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helps preserve natural legacy



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Textile artist builds sense of
community with ribbon masks



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DECEMBER 2020

CELEBRATING FORTY YEARS

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The Pandemic Pipeline



Climate campaigners and Indigenous groups in Minnesota continue to fight against Enbridge's Line 3 Pipeline. (Photo courtesy Honor The Earth.)

BY WINONA LADUKE

Governor Walz has just issued all the state permits for Enbridge's Line 3. That's including the Minnesota Pollution Control Permit called the 401 permit, which approves the water crossings on the Mississippi, Willow, Crow Wing and other rivers in the heart of Anishinaabe territory. And the Governor's Department of Natural Resources issued all permits, including one which allows Enbridge to kill endangered species, and then pay Minnesota \$2,532,860 for the destruction of endangered species in the line of the pipeline. There is no bonding for tribes, no protection for our wild rice and no justice.

Then there's the pandemic. This is a legacy Walz will have to deal with – shoving a pipeline down our throats during a pandemic for, in the end, 23 jobs. What's clear is that all permits have been issued. The Governor should issue a stay in construction, to protect Minnesota and our people. There's no urgency in a pipeline project.

To be clear, COVID is in an exponential growth period, and the counties along the proposed pipeline route, many of them with higher populations of Native people, are at risk. This is what exponential growth looks like: In Minnesota, our first 1,000 dead came by May 30 (a 4-5 month period), our second 1,000 dead came by Sept. 26 (a 4 month period), our

third 1,000 deaths came by Nov. 18 (a 7.5 week time frame), and if trends continue, we'll hit 4,000 dead before year's end.

Native people are at very high risk in the corona virus pandemic. An analysis by U.S. News & World Report indicates that Native Americans have the highest racial disparity when it comes to COVID-19 hospitalizations of any group in the US. Native Americans are 5.3 times more likely to be hospitalized due to COVID-19 than white Americans. The inquiry shows that in 23 of the 31 states studied, Native Americans were at greater risk for COVID-19 infection.

In Arizona, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico and Oregon, Native Americans were more than four times more likely to contract the disease. We would prefer to not be studied after death, and instead request that you support our lives. We have already lived through small pox and influenza epidemics. And we should not be subjected to a state sanctioned expansion of the COVID pandemic.

Now that all approvals have been issued, Enbridge is unrolling 4200 workers in the territory of the Minnesota Chippewa tribe, into trailer parks, RV sites, hotels, and on site man camps. All of those workers pose a threat to the health and wellbeing of the Anishinaabe and to the people of this state.

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New memorial recognizes generations of military service by Native vets



A new monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., opened on Veterans Day – the National Native American Veterans Memorial. (Photo by Alan Karchmer/National Native American Veterans Memorial.)

BY QUIL LAWRENCE/ MPR

After 25 years in the making, a new monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., opened on Veterans Day – the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

"It's an article of faith in Indian country that Native Americans serve at a greater rate than basically any other group," said Kevin Gover, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and a citizen of the Pawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. He said the steel ring sculpture over a carved stone drum will become hallowed ground.

"When people bring their memories and bring their prayers to a place, they make it sacred," he said. "We wish for this to be a sacred place, not just for Native Americans, but for all Americans."

For now, most of those prayers and memories are being sent virtually because of the pandemic, but plenty of Native veterans are hoping to sanctify the site whenever it becomes safe to travel there.

"My ancestors were warriors. Rain-in-the-Face who fought in

the Battle of the Little Bighorn or Greasy Grass that they called it," says Marcella LeBeau, a 101-year-old former Army nurse. "My father was a Spanish American war veteran. My brother, oldest brother was a veteran. All down the line."

LeBeau is a citizen of the Two Kettle Band, Cheyenne River Sioux. She recalls hearing a constant barrage of German "buzz bombs" during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, while she worked as a surgical nurse at the 25th General Hospital in Liege, Belgium, just miles from the front.

"To me it was a great honor," she said – and one recognized by her tribe when she returned home to South Dakota. With the memorial, she's hoping recognition of Native service will be nationwide.

For other Native veterans, a tradition of military service isn't something they heard so much about.

"For a lot of years I thought I was a first-generation military person," says Army Col. Wayne Don, a native Alaskan.

"Came to find out both of my grandfathers and uncles had served in the Territorial Guard during World War II," he said.

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Who's a Banana Republic Now?

BY WINONA LADUKE

Who's a Banana Republic Now? That's the question asked in a *Colombian Newspaper* in November, as that country, like the rest of the world watched the US elections. As Donald Trump lost both the popular vote and the electoral college vote, that would mean a transition to a new president. Well, in a working democracy.

Instead, as the *New York Times* reports, "What we have seen in the last week from the president more closely resembles the tactics of the kind of authoritarian leaders we follow," Michael Abramowitz, the president of Freedom House, which tracks democracy, told *The Times*. "I never would have imagined seeing something like this in America."

It's a political crisis, which is an embarrassment, and indeed puts America in the league of corrupt democracies worldwide. There's a few examples, on a worldwide scale. Ruling parties in Zimbabwe reversed true election results in 2002, Iran did the same in 2009, Venezuela is a mess, and the recent Bolivian elections and removal of democratically elected Evo Morales tell a more recent story of corruption and foreign influence. America seems to be no different. Politicians should not steal elections.

In the meantime, something else is happening. Despite voter suppression, armed white terrorists attempting to thwart voters, endless lines and for some of us, very remote polling places, this election changed our world. And it turns out that Native voters helped put President Elect Biden and Kamala Harris into office, providing the votes in key states of Arizona and Wisconsin. Our votes, although not large, are strategic. And, it is beginning to show. The question is how will that show up in Minnesota over the next two election cycles.

Get out the Vote work on Red Lake, Leech Lake and White Earth reservations stirred up some new voters, thousands of them. Red Lake Nation started their drive on October 4, training a get out the vote team who would travel by car, foot or bicycle. There was an expectation to register two voters an hour, and Personal Protective Equipment was provided. A friendly competition meant more voters.

According to Doreen Wells, who supervised the drive, 40-50 canvassers went out, and registered people, most from 18-45, driving beyond the reservation, into the treaty territories of Thief River Falls, Bemidji and beyond. Then there was the bus to Bemidjigamag, the first bus left the Red Lake Nation, with 12 Red Lakers from 25-72, who were first time voters in a non tribal election.

That's how the vote was rocked. Leech Lake had a series of virtual get out the vote events, and White Earth tribal members went door to door, and then drove people to the polls before and on election day.

Here's how it works. Take the village of Pine Point, 320 tribal members live in that village, between housing projects and private homes. Those tribal members constitute the Pine Point Township population, but the polling place is nowhere near the village. In fact, it's in the middle of a snow bank in the Ponsford Prairie, in the heart of Trump country.

Despite that, voters turned out, driving to town, casting absentee ballots and boarding the White Earth Council of Elders bus to take a ride to the polls.

Tipping the Vote

Wisconsin, a closely watched state in the election, went for Joe Biden by fewer than 21,000 votes in the initial county. When the votes came in from the Bad River, Red Cliff, Menominee and other reservations, things changed. Native people represent about 90,000 tribal members, and Menominee County, Menominee County, which overlaps the Menominee Tribe's reservation, voted for Biden 82%, compared to the state as a whole at 49.4%.

Meanwhile at the Navajo Nation and Tohono O'odham Nation, which spans Pima, Maricopa and Pinal counties, most precincts were above 90% for Biden, according to a statewide map pulled together by ABC15 Arizona. With good reason.

The Navajo Nation has sued the Trump administration for botching the COVID Relief Program, costing Navajo lives. At one point in May, the Navajo Nation had the highest ratio of COVID-19 cases in the U.S., surpassing New York City. The Navajo Nation has joined other tribal nations in a lawsuit over the dispersal of the funds. Recent exit polls showing how Indigenous voters favored Biden overall in Arizona also showed the pandemic response to be the most important issue on their minds.

Something Else

Tribal voters have long been discounted, and perhaps none so prominently as at the recent CNN Election night reporting which categorized voters into White, Black, Hispanic, Latino and Something Else. This is how that "Something Else" counts. In Minnesota, Biden won, but in the Deep North, Trump ruled.

Overall Clearwater County voted 71% in favor of Donald Trump, while Rice Lake, in La Prairie Township voted 72.5% for Joe Biden. Similarly, Representative Steve Green, although

a tribal member, received little approval from tribal voters, where in Rice Lake 67% voted for Democrat Dave Suby and only 31.9% for Steve Green. In Mahnomen County, Twin Lakes (Naytauwash) voted 75% for Biden, while non Native voters narrowly secured a Mahnomen County victory for Trump of 49% versus 48%. In Pine Point, Native voters secured 55% of the vote for Biden, while most non Native voters turned out for Trump. Red Lake,

was a more unified vote, not surprisingly, as allotments and non Indian residency certainly colors the politics of White Earth.

Minnesota elected more Native people this year than in any previous election – from City Council and County Commissioners in Bemidji (Audrey Thayer, Jourdain, and Tim Sumner), Lyz Jakkola (Cloquet City Council) to new additions to the State Senate – Mary Konesh.

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A pandemic challenge: Keeping Native students connected to teachers

BY LEE EGERSTROM

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a toll on Native students, their teachers and programs within Minneapolis Public Schools and threatens to upend steady progress toward improving education and graduation rates over recent years.

This is not unique to Native American students and programs in Minneapolis, as schools across the state and nation shift to online teaching, called remote or distance learning. It is especially noteworthy in Minneapolis, however, where from 1,500 to 1,700 Native students are enrolled each school year.

That may be understating the actual numbers, said David (“Bez”) Butler, the All Nations program coordinator at South High School in Minneapolis. Many Native students at South and throughout Minneapolis’ 75 schools simply get identified as “white” or other ethnicities, or come from families that keep their own cultural identities close within their circles of families and friends, he said.

“We are always trying to reach these students and families to make them more engaged within the Indian community,” he said.

Jennifer Simon, director of Indian Education for Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), said the key challenge for educators and families this year is keeping students attending classes and connected to teachers, and with other classmates while using online tools at home and not in classroom settings.

Minneapolis school officials, like counterparts elsewhere across the country, are finding this difficult with distance learning in Minnesota.

Data from the Minnesota Department of Education show that 43 percent of Minneapolis American Indian students in grades 9 through 12 failed at least one core class of math, English, social studies or science in the first, or Fall quarter, of this school year. That is up from 38 percent from Fall quarter a year ago.

Comparable disappointing results were noted for middle school Native students – grades 6-8, by MPS officials in a statement on American Indian education in the district released Oct. 12, Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

State and district officials are still collecting data, Simon said. Early findings are disappointing given that Minneapolis schools were seeing improvement in connecting with Native students, their families, and improving graduation rates. The percentage of Native students graduating in four years increased from 36 percent in 2018 to 45



“Native HERO: Here Everyday Ready OnTime” is one component of a revitalized community campaign for successful attendance among MPS Native students. The poster is currently encouraging Native students to keep connected and in attendance at Minneapolis schools virtually. It was designed by the Phillips Indian Education Attendance Workgroup (PIE) and the Minneapolis schools’ American Indian Youth Council or Ogichidaa Oyate (Warrior Nation).

percent in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

While that was progress, Simon said, it shouldn’t leave educators “satisfied. Four in ten graduating on time isn’t what anyone should see as a great accomplishment.”

Similar looks at student progress being impacted by the pandemic is troubling for educators all across the nation where classes are restricted to avoid the virus.

Across the river in St. Paul Public Schools, for instance, officials found 39 percent of all students were failing at least one core course during the first quarter of this school year. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported Nov. 11 that district wide failure rate was only 19 percent at the same time the year before.

Around the same time, NBC News reported Fairfax County Public Schools in affluent Virginia suburbs of Washington D.C. struggled with online learning results as well. While some students are thriving under the current remote learning system, students who were already having difficulty with academic progress have fallen farther behind.

The Fairfax schools said the number of students failing two or more grades increased 83 percent in the first quarter this year. Failing grades for English language learners jumped up 106 percent; students in special education with failing grades increased 111 percent.

News reports on the COVID-19 pandemic often remind us that the only comparable health crisis to today’s contagion was the Spanish flu a century ago. There were no computers, comparable telephone services and handheld devices back then to even contemplate out of the classroom, distance learning

approaches to education.

Schools and education officials are coping and changing education approaches all across the country to keep students, teachers and school staffs healthy.

Despite these challenges, Minneapolis schools do have strengths and community support in reaching out to Native students and their families.

Several ongoing programs districtwide and at various schools, conducted in coordination and with support from Native community groups, have been in existence for a decade or more, said Indian Education director Simon and Louise Mattson, executive director of Division of Indian Work (DIW). These deserve future media attention for greater public awareness and to help the schools and their programs connect with Native families and students.

A more recent development, however, is especially timely in that it addresses many of the challenges educators now face with teaching students under distance learning from COVID-19 restrictions. It stresses attendance and keeping students in contact with their teachers.

This program was established before the virus began affecting students, their families, and shutting down in-person classes.

Called Here Today Ready On Time (HERO), it rewards students who have 95 percent and better class attendance records, said Braden Canfield, a social worker assigned to the Indian Education Department who works with schools in South Minneapolis.

This is done with community support from partner organizations that include DIW, Migizi Communications, Minneapolis American Indian Center

(MAIC), Native American Community Clinic (NAAC) and the Indian Health Board (IHB). Awards are provided to students who became the program’s HEROs. The shutting down of in-person gatherings now make such ceremonies difficult.

“I’m really hopeful that we can hold a community celebration to honor these kids in May,” DIW’s Mattson said. “But, that isn’t easy to predict right now.”

South teacher Butler isn’t making predictions, either.

“I know what some of our kids are going through,” he said. He lost his grandmother to COVID and other family members have had the virus.

“It is difficult when you can’t visit your sick relatives in the hospital and when you can’t get together for family gatherings and funerals. That’s not how our culture works.

“A lot of our kids are going through the same thing right now,” he said.

Teaching some students online can create other challenges. Students can mute the sound on online devices and remove cameras from Zoom teleconferences. “You don’t really know if they are there. Just knowing attendance is difficult.”

These challenges often engulf entire families, he added. With sick parents or guardians, Butler said, students may drift away from classes while others opt out to take jobs to pay family expenses and buy food.

Underlying these new challenges is the inherent problem many Native families have with institutionalized education. That comes from education being a “Europeanized” institution that remains foreign to many Native families and their student children.

This is why, they said, that American Indian education in the schools encourage class attendance, culturally appropriate activities, and interaction among people within communities with faculties and families. This helps make all pieces and people fit into a culturally recognized community.

Information on what Minneapolis Public Schools are doing to cope with COVID-19 is available at https://b2s.mpls.k12.mn.us/Phases_to_Safe_Learning.

Data from Minnesota Department of Health on COVID-19 impacts on schools can be found at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/stats/wschoool.pdf> and <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/index.html>.



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Minnesota Bison conservation herd helps preserve natural legacy

BY DAN RUITER & HARLAND HIEMSTRA/MINNESOTA DNR

As the sun rises on a crisp October morning, Blue Mounds State Park comes to life with a buzz of activity. More than two dozen workers and volunteers gather under a bright blue sky for a special mission focused on America's largest and most iconic animal.

Bison. Buffalo.

A massive wooly beast that once roamed the great plains of the upper Midwest in vast herds that by some reports took days to pass. The Lakota had another word for it: Tatanka.

Pushed to the brink of extinction

Estimated to have numbered 30 million or more at one time, the plains bison played a critical role, along with fire, in maintaining healthy prairie ecosystems. Weighing as much as a ton, and yielding 400 to 800 pounds of meat, the bison was also central to the culture, economy and spirituality of indigenous peoples.

"The buffalo gave us everything we needed," said 20th century Lakota elder John Fire Lane Deer, who made his home on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. "Without it we were

nothing. Our tipis were made of his skin. His hide was our bed, our blanket, our winter coat. It was our drum, throbbing through the night, alive, holy. Out of his skin we made our water bags. His flesh strengthened us, became flesh of our flesh. Not the smallest part of it was wasted."

As European settlers embarked upon westward expansion, though, bison were slaughtered by the thousands for their hides, for sport, and at the urging of military officials who saw the animals' extermination as a strategy to weaken the Plains Tribes and force them onto reservations. Within a few decades, bison were pushed to the brink of extinction. The last wild bison in Minnesota was observed in Norman County in 1880, and by 1883 there fewer than 1,000 left nationwide.

A conservation comeback

Today, the North American bison is making a comeback through public, private and tribal efforts, and Blue Mounds State Park near Luverne, Minn., is playing an important role. The bison that roam a prairie enclosure here are among the most genetically pure strains anywhere. The park has sufficient range for about 75 adult bison, and each year, 20 to 30 calves are born. Each fall, DNR



managers follow the herd's management plan to keep the population at a sustainable level. As part of that process, bison are given a health checkup and vaccinations. Some are selected to be sold to other herds.

Blue Mounds State Park manager Chris Ingebretsen oversees that process along with the park's buildings and grounds supervisor, Dan McGuire. The work unfolds like a noisy symphony – gates clanging, people shouting, and the unmistakable grunt of the bison. Ingebretsen and McGuire are the conductors of the orchestra, barking orders to keep the bison moving through the system in what seems like carefully coordinated chaos.

"Heifer!"

"Open the gates!"

"Yearling bull!"

A series of wheeled gates lines a narrowing chute that helps direct the bison where they need to go – into a large mechanized crate that allows the attending veterinarian to examine the animal. The bison receive vaccinations before hair and blood samples are taken, which will help detect any disease and provide information about their lineage. At the same time, Ingebretsen and McGuire determine which bison stay at Blue Mounds, and which ones go to auction.

Preserving a legacy

The work of sorting, vaccinating and gathering data on these 106 bison plays an important role in preserving the legacy of an animal that has figured so prominently in American history. As part of the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, the Blue Mounds State Park animals are special because they rank among the five percent of bison that have no cattle genes. After being hunted to near-extinction, well-meaning ranchers and conservationists bred the plains bison with cattle in an attempt to preserve the species.



Buffalo at the Blue Mounds State Park near Luverne, Minn. Photos courtesy of Blue Mounds State Park.

The Blue Mounds State Park herd started in 1961 with three animals from Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska. Now the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd has expanded to about 130 animals at three sites: Blue Mounds and Minneopa State Parks, and the Minnesota Zoo, which has partnered with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on the project to preserve the animals' genetic legacy. Management plans call for the herd to eventually grow to about 500 bison at several locations, offering ongoing opportunities to educate visitors from around the Upper Midwest about the important roles buffalo have played in prairie ecology, Native American culture and U.S. history.

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We note particularly that the Enbridge pipeline route is also a route of significant COVID impacts. We also note a number of cases in western states where Pipeline workers and camps have increased the COVID rates and exposure with itinerant workers.

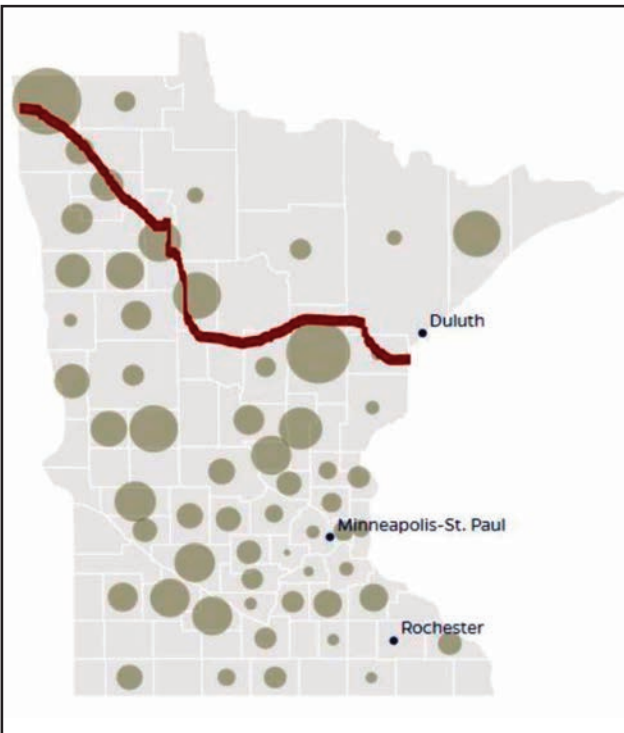
Health Care Capacity

Health Care professionals are deeply concerned about the raging pandemic. Health care professionals from Aitken county have called on the Governor to put a stay on the construction, noting that Aitken County has only four ICU beds, and a significant high risk population of Native and elderly residents. Cornerstone Nursing and Rehab in Bagley called on the National Guard the third week of November to support their diminished staff. Duluth hospitals are at risk, Bemidji and more. Indian Health Service is not equipped for a pandemic.

Minnesota is seeing increased community spread among health care workers. The Minnesota Hospital Association noted a Nov. 11th spot check of their system showed "over 6,000 of our frontline health care heroes were out of service in our hospitals." Bed counts mean nothing without qualified staff. Meanwhile, Children's Hospital is similarly impacted, with Dr. Marc Gorelick reporting that over 200 Children's Hospital of Minnesota staff were affected. Our tribal health care systems are already stressed, and this pandemic should not be expanded for the benefit of a Canadian multinational which has put our state and people at risk for fifty years.

The Public Trust Doctrine

Walz's permits are a puzzle in a time when tar sands economies are collapsing, and when no other state



Pipeline workers and mancamps have increased the COVID rates and exposure with itinerant workers.

has approved a pipeline project. Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer revoked the 1953 easement that allows Enbridge to operate pipelines through the Straits of Mackinac. That is also the heart of Anishinaabe territory. Governor Whitmer acted under the state's public trust doctrine, which requires state authorities to protect the Great Lakes.

"Enbridge has routinely refused to take action to

protect our Great Lakes and the millions of Americans who depend on them for clean drinking water and good jobs," Governor Whitmer said in a statement.

In 2010, Enbridge's Kalamazoo oil spill occurred sending 850,000 gallons of tar sands oil into the water. The spill had continued for 17 hours before it was noticed by Enbridge. Minnesota actually had the largest oil spill in US history, and it was an Enbridge spill in Grand Rapids. Seems like someone should have a memory.

Elsewhere, the tar sands industry is collapsing and in other states, like New York (Constitution pipeline), projects are being cancelled for economic reasons. In turn, the Bad River Band of Anishinaabe has rejected Enbridge's continued use of an easement, now over 50 years old, and asked that Enbridge remove the 13 miles of pipeline crossing that reservation.

It's baffling that Governor Walz would approve this pipeline in the face of the poor economic forecast for tar sands oil, and the fact that Enbridge has already cut through and put in the line by 400,000 barrels per day, and moved the equivalent of any new proposed line into other pipes. More than that, the state, and tribes have appealed all the Public Utilities Commission decision (an agency which needs to be entirely rebuilt).

While Governor Walz has stated that he intends to follow the science and the process, allowing all construction and water crossings to be completed prior to a Court hearing is a hollow promise. The state and our tribes have yet to have our day in the Minnesota Court of Appeals, where we have challenged this pipeline in terms of the Certificate of Need and the Route.

This pipeline during a pandemic is a disaster for the state and for our people. This is not an essential pipeline project by any means, and Walz's legacy will be tarnished by the deaths resulting from this project.

In the end this pipeline, according to Enbridge, will leave 23 new jobs. Those jobs are conflict jobs, born of a battle, dividing your state, and adding a huge carbon footprint in a time of climate disaster.

Governor Walkz, we understand your commitment to labor and jobs, and respectfully request that you look beyond a dirty pipeline during a pandemic, and make instead, a legacy of hope, courage and well being for all of our people. Please issue a stay on construction.

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Top left: First Lt. Nainoa K. Hoe died in Mosul, Iraq, in 2005 serving during Operation Iraqi Freedom. (Photo courtesy Allen Hoe.)



Lower left: Marcella LeBeau served as a surgical nurse at the 25th General Hospital in Liege, Belgium, in World War II. (Photo by the American Veterans Center.)



Right: Native veterans are hoping to sanctify the site whenever it becomes safe to travel. (Photo by Alan Karchmer/National Native American Veterans Memorial.)

Don has served 27 years so far, including tours in Bosnia and Afghanistan. Learning about his family history of U.S. military service was emotional and complicated.

"Not just Native Americans, but some of the other minority groups – ultimately they chose to serve, to represent their people and also to serve a country that sometimes didn't have what proved to be their best interest in mind. But they still did it," he said.

Don said now that the country is wrestling with questions about racial justice, he hopes the memorial can play a part.

Validation or maybe an inspiration

Army vet Allen Hoe feels the same. He's native Hawaiian, and was drafted in 1966. He then volunteered as a combat medic in Vietnam. Both his sons followed in his footsteps and served in the Army after 9/11. His oldest son Nainoa K. Hoe was killed in action in 2005 at age 27, in Mosul, Iraq.

"He was a young man who felt the same I did and the same way his ancestors did. For me, his loss obviously very painful as his father, but I look back and say the greater feeling is that he worked so hard to do so much for this country and he will not be able to enjoy that," Hoe said.

"His younger brother is a staff sergeant. His name is Nakoa. The meaning of Nakoa is 'the warrior who is brave and courageous.' And you know, from the two sons he's had to carry the heavier load than his big brother did, simply because he's left with the legacy of his older brother's accomplishments, as well as now having to make sure mom and dad are OK," Hoe said.

Those are the kind of stories of service and sacrifice Hoe wants Americans to learn about at the new Native American Veterans Memorial. For Native visitors, Hoe wants it to be a validation or maybe even an inspiration.

"Maybe some young Native who experiences that memorial for the first time, in 50 years from now, he'll be the president of the United States. Who knows? Or he'll be the next great general?" Hoe said.

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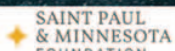
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Sophia Morin: Senior Captain of Bemidji HS Lumberjacks Soccer Team

The Minnesota State High School League adjusted their 2020-21 winter schedules to curb the spread of the COVID-19.

The fall high school sport season was completed for high school soccer. College-level soccer was canceled during the fall season.

Sophia Morin, 17, is a multi-sport senior athlete at Bemidji High School. She is from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Her Indian name is Whispering Deer. Sophia is the daughter of Craig and Eleanor Morin.

“I compete in varsity soccer, gymnastics, and track,” said Sophia. “In past years I also ran varsity cross country.”

“I have always been an active person,” said Sophia. “My parents started me in soccer and gymnastics at three years old. I competed in club gymnastics until eighth grade and switched to high school gymnastics. I always loved running with my family and took up track in eighth grade. I started club soccer at age seven. I made the varsity soccer team as a junior, although I was pulled up for multiple games as a sophomore. This year as a senior I was named captain of the team.”

“One of my proudest athletics accomplishments would have to be participating in the state soccer tournament last year and assisting the first goal scored by the Bemidji girls program at the state tournament,” added Sophia.

“My tribal core values have been a large part of my experience as an athlete,” said Sophia. “I highly value respect on the field, track, and gym at all times. Respect for fellow teammates and coaches, respect for the officials and their authority, and respect for the process



Bemidji High School senior Sophia Morin (28) passes the ball toward the Willmar goal in a September 2020 game. (Jillian Gandsey/Bemidji Pioneer)

that produces athletes who love the sport. My teammates are my family and I trust them. When you create an environment of trust, love, and respect you get to create something really great.”

“My sister Isabelle Morin plays college soccer for Bemidji State University,” said Sophia. “She has been with me every step of the way on my athletic journey. She would wake me up at 6 am twice a week to play indoor soccer with her and all her intimidating soccer

friends, she would yank me off the couch and teach me new ways to juke out a defender, and she still to this day always has advice for me after my games. I would not be the athlete I am today without my sister.”

“BHS Coach Logan Larson was my coach all the way back in U12,” said Sophia. “He helped me develop into the athlete leading the team today.”

“After coaching Sophia Morin for seven years, I can honestly she’s a person of the highest character,” said Logan Larson, BHS head girls’ soccer coach. “She’s always expected the most of herself, and held herself to a higher standard. As a captain, she embraced her role, and was often the half-time speaker that lifted the confidence of her teammates, and reinvigorated our spirit to get back on the field and fight. It was an honor to coach Sophia Morin.”

To compete at a high level, athletes need to have a balance of the holistic dimensions of high performance: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. These areas are very important during the covid-19 pandemic time we are in as well.

“To stay healthy during the pandemic I have been paying extra attention,” said Sophia. “Physically I try to stay hydrated, keep my social distance, and work out as often as I can. Emotionally, I try to stay in touch with my friends as often as I can for my mental health and theirs if they ever need to talk. I try to be a listening ear for whoever might need it around me. Mentally, I try to keep on top of my schoolwork as best as I can with a strict schedule while also allowing myself time to wind down mentally. To keep balance spiritually I try to spend some time on my own to find peace. I find that being quiet with myself and drawing or listening to music to help me keep my balance.”

“I make efforts to give back to the soccer community,” said Sophia. “I started out playing recreation soccer when I was little so I try to give back to the program whenever I can and volunteer coach the little ones now. Our soccer program has grown so much in the past years so it’s really important to do my part in making sure and helping the program grow even larger.”

“We are more and more successful every year,” said Sophia. “I’d like to think that I am a part of that.”

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Angie Hirsch
Lake Manitoba First Nation

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Erdrich curates National Poem-a-Day series

BY JAMES P. LENFESTY

The Academy of American Poets popular national “Poem-a-day” series selected poet Heid Erdrich as guest editor for the month of November. She joined other 2020 guest editors Joy Harjo (Muskogee, current US Poet Laureate), Major Jackson, Monaca Youn, and Dana Levin among others.

Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe), is a poet, educator, and interdisciplinary artist. She earned a BA from Dartmouth College, two MA degrees from the Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars, and a PhD from the Union Institute. She is the author of seven poetry collections, her newest *Little Big Bully* was released this year by Penguin Books. Important for her work with the Poem-a-Day series, she is the editor of the ground-breaking anthology, *New Poets of Native Nations*, published by Graywolf Press in 2018, and co-editor of *Sister Nations: Native American Women Writers on Community* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002).

Erdrich has received two Minnesota Book Awards, as well as fellowships and awards from the National Poetry Series, Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, First People’s Fund, and others. She teaches in the low-residency MFA Creative Writing Program of Augsburg University and was the 2019 Distinguished Visiting Professor in Liberal Arts at University of Minnesota–Morris. Erdrich is the 2020 Glasgow Visiting Writer at Washington and Lee University.

JL: How were you notified you were chosen to curate Poem-a-Day?

HE: Shortly after the National Poetry series award, Poem-a-Day approached me to curate this November. They wanted me to contact 21 poets to ask for 1 or 2 poems that I’d select from. I determined to invite Native and BIPOC poets as well as LGBTQ and Two Spirit poets. It seemed so easy at the time to just reach out to poets I admire, so I said yes. Eventually it became an organizational effort, not gonna lie. I asked local poet Halee Kirkwood (Ojibwe) for help and got a poem from them as well!

JL: How did you choose poems for this series?

HE: Actually, I did not choose the poems presented on the weekend. Also, I chose several poems that did not make it into the series because once the pandemic hit and then the Unrest and BLM went global, I asked several poets for poems that would be relevant to 2020 and that would land well in this particularly anxious November. I consulted astrology, too. I kid you not. I’d given up on pollsters and decided that the stars would guide the month’s order. It worked out pretty well.

JL: The final poem you chose for November was the heart-breaking “No More Fire Here: A Sestina,” by William Bearhart, of Wisconsin’s St Croix band of Ojibwe, who died in August of 2020. It includes these wrenching lines: “We can only build the most modest of temples, when all we have is moonlight.” Tell us about finding that poem.



HE: Bryan will always be dear to me and it’s a heart-break to lose such a talented writer so young. In the months before Bryan went back to the stars, we looked at a few of his poems and discussed how they would or would not work for Poem-a-Day. Many of his poems were frank about thoughts of suicide and that was one subject not allowed at Poem-a-Day. We settled on his deeply touching sestina about desire and damage. He was proud of the poem and pleased I would include him in this series. Poets.org added a profile of b.william bearhart work to their website so we have a memorial to his work now and that’s a comfort.

JL: The late Sixties and early Seventies have been termed the “Native American Renaissance,” echoing the Harlem Renaissance of Black artists in New York in the Twenties. Is there a NEW Native American Renaissance right now?

HE: I’ve heard it called a resurgence and a second wave, but really, as one of the poets publishing in the end of the 21st century, it’s part of a continuum. We’ve never stopped singing.

JL: In 2019, Joy Harjo was named US Poet Laureate, the first Native in that position. What has that recognition meant to other Native poets and writers?

HE: Joy is an amazing force for good in the poetry world and has no doubt helped Native writers to rise in recognition. Her work with the new Norton anthology of Native Poetry really enlarges literature in general. Her map project, *Living Nations, Living Words*, shows Native poets in their homelands. It was just published and it’s a terrific resource and reminder that all of the continent is Native land.

JL: Tell us about your own current projects. Are you able to work during the difficulty of the pandemic?

HE: Well, I am supposed to be working on something... what was it? My focus has been on my new book, *Little Big Bully*. I’m doing a lot of online readings and events. I guess I’ll get back to my book about Metis ancestors at some point!

See *Living Nations, Living Words* online at: (www.loc.gov/ghe/cascade/index.html?appid=be31c5fc7614d6680e6fa47be888dc3).



FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT
AMERICAN INDIAN OIC AND TAKODA



Reflections on Turkey Day

My family moved up the Thanksgiving festivities by a week, so our son Max, who was visiting from Copenhagen, could enjoy the traditional turkey and side dishes before his return to Denmark.

Over recent years, the National Day of Mourning has been observed by many Native people who have learned that the dominant American holiday is “rooted in historical fallacy and upholds tired settler colonial belief systems,” in the words of the hosts of the “All My Relations Podcast.”

The Nov. 20 podcast episode (bit.ly/amr-thanksgiving), hosted by Matika Wilbur and Adrienne Keene, is titled “ThanksTaking or ThanksGiving?” The program features an illuminating discussion of the national holiday, featuring Wampanoag scholars Paula Peters and Linda Coombs.

The previously mentioned National Day of Mourning was born in 1970, when a Massachusetts civic celebration of the 350th anniversary of the Pilgrims’ arrival ran into a snag. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts intended to celebrate amity between their ancestors and the Wampanoag; but Wamsutta (aka Frank James), a Wampanoag leader invited to speak, was disinvited by planning committee members, who deemed his remarks as “inflammatory” and contrary to the anniversary celebration’s theme of “brotherhood.”

Wamsutta and his supporters shunned the civic celebration and assembled at nearby Cole’s Hill. He gave the speech that he intended to deliver about the depredations of the Pilgrims (grave robbing, stealing food stores, enslaving Native people, etc.), near the statue of Massasoit, who was the Wampanoag’s leader when the Pilgrims landed, and thus kicked off the first National Day of Mourning.

This reexamination of the past has accelerated in 2020, the year from hell, as statues of genocidal explorers and slave owners – Columbus, George Washington, et al. – have been toppled. If we are to go forward as a society, a reckoning with mythologies is necessary, in part, as an antidote to the right-wing movement of self-proclaimed patriots threatening to pull us back to an imagined era of American greatness.

I recently signed an online petition to rename my high school, which is now called Henry Sibley (it was just Sibley High School when I graduated in 1968). There’s no compelling reason to continue honoring Minnesota’s first governor, who played a key role in the U.S.-Dakota War and the country’s

largest mass execution, the hanging of 38 Dakota men in Mankato, on Dec. 26, 1862. Sibley’s military commission sought to execute 303 Dakotas, but Pres. Abraham Lincoln pared down the list.

My alma mater certainly can find a person more deserving of recognition. Perhaps, the school should be named after Dakota leader Taoyateduta (Little Crow).

The Native vote

The Nov. 3 elections provided a sense of relief. Eventually, as the votes were counted in key battleground states, we learned that Donald Trump would soon pack up his Twitter device and move out of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Political observers have noted that Trump’s abdication of responsibility to stop the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, contributed to his failed reelection bid.

My wife (who became a U.S. citizen last year) and I live in a deep blue precinct in South Minneapolis, where DFL candidates routinely reap 80 to 90 percent of the vote. (I refer to the neighborhood as the People’s Republic of Powderhorn Park.) And there were similar results this year from precincts around the Red Lake Reservation, in Beltrami County, according to an analysis by the *Star Tribune*.

In four precincts around Red Lake – where voter participation increased from 22 to 45 percent from 2016 to 2020 – the Biden-Harris ticket got more than 90 percent of the vote. “A similar pattern played out in precincts on or around Native American reservations across northern Minnesota – blips of deep blue in the middle of red Trump country,” according to the newspaper.

There likely was a prime reason for the rise in voter participation in predominantly American Indian precincts and the blue vote.

Nancy Beaulieu, an organizer for the clean-energy group MN350, told the *Star Tribune*: “You know why they showed up? Trump. They didn’t believe in the DFL Party. They didn’t believe Joe Biden was the best candidate for us. They wanted to vote against Trump.”

This trend was replicated across Indian Country. The Nov. 21 *Star Tribune* story mentioned that in other battleground states, “Native American voters turned out in record numbers, including Arizona, where Biden leads Trump by 11,000 votes. Native voter turnout may have also tipped the scales in neighboring Wisconsin, where the National Congress of American Indians estimates there are about 71,000 voting-age Native Americans. Biden won the state by about 20,000 votes, pending a recount.

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Textile artist builds sense of community with ribbon masks

BY BRAD HAGEN

With the ever-growing presence of Natives on social media, it's likely that you've come across Maggie Thompson's work at least once or twice while scrolling through your feed. Thompson (Fond Du Lac Ojibwe) is a textile artist and designer, as well as the owner of Makwa Studio, where she crafts a variety of beanies, cowls, and scarves that are available for purchase through her website. In addition, she's exhibited her work at places such as All My Relations Gallery, Minneapolis Institute of Art, and the Plains Art Museum.

For Thompson, art has always been part of her life. "Both of my parents were artists. My mom's a painter and photographer, and my dad was a graphic designer, so I just kind of grew up with it." After beginning to explore fine art in highschool, Thompson earned her BFA in Textiles at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2013.

When she returned from college, Thompson worked part time at a coffee shop while taking care of her father who had just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. At the same time, she was looking for ways to use her skills. "I was look-

ing for textile jobs, but everything was at [places like] Target. I just needed something more flexible. So [Makwa Studio] started very small and on the side. I was living on a half-time coffee wage and bought small balls of yarn to knit my first hat."

Now Thompson's audience is growing, with people like Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan appearing on Makwa Studio's Instagram page wearing an "I Voted" beanie, one of Thompson's latest projects.

For many, fine art is surrounded by an aura of aristocracy, which can act as a means of gatekeeping and often prevents many people from seeking it out or engaging with it. Because of this, Thompson wanted to create art that would actually reach people.

"I came from more of a fine arts background and after school, I was thinking about how to make artwork more accessible to other folks. So I thought I could make wearable art that would reach more people."

The creation of Makwa Studio has allowed Thompson to follow this credo, especially in regard to the aid she's offered during the pandemic.

With mask shortages occurring around the country in the early days of



Textile artist Maggie Thompson wearing one of her Ojibwe word designs on a North hat. (Photo by Jaida Grey Eagle.)

the pandemic, Thompson was inclined to use her abilities to help and ultimately created the Ribbon Mask Project, an initiative that aimed to provide as many masks as possible.

"I started making masks pretty early on because folks in New York were talking about their shortage, so I started sewing and trying different patterns for masks. I was donating a lot for hospitals here, and then I started having individuals ask for them and then I made this one mask for a woman's mother who was going through chemo. So then I was really thinking about protecting the vulnerable. I just wanted to keep making something that felt more special to people and thought of using ribbon."

Hearing "ribbon mask" and seeing the mask's design may lead many Native people to think of ribbon skirts, an article of clothing particular to Native women. For Thompson, this was intentional. "I think of ribbon as a symbol of adaptation and survival. For me, it speaks to indigenous communities and how we've experienced the traumas of the past, and how we're still here. Everyone in the world is experiencing this together, though I feel it's different for indigenous peoples. There's a familiarity to it."

Thompson also cites a desire to create a sense of community by using ribbon in her masks. "When you see another Native person wearing beads or wearing something that we see as being Native, there's this instant connection, whether you know them or not. In a time of isolation, I felt like that was really important to translate."

Thompson's Ojibwe identity plays a



Thompson cites a desire to create a sense of community by creating ribbon masks. (Photo courtesy of <http://makwastudio.com>.)

central role in her artwork. On Makwa Studio's website, it's stated that "she derives her inspiration from the history of her Ojibwe heritage, exploring family history as well as themes and subject matter of the broader Native American experience." This exploration of identity through art also played a large role in the creation of Makwa Studio. "My identity was obviously showing through my work, and it didn't feel like something I could give up to a larger company- it felt more personal."

However, this doesn't stop Thompson from collaborating with other companies. Her most recent joint venture was with Askov Finlayson, the Minneapolis-based fashion company owned by the sons of Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton. Her idea was to put an Ojibwe spin on an already popular product. "I don't speak the language a lot, but I know a few words here and there, and they [Askov Finlayson] have these iconic North hats, so I was like, what if we did the North hats in Ojibwe?" The result was a hat that replaced "North" with Giiwedini, the Ojibwe equivalent of the word. Her motive was based in "the idea of bringing culture to the forefront and also teaching people. So art as education." Through this collaboration, Thompson was able to maintain the integrity of her work, while allowing it to reach a wide audience.

When asked about the role of art during the pandemic, Thompson had some wise words to share. "It's a way to process and communicate. And it's a way to tell stories. When people are going through all these intense emotions and seeing things happening from all around the world, art can tell the personal narratives that aren't in the headlines." She went on to say that artists tend to navigate through the world in a unique way and, because of this, they're important during this time when many are struggling to see the path forward.

For information Thompson's work: <http://makwastudio.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/makwastudio>
<https://www.askovfinlayson.com/collections/makwa-studio-x-askov-finlayson>

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Visions of chokecherries...



BY DEBORAH LOCKE

“Native American Night Before Christmas” is so cute that I wish I had a three to five year old relative to read it with this very moment. The retelling of the classic “Twas the Night Before Christmas” poem substitutes flying buffalo for reindeer, a chubby Old Red Shirt for Santa Claus, moccasins hung from a lodgepole instead of stockings hung from a chimney, and “Hoka-hey!” instead of “dash away all!”

The colorful, sweetly illustrated children’s book by Gary Robinson ends with a familiar sentiment to American Indians of all ages: “Merry Christmas to All My Relations and to all a goot night.” (Yes, “goot”, not “good” but they mean the same.)

It tells the story of Red Shirt’s team of white buffalo that annually delivers fry bread, commodities, golf clubs, and toys from a wooden sleigh. Consider this:

“The moon and the stars in the night sky were a blinkin’ – Like the headlight that shines on my ’69 Lincoln. When what to my wondering eyes did show – but an old wooden sleigh and eight buffalo. With a plump little driver who looked so well fed, I thought for a bit he was flying fry bread.”

Note to the adults in the room: you must admit that the Lincoln headlights and fry-bread-fed driver is clever. So is the artwork, masterfully illustrated by Jesse Hummingbird (Cherokee). A short glossary at the end defines words like medicine bundle, commodities and chokecherries. “Hoka-hey” is a Lakota



Native American Night Before Christmas
by Gary Robinson (Author)
Jesse T. Hummingbird (Illustrator)
7th Generation; Illustrated edition
August 2020

term that offers encouragement, words Old Red Shirt shouts while encouraging the flying, and perhaps short of breath, buffalo.

For a child, the poem presents an old story in a new light, complete with a Native Santa clad in buckskins, beadwork and carrying a medicine bundle. If that’s not tradition, I don’t know what is. As for the adults sharing the story, this is a poem that will at the very least, make you smile.

Author Gary Robinson is of Choctaw/Cherokee descent and lives in southern California. The book is published by 7th Generation, and is available through Amazon, Follett and Orca Books. The cost is \$14.95.

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