

**Indigenous organizations collaborate to feed their most vulnerable**



Linus Yellowhorse cooks bison prime rib on Dec. 24 at the Minneapolis American Indian Center. Yellowhorse cooked more than 200 pounds of bison for several hundred delivered meals. (Christine T. Nguyen/MPR News)

BY KATHRYN STYER MARTINEZ/MPR NEWS

It's the first big snowstorm of winter. Bob Rice and Angel Swann are out running errands and picking up food in Rice's minivan. Even though the weather reports advise against driving, Rice, an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation and a born-and-raised Minnesotan, says there are no snow days for him.

And besides, he has more than 400 people to feed during a life-changing pandemic.

Rice is the owner of Pow Wow Grounds coffee shop, situated between the American Indian Center and the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe building on Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. Together with Dream of Wild Health, where Swann works, and the Minnesota Two-Spirit society, Rice and crew set out to cook and deliver holiday meals to community members in need. Rice stresses that this event is a collaboration of organizations, funders and volunteers – a real community effort.

For Thanksgiving, Rice and other volunteers and organizations came together to cook and deliver about 400 meals to people, and on Christmas Eve, another 429 meals went out the door. The effort was designed to help people save money on food in order to spend it on things like rent or medical bills, while also encouraging them to stay home because of the coronavirus.

Swann, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, notes that a lot of community mem-

bers have diet-related health issues and makes the connection between what we eat and our overall health.

"When we are fueling our bodies with Indigenous foods, our bodies remember those tastes. They remember that they make us feel good. It's a part of us," said Swann. "It's very healing, not only for your physical health to eat healthy food, but it's also healing to your spirit."

Swann and Dream of Wild Health helped source local, organic food options. All their produce came from the Good Acre farm in Falcon Heights.

The Dec. 24 meals consisted of traditional indigenous fare: buffalo prime rib, squash, roasted carrots and potatoes, wild rice and apple cobbler and wild rice balls for desert. Fry bread – not a traditional staple, but beloved nonetheless – was a last-minute addition to the menu.

The day before delivery, Linus Yellowhorse was busy cooking more than 250 meals at the American Indian Center and didn't miss a beat transitioning from feeding elders in the morning to picking up supplies and prepping for the next day in the kitchen. Yellowhorse worked through the night cutting up three bushels of apples.

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**Biden to pick Rep. Haaland  
as interior secretary**

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

President-elect Joe Biden plans to nominate New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland as interior secretary, according to two people familiar with the decision, a historic pick that would make her the first Native American to lead the powerful federal agency that has wielded influence over the nation's tribes for generations.

Tribal leaders and activists around the country, along with many Democratic figures, cheered Haaland's selection after urging Biden for weeks to choose Haaland. They stood behind her candidacy even when concerns that Democrats might risk their majority in the House if Haaland yielded her seat in Congress appeared to threaten her nomination.

With Haaland's nomination, Indigenous people will for the first time see a Native American at the table where the highest decisions are made – and so will everyone else, said OJ Semans, a Rosebud Sioux. "It's made people aware that Indians still exist," he said.

Haaland, 60, is a member of the Laguna Pueblo and, as she likes to say, a 35th-generation resident of New Mexico. The role as interior secretary would put her in charge of an agency that not only has tremendous sway over the nearly 600 federally recognized tribes but also over much of the nation's vast public lands, waterways, wildlife, national parks and mineral wealth.

The pick breaks a 245-year record of non-Native officials, mostly male, serving as the very top federal official over American Indian affairs. The federal government often worked to dispossess them of their land and, until recently, to assimilate them into white culture.

Her selection was confirmed by two people familiar with the decision who wasn't authorized to speak about it publicly and spoke to the Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez described himself as "overjoyed" and said in a statement, "It is truly a historic and unprecedented day for all Indigenous people."

Biden's pick could further deplete, at least temporarily, the narrow majority Democrats maintain in the House. Biden has already selected several lawmakers from the chamber, including Louisiana Rep. Cedric Richmond and Ohio Rep. Marcia Fudge, to serve in his administration.

Some on Biden's transition team had expressed concerns about dipping further into the already thinned out Democratic House majority for another senior administration posting. But Biden decided that the barrier-breaking aspect of her nomination and her experience as vice chair of the House committee on natural resources made her the right pick for the moment.

The president-elect has been methodically filling the posts in his Cabinet, adding North Carolina environmental official Michael Regan as his nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, according to two people familiar with the selection process. Earlier this week, Biden introduced former South Bend, Indiana, mayor Pete Buttigieg as his transportation secretary, and he intends to make former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm his energy secretary.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made it clear that Biden had her blessing to choose Haaland, saying she would make an "excellent choice" as interior secretary.

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 –

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# Winter Count: Mississippi River

BY WINONA LADUKE

**November 20, 2020:** Army Corps of Engineers issues 404 permits to cross waters of Minnesota, based on the findings of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The Army Corps did not do an environmental impact statement on the water crossings, or potential of a spill into Lake Superior, instead relying upon the state's review.

The company is ready, it has been for years. Staged on the edge of Ojibwe territory are piles of pipes, many of them sitting there for four or five years. Next to those pipes are now matting yards, that's the big 8 by 10 inch wood planks that big trucks drive on in wetlands. And then there's the equipment yards. Every kind of machine which can gouge, eat forests, or drag bigger equipment is sitting in yards. That's to say, equipment yards span from Their River Falls to Floodwood, and then some, full of things which destroy ecosystems. They all sit and wait. Hotel rooms are filing up, the word is out on the street.

**December 2:** Enbridge begins construction on Line 3. 4200 workers begin to pour into the state, most of them out of state union pipeline workers. Palisade, a small town of 100 looks like it's occupied: 400 pipeliners and 200 water protectors.

**December 5:** Tania Aubid and Winona LaDuke visit the ceremonial lodge on the shore of the Mississippi River. There's a survey stake for the pipeline project in the middle of the lodge. Fond du Lac has the contract for a cultural monitor who is supposed to be out ahead of any destruction by Enbridge. There's no cultural monitor around. We sit there with Aitken County Sheriff Dan Guida and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Captain Proctor, waiting for Fond du Lac's Cultural Monitor, to inform us "if we are sacred are not." We are told that they will be at the Mississippi River in 15 minutes, then 30 minutes and then, not today. We never saw a cultural monitor from the Fond du Lac Band. Our Tribal Historic Preservation Officer was told she would be arrested if she went to the lodge. Still no word from Fond du Lac or Enbridge. I was cited for trespassing on "public lands" to be at my lodge by Aitken County.

**December 6:** five more people cited by DNR for going to the lodge.

**December 12:** Arrests. A delegation of Minnesota State Representatives – led by Senator Elect Mary Kunesh

Poudin and Representative Elect Heather Keeler come to Palisade. Another delegation comes a week later. All to see what is going on.

**December Solstice Gathering:** Renewal of the One Dish, One Spoon Treaty between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee. Joe Hill of the Seneca Nation is presenting a wampum belt to the Anishinaabe women who have gathered to protect the water – today it's me, Tania Aubid and Morning Star Goodsky. The wampum became part of our Great Law of Peace, the Haudenosaunee, People of the Longhouse. The last time the treaty was renewed that I know of was in 1706 near what is now Montreal. It's called the dish with one spoon, also known as the one dish, one spoon, what it means is we can all take from the dish, we can all share the bounty that mother provides us.

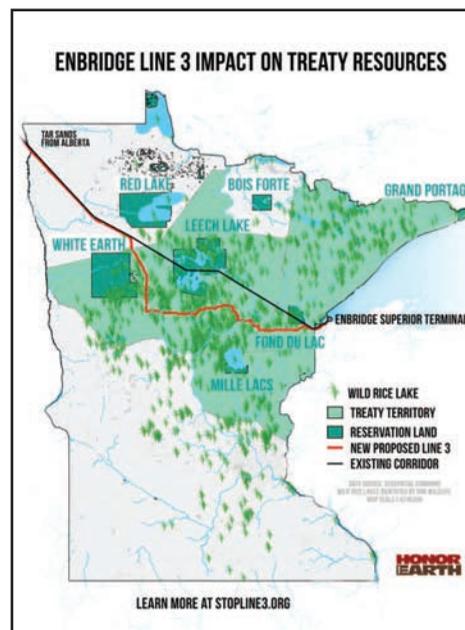
With that, comes a responsibility. A responsibility to protect mother earth.

The spoon is used because we can all reach into the dish, but we don't want to reach into the dish with a sharp a sharp instrument, because if there's a knife there and someone gets cut, then that person will have bad feelings towards the others that are taking from the dish.

The times were epic then as they are now. The European colonists took many of the wampum belts, "They were taken from us, many of them were held for a month for over one hundred years, and they thought that we would forget," Hill explains. "What they meant, but they didn't realize that the oral tradition is so strong among our people. There was no way we would forget. So I was there when many of our belts came back to the Onondaga Nation, where they're the caretakers of our most sacred belts. The Hiawatha Belt being one of them, but you see that became a flag in 1990 when the Iroquois nationals needed a flag to fly, when they went to play on the international level of the game, lacrosse, which we gave to the world, you know, our games alternative to war. That's how we settle our disagreements, because with the Great Law of Peace, we buried our reasons for war, for killing each other. So we settled it with a game of lacrosse."

Before I came out here. I asked a man in western New York who recreates these belts if he had a replica of the one disk with one spoon and he said, I do. And then he said, as he was making it, had to make one a little bit better. So the belt that I have.

The white beads represent peace. The purple beads represent the dish or the beavertail because of the part of this agreement, the chiefs and the grand-



mothers and the officials from other nations would sit and eat a dish of beavertail soup, all using one spoon.

The the Iroquois delegation gives the Ojibwe women the belt. And explains, "These are a clay bead, but the beads that represent the spoon are from the 17th century. So these beads would have existed before you left and came out here on your migration to where the food grows on the water." Joe looks to the Mississippi then, we are on the shore of the Mississippi River.

"And I'm here to honor this treaty because we're here to protect the land," Joe tells us. "We're here to protect the water. And more of our people will come."

Then we eat beaver tail hominy soup, and our treaty is reaffirmed. This time, there are a hundred others observing, and they too eat the soup and affirm the One Dish One Spoon Treaty.

**December 24:** Minnesota Public Utilities Commission denies the Red Lake and White Earth Nation's motion to ask for a stay of construction based on the numerous challenges to the regulatory decisions and the pandemic.

**December 24:** Red Lake, White Earth, Honor the Earth and Sierra Club appeal to Minnesota Court of Appeals and federal court.

**December 28:** Water Protectors, and local citizens face off with Cass County Sheriff. And there are friends in front of the Enbridge Pipe yard in Backus. Emma the Water Protector is high aloft in a tripod. It's 10 degrees out and the three hours is punctuated by music and chants in abundance. More people come and bring Christmas cookies.

Learn more about Line 3 at: <https://www.stopline3.org>

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# Ojibwe bands ask for halt on Line 3 construction

BY DAN KRAKER/MPR

The Red Lake and White Earth Bands of Ojibwe have asked the Minnesota Court of Appeals to pause the ongoing construction of the Line 3 oil pipeline replacement project until lawsuits challenging the project's approval can be heard.

The bands, along with several non-profit groups and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, have filed lawsuits challenging the project in both federal and state court.

But construction has already begun in earnest on the pipeline, which stretches for more than 300 miles across northern Minnesota. More than 3,000 people from around the country are currently working on the project, with another thousand expected to join them soon.

The tribes argue that if a stay is not granted to temporarily stop construction, then their lawsuits will be "pointless and moot," because they anticipate that the state appeals court would not issue a final order on their legal challenges until July 2021.

At that point, construction on Line 3 would likely be largely completed. Enbridge began work on the pipeline on Dec. 1, and has said it anticipates that construction will take six to nine months.

Even if pipeline opponents prevailed in court, and state utility regulators were required to hold additional proceedings on the merits of the project, "the outcome of new hearings to determine the need for the pipeline, or to properly analyze its environmental effects before selection of a route, would have no practical purpose," the tribes say in their brief to the court.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved Line 3 –



Deb Topping of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa protests the planned Line 3 oil pipeline replacement project outside Bagley, Minn., where the pipeline route crosses the Clearwater River, Dec. 10, 2020. (Photo by Dan Kraker/MPR News.)

for a second time – earlier this year, when it approved a revised environmental analysis of the pipeline's impacts, and granted the project a Certificate of Need and route permit.

"There is no legitimate basis for this filing which fails to recognize the exhaustive and meticulous review [by the PUC], and only seeks to delay an essential maintenance and safety replacement project," Enbridge said in a statement.

Earlier this month the PUC rejected a similar request from project opponents for a construction stay, concluding that "the risks of continuing to transport oil through existing Line 3 are greater than those caused by construction and operation of the project."

The current pipeline is corroding and requires extensive maintenance. Enbridge has argued – and regulators have agreed – that it's safer for the environment, and will reduce the risk of potential oil spills, to replace the pipeline with a new pipe along a different route across northern Minnesota.

The new pipeline will also allow Enbridge to nearly double the amount of oil it currently transports through Line 3.

But opponents argue the project exposes new areas of water-rich northern Minnesota to risks of an oil spill, and also would greatly exacerbate the impacts of climate change by transporting nearly 800,000 barrels of heavy Canadian oil every day to refineries in the Midwest and Gulf Coast.

The new pipeline corridor winds around tribal reservations in northern Minnesota, except for the Fond du Lac reservation, whose leadership reached a deal with Enbridge to route the new line through its lands after it was approved by the PUC.

But the route still traverses territory where tribal members exercise treaty rights, including hunting, fishing and gathering of wild rice, maple syrup, and medicinal plants.

The Red Lake and White Earth bands argue that construction of Line 3 would destroy their "treaty-protected interest" in the land, waters, plants and animals, as well as their "cultural and religious rights."

Meanwhile, work on the project has quickly accelerated since construction began on Dec. 1. Miles of right-of-way have been cleared, and workers have begun connecting sections of pipe together in certain areas in preparation for installing it in the ground.

Activists have also continued efforts to physically stall construction. In December, a self-described "water protector" suspended herself from a giant tripod to limit access to a work site near Backus, Minn.

Protesters have also repeatedly blocked work on a section of the pipeline route in Aitkin County, near a point where it crosses the Mississippi River.

*Minnesota Public Radio News can be heard on MPR's statewide radio network or online.*

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# State programs help Native warriors become employed civilians

BY LEE EGERSTROM

For Jeff Isachsen, like for a lot of Native Minnesotans, it was far easier to become a member of the armed services than an employed civilian in the midst of a pandemic and recession. With the help of state programs, the transition can be made even in these trying times.

Isachsen, 46, worked for several years at Mystic Lake Casino for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community after leaving the Marine Corps in 2003. A disabled veteran, he used veterans' benefits to attend the University of Minnesota.

"I graduated in May. It was scary. I wondered what I was going to next," he said.

Most everyone knew the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic at that point. The Minnesota and national economies were quickly falling into recession. People were losing jobs and businesses were closing shops. Employers held back in hiring while watching economic developments and surging numbers of virus infections.

A state employee with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, a member of the White Earth Nation, got Isachsen connected with Yogi (Terrence) Montry, a veteran employment representative with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). He works within DEED's Native American Project that bundles various programs to help Native veterans find work.

Isachsen became one of Montry's cases. It worked. He is now a Wells Fargo loan officer.

Montry is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Community in South Dakota and the White Earth Ojibwe Nation. He is a Marine veteran as well.

All 26 caseworkers and employment representatives working the Native programs at DEED are Native American veterans, Montry said. This helps to assure that relationships during training, preparations for seeking employment, and finding various other services the veteran might need are culturally sensitive, he said.

"If a women veteran is uncomfortable working with me, we have Native women here as well."

Statistics kept by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs show why that is important. Keeping alive a warrior tradition, 25 percent of able-bodied Native Americans enlist in the armed services compared to only 3 percent of the general U.S. population. Despite this service, less than 50 percent of American Indian veterans apply for

the federal and state benefits they have earned.

State officials working on veterans' employment services said helping veterans in general and especially Native veterans has become more difficult with the pandemic.

"We pivoted to virtual services (on the Internet) with the COVID. We are doing it now safely and virtually," said Ray Douha, a Navy veteran who is director of the Veterans Employment Program at DEED, during a conference call interview. "But we are not reaching everyone we would like."

Computer access is difficult for veterans now that most libraries are closed. Providing virtual services for the homeless is really a stretch, said Douha and Barry Platt, an Army veteran who is field operations manager for the program. Social distancing to stay safe keeps people from using friend's computers and even telephone service.

The COVID pandemic causing veterans to remain isolated and being unemployed both expand the need for health services in tandem with employment services, said Montry.

Despite such challenges, Douha, Platt and Montry can point to successes during the past year.

Reviews of joint DEED and Department of Human Services (DHS) veterans' programs for the fiscal year ending on June 30, which doesn't account for the past six months, showed 703 veterans receiving case-managed services. Of them, 16 percent were Native veterans or other people of color.

Nearly half of these veterans (47 percent) had a disability or other barrier to employment, 54 percent were between the age of 25 and 49, 13 percent were women, 16 percent were ex-offenders, and 12 percent were homeless.

Of these veterans served by state programs, 15 percent had only had only high school or GED diplomas while 40 percent had bachelor or higher degrees.

Granted, the fiscal year review doesn't show what has happened in the last half of year 2020. There was, however, favorable results heading into the virus surge.

The review showed that 86 percent of veterans receiving case-managed services successfully exited the programs with an average wage of \$22.18 per hour. That is \$7 an hour more than the generally accepted cost of living rate for Minnesota, and \$4 more than the cost of living for a family of four.

For information on available veteran services, see [www.mnworkforceone.com](http://www.mnworkforceone.com) and <https://careerforcemn.com/veterans-resources>. Minnesota's other veteran services and benefits can be found at <https://mn.gov/mdva>.

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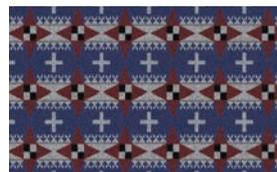
Large-scale digital animated artwork by Marlena Myles, projected onto Highlight Tower in Northeast Minneapolis.



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JAN 28, podcast release

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In partnership with Meal Magazine Issue 2, featuring two long-form articles commissioned by The Great Northern highlighting the work and perspectives of Sherman, Mikkelsen, Yia Vang and Wendy Geniusz



## Climate Justice: The People's Role

FEB 4

A virtual panel featuring a mix of national and local activists and organizers sharing perspectives on climate justice through stories of "We the People" climate action. With Winona LaDuke (Honor the Earth), Catherine Fleming (Project Sweetie Pie), and Bruce Morlan (Conservative Climate Caucus). Moderated by Carmen Sirianni (CivicGreen).

In partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center and Climate Generation



## Diane Wilson: The Seedkeeper

FEB 7

An exclusive book preview and virtual conversation hosted by MPR's Brandt Williams. Diane Wilson's *The Seed Keeper* is a work of historical fiction centered on the forced march of Dakota women and children in Minnesota in 1862.

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## WETCC signs Articulation Agreements with seven colleges and universities

Mahnomen, MN – White Earth Tribal and Community College (WETCC) has entered into Articulation Agreements with Bemidji State University, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University Mankato, Minnesota State University Moorhead, Southwest Minnesota State University, St. Cloud State University, and Winona State University, all who are institutions within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU), the largest system within Minnesota.

By entering into the Articulation Agreements, WETCC will provide eligible students an opportunity to be dually admitted in both WETCC and one of the universities listed. One great feature of the dual admissions program that is included in the agreements, will allow students who attend WETCC the opportunity to be admitted into the university as a junior after completing their AA degree at WETCC.

This agreement is a huge accomplishment for administration at WETCC and will open the door for students to easily transfer to a four-year college or university. “We thank Chancellor Devinder Malhotra and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Ron Anderson for the efforts made to bridge the divide between our colleges and make the transition to the Minnesota University system seamless for our students” said WETCC President Lorna LaGue.

“We are creating pathways that our students can follow by establishing these partnerships,” said WETCC Academic Dean Brian Dingmann, “and hopefully,

provide a more comfortable educational journey.”

White Earth Tribal and Community College is a two-year institution located in Mahnomen, Minn. The College is dedicated to academic excellence grounded in Anishinaabe culture, values, and traditions. WETCC has one of the lowest tuition rates in the entire state and has an open enrollment policy, providing accessibility for anyone to earn their AA degree. WETCC serves PSEO options allowing high school students to start their college journey and is open to tribal members and non-tribal members with a high school diploma.

## UW-Stevens Point marks Native American burial site on campus

STEVENS POINT, Wis. (AP) – A memorial on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus now marks the land as a gravesite for Native Americans buried there in 1863.

Karen Ann Hoffman helped lead the effort and told Wisconsin Public Radio it’s a “hard-won first step.”

By 1863, hundreds of Indigenous people of several tribes were living in a camp in what is now Stevens Point. The members of the group were essentially refugees displaced by American settlers.

As many as 100 Indigenous people died when the scarlet fever swept through the camp. About 30 years later, the university purchased the land where its campus is today.

The plaque installed last month on campus recognizes that history. It comes after years of work by Hoffman, Stevens Point anthropologist and researcher Ray Reser and others. In September, they led a community letter-writing campaign aimed at convincing

the university to take action.

UW-Stevens Point Chancellor Bernie Patterson said the university is committed to establishing a permanent memorial on the site.

## Archeological find halts proposed road improvement project

NORTHAMPTON, Mass. (AP) – The discovery of Native American artifacts that appear thousands of years old has prompted Massachusetts officials to pump the brakes on a planned road improvement project.

The state Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs said that a traffic roundabout proposed in Northampton has been pulled from the state’s Environmental Policy Act review without prejudice, the the Republican newspaper of Springfield reported.

The agency said the state Department of Transportation will conduct public outreach in response to an outpouring of comments during the review process. Energy officials say the transportation agency eventually intends to re-submit its proposal.

The more than \$3 million project was slated to start last summer, but tens of thousands of people signed a petition calling for the site’s preservation.

Archaeologists hired by the state to survey the site before construction uncovered stone blades, tools and other evidence of an ancient human settlement in 2019.

A local property owner has also sued seeking to stop the project, which supporters say will improve traffic and pedestrian travel.

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# Restoring our connections to each other and the natural world

BY RICKY DEFOE AND JANET KEOUGH

As the year gets ready to renew itself, we have a chance to heal ourselves, our human communities, and the larger community of all beings in the natural world.

We have a chance to restore our relationships to the environment and to each other. We can rid ourselves of the arrogance and ignorance that comes out in violence.

We've experienced stress from living in an abusive environment, not just in some of our families, but in our society as a whole. This has brought negativity to the forefront of our community in the form of competition, aggression, and selfishness. Our community is out of balance and harmony.

In order to heal our differences and renew our spirits and our world, we first need to name these problems. If we can't relate to our own community in a positive fashion, how can we relate to the environment?

We must start with mutuality, solidarity, and community. American culture has socialized us to see group divisions – Black, White, Native, Other. Add privilege to that mix, and it makes a violent society, with racial and social division. As Americans we are also told that we can fend for ourselves. So we see power, money, dominance, prestige, and credit work against relationships and drive negativity within and among even elements of our communities who share similar goals and values.

Healing begins by doing good work for others. If we turn away from selfishness and, instead, lift others' spirits and burdens it takes away our own hurts and divisions. Healing means a holistic renewal that is physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social for both the individual and the community.

The Ojibwe language speaks about you before me. In English, we say "I'll see you later." In Ojibwe, we say "giga-waabam-in naagaj," which means "you will be seen by me later." In English, we say, "I love you." In Ojibwe, we say "Gi-zaagi-in," which means, "you are loved by me." When we speak about you before me, we also seek to think about you before me.

Institutions are manifestations of actions that stem from our cosmology, philosophy and values. If we don't understand that we are related to the rocks, the water, the plants, and the animals in all their forms, it is easy to see only hierarchy and dominion. That allows us to destroy and allow destruction. We experience societal devaluation of nature, the demand for short-term profit, and regulatory capture in our government.

It is important to re-spiritualize the

If we don't understand that we are related to the rocks, the water, the plants, and the animals in all their forms, it is easy to see only hierarchy and dominion. That allows us to destroy and allow destruction.

world. For all those who enjoy and protect our natural world, we need to remember and regain those spiritual and emotional feelings we have for waters, lands, and wildlife, a commonality and world view that brought us all to our work and creates our well-being.

We and the other beings on our planet have the right to exist, the right to flourish, and the right to be sustained and sustainable.

In traditional Ojibwe culture, we are each part of our own healing. We can't just go to a doctor or another person and expect them to do the healing for us. We go to the waterways and forests to find healing medicines. We participate in our own healing.

Now is the time for us all to take responsibility for our own healing – physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and socially. We all need to go, both physically and in spirit, to wild and

natural places. We need many types of knowledge: intergenerational, dream state, ceremonial, and contemporary knowledge of science – not just power and profit. We need the rivers, the wild rice, and the animals. And they need us to come together as a community to share the same objectives – clean water, air, and land, and preserving life now and in the future.

This year has been a time of isolation, and people long for relationships. We are a social people. We can change the way we relate to each other and rebuild the sense of working together for the welfare of all the people.

Our spiritual and emotional medicine

will also be found in the connection with other beings who share our natural world. This year, let us come together for renewal as a community and for restoration of a world view where human beings are both part of the natural world and its staunch protectors.

"Gwiiwizens" Ricky W. DeFoe is a Fond du Lac Band Elder and Water Legacy Board Member.

Janet Keough is President of Water Legacy.

This commentary was first published in the *Duluth News Tribune* on December 8, 2020.

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Albright Townhomes	Minneapolis	612-824-6665	closed	X		1, 2
Chancellor Manor	Burnsville	952-435-7111	closed	X		1, 2, 3
Cornerstone Creek Apartments	Golden Valley	763-231-6250	open		X	1, 2
<i>For developmentally disabled individuals.</i>						
Dale Street Place	St. Paul	651-224-7665	open		X	efficiency & 1
Diamond Hill Townhomes	Minneapolis	612-726-9341	closed	X		2, 3
Elliot Park Apartments	Minneapolis	612-338-3106	closed	X		2, 3
Franklin Lane Apartments	Anoka	763-427-7650	closed		X	1, 2
Hamline	St. Paul	651-644-3442	open	X		2, 3, 4
Hanover Townhomes	St. Paul	651-292-8497	closed	X		1, 2, 3
Haralson	Apple Valley	952-431-5216	open	X		1
Hopkins Village Apartments	Hopkins	952-938-5787	closed		X	1, 2
Lincoln Place Apartments	Mahtomedi	651-653-0640	open	X		2, 3
Oakland Square	Minneapolis	612-870-8015	closed	X		1, 2, 3, 4
Olson Townhomes	Minneapolis	612-377-9015	closed	X		2, 3
Park Plaza Apartments	Minneapolis	612-377-3650	closed	X		1, 2, 3
Prairie Meadows	Eden Prairie	952-941-5544	closed	X		1, 2, 3
Ramsey Hill	St. Paul	651-229-0502	open	X		1, 2, 3
Raspberry Ridge Apartments	Hopkins	952-933-3260	closed	X		1, 2, 3
Slater Square Apartments	Minneapolis	612-340-1261	open	X		efficiency & 1
Talmage Green	Minneapolis	612-623-0247	closed	X		2, 3, 4
Trinity Apartments	Minneapolis	612-721-2252	1 bdrm handicap, 2 bdrm open		X	1, 2
Trinity on Lake	Minneapolis	612-721-2252	open	X		1, 2
Unity Place	Brooklyn Center	763-560-8808	closed	X		2, 3
Vadnais Highland Townhomes	Vadnais Heights	651-653-0640	open	X		2, 3
Veterans and Community Housing - Sober Housing	Minneapolis	612-333-0027	open			efficiency
Brustad Place, aka Veterans East	Minneapolis	612-208-1712	open			efficiency

Yellowhorse works as a chef at the Gatherings Cafe in the American Indian Center. He cooks meals that are delivered to community elders so they can stay safe at home. The pandemic and food insecurity have disproportionately affected Indigenous communities, according to Second Harvest Heartland, the Twin Cities food bank.

Sometimes the hours in the kitchen are difficult, and after putting in a long day, Yellowhorse walked home in a blizzard. Originally from the Tohono O’odham Nation in southern Arizona, he moved to Minneapolis two years ago and has been cooking for his community ever since.

“I’m here not for me, I’m here for the elders,” he said. Elders play an important role in Indigenous communities. They are storykeepers and teachers of tradition. When it comes to meal time, Rice says, “Elders always eat first.”

On Christmas Eve, when meals were packaged to be delivered, the first 100 meals – along with medicines and pharmaceuticals – went to the community elders.

The volunteer crew gathered around foldout tables assembling medicine bags. They filled the handmade cloth bags with traditional plant medicines: cedar, sage and sweetgrass for protection and red willow bark or tobacco as an offering to the ancestors. People together from southern and northern tribes chatted and laughed while music played.

In addition to the food, plant medicines and medical kits, the volunteers also shared another kind of medicine: laughter. It is scarce medicine these days, but on this day, it was a salve for the spirit and made sure that the holiday meals fed more souls than intended.



Top: Siblings Liz and Bob Rice make fry bread to deliver to elders on Dec. 24 at the Minnesota Chippewa Tribes office in Minneapolis. Three Indigenous groups cooked and delivered more than 400 meals on Christmas Eve.

Left: Fry bread sits in pans ready to be packed as three Indigenous groups prepared several hundred meals to be delivered on Christmas Eve. (Photos by Christine T. Nguyen/MPR News.)

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The speaker called the New Mexico congresswoman “one of the most respected and one of the best members of Congress” with whom she has served.

South Carolina Rep. James Clyburn, the No. 3 Democrat in the House and a close Biden ally, also supported Haaland for the job.

Haaland, one of the first two Native American women elected to the House, said she could see the difference her position made for ordinary Native Americans who came to her with business before the federal government.

“They felt comfortable just launching into the issues they wanted,” Haaland told The Associated Press in an interview before her appointment. They would say, for example, “Oh, we don’t have to explain tribal sovereignty to you,” meaning tribes’ constitutionally guaranteed status as independent nations.

Scores of tribal officials around the country and dozens of Democrats had written letters urging Haaland’s appointment.

Haaland, is vice chair of the House Committee for Natural Resources. She previously worked as head of New Mexico’s Democratic Party, as tribal administrator and as an administrator for an organization providing services for adults with developmental disabilities.

Born to a Marine veteran father and Navy veteran mother, Haaland describes herself as a single mother who sometimes had to rely on food stamps. She says she is still paying off student loans after college and law school for herself and college for her daughter.

When Democrats mentioned former Interior Department officials who were male and Native American as alternatives to Haaland, her supporters charged sexism and classism, and stuck with the New



Representative Deb Haaland, D-NM 1st District. (Photo by Franmarie Metzler/commons.wikimedia.org.)

Haaland was born in Winslow, Arizona in 1960 and is a member of the Laguna Pueblo Native American people. Her mother, Mary Toya, is a Native American women and US Navy veteran. Her father, J.D. Haaland, was a Norwegian American veteran of the US Marine Corps.

Haaland earned her Bachelor’s degree in English from the University of New Mexico in 1994, at the age of 34. She earned her J.D. in Indian law from University of New Mexico School of Law in 2006 and served as the tribal administrator for the San Felipe Pueblo from January 2013 to November 2015.

Interior’s broad authority includes managing federal relations with tribes, administering tens of millions of acres of land and mineral rights held in trust for Native Americans and Alaska Natives, running national parks and making decisions affecting millions of miles of U.S. lands and waterways, wildlife, endangered species, and oil and gas and mining.

Biden has promised the nation’s broadest effort yet to curb the oil, gas and coal emissions that are causing the rapid deterioration of the climate, and Interior would play an important part in that.

Previously, the highest-ranking administration official known to have Native American heritage was Charles Curtis, who served as Herbert Hoover’s vice president and whose mother was one-quarter Kaw tribe.

Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani in Wilmington, Del., contributed to this report.

Mexico Democrat.

Haaland told the AP before her selection that regardless of what job she had, she’d be working to “promote clean energy and protect our public lands.”

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## LeRoy Staples Fairbanks IV: Bringing AAU Summer Season to Cass Lake-Bena

The wave of top level Minnesota Section 8 basketball talent is continuing to rise at Cass Lake-Bena High School. One of the team leaders is making potential adversity into his strength.

LeRoy Staples Fairbanks IV, 16, is from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and his clan is Makwa (Bear). He is a junior at Cass Lake-Bena HS. His parents are LeRoy Staples-Fairbanks III and Becky Fairbanks.

LeRoy's credentials include being a gold medalist for Team Minnesota 14U at the 2017 North American Indian Games. He was to play for the 16U team this past summer but Covid-19 arrived.

"I have been playing varsity basketball since eighth grade," said LeRoy. "In eighth grade in 2018 we made it to state and took fourth place. We made it to the section championship the last three years. We had a great chance to make it back to state this past year but the season got cancelled."

LeRoy played AAU ball with the WI Playmakers North program. "Last summer I was recognized by Prep Hoops Minnesota as the Top Preseason small forward in my section and top Breakout Player candidate for Section 8A," said

LeRoy. "I was also named Prep Hoops Big Jump Stock Riser for the 16U AAU season."

"We are a basketball family, so it was naturally expected for LeRoy IV to pick up a basketball," said dad LeRoy Staples Fairbanks III. "He grew up watching Cass Lake-Bena's run of state tournaments, and traveled the region watching his uncle Brady play ball during his college career."

Leech Lake Tribal College Head Men's basketball coach and uncle Brady Fairbanks talked about his nephew: "LeRoy always had love for the game and always worked extremely hard. Each year he had to prove himself and each year he's improved his game."

"Last summer Playmakers North had 18 teams for boys and girls and I'd give my most improved award to LeRoy," said Phil Roe, Playmakers North program director. "In one year LeRoy dramatically got stronger taking it to the basket, shooting the ball and making the right play at the right time. He works extremely hard and it shows."

"I prepare myself to perform physically ... by keeping my blood sugars level and staying good for long and short term," said LeRoy.



LeRoy Staples Fairbanks IV is a junior at Cass Lake-Bena HS. (Photo courtesy of Holden Phillip Law.)

Flu and COVID-19 viruses are spreading this winter.



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"Something most people don't know about me is that I have Type 1 diabetes," said LeRoy. "I'm not shy or ashamed of it but I just don't tell a lot of people. This could be the first time I have said something publicly about it. I was diagnosed two years ago, and I wear a full time Dexcom blood sugar monitor in my arm that I use to keep track of my blood sugar numbers. I take insulin through a shot every time I eat or need to correct. I do this because my pancreas no longer produces insulin in my body so I have to do it for myself. It has been a huge learning experience and lifestyle change, living with diabetes."

"Two years ago we learned that LeRoy was a Type 1 diabetic, and was a huge shock to our family," said dad LeRoy III. "We had to learn the differences between relatives we knew with Type 2 and now how to live with Type 1. Since

the day we found out, LeRoy IV has been awesome about how he deals with it."

"My mother is probably like the best diabetic mother in the world and she helps out so much with this it's crazy," said LeRoy.

"LeRoy was cool, calm and collective about the whole situation," said mom Becky Fairbanks. "Still to this day he never gets upset or too emotional about his situation, he just does what he has to do to continue to live a healthy life. I believe that these traits show how he is a great leader at such a young age to be in control of this disease and not letting this disease control his life."

"I have been watching him since he was a little bitty guy, playing the sports he loves so much," said Becky. "On the court, I watch how he leads the team with playing in an unselfish manner."

**Cancelling Henry Sibley**

As I mentioned in the December issue of *The Circle*, I attended Sibley High School. In gym class, we wore jerseys that were adorned with the image of an American Indian in a full-feather bonnet. The school nickname was Warriors and, in the late '60s, it clearly referred to Native culture. Our yearbook was titled Keewaydin, a variant on Giuwedin, Ojibwe for “north wind” or “north.”

I was a member of the Class of 1968, and that fateful year of world revolution has reverberated through the decades. The 73-day U.S. government siege of the village of Wounded Knee, in 1973, was another turning point, as the American Indian Movement (AIM) and traditional Oglala Lakota at Pine Ridge took a stand against repression and tribal corruption.

On another track, Native people campaigned against the appropriation of their sacred symbols and rituals for America’s sports-industrial complex. On the prep and collegiate levels, numerous schools changed the names of sports teams known as the Indians, Braves, Fighting Sioux, etc.

In the professional ranks, it seemed like the team owners would hold fast to their nicknames and demeaning symbols derived from Native lifeways; but

the year 2020 was another time for a sea change in consciousness – a rethinking wrought by the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd, on May 25. As statues of Confederate generals were pulled from their pedestals (along with the Columbus statue at the Minnesota Capitol), a reconsideration of history and cultural touchstones was taking place.

Pro sports executives – even those in the hidebound NFL that shunned Colin Kaepernick for taking a knee in support of Black lives – were moved by the global reckoning on racial justice that was triggered by a cop crushing the life out of Big Floyd, by Cup Foods, Chicago Avenue and 38th Street, South Minneapolis. The Washington NFL franchise, which was facing pressure from its corporate sponsors, announced that it would ditch the “R”-word; its squad is now called the Washington Football Team.

And in mid-December, Major League Baseball’s Cleveland franchise announced that it will no longer be the Indians, as of the 2022 season. “We have decided to move forward with changing the current team name and determining a new, non-Native American based name for the franchise,” the club said in a statement reported in the *New York Times*.

Unlike the Washington NFL franchise, which lurched forward in response to financial pressure, the Cleveland club studied the issue in a deliberative way.

“One of the experts the team consulted over the summer was Stephanie Fryberg, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan and a member of the Tulalip tribes in western Washington State,” according to a story in the *Times*. “Her research illustrates the damaging effects the use of Native American sports mascots have on Indigenous people, particularly children.”

Fryberg “presented her research, gave her opinions and answered their questions. She believes the team should be lauded for its open-minded and genuine approach to a sensitive matter.”

“It wasn’t at all like the Washington Football Team, which did it kicking and crying,” Fryberg told the newspaper. “It was a really thoughtful process, and it was obvious they cared about it. They listened and asked good questions. They said: ‘Look, many of our fans really like this name. Is there any way to make it work?’ But they understood there is no way to keep the name without doing harm.”

Of course, there’s still the matter of the Atlanta Braves and the Kansas City Chiefs, to cite two examples of pro fran-

chises that still need a nudge to do the right and decent thing.

Getting back to my alma mater, on Dec. 7, the board of West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools, aka School District 197, voted unanimously to change the name of Henry Sibley High School.

Minnesota’s first governor led U.S. troops in the 1862 war against the Dakota, and then convened the military commission that condemned 303 Dakota men to death. Pres. Abraham Lincoln later reduced the list of condemned men to 38; and they were hanged together on a scaffold on Dec. 26, 1862, in Mankato, Minn., in the largest mass execution in U.S. history.

In an Aug. 25, 1862 letter to Gov. Alexander Ramsey, who was then Minnesota’s second governor, Sibley betrayed his implacable enmity toward the Dakota: “My heart is steeled against them, and if I have the means, and can catch them, I will sweep them with the besom [a broom made of twigs tied around a stick] of death.”

The District 197 school board made the correct decision, finally. I’ll be a proud alumnus of a school not named after a villainous character in Minnesota history.

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Our new space that we are renovating and hope to be in by late summer of this year.

# ILTF's Will In A Box helps Native Americans with land transfers

BY HANNAH BROADBENT

Like many American Indians, my family has land in our district on the Sisseton Whapeton Oyate Reservation (in South Dakota). Also, like many families, my grandmother's land went to her oldest son. Sometimes it's that simple and sometimes it's not.

When it's not, we need a plan. Our family's land can provide resources and space to continue a traditional way of life. Planning the outcome can be a complex thing to do and usually means we are planning for someone's journey to the next life.

How do we start?

The Indian Land Tenure Foundation recently launched a program for Natives to write their own will to aid in the safe transfer of lands from one generation to the next. It's called "Will in a Box".

On their website they state: "Your land may be the most important thing you own, but you won't be able to leave it to your children if you don't take action now. If you die without a will, it will be up to a federal probate judge – not you or your kids – to determine who will inherit your land after you have passed

on, and it could take years to decide."

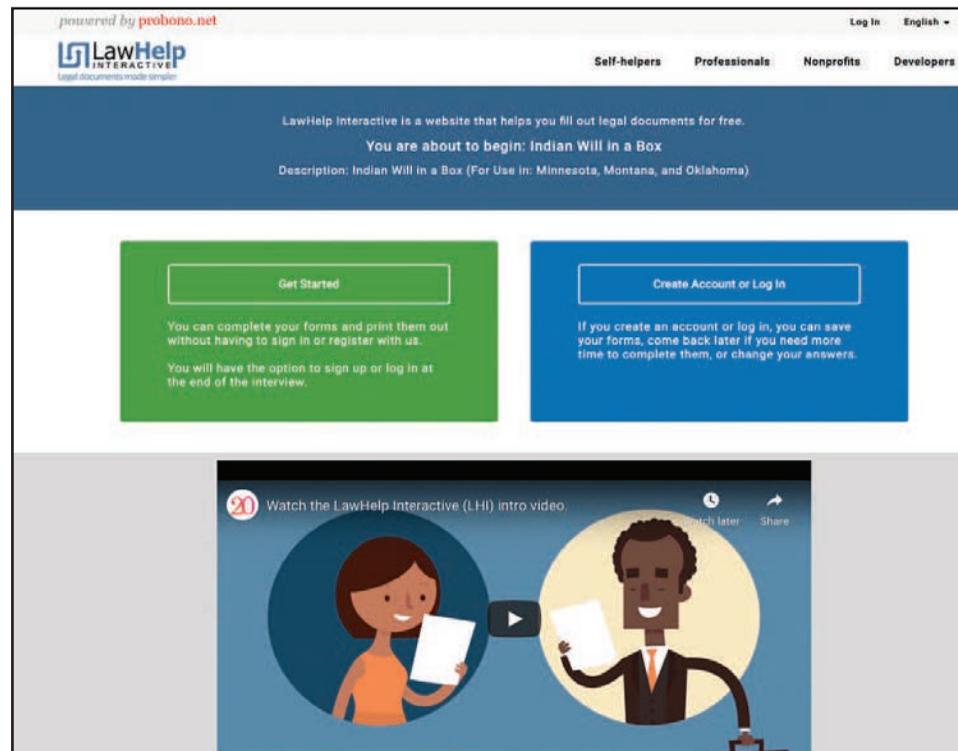
Tribal members who own trust land in Minnesota, Montana and Oklahoma can take advantage of this service free of charge.

There is a checklist of items you need to have on hand before you begin the Will in a Box process. A few of the basic items include: Government ID, name of tribe you are enrolled in, and tribal enrollment number. If you own real estate (land, farm, house) you will need a copy of your title and a copy of your mortgage documents. There are a several other items to checkoff so be sure to visit the website so you can be fully prepared.

The Indian Will in a Box, is laid out as an interview, you will find an outline of everything that will be covered at the very beginning. The will-writing process is incredibly detailed and simplified, there is even a "legal terms" section that has a definition for each legal phrase that is included. When it is a completed you will be able to download your Will.

Before you begin, ITLF wants you to understand a very important aspect.

"The product is designed for you to write a Simple Will. The Simple Will is designed for simple estates. This interview doesn't give you all available



The Indian Land Tenure Foundation recently launched a program for Native Americans to write their own will to aid in the safe transfer of lands. (Image from: [www.iltf.org](http://www.iltf.org).)

options for writing your Will. You will still be able to name your heirs and say what happens in case of future events," they write on the platform. "This Will does not take the place of legal advice from an attorney. It is always a good idea to consult with an attorney about your Will."

ILTF says, for more than a century, Indian families have seen valuable land resources diminish as fractionated ownership increases with each passing generation. On their website they state that they support estate planning as one of the most effective ways to stop the continued division of Indian land titles and ensure that Indian lands are controlled

and managed by Indian people – in this case, that person is you.

The goal is to have this service available for more and more tribal members in the future.

"By providing services that reduce fractionation, and training that informs Indian people about the laws governing land ownership and transfer, ILTF empowers tribes and individual landowners to protect their land assets and preserve economic and cultural resources for future generations."

For information, see their website at: [www.iltf.org/special-initiatives/estate-planning](http://www.iltf.org/special-initiatives/estate-planning)

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# “The Brave” is compelling, but could do without the stereotypes

BY DEBORAH LOCKE

This book, “The Brave” by James Bird, about a boy who overcomes a disability and hard start in life, could have been great. It’s not great. Granted, the book was written for middle school-age children, and has strengths including a compelling premise of overcoming fear and finding true love. Another plus: for those who enjoy geographical familiarity, most of the story is set on the Fond du Lac Reservation in northeastern Minnesota. Other reviewers pronounced “The Brave” as “endearingly earnest,” “an amazing debut,” “bighearted,” and “a novel to cherish.”

Huh? How closely did they read? Granted, the story is make believe and brimming with magic and mystery and ghosts, but this magic and mystery depicts wooden caricatures in a fake reservation setting. Insight into why adults do what they do is rarely offered. All we learn is that one drinks too much alcohol, another is always getting into or out of her truck, and a wise, spooky grandmother appears and disappears.

The best part of the book is the first

third. The story starts in California with Collin Couch, 12, who has an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) that isolates him from classmates and frustrates the adults in his life. He calculates the number of letters in sentences spoken to him, and then repeats the number. Specialists attempt to treat Collin, but no one can help. Collin’s father is an alcoholic who has trouble keeping jobs, and must send Collin to live with his Ojibwe mother in Minnesota.

Collin’s mother, Cecelia, meets Collin and his dog, Seven, at the Duluth airport, and drives the boy and dog to her home at the Fond du Lac Reservation. He is welcomed by a grandmother who comes and goes, and by a next door neighbor – Orenda – who spends most of her time in a treehouse. Orenda, wise beyond her years, teaches Collin to be brave when faced with adversity. Sick with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, Orenda predicts that one day she will turn into a butterfly. As Orenda loses strength, Collin gains strength both mentally and physically. With the help of some kind of medicine man and after turning into a wolf and killing a boogeyman, or dreaming that, Collin is mostly free from his OCD.

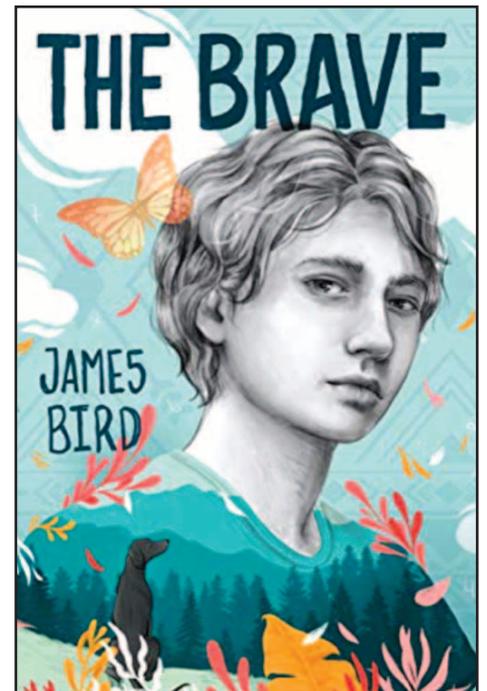
A few things here. First, Collin’s observations are often insightful and touching, like this: “My dad drinks a lot. I guess that is what happens when you have to work a nine-to-five job you hate just to put food on the table for a son you don’t necessarily like. And as hard as I tried to make him like me, it’s pretty hard making an alcoholic happy.”

At the Duluth airport, Collin waits at the baggage claim with Seven and notes that no one sees or speaks to him. Instead, people look at their cell phones or watch the conveyer belt, “searching for their stuff like it’s a race to see who can get out of the airport the fastest.” He watches family members embrace each other, “and parents scooping up their little traveling children. It’s like one of those commercials on TV where everyone is paid to be overly happy.”

They drive to Fond du Lac and I picture a truck at night tooling down Interstate 35 North to State Highway 33 South to Big Lake Road to the reservation. This is where the similarity to the actual reservation and its people ends. Cecelia’s home is deep, deep in the woods where peach trees grow that feed Orenda’s butterflies. Spoiler alert: peach trees don’t grow in northern Minnesota. Apples do. What’s with the peaches?

Another gripe: Collin enrolls in a Duluth school where he is bullied for his disability, and no teacher or administrator seems interested in helping him. I have not attended school in Duluth, but am pretty sure that Collin’s OCD would have been at the very least, acknowledged. Ideally, he would receive coping skills and treatment.

Finally, Collin sees his mother talking to her truck and wonders if all Native Americans have a connection with everything around them, or is it just in his family? Note: I have lived on and worked at the Fond du Lac Reservation and am unaware of truck-talking



**The Brave**  
By James Bird  
Feiwei & Friends  
June 2020  
Grade level : 4 - 7  
320 pages

Ojibwe. (Granted, choice words may be directed to a non-working vehicle engine on a sub-zero morning, but the intent is not conversational.)

One may argue that these points are hypercritical of fiction that’s merely that: stuff that’s all made up. True enough. And the book’s overall premise that humans may gain strength and courage in the face of hardship is a good one. Still, we should be past stereotypes of stoic, wise Indians who speak little and are abnormally attached to the great outdoors.

“The Brave” (Feiwei and Friends, Macmillan, \$16.99, 2020) is James Bird’s first book. A screenwriter and director, he lives in New England with his wife and son.

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## Notice of U.S. Magistrate Judge Vacancy

The Judicial Conference of the United States has authorized the appointment of a full-time United States Magistrate Judge for the United States District Court, District of Minnesota.

The current salary of the full-time position is \$201,112 per year and the position will be located in Minneapolis or St. Paul. The term of office for a full-time magistrate judge is eight years; incumbents may be reappointed to successive terms.

The full public notice, application instructions, and application form are available on the Court’s website at [www.mnd.uscourts.gov/employment](http://www.mnd.uscourts.gov/employment).

Applications must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time on **February 19, 2021**.



I just want them all gone. I am in therapy trying to help myself and I know many others are, too. What a nightmare shared by all.

I had a lot of awful things happen to me in the recent past but I know I don't have 'Rona (as yet). Last July while in the hospital, after I shattered my left ankle, they gave me two tests by shoving a three-foot Qtip up my nose to test me for Covid. They seemed to enjoy my discomfort. Most recently I woke up all miserable and creaky having a sore throat and aches-n-pains.

I called the Indian clinic and they advised I have a 'Rona test done. I explained that I could not go there so they sent out a nurse; a big, beefy guy who came in my house dressed in PPE and asked whether I had blown my nose? I always blow my nose, it's one of my most endearing qualities, anyway he meant boogers.

I braced myself for the rude intrusion sitting in my wheelchair as he approached. He just did a little, very gentle swirl in each nostril and was done. All that self-imposed drama for naught! Best news is I do not have it, and that I need to stop watching so much news. Well, error on the side of caution, ennit?

There are now over 360,000 unnecessary deaths of loved ones in the U.S. and millions globally. It is easy to wear a mask for protection for oneself and for others. Plz, I entreat you.

I'm excited for January 20 when the world laughs out the old Orange Guy and greets the new old white guy as POTUS. There is a big difference. Biden has a young, Jamaican, India Indian woman as vice president who was born in Oakland, CA. So drop the rhetoric about her.

I cried when it was announced that Sen. Kamala Harris would be in office. Just as with Michelle, as I call her, she will be the new, brown face topping every pasty pale one we've had so far. Let's hear it for the Sistahs!!!

Not only that but Rep. Deb Haaland will be Secretary of the Interior. What?! IKR? I cried then, too. Lot'sa crying going on this year but all was not bad. When I was a child, I wanted to be Maria TallChief, Buffy St.Marie, and any of the many authors of books by Indigenous women. Now our daughters and granddaughters can aspire to create change in mainstream culture and politics (aka colonial rules).

Hey! We are now what I call modern Indians in that we live within the dom-

inant culture but still have ours from the time the Star Beings put us here. From those ancestors we get our strength and resilience – dream on that. We were not supposed to still be here as a reminder of a failed genocide.

My New Year's vows include learning to make frybread but I'm not gonna tell anyone how it goes. I will dance again without a cane even if it's just in a chair. The light at the end of the Tunnel of Misery is just around the corner, I can see it glimmering.

I shall love again and freely, with no projections as to the outcome. I've missed you all soo much! Just know that I am ba-ack and happy to be here. And, even though I'm not a Christian I got gifts and cards from loved ones who celebrate this season. I celebrate the Solstice. Same thing really, with all the pagan customs disguised as Christianity.

My hugs will be weird, long ones when I can finally hold you in my arms and close to my heart, just know yooz have it coming. I'm saving them all up in prayers that I get to see you or meet you again. Cheers to a new day! A day that it is good to be kind to others, and also take care of oneself. We're all we've got.

A thought to share with yooz. By this time in my middle age I thought that I would 'get it' by now, whatever that state of being is. Truth is I don't 'get it' and by that I mean life in general as opposed to what I think it's supposed to be. Geddit? No? Exactly.

That said, it is now another year of a lot of what nobody knows or can predict. All I know for sure is that the current squatter in the White House will be gone from public housing. IT needs to pull itself up by its bootstraps and immigrate to Russia where IT and family will have the best quarters living in the Gulag. Me not being a hater,

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