Mille Lacs County board race highlights old tensions

When Bradley Harrington was an 11-year-old growing up on the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation, members of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe were in court, arguing that a treaty their ancestors made with the U.S. government gave them the right to harvest fish on Mille Lacs Lake.

It was 1992. At his school in Onamia, he said, "We were fighting all the time." Harrington said. "And stuff was being said to me, like, how they want to spear me or wrap me in a net and throw me in the lake."

That was Harrington's first taste of the discord that still lingers in the Mille Lacs region, one of the state's best-known fishing destinations.

Seven years later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Mille Lacs Band retains the right to hunt, fish and gather on the lands it ceded to the federal government. But disagreement over the band's legal rights continues.

"I have two boys that are going to that same school, and things are a little bit different," he said. "But we're still fighting about fish."

Harrington, who serves as the state tribal liaison for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, is running for a seat on the Mille Lacs County Board of Commissioners, a local government body he says sets the temperature for the community. He said he hopes to set a new, less divisive tone.

"It's pretty small here, and our community is divided," Harrington said. "We have a really hard time talking to each other."

Harrington is challenging Dave Oslin, a retired business owner who has represented District 5 for eight years and is seeking a third term.

The latest dispute between the band and the county is now winding its way through federal court. In 2017, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe sued the county over policing concerns. The band asserts that its reservation includes 61,000 acres along the southern shore of Mille Lacs Lake, as established in an 1855 treaty. The border encompasses several small towns and three islands on the lake.

But Oslin and other county officials believe that subsequent treaties and court actions dissolved those reservation boundaries. They believe the band has only about 4,000 acres, held in trust by the federal government.

Oslin said he's glad that the courts will finally settle the long-disputed question.

"I represent both tribal members and non-tribal members, and everyone should be excited that we're finally going to get a court decision on this," he said. "I can't imagine why anybody would not want this thing settled."

Continued on Page 8

Wakan Tipi Center aims for spring groundbreaking

Community supporters in St. Paul and at Minnesota’s four Dakota communities are still raising funds and making plans with their sights set on a spring groundbreaking for the Wakan Tipi Center that is envisioned as a great Dakota heritage preservation and learning center.

With a recent $1 million appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature and additional financial help from the Prairie Island Indian Community, backers of Wakan Tipi have now raised $6.4 million of the $7.7 million needed to start work on the center.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated some planning and fundraising efforts, said Maggie Lorenz (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe/Spirit Lake Dakota), executive director of the Lower Phalen Creek Project on the East Side of St. Paul and the Wakan Tipi Center director. At the same time, she said, work continues and the collaborating groups are still hoping for a spring start to construction.

This is all an evolving and expanding enterprise. As October was coming to a close, the Lower Phalen Creek Project (LPCP) was awaiting word from archeological investigators on how the nearby Boys Totem Town land might also tie in with the Dakota heritage on St. Paul’s East Side.

Boys Totem Town, a name reflecting how Euro-American settlers in the Twin Cities may have recognized the area’s Native cultural influence, was a 113-year-old juvenile detention center that Ramsey County closed in 2019. It involves about 80 acres of land in the Battle Creek neighborhood of St. Paul.

A report on the cultural heritage study was to be released as The Circle was going to press. Lorenz said those findings might also influence Wakan Tipi Center planning and operations going forward.

Discovering Dakota cultural heritage in the area is a constant ongoing project for Center planners and for the Lower Phalen Creek Project, Lorenz said.

Wakan Tipi means “ Dwelling Place of the Sacred” in Dakota, and it is the historical name for the Mississippi River bluff cave that was explored and thus named “Carver’s Cave” after English explorer Johnathan Carver visited and wrote about the site in 1766.

That site and cave, including its ancient hieroglyphs, has largely been destroyed in the past century. It lies in nicely with the surrounding views of the Mississippi River, known nearby Dakota villages (such as Kaposia by Pig’s Eye Lake), and with the historic burial mounds in Indian Mounds Regional Park above the bluff and cave.

“Wakan Tipi was more like the church and graveyard for the Dakota communities from across the river and from settlements miles away, up and down stream,” said Lorenz.

Her description of Wakan Tipi puts it in geographical and sacred perspective. The effort of bringing people together to preserve and rediscover Dakota heritage with the geography, however, gets a bit more complicated.

Mishalla Bowman (Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota), the LPCP cultural programs coordinator and communications special, said Wakan Tipi Center development is an outgrowth of numerous historical, cultural, environmental groups working together with government agencies and nonprofit foundations. LPCP serves as the operating body for coordinating their efforts.

Continued on Page 9
Health care can be expensive, especially as we age.

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LINK TO A LOCAL AGING EXPERT
AICHO produces COVID-19 videos from Native physicians

BY IVY VAINIO

Recently, it seems every time I log onto my Facebook page, I see at least one new post about an individual or family I know who has tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19). Many of these folks are Indigenous.

According to a recent Minnesota Public Radio article there is a 75% increase in positive COVID-19 infections in Minnesota American Indian communities in October. The common denominator for this rise is, unfortunately, family gatherings.

A White Earth Nation health representative stated they are seeing up to 29 active cases a week. On a national scale, the Centers for Disease Control reports there are a total of 8,617,022 cases with 488,498 within the last seven days (as of October 26th) and 224,601 COVID-19 deaths in the United States.

The American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) has been leading a state-wide and tribal community public health communications effort since this past April to keep our Indigenous community updated with factual information about COVID-19 safety, free testing, Case Investigation and Contact Tracing (CICT protocols), etc.

We received two professional technical contracts from the Minnesota Department of Health alongside five other state-wide Indigenous organizations, with the collective goal of sharing culturally relevant resources and education around COVID-19 in tribal communities.

As part of these contracts, we worked with 15 Indigenous, mostly Anishinaabe, artists to create beautiful and impactful content (posters, coloring sheets, and videos) with culturally appropriate messages that share visual cultural Indigenous teachings and values, for all ages, about important COVID-19 health safety practices while holding onto traditions. We are continuing this important work of informing our communities about COVID-19 testing, symptoms, and CICT.

In addition to working with Indigenous artists, and our online/social media marketing, we filmed three Indigenous physicians who work at the Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe Reservation Human Services Division. Mary Owen, MD (Tlingit Nation), Arne Vainio, MD (Mille Lacs Ojibwe), and the clinic’s Medical Director Charity Reynolds, MD (Mexican American and Indigenous) participated. Each physician shared things we all should know about CICT recommendations, expectations and facts. Each video is around 2 minutes and the messages/scripts were written by each physician.

Dr. Charity Reynolds, who recently lost her mother to COVID-19, shared with us why she wanted to participate in this video project, “I was initially drawn to medicine because, growing up, I saw firsthand the health disparities that afflicted those who live in rural areas, minorities and Indigenous communities. My undergraduate degree is in public health, and it is such a fundamental branch of medicine to eradicate disease, especially during a pandemic. As a minority, I understand the importance of making healthcare accessible for all and will do whatever I can to provide the best care for those who need it the most. My one piece of advice is for us to think about how can we love others during this time, as we are all in this together.”

American Indian Community Development Corporation is hiring!

Homeward Bound Shelter

JOB TITLE: Homeward Bound Staff/On-Call Staff
REPORTS TO: Homeward Bound Manager
PURPOSE: The Homeward Bound Staff & On-Call Staff is responsible for ensuring an efficient and effective Homeward Bound operation which reflects a safe and welcoming environment for clients and staff.

MAJOR JOB FUNCTIONS:
• Safety and Security
• Intervention Services
• Building Services
• Support Administration

QUALIFICATIONS:
• High School Diploma or GED.
• Experience in Harm Reduction and Crisis Intervention.
• Demonstrated written and oral communication skills.
• Ability to quickly assess a crisis situation and take appropriate professional action.
• Ability to work within the philosophy and support objectives of Shelter and American Indian Community Development Corporation.
• Ability to work with people from diverse economic, cultural, racial and gender backgrounds.

Housing Case Manager

SALARY RANGE: $37,500 - $40,000 DOQ
JOB TITLE: CASE MANAGER- Full Time
REPORTS TO: Homeward Bound Manager

JOB SUMMARY:
The Case Manager(s) are responsible for coordinating case management, supportive services, referrals and activities for Homeward Bound a 24-hour shelter. The Case Manager(s) will utilize a Harm Reduction/Housing First model to provide services to clients. Work with clients to find and options that meet their individual needs/capabilities. Work with clients and housing providers to acquire permanent supportive housing.

MAJOR JOB FUNCTIONS:
• Facilitate Case Management Services
• Coordinate Support Services and Activities
• Support Program Administration

QUALIFICATIONS:
• 3-5 years Case Management experience.
• Experience in chemical dependency/residential housing services with culturally diverse homeless population.
• Experience in crisis intervention, and more.
• Intermediate computer skills.
• Must pass Minnesota Department of Human Services Background Check

AICDC Chemical Withdrawal Mgmt

JOB DESCRIPTION: Healthcare Billing Specialist
DEPARTMENT: Chemical Withdrawal Mgmt
REPORTS TO: Chemical Withdrawal Mgmt Dir.

POSITION SUMMARY:
The Healthcare Billing Specialist has the responsibility to bill insurance companies and/or government programs for services provided by the facility in a timely manner. The position requires a highly skilled, detail-oriented individual to be responsible for all aspects of the billing process.

REQUIREMENTS:
Must be able to maneuver around office; lift 5-20 pounds, and climb three flights of stairs in case of emergency evacuations.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:
• High school diploma/GED and four years of general accounts experience. Training may be substituted for the number of years of experience.
• Competent use of computer systems, software and 10 key calculators.
• Maintain client confidentiality as outlined in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).
• Must pass Minnesota Department of Human Services background check.
• Six months of freedom from chemical use/abuse.

AICDC Chemical Withdrawal Mgmt

Please email cover letter and resume to: Mgoze@aicdc-mn.org. AICDC is an equal opportunity Employer.
Researchers find doubts about COVID-19 vaccine among BIPOC

BY LAUREL WAMSLEY/ MPR

The Food and Drug Administration is preparing for the eventual rollout of one or more COVID-19 vaccines – by identifying the concerns that some people have about taking such a vaccine.

At a meeting, in late October, of experts advising the FDA on COVID-19 vaccines, the concerns of front-line workers and people of color were read aloud verbatim, highlighting the crucial project of communicating the safety and effectiveness of a vaccine in an environment of deep political distrust.

Those concerns were gathered at a series of listening sessions organized by the Reagan-Udall Foundation, a nonprofit that aims to advance the work of the FDA.

Susan Winckler, the foundation’s CEO, noted that its study was rather narrow, with a focus on the role of the FDA in vaccine review and approval. Nonetheless, participants in the sessions voiced a range of concerns:

• “I would not be first in line and I would want to see some data.”
• “When I hear the FDA say they have a particular process, but then I hear the White House say they can cut it in half or negate it – it brings more distrust.”
• “We are not going to be guinea pigs again.”
• “African Americans are treated differently by doctors.”
• “I am looking for an organization I can trust that does not have a tainted history and has not been bought out by some big pharma.”

The listening sessions focused on two groups. One was front-line workers in service, retail and health care settings. The second focused on people who are often underrepresented and are at increased risk for COVID-19: Black, Hispanic and Indigenous/Native American communities.

Eight such sessions have been conducted so far, and a few more are slated for the coming weeks. The foundation said its goal is to understand the perceptions that may lead Americans to feel hesitant about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine – and to use that information to craft messaging that addresses those concerns.

Winckler noted that the participants’ concerns often shared certain themes: concerns about the speed of the process, distrust of government and government agencies, distrust of the health care system, and concern that politics and economics will be prioritized over science.

People of color also voiced worries that the vaccine won’t work for minority populations. Among their statements:

• “Need to know other minorities have taken it. Are other minorities ok? We’re all built different. How do we know?”
• “I need to know that all the minorities who took it are okay. I need to know it works for everybody. I am not trying to be harmed.”

Participants also expressed fears based on past experiences. One person expressed a worry that “this is another Tuskegee experiment.”

Vaccine hesitancy was a frequent topic at the FDA meeting – recognition that the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines will be a nationwide communications effort as much as a scientific one.

The FDA meeting was one effort to demonstrate that the vaccine development process in the U.S. is safe and is being handled with great care and transparency.

Marion Gruber, director of the FDA’s Office of Vaccines Research and Review, said that development of a vaccine is happening as quickly as it can – but no faster.

“Vaccine development can be expedited,” she said. “However, I want to stress that it cannot and must not be rushed.”

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I dial the number sent to my phone. It rings maybe two times. “Hello,” says a rather cheerful voice, “This is Anton Treuer.” I stumble through a brief introduction and ask him if it would be alright that we conduct this interview over Zoom, to which he agrees. Treuer’s face blinks onto my screen and we begin our conversation. “So Anton, tell me a little about yourself.”

“Sure. I’m Anton Treuer, professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University. I come from Leech Lake. My Ojibwe name is Waagosh, which means Fox. I’m from the Eagle clan.” Treuer is also the author of nineteen books, the recipient of over forty awards and fellowships, and is considered by many to be a renowned Ojibwe spiritual leader and language warrior.

Treuer’s latest book, The Language Warrior’s Manifesto (Minnesota Historical Society Press, January 2020) is about the importance of language revitalization. He’s been fighting the battle of language revitalization and helping keep lit the flame of Ojibwe spirituality for many years. Treuer has much incite to offer about the importance of these aspects of Indigenous life, “There are a lot of things that impact us as human beings and impact our identity. Every language embodies a unique worldview and ultimately, I would say we’re impacted by our language and our cultural practices. We have everything from sacred societies, drumming, medicine dance, to every day culture – the way we live our lives. Those are the things that keep us grounded in our indigeneity.

“I think these things are really valuable and important for a lot of different reasons. We’ve been trying colonization for hundreds of years and it just messes people up. It’s not making them any better. Positive identity development of any human is important. So what does an Indigenous person’s positive identity development look like? Language and culture.”

It was not until 1978 with the passing of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act that the Indigenous peoples of the U.S. were legally allowed to practice their cultures and sacred ceremonies. In the relatively short amount of time since then, resources for language and culture resurgence have sprung up.

“It’s changed a lot. When I started this work, you could probably count the number of [Ojibwe] books on one or two hands, and now there are so many hundreds that I couldn’t tell you how many there are. We’ve broken through to mainstream presses for both bilingual and monolingual publications now, so there’s a lot more work going on with resources. We’ve also seen immersion schools pop up in different areas.”

In addition to resources, Treuer states that there’s also been an increase in a willingness to use them. “There’s been a resurgence of interest amongst millennials and Gen Z about language and culture and I see heightened levels of engagement and interest in people, which is really great.”

However, the battle of language revitalization is not without its losses. Treuer cites some key challenges that the revitalization effort has faced over the years.

“When I was starting this stuff, you’d walk around the grocery store and run into fluent language speakers everywhere, [but since then] we’ve lost a lot of really great speakers. Even communities that we thought of as very strong, Inger, Ponemah, Mille Lacs, just have a handful of speakers left in some places, and most of those are seventy years old or older – they’re not having babies and raising kids.

“There’s been a shift in who’s carrying the load for intergenerational transmission of Ojibwe to young people who, for the most part, are second language learners or their kids are already grown up. There’s been a baton pass-off that’s still in process, but has unmistakably changed the battle.”

Despite the years, work, and resources that Treuer has put into language revitalization, he’s not done yet. He has high hopes for the movement in the years to come. “I’d like to see a proliferation of immersion schools, resources, higher level of proficiency fluency and eloquence of the language. I’d like to see more people graduate into the ranks of spiritual leadership and Indigenous ceremonial knowledge. I want us to have 5000 books loaded into an accelerated reader program with assessments, so we can really do literacy for this language.

“Which is, of course, change, because we’re an oral language. But I think that kind of change is needed. We’re not going to wall ourselves off from the world and live in wigwams, you know? We need our language suited for the modern world.”

One way in which this is occurring is through the creation of Ojibwe language curriculum on Rosetta Stone, a language learning software that offers twenty five languages from across the world.

“We’re in the midst of developing Rosetta Stone for Ojibwe, which I think will be really great because that’s going to push an app on everyone’s phone that you can take anywhere you go. There’ll be six years of sequenced language classes, with four units per year with expansion units in different areas of the language. I think it has the opportunity to be really helpful.

I ask when this service will be released. Treuer said, “Yeah, COVID threw a monkey wrench into that. [It’s difficult] to get people together for the filming, especially since tribes actually have stricter prohibitions than state governments [in regard to COVID], so we had to bump some of that schedule. But I think a year from now, we’ll see year one, and then we’ll see a unit after that every year for the next several years.”

The delay of Ojibwe being on Rosetta Stone isn’t the only thing that’s been affected by the pandemic. Treuer said, “The challenges are that a lot of our big ceremonies, like ceremonial drum and medicine dance, sometimes gather hundreds of people who are standing right next to each other, breathing in each other’s faces, and that’s just not medically wise. So we’ve pretty much had to cancel medicine dance across the board, with just a couple of exceptions for extreme emergencies.

“Even our funerals have been deeply impacted. We do lots of feasting at traditional funerals, sharing of music and legends, so it’s often a very large gathering. We’ve even had a lot of Native people die from COVID, which means sealed casket, outdoor ceremony, no feast – pretty dramatic impacts on basic protocols.”

There’s no doubt that the pandemic has radically affected Native peoples across Turtle Island, as well as individuals around the world. To this, Treuer offers some reassuring words, “I’ve been telling people in our circle that ceremonies aren’t the place you go. You are the ceremony. It lives inside you.” He goes on to say, “I’ve got some people who are just freaking out about Trump-pocalypse, plague, whatever, and I’m just like, ‘breathe in and out, you guys. We’ve been surrounded by people that hate our guts for five hundred years. And every generation is saying the last of the ‘blank’, last of the mohicans, last of the Ojibwe, the last speaker.’ I say screw ‘em all. We’re still here.”

“Treuer stated that each generation is different than the last, with new issues needing to be addressed with new tools.

“Do you want the culture that was well suited for 1600 right now? We might all starve to death. Do you want the one from 1850, when we were all really good with war clubs? We have different challenges, so we probably want the culture that we have now. That doesn’t mean we want all the problems we have now, we just need to address them, but the culture has to adapt to our unique circumstances and challenges. We can still do that and maintain our indigeneity and our Ojibwe-ness. So we evolve and adapt the tools we have. I think our languages and cultural practices are tools we need in the toolbox.”
Celebrating Native American Heritage Month by Supporting Native Art

Wells Fargo partnered with five of the most talented, up-and-coming Native artists in the country to create the bespoke artworks featured in the Native Art Gallery card collection. We are excited to announce that the collection is now available to all of our customers through the Wells Fargo Card Design Studio® service.

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Law enforcement at issue

The current dispute began four years ago, when Mille Lacs County officials ended a cooperative law enforcement agreement with the band. When tribal police lost the authority to investigate crimes, Harrington said, crime rose as drug dealers targeted the reservation. It hit close to home. He said he had to bury people with whom he’d grown up, who died of overdoses.

Since then, the county and the band have reached an agreement on policing, but the underlying question of the reservation’s boundaries remains unsettled. For Harrington, the two issues are very much connected.

“The action of the county hurt my community,” he said. “People died. People are still sick.”

Osling said he thinks law enforcement in the county actually is working well. He said the county and the band routinely collaborate on a range of issues, from public health to housing. Any contention that remains is related to the unanswered question of the reservation boundaries, Osling said.

“That’s not what I call real contention,” he said. “That’s just simply a legal question that needs to be answered, and we’re heading towards that answer right now, in the federal courts.”

Earlier this year, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison asserted in a legal filing that the 61,000-acre Mille Lacs Indian Reservation still exists, reversing a position taken by previous governors.

Osling and other county officials have voiced concerns that a court decision supporting that opinion could have an impact on nontribal members living in those areas.

“Changing the reservation’s status changes the relationship of Mille Lacs’ citizens and their land with the state and the federal government,” Randy Thompson, an attorney who represents the county in the lawsuit, wrote in a newsletter for county residents in July.

Harrington said he believes the county is stirring fear among its residents who aren’t band members, suggesting that they could be under tribal authority instead of the county.

“There’s undertones in there that my people have been able to pick up on for quite some time,” he said.

But Colette Routel, a professor at Mitchell Hamline School of Law’s Native American Law and Sovereignty Institute, said recent Supreme Court rulings have limited the ability of tribes to exercise jurisdiction over nonmembers.

“If a reservation exists under a current case law, it primarily impacts tribal members,” Routel said.

Different paths

Harrington’s route to becoming a candidate for public office was unconventional. A decade ago, he was serving a five-year prison sentence for driving under the influence when he had what he calls a moment of clarity.

“It drove him to start reading about Ojibwe history and language, and federal Indian law. After prison, he connected with elders in his community and learned to perform tribal ceremonies. “I knew if I continued on seeking out knowledge, seeking out the language, seeking out who I was as an Anishinaabe person, I may lessen the need to return to that [old] lifestyle,” he said.

After taking some college and leadership courses, Harrington was appointed natural resources commissioner for the Mille Lacs Band in 2017. Earlier this year, Gov. Tim Walz appointed him tribal liaison to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, where he serves as a resource to DNR staff, and coordinates with the governments of the 11 Native American tribes in the state.

Harrington said he knows unseating an incumbent is an uphill battle, but he said he’s been able to share information and connect with people during the campaign.

“What I tell people is that if I’m elected, I’ll be a constant voice,” he said. “I’m not there to really push any propaganda of the band. I have my experiences growing up here. I’m a lifelong resident ... My people have been here for generations. So that’s a lot at stake. And I don’t want one side to win, because we’ve all got to live together.”

Beyond the boundary question, both candidates have other issues they hope to focus on if elected. Harrington said he wants to tackle the county’s drug problem and reduce its recidivism rate among people who are charged in drug crimes.

A former volunteer firefighter who served on Mille Lacs County’s search and rescue team, Osling said public safety is one of his top priorities, including building a new law enforcement center in the northern part of the county.

He said the county has been working to assist local businesses affected by tighter fishing regulations on Mille Lacs Lake in recent years. He also supports a county effort to improve broadband access, which he said has been a big problem in the region.

“We’re excited about taking the lead on that, and it’s going to be a huge benefit for everyone in the county,” Osling said.

The outcome of the election will be settled long before that of the legal boundary dispute.

“Unfortunately, it’s not going to be a quick resolution,” Routel said.

A decision in the case isn’t expected until at least next year, and, she said, it almost certainly will be appealed.

Minnesota Public Radio News can be heard on MPR’s statewide radio network or online.
The entire area around the project on the East Side was terribly polluted. The entrance to Wakan Tipi cave was destroyed for railroad development along the river.

Background materials from LPCP shows it was formed by East Side and St. Paul Lowertown community activists in 1997. Cleaning up and restoring habitat in their shared neighborhoods was the initial plan.

Targeted was the land along Lower Phalen Creek that extends down the East Side from Lake Phalen to the Mississippi River. LCPC, the Trust for Public Land, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service purchased the land in 2002.

Cleanup work, largely carried out by volunteers, went to work the following year and LPCP worked with Minnesota’s four Dakota communities to begin site surveys for identifying and restoring archeological and cultural significant items and ties.

Out of this work, the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary was opened along the creek corridor in 2005 that with the city of St. Paul and partners has now restored six different ecosystems that are visited by 300,000 people each year. Also extending from those efforts, LPCP has more recently worked with St. Paul in developing a master plan for a part of the area, known as Swede Hollow Park so named because impoverished immigrants often camped out and lived in inexpensive housing in the ravine along the creek.

That area served as a landing zone for Swedes in the 1860s on through later arrivals from Italy, Ireland, Poland and Mexico. The surrounding neighborhoods continue to serve the same purposes for Salvadorans, Karen, East Africans and others.

Archeologists along the way have found items in Swede Hollow that show the East Side ravine near Phalen Creek was also a site for an early Dakota village.

These ties to Dakota people and culture along the Mississippi River and St. Paul neighborhoods are gradually being rediscovered and analyzed. That should help all Minnesotans understand who they are and their shared histories.

That point was made in early October by Prairie Island Indian Community leaders participating in a LPCP Wakan Tipi Launch online program.

Shelley Buck, president of the Prairie Island community, said in the launch video that Wakan Tipi will not only benefit the Dakota people, “it will benefit the entire state and region.”

The Wakan Tipi Center will be a great way to preserve the cultural heritage and “what is sacred” to the Dakota people, added Franky Jackson, Prairie Island’s compliance officer.

Both Buck and Jackson stressed that it will be a great help for Dakota people and supporters to educate others. Current plans call for a 9,000 square foot building in the integrated areas to be used by visitors, students and for educational programming.

The Wakan Tipi Center Launch program is available on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bn g5Oquvnac.


Additional information is available at https://www.lowerphalencreek.org.
Native/other communities lose organizer and mentor Robert Albee

Robert “Bob” Albee, a community organizer and activist who helped Native and other communities develop tools needed for development and cohesive community action, died on Oct. 6 after battling cancer. He was 76.

Albee was a long-time board member of The Circle, helped start WOJB FM radio with the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in northwestern Wisconsin, played early organizing roles with KFAL community supported radio on the West Bank of Minneapolis, was a long-time supporter and backer of the The Alley community newspaper in south Minneapolis, and left his imprint on community organizations throughout the Phillips and Ventura Village areas of south Minneapolis.

He didn’t start things to put his name on building or organizations, like many “founders.” Instead, former colleagues and friends say, he helped communities “find” things that they or their communities needed to move forward.

Two examples would include his work with Gordon Thayer, then with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BLA), when they started the American Indian Task Force on Housing and Homelessness in 1991 in response to housing problems in Minneapolis, and later in organizing what is now known as Ventura Village.

The housing task force emerged into the American Indian Community Development Corp., said Mike Goze, chief executive officer. Its first housing project on Franklin Avenue – Anishinabe Wakiagun – lives on as a model for Native housing development in various parts of the United States, he said.

Ventura Village, meanwhile, was created by Albee and area activists to be a more cohesive unit for community action and development than the huge Phillips Community on the south side of downtown Minneapolis, said Mary Watson, financial administrator for the neighborhood organization.

The Minneapolis City Council subdivided Phillips into four neighborhoods in 2002. Ventura Village is the diverse area south of I-94 south in which Franklin Avenue serves as the commercial hub. Albee was instrumental in pursuing the legal status for Ventura Village, Watson said, “and he even came up with the name.”

Ventura, which is a shortened version of “Buenaventura,” is Spanish meaning “good luck” or “good fortune.”

Colleagues and friends over the years said among his talents was an ability to write formal grant proposals for groups seeking help from government units, nonprofit organizations and foundations.

It was a great help to Lac Courte Oreilles, recalled Eric Shubring, WOJB’s public affairs director. “He wrote all the application materials except for engineering that we had to submit to get our license (from Federal Communications Commission), and he helped win community support.”

Albee was born Jan. 16, 1944 in Eau Claire, Wis. He was the youngest of five children of Gerald and Mary (Whipple) Albee who had moved from his native Minnesota to Wisconsin to make a better life for their children.

Albee entered a school for Native American children at age 8 and graduated in 1962. After high school he entered college and received a degree from Huron College and a master’s from the University of South Dakota and began a teaching career. He also taught audio-visual technology and techniques to students over the years, she added. That made him “really hurt” when he learned that the MIGIZI Communications’ new building on Lake Street was burned in fires after the George Floyd killing by police officers in May. He started his own “gofundme” page on Facebook to help raise money for MIGIZI and its programs for students.

Albee’s close ties to the Native community included heeding some of the rituals, his wife said.

He entered a hospital at Edmonds, Wash., the day before he died. On his last day, she said, he awoke for a few moments, stared up, “and started a smudging ceremony”.

“I thought, ‘He’s watching his spirit go.’ He laid back, crossed his arms over his chest. And died.”
Help stop the spread of COVID-19 – get tested.

Testing is encouraged and available to everyone, regardless of symptoms. Getting tested is critical to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and will help to prevent exposing your loved ones to the virus.

Find free testing events at Minneapolismn.gov.

For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please call 311 at 612-673-3000. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 at 612-673-3000. TTY users can call 612-263-6850. Para asistencia 612-673-2700, Yog xav tau kev pab, hu 612-673-2800, Hadii aad Caawimaad u baahantahay 612-673-3500.
“I am forever grateful for the people I’ve met and the opportunities I’ve been shown by going to a Minnesota private college.”

The Seed Keeper” by Diane Wilson (Mdewakanton Dakota) shows the way seeds are the foundation of every living thing and hold the world together. Cherish them, protect them, nurture them and they will nurture you and the generations to come. In her first work of fiction, Wilson tells the story of four women intricately connected by seeds handed down from generation to generation. For hundreds if not thousands of years, women selected and saved the best seeds for food production, passing them down as sacred gifts. In her afterward, Wilson writes that Dakota women sewed seeds into the hems of their garments to be planted after the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. That gesture suggested a resolve to survive whatever happened next, as well as the keen importance of seeds to feed families.

In this lyrical, well-told story, the Dakota history of removal is sprinkled throughout, illustrating the sad impact of war and removal of Dakota from Minnesota, and the forced separation of children from their families through boarding schools and later through foster care. The story also illustrates the pollution of the Minnesota River over time, the impact of big agriculture and chemicals on soil, and the way both soft and hard bigotry take a toll.

After that last paragraph, I know what you’re thinking. A downer about Indians. Not really. One of the story’s characters who came through hardship, Rosalie Iron Wing, serves as protagonist. The book opens with a description of Rosalie as an adult in a remote cabin where she spent her childhood. Rosalie fled to the cabin from her life on a farm two hours away in order to better understand her past.

The chapters reveal Rosie’s childhood with the father who loves her, and her years in foster care and then adulthood. She meets and marries a non-Indian farmer. They build a good life and raise a son. For me, Rosie’s story was the most compelling of the four women who are featured in this book over three generations. I read through Rosie’s life and lost track of time, turning pages quickly and hoping she would find the life she sought. For years Rosie’s only goal was to leave the foster home and get a job in the Twin Cities, without giving up. She was determined.

Years earlier Rosie’s mother, Agnes Kills Deer, stole Ray’s heart. Wilson paints vivid, memorable descriptions including this one about Agnes: “She had this way about her, like she could either fall to pieces or rip you apart, and she hadn’t decided yet which way to go. The men all wanted to get close to her and the women watched her like she was about to steal their powwow money.”

Wilson is good at flashes of humor and insight. Late in the book she talks about what it means to be Dakota. Being an Indian is hard, she writes, but not just because Indian history is hard. Being Dakota demands your very best every single day, and it means each step taken is a prayer. Earlier Darlene, a Dakota elder, confronts Rosie and her son, Thomas, who were at odds. Darlene said: “We’re a mess, a broken-down mess. And we’re all that’s left. Don’t go wasting time feeling sorry for yourself. Plenty of people had a rough life. You just make the best of it – that’s all anyone can do. The two of you still have time to do better. It’s up to you.”

Wisdom, humor, truth, marriage, history, child-rearing, environmental advocacy, overcoming obstacles, tears: the book has it all, told in a compelling and poignant way.

Wilson is enrolled at the Rosebud Reservation and is the author of Memoir, Spirit Car: Journey to a Dakota Past and Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life. She is executive director for the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance. The Seed Keeper (Milkweed Editions, $16) will be available for purchase in March, 2021.
POLITICAL MATTERS: Native Issues In the Halls of Government – by Mordecai Specktor
editor@ajwnews.com

#4 More Years in prison

I’m writing at the end of October, feeling apprehensive about the results of the upcoming elections. As I’ve made clear in recent columns, I favor the defeat of the Imperial Wizard in the Oval Office. Trump creates some new form of chaos each day he’s in power; and he poses a clear and present danger to this country and to the world. A second Trump term would be catastrophic – deleterious to the health of the planet and destructive of what’s left of American democracy.

“The Republican administration descended on the federal government, perverted the remit of federal agencies, and eviscerated federal departments in a fury of looting the national assets,” writes Darryl Pinckney in The New York Review of Books. The magazine featured a group of writers holding forth on the 2020 elections; Pinckney’s contribution was titled “A Society on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown.”

He continues: “They hadn’t been convinced in 2016 they’d get in. Opportunists have been running amok ever since. No restraint at the top means the shit everywhere is so out in the open and undisguised that everything feels unprecedented. Too many white people would rather let bullies wreck the Republic than have democracy work if that would mean the system also working for people they prefer not thinking about. Plenty of non-whites want to be white. Nonvoters and voters who didn’t care took it for granted that they’d be fine or just as bad off no matter who won. These bloody days have eliminated that category.”

It’s hard to know where to start with the debacle of the Pres. Dumbass administration. Of course, the nominal president downplayed and continues to minimize the danger from SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, which has killed more than 225,000 Americans – and the victims are disproportionately Native, Black and other people of color. Trump says, when he’s not advocating quack remedies, that we’re “turning the corner” on the virus. It’s a lie: Infections, hospitalizations and deaths are surging in most states.

The Dakotas and Wisconsin have been especially hard hit by the recent wave of infections. With the bungled federal response to the virus – really, a complete abdication of responsibility for a coordinated effort – the U.S. economy is in shambles. Small businesses are shuttering and entire industries have collapsed, with millions losing their jobs. The U.S. does not have an effective social safety net, and the Republicans in the Senate of late have focused on installing another right-wing justice on the Supreme Court, rather than passing a stimulus bill that would have benefited increasingly desperate families across the land.

Regarding Pinckney’s observation at the top that Dumbass and his cronies “perverted the remit of federal agencies, and eviscerated federal departments in a fury of looting the national assets,” at the end of October the Trump administration opened up 9.3 million acres of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska for logging. The Tongass is one of the biggest intact temperate rainforests, according a report in the Washington Post:

“For years, federal and academic scientists have identified Tongass as an ecological oasis that serves as a massive carbon sink while providing key habitat for wild Pacific salmon and trout, Sitka black-tailed deer and myriad other species. It boasts the highest density of brown bears in North America, and its trees – some of which are between 300 and 1,000 years old – absorb at least 8 percent of all the carbon stored in the entire Lower 48’s forests combined."

Dominick DellaSala, chief scientist with the Earth Island Institute’s Wild Heritage project, told the newspaper: “While tropical rainforests are the lungs of the planet, the Tongass is the lungs of North America. It’s America’s last climate sanctuary.”

The Washington Post also reported in late October that the Trump administration has rolled back more than 125 environmental safeguards, which means “more pollution, drilling and logging, while weakening protections for animals such as bees, bears and birds.”

In our neck of the woods, American Indian tribes are fighting energy development and mining schemes that have the potential to pollute unceded treaty territories that provide subsistence for the people: wild rice, berries, fish and game.

And the recent removal of the gray wolf from the U.S. Endangered Species Act list is the latest outrage. The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), which works on behalf of Ojibwe bands in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, condemned the decision, according to the Star Tribune.

“The tribes have very ancient and traditional relationship with what we call ma’iìning – the word for wolf,” GLIFWC spokesman Dylan Jennings told the newspaper. “The tribes will take whatever means or avenues necessary to help protect their relative.”

New project examines the history of Nebraska’s Genoa Indian School

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the U.S. government sent tens of thousands of Indian children to boarding schools in the hopes of assimilating children and breaking their ties to families and tribes. More than 300 schools were established for this purpose, including one in Genoa, Neb., that grew to a 640-acre campus that enrolled thousands of children from more than 40 Indian nations during its 50 years of operation from 1884 to 1934.

The Genoa Indian School Digital Reconciliation Project is a new effort to tell the story of these children through record digitization, oral histories, community narratives, and artifacts. The project is a collaboration between the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; the Genoa U.S. Indian School Foundation; Community Advisors from the Omaha, Pawnee, Ponca, Santee Sioux, and Winnebago tribes of Nebraska; and descendants of those who attended Genoa.

It aims to bring greater awareness of the schools and their legacies at the same time as it hopes to return the histories of Indian children from government repositories back to their families and tribes. So far, project members have digitized, described, and published about 4,000 pages of documents from the National Archives in Denver and Kansas City. Communities and individuals will be able to contribute their own digital content to the record.

At UNL, project co-directors are Margaret Jacobs, professor of history, and Elizabeth Lorang, associate professor in the University Libraries. To ensure the project represents many perspectives and experiences of those who attended the school and their descendants, a council of Native American community advisors provides direction and oversight. The advisory team is led by co-chairs Gaia Shikibos (Ponca), executive director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, and James Riding In (Pawnee), associate professor of American Indian Studies at Arizona State University. Other members include Everett Baxter (Omaha), Ben Crawford, Stuart Redwing (Santee) and Larry Wright, Jr. (Ponca). Nancy Carlson of the Genoa U.S. Indian School Foundation also serves as a project advisor. Over its first two years, the project has employed three undergraduates and seven graduate students.

“The Genoa Indian School Digitizing Reconciliation Project offers public access through its website to thousands of documents and photographs. Through the power of documentation, the project tells the story of thousands of lives impacted over a 50-year period,” gaia Shikibos said. “The documents that have been compiled tell the truth about a failed experiment in human cultural reprogramming. They speak for the children who were silenced, restoring their voices and those of their resilient descendants who carry on.”

Authorities designed the schools to “kill the Indian and save the man,” said Captain Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of Carlisle Indian School. To assimilate Indian children and break their ties to their tribes, most teachers and administrators forbade students from speaking their native languages and required Christian conversion. They formed students into military-style companies, which marched and drilled each day. Memoirs and oral histories of attendees reveal that boarding schools gave some children new opportunities and also subjected many to harsh discipline, abuse, exploitation, and disease.

Support for the project is provided by the Council on Library and Information Resources, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s College of Arts and Sciences, University Libraries, and Center for Digital Research in the Humanities.

For more information on the project, visit https://genoaindianschool.org/ or contact genoadigitalproject@unl.edu.

As this pandemic is nearing what appears to be its second wave, let’s do all we can to prevent our families and our relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, team mates, and community members of all ages and all backgrounds from getting and dying from this disease. I look forward to when this pandemic is over, when there will be less and less Facebook posts about my friends testing positive and/or their loved ones dying from COVID-19.

I also look forward to the day when I get to hug my mother and my 94 year old Anishinaabe grandma again. This pandemic has taken a lot of precious moments away from me and many of us, but if we are to get through this we all need to actively take precautions to keep everyone safe.

Wear a face mask, stay 6 feet apart, wash/sanitize hands, and stay home when possible. Who is worth saving for you?

Important reminders:
If you have COVID-19, stay home (in isolation) until all three of these things are true:
1. You feel better. Your cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms are better,
2. Your fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication,
3. It has been at least 10 days since your symptoms first appeared.

— COVID VIDEOS CONTINUED FROM 3 —

— CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE —
2: It has been 10 days since you first felt sick,
3: You have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fevers.
If you have had close contact with someone who has been told by a doctor, clinic or hospital that they have COVID-19:
1. Stay home and away from others for 14 days.
2. Get tested. However, even if you get a negative test result, you still need to stay home for the full 14 days.
3. Watch yourself for symptoms.


Watch the Doctor’s videos at:
Arne Vainio, MD: https://youtu.be/AY7YELhfGE
Charity Reynolds, MD: https://youtu.be/vicAKINugKQ
Mary Owen, MD: https://youtu.be/UUYUzngFL10
**Who should not wear a mask?**
- Children under age 2.
- Anyone needing help to remove the mask.
- People who have trouble breathing.

**DO:**
- Clean your hands before and after touching your mask.
- Continue to stay 6 feet away from others.
- Use the mask ties or ear straps to put it on and take it off.
- Make sure your mask covers your nose and fits close under your chin.
- Encourage others to wear a mask.
- Wash your cloth mask each time you use it.

**DO NOT:**
- Wear a dirty or damaged mask.
- Wear your mask below your nose.
- Leave your chin uncovered.
- Pull the mask down to under your chin.
- Touch the front of your mask.
- Share your mask with other people.