Minneapolis offers additional information for vendors, food sellers and their customers at http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/inspections/farmermarket.
Jones said it was a group of young men who put the street signs up to block the roads into Little Earth Housing a day before, the same night LaPointe stood outside the first time. That action prompted the blockades and since then the protection has continued to evolve as needs have change in the community, including giving the title “The Protectors” to Native people standing guard to protect their community.

“Four weeks later it’s a lot calmer. We’re trying to keep the drugs out and do better for our community,” Jones said. “It’s a lot better than getting shot at by the cops.

“We’re basically patrolling our neighborhood and making sure people who are non-residents are not admitted in,” said long-time resident and LaPointe’s husband, John Buehlmann. “We report anything that looks off.”

Buehlmann and LaPointe were out every night for three weeks as part of the night watch. Buehlmann said they are keeping an eye on the neighborhood and were noticing that there were a lot of people trying to come in with drugs – those are the people they want to keep out.

“All this means trying to keep my community safe and helping my fellow neighbor,” Buehlmann said. “We are all Mitakuye Oyasin, we are all related. I look at these younger kids and I am looking out for them. Hopefully, they will look out for me in the future.”

Jones says there are about 1000 people that live in Little Earth and about 600 of those are kids, half under the age of ten.

The Protectors noticed a large dip in traffic early on. Though the riots have halted, the effectiveness of these watches has not. Jones said the traffic that would otherwise take advantage of their residents has slowed down. She said the fact that it is community driven makes all the difference. “Every time we think we’re done, we’re not done,” she said. “This might just become a way of life for us. We’re community policing.”

LaPointe said the night they were attacked, she was amazed at the way community came out to fight for their homes, “We were going to do whatever we could to keep people safe. The mission was and is still to keep our homes safe.”

The Little Earth Protectors, made up of between 30-50 residences, gather every night at 9:30 for a meal before they are sent off to their posts at 10 p.m. On a good night they’ll head in around 2:30. Rain or shine, warm or freezing, there are groups on every corner.

A goal Jones has from this experience is to team up with other organizations to create an official disaster plan. Another goal everyone dreams of is having funding to keep regular, resident-driven security for Little Earth.

“I would like to see our community continue to police itself. There are a lot of people here that would take pride in that,” Buehlmann said. “We could possibly make something of this and see less crime. If we stepped in before the police do, I think we could stop a lot of violence.”

Jones said if they could receive funding then people working, like young men, could receive a stipend. She says to show them they can protect their community would make them feel purposeful. She said it’s the men that have been so badly abused by the authorities.

LaPointe agrees, saying it’s an opportunity for young men to find their identity.

LaPointe and Buehlmann have concerns for the dwindling numbers in protectors as well. Overdoses and gun violence, among a variety of outside threats, continue to be an issue even in smaller numbers. They say funding could be the answer to the longevity of The Protectors, and could also provide much needed income for their men as well.

Though one thing is certain, as their system and needs continues to evolve, the feeling of community remains.

“We were all out here side by side, all together, all for one effort to protect our community,” LaPointe said. “This whole effort branches out to good health, Wicozani – a good way of being with each other. It’s changed and it’s getting better.”

“This is the time. There is so much going on with the police and there are so many good people that would step up,” Beuhlmann said. “I believe we could make a good community that way and build from this.”
Chris Jourdain: continuing the Red Lake youth basketball movement

The youth basketball movement at the Red Lake Nation travels throughout Indian Country and beyond. Life lessons are learned with wins and losses along the way. One of the aspiring leader’s in the movement on and off the sidelines is Chris Jourdain.

Chris Jourdain, 45, is a member of the Red Lake Nation. His Indian name is “Forever Lasting Earth.” His clan is Bear and he and his family live in the Little Rock District on the Red Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota. Jourdain was a three-sport athlete almost three decades ago at St. John’s Prep in Collegeville, Minn., Red Lake High School and Heart of the Earth Survival School in Minneapolis.

Jourdain is a leader as the Chef de Mission with Team Minnesota for the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG). He is also the Red Lake School Board Chairman.

He coached youth basketball at the middle school boys’ and elementary boys’ and girls’ feeder programs in Red Lake since 2005.

“My brother Ira was in second grade and asked if I could teach him how to play basketball,” said Jourdain. “We started an afterschool program that went all over the state playing in any tournament I could get them into.”

“As the years went on, I realized the impact a coach can have and started focusing on more than just the game,” said Jourdain. “We always encouraged the teams to not only represent the Ogichidaag (Warriors) name on the jersey, but the Red Lake Nation as a whole, as well as their families.”

“We would let our game talk, leave it all on the floor, respect the officials and opposing teams,” said Jourdain.

“I am a continuous learner of not only basketball, but effective communication, leadership and motivation,” said Jourdain. “Coach Dan Ninham has always been in my corner and gave me a few opportunities to coach some high school All-Star games in the middle of my career,” said Jourdain. “He also shared his philosophy that it’s not run and gun, it’s run and score.”

“Jeff McCarron, Pacesetter Basketball Director, is another one that I am thankful for,” said Jourdain. “His tournaments gave us the opportunity to play against high caliber teams. He invited our high school teams to the Pacesetter Sweet 16 including the top four teams in each class from A to AAAA. We faced the powerhouse Hopkins team, where I coached against a former Gopher great Richard Coffey, who was coaching his son Amir.”

“Nolan Desjarlait, Sr., Red Lake HS Athletic Director, Randy Holthusen, our head girls’ basketball coach, and Gerald Kingbird, Sr. are a few I have leaned on for support, along with X’s and O’s. Paul D. Jones is a business partner, author, mentor and friend who has taught me a lot on personal leadership and motivation,” added Jourdain.

There was a time when outstanding high school and college coaches came to Red Lake on their basketball tour stops of regional communities. The list included Bob Hurley, Sr., Kelvin Sampson, and Red Lake’s own Ben Strong. These coaches not only inspired the youth but also the local coaches.

“To be successful you have to put the work in on the front end,” said Jourdain. “I point out some of our former players they grew up watching, and the work ethic they had.”

“I let our youth know with that same ethic they too could become a great athlete,” added Jourdain.

“For most student-athletes, high school sports are the only years they’ll get to play at that level of competition,” said Jourdain. “We do have more of our student-athletes going on to play college ball”

“One of the most memorable moments was coaching the 2017 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) 14U gold medal boys’ basketball game in Toronto, Ontario against Team British Columbia,” said Jourdain. “The noise in the gym rivaled any big game atmosphere that I ever experienced. It was a back-and-forth contest and due to injuries, we had just five players in the second half. The game came down to free throws in the final minute, and we held on to get the win!” added Jourdain.

“If I get to kids to see the goal, then I lay out the groundwork I think it takes to get there, and have success to prove that it can work if they buy into the plan,” added Jourdain.
Columbus has fallen
We’re halfway through 2020 and the hits keep coming.
I’ve generally kept away from the protests seeking justice for George Floyd (because COVID-19); but I joined the June 7 Native march for racial justice. There was a rally with some speeches at the Minneapolis American Indian Center, then the group of 150 protesters hit the streets.
The march wound through the Phillips neighborhood and by Little Earth. In the intersection of Lake and Cedar there was a Round Dance. The street protest ended at 38th and Chicago, the spot where Minneapolis cops murdered Floyd. The intersection has been blocked off to vehicular traffic and is a sacred space; I don’t how the memorial there will be maintained in the months to come.
On June 10, a protest at the State Capitol climaxed with the Christopher Columbus statue being toppled from its pedestal by American Indian protesters. The monumental to the genocidal Genoese explorer has been on the Capitol grounds since 1931.
Prior to the toppling, American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Mike Forcia talked to a State Patrol captain “sent to the scene to encourage protesters to follow a legal process for removing the statue,” according to a Star Tribune report. “Forsia said they had tried that route many times and it had not worked.”
A rope was arranged around the statue’s neck, and Forcia asked Native women to line up and tug on the rope. The statue hit the deck and a celebration ensued.
I contacted Forcia at the end of June, asked if he’d heard anything about a criminal complaint being filed for premeditated statue pulling down. He expected that charges would be filed soon.

Powderhorn Sanctuary
Minneapolis used to be a quiet Midwestern city, but things have changed.
For example, there was a Saturday night gunfight recently in the Uptown entertainment district. Initial reports said that 12 people, all in their 20s, were wounded in the shooting, and one person had died.
The reports later were corrected, when it was discovered that the sole fatality actually had been shot in downtown Minneapolis. Apparently, everyone went to HCMC to get patched up and, amid the chaos, the victims were all lumped together in the Uptown carnage.

Speaking of chaotic scenes, two sprawling homeless camps have sprung up in Powderhorn Park. We live two blocks from the idyllic 66-acre South Minneapolis park, so this is quite a surprise. The two camps on opposite sides of the park now number about 400 tents. The encampments have been dubbed the Powderhorn Sanctuary.
On a recent visit, I talked to Kyle Wilson (Dine), who is a facilitator and spokesperson for the east camp, on 14th Avenue South. A conversation with him was interrupted about every 30 seconds by camp residents bringing up various concerns. At one point, a man with a hammer was about to break into a locked storage shed and had to be persuaded to desist.
As people arranged tarps in preparation for a deluge that was in the forecast, Kyle noted that the mood in the camp changed by the hour and by the day.

Many readers will recall that homelessness in Minneapolis gained a higher profile in 2018, when a predominantly American Indian homeless camp appeared along a highway sound barrier on Hiawatha Avenue, near East Phillips Park. It was named the Wall of Forgotten Natives. As winter set in, many of the camp residents moved to what was called a navigation center, large Quonset-type huts erected near the Franklin Avenue LRT station.
Earlier this year, Quarantine Camp, a homeless camp with several dozen tents, was established near Hiawatha Avenue and 28th Street. When the Minneapolis uprising occurred at the end of May, that camp was shut down and many residents moved to the Sheraton Minneapolis Midtown Hotel, near Chicago and Lake, which was commandeered as a homeless shelter. The scene at the Sheraton soon got out of hand and the residents were evicted. Some of them were set up with tents on the west side of Powderhorn Park and, in mid-June, the encampment spread to the east side of the park.
At this writing, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is set to vote on a proposal to limit homeless camps to a maximum of 10 tents in 10 city parks. If the proposal passes, it would doom the Powderhorn Sanctuary, and the residents would once again be scattered across the city.
You’d think that a functioning government would be able to arrive at a compassionate solution to the problem of people who are unhoused.
Protesters bring down Columbus statue

By AP and MPR News

On June 9th, protesters in Minnesota pulled down a statue of Christopher Columbus outside the State Capitol amid continuing anger over the police killing of George Floyd.

The protesters threw a rope around the 10-foot bronze statue and pulled it off its stone pedestal.

The protesters, led by Mike Forcia with the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, said they consider Columbus a symbol of genocide against Native Americans. The Minnesota State Patrol told the group that they could fill out paperwork to have the statue removed, but they said they had tried many times to remove it through the political process, but without success.

“We don’t have to wait for the state,” Forcia said. “We don’t have to wait for the process because we’ve already waited far too long.”

Forcia said he wants the input of Dakota people on what to do next since the statue was on Dakota land.

They also demanded justice for Floyd, who died May 25 after a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Floyd’s neck and held it there even after he stopped struggling.

State Patrol troopers in helmets, who provide security in the Capitol complex, stood by at a distance but did not try to stop the protesters, who celebrated afterward with Native American singing and drumming.

The protesters eventually formed a line to protect the toppled statue so it could be taken away.

“There will be consequences”

Asked about the toppling of the statue, Gov. Tim Walz called it a dangerous act and said he was surprised at how loosely it was moored.

“I certainly do not condone, nor is this the right way to go about this change,” Walz told reporters.

He described it as an act of “civil disobedience” and said “there will be consequences” for the person who led it.

John Harrington, the state’s public safety commissioner, said the State Patrol officer in charge on the ground at the Capitol made the decision not to intervene to stop removal of the statue.

Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, said the current process for deciding what is displayed at the Capitol is “not well defined” and needs to get better and more accessible.

“I’m not going to perform for folks. I’m not going to feign sadness. I will not shed a tear over the loss of a statue that honored someone that by of his own admission sold 9- and 10-year-old girls into sex slavery. So, let us start there,” Flanagan said during a press conference with Walz and state DFL legislative leaders.

The protest followed a similar incident in Richmond, Va., where protesters pulled down a Columbus statue in a city park, set it on fire and rolled it into a nearby lake.

The Republican assistant minority leader in the Minnesota House, Jim Nash of Waconia, released a statement expressing his dismay, saying he was “frustrated and alarmed the decision was made to not deploy sufficient State Trooper presence in order to protect property. There is a process to petition the removal of artwork at the Capitol, pulling it down with a rope isn’t that process.”

But Flanagan, who was at a press conference hours earlier in which Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington noted he was aware of the move by some to remove the statue, tweeted later: “All Minnesotans should feel welcome at the Minnesota State Capitol, and our state is long overdue for a hard look at the symbols, statues, and icons that were created without the input of many of our communities.

Minnesota Public Radio News can be heard on MPR’s statewide radio network or online.
The tribes are listed by region of origin. The Sioux, or Dakota, are in the Plains Region and the Ojibwe, also known as Chippewa or Anishinabe, are included in the Northeast Region. The Sioux page describes legendary leaders like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, as well as the Dakota’s wide expanse of land throughout the central US. Mention is made of trade with the French and support for the British in the Revolutionary War. Also, brief mention is made of the Dakota nation’s violent conflicts such as the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, Red Cloud’s War, and the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

The Ojibwe page explains the migration of the people before the 1600s from the St. Lawrence River region on the East Coast to the Great Lakes regions from Michigan to North Dakota. The encyclopedia credits the Ojibwe with inventing the birch bark canoe, a lightweight mode of transportation that moved quickly through the region’s many interconnected rivers and lakes. Like the Sioux, the Ojibwe had good trade relationships with the French, and fought territory wars with the Iroquois to the east and the Dakota Sioux to the west.

One might argue that the above are puny introductions, but encyclopedias by definition stretch broadly without room for depth. Fortunately, the editors had the sense to make the colorful and often touching images the heart of the book. There’s a 1800s-era black and white photo of four little Wyandotte boys who could pass as kids from any Minnesota Dakota community. The Grand Ronde drummers easily resemble any drum group you’ll see at a Minnesota powwow.

A quick look shows how the book nicely depicts what tribes have in common, and it as effectively shows differences due to geography, resources and history. A striking two-page photo shows a Navajo woman feeding her sheep on the Arizona border. Another photo shows the specialized nets used by the Tolowa to harvest smelt from the ocean. Another photo shows Seneca men playing lacrosse. Three little Inuit girls from Alaska are shown in warm ceremonial coats and leggings.

Small stories appear throughout the book that are perfect for reading aloud to a child. “The Rabbit and the Frog” tells an age-old parable about trust, and includes a sweet photo of a white rabbit. Another story explains why turkeys have red eyes. Another story explains how the coyote gained powers.

Looking for a different kind of history book? Want to jump start your imagination with wonderful photos that depict the staying power of American Indians? This is it.

Like, they have no concept of how close and tight those communities are and how we’re all related,” said Jumper.

Jumper said that within the first year of operation, it was quite evident that culturally specific services for Native Americans are sparse. There is a tremendous lack of tribal services provided for domestic violence victims, with only 60 tribal shelters available across the country. This creates an unjust predicament for those who don’t want to or can’t leave their community to find help.

“The majority of people that call us really need that validation and support that our advocates provide... We found that our relatives that call us tend to need more of that. Because our communities are so small, it could be hard to reach out for help in your own community. If they [callers] don’t feel like they can do that, then they need somebody to talk to, and our helpline is completely anonymous and confidential,” affirms Jumper.

Ultimately, the StrongHearts Native Helpline’s mission is to empower and validate each of their callers needs, and to educate them about domestic violence and their options available for handling their situation. They are also committed to providing ongoing support and connecting callers back to a service that’s in their community. And, although their expertise is in domestic violence, StrongHearts Native Helpline advocates do confer callers with other needs and find appropriate support for them.

The Helpline is the first and only national helpline available exclusively for Native Americans, and they plan to continue their development. Looking forward, the organization will be training advocates to respond to sexual violence, as there is not a national helpline service available to Native Americans for this matter yet. It is scheduled to launch in late summer. They also hope to hire enough advocates to become a 24/7 service for our relatives by fall. As the StrongHearts Native Helpline works to recruit more advocates, they continue to be a vital service created by Native Americans for Native Americans.

For more information about StrongHearts Native Helpline, or to chat online with a trained advocate during operation hours, you can visit https://www.strongheartshelpline.org.

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Please consider becoming a supporting donor of The Circle. Your contribution will help The Circle continue to cover news, arts, and events in Minnesota’s Native American community, the only non-tribally owned newspaper in Minnesota. This is a great way to let your friends, colleagues, and co-workers know that you support an important service in the Indian community. And you’ll have the joy of knowing your money is going to a worthy service.

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– NATIVE FACE VOTING OBSTACLES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4 –

To this point, main arguments for opposing vote-by-mail plans and thus deny thousands their right to vote are built around trying to protect against voter fraud.

CBS’ 60 Minutes program on June 28 noted that Oregon, which is exclusively a vote-by-mail state, had well over 2 million votes cast in the last election and had 22 cases of voter fraud. Minnesota, meanwhile, had more than 2.9 million votes cast in 2016 and had even fewer cases of suspected voter fraud.

Courthouse News summed up that experience: “Minnesota convicted 11 people for voter fraud in 2016, primarily felons who said they didn’t know they were not allowed to vote.”

Absentee voting in Minnesota began on June 26. Registering, both online and at county offices, for the Aug. 11 primary and Nov. 3 general elections are underway.

- Minnesota voter registration information can be accessed at: https://mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/VoterRegistration/VoterRegistrationMain.aspx, and at Minnesota county election offices.
- News about the League of Women Voters of Minnesota efforts to increase vote-by-mail registrations can be found at https://www.lwvmn.org/league-news.
- The NARF report, Obstacles at Every Turn: Barriers to Political Participation Faced by Native American Voters, can be seen online at: https://vote.narf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/obstacles_at_every_turn.pdf?_ga=1.137550889.1614237898.1594690315-1727720749.1594690315

Montessori American Indian Childcare Center
Position Announcement: Montessori Primary Guide

The Montessori American Indian Childcare Center, in St. Paul, MN is in search of a qualified Montessori Primary Guide for children 3-6-years of age. The Primary Guide must have an AMI diploma. A four-year college degree is required. We are searching for a reliable, trustworthy, and innovative Montessori Primary Guide to join our excellent school. The Guide helps direct the children's development academically, emotionally, and physically in a prepared and peaceful Montessori environment that challenges each child to reach his/her fullest potential. Interested candidates should be excited to work in a community directed and culturally inspired Montessori school. Knowledge of the American Indian community preferred and/or experience working in cultural communities.

Full job description can be found at: www.americanindianmontessori.net

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IT AIN’T EASY BEING INDIAN –  BY RICEY WILD

One thing I know for sure is that I was born “Indian” as written on my birth certificate. I now know that is an outdated appellation and for the record I am Anishinaabe, a woman of my Nation, as am I, a member of the Superior Chippewa. 

I take much pride in being part of our Nation, as am I, a member of a singular person named Ricey Wild. 

I’m speculating there will be horror stories about humans to scare their little hearts. 

My thoughts, grief, love and heavy heart are with the George Floyd family and everyone who suffered a loved one’s death at the knee or guns of police. 

I’m a baby yet but is proud of the changes that his death has sparked a global movement. 

It was on June 10th, the day the Christopherson Columbus statue came down in St. Paul, MN, that I became a tsunami of emotion. Mike Forcia of AIM Minneapolis invited me personally to Minneapolis and cried to see my daddy changed the world!”

I lived most of my life as a Minneapolisan and cried to see my beloved hometown burn. The worst part is I have loved ones who live there and I feared and prayed for their safety. I could literally do nothing to help. After George Floyd was murdered by the MPD I held and rocked myself trying to get through at least the initial grief and had no one to hold me. 

I’m pretty sure they won’t miss us. 

I feel like I’m in a static state where this feels like I’m in a static state where this systemic pink domination has reached 

Beyond any horror point, and disgust of human beings who only exist to amplify racism.

I’ve written, and believe, that this gorgeous little blue world that allows us to live on it (it should be ‘with it’) is better off without our destruction of Her resources. 

I believe we were seeded and off without our destruction of Her natural species that inhabit this Earth recover their populations and continue their purpose here. We need this Earth recover their populations and continue their purpose here. We need this Earth recover their populations and continue their purpose here. We need this Earth recover their populations and continue their purpose here. We need this Earth recover their populations and continue their purpose here. 

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I’m beyond traumatized, sickened and lonely. This place is in my heart, I lived most of my life as a Minneapolisan and cried to see my beloved hometown burn. The worst part is I have loved ones who live there and I feared and prayed for their safety. I could literally do nothing to help. After George Floyd was murdered by the MPD.

And I pray.

Hennepin Healthcare

HENNEPIN HEALTHCARE COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD SEEKS NOMINATIONS

This notice is an open call for nominations for community leaders to serve on the Hennepin Healthcare Community Advisory Board (CAB). CAB is an advisory group of volunteer members who are representative of the patient community served by Hennepin Healthcare, which includes residents of Hennepin County, the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, and out-state regions of Minnesota. The purpose of the CAB is to serve as an Advisory Body to the Hennepin Healthcare System Board of Directors reporting through the Mission Effectiveness Committee. The CAB will serve as a catalyst for relationship building and partnering with community organizations, populations with disproportionate unmet health needs, the business community and the individuals who live in the community.

To be considered for membership on the CAB, individuals can submit a letter of interest to CAB Board Member Dan Collison at dcollison@mpls downtown.com or by mail to Dan Collison, 810 S 7th St, Mpls, MN 55415. A letter of interest or recommendation for the CAB should include:

• Specific reasons why the applicant would be a valuable member of the CAB including how the nominee would strengthen or build community relationships; 

Preference will be given to applicants who demonstrate knowledge of the following issues or topics:

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• The health care system

• Racial, age, income, and/or geographic disparities

• Population or public health

• Minnesota’s Medicaid Program and/or social services

• Consumer/Patient improvement programs

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