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Hemp and the New Green Revolution are game changers



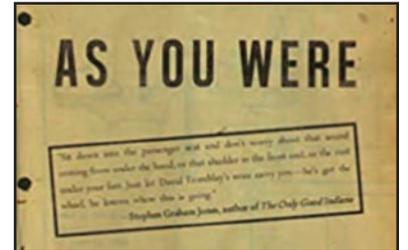
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New podcast addresses opioid abuse in tribal communities



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FREE

## Covid pandemic gives mixed business results



Nancy St. Germaine, owner of Raven Construction, has seen an increase in business during the pandemic. (Photo courtesy of Nancy St. Germaine.)

BY LEE EGERSTROM

A year after the death of George Floyd caused riots in Minneapolis and after the global COVID-19 pandemic shuttered businesses across the nation, two Native-owned construction related businesses in Minnesota show how economic turmoil can produce greatly mixed results.

For Raven Construction Inc., a Minneapolis-based design-build construction company, the past year produced great growth. For Mission Trucking in Duluth, a subcontractor primarily for the road construction industry, the task was just to keep on trucking.

Nancy St. Germaine, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in North Dakota who grew up in Minneapolis, owns and operates the six-year-old Raven Construction commercial and residential builders firm.

“Our business has grown by 400 percent in the past year,” she said in an interview. Following that, she has just added a mechanical services sector to her construction business.

For Sue Roper, a member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and owner-operator of Mission Trucking of Duluth, the past year was marked by coping with COVID requirements and restrictions on when and where road construction projects moved forward.

This slowed business enough so she put federal emergency Small Business Administration and Commerce Department programs to work to keep her nine employees and her trucks in motion.

Across the country, numerous business reports show that the coronavirus and related economic recession of the past year affected businesses and industries – large and small – in various and inconsistent ways. This is also true of the huge construction industry sector, often lumped together as engineering and construction companies, that is as diverse as the Raven and Mission enterprises.

In a comprehensive forecast for 2021, the Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited auditing and financial services firm, commonly referred to as Deloitte, sees a big bounce back coming for companies in these fields.

Projects were halted or delayed when the COVID-19 pandemic reached the U.S. a year ago. Deloitte analysts said related engineering and construction companies lost more than \$60 billion in the U.S., idling 6.5 million workers last year in response to the pandemic.

St. Germaine’s path to progress is more complicated than getting COVID under control and riding an economic recovery.

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## New rules coming for assisted-living home care providers

BY LEE EGERSTROM

New protections for elders and others residing in long term assisted living-type facilities are coming on Aug. 1 along with new requirements and licenses for home care providers and their staffs.

The stepped-up requirements and licensure for assisted living facilities come about from a 2019 Minnesota law passed well before the COVID-19 coronavirus hit and further showed vulnerabilities for residents in these homes.

The change in law doesn’t affect Native families and others who often care for elders and family members with special needs within their homes, state Health officials said. But commercial care providers will have new requirements to make their homes safer and healthier for their residents.

Long-term care providers were to have informed the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) by the end of May what their plans were for providing care beginning in August.

In the process, they were to seek and receive training for two new licenses. One is an Assisted Living License and the other a new Assisted Living License with Dementia Care. They replace a combined Comprehensive Home Care license and a Housing and Services registration with the state.

In reminding residents, their families, and assisted living care providers of the forthcoming changes, Minnesota Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm said residents and families should confer with providers to learn if there are any changes coming to care after the new law is in effect.

“We are working with providers to make sure residents get all the information they need in a timely fashion, but it’s a good idea for residents and families to have these discussions with providers and ask questions now so they are prepared to manage any possible changes,” she said in a statement.

The MDH estimates 60,000 Minnesotans live in 1,800 assisted living homes that mostly house senior citizens. Many residents have health conditions – the reason they are in assisted living facilities – that make them especially vulnerable to diseases. That became evident with the pandemic that swept Minnesota and the nation over the past 13 months.

State records change daily and details on locations of residences are incomplete. But 3 percent of Minnesota diagnosed COVID cases by late May were attributed to these homes, a number disproportionately high for the population base.

Care provider and advocate groups for the elderly joined in on a state-issued statement showing support for the forthcoming changes in Minnesota’s assisted living license and training requirements.

Referring to the 2019 law passed by the Legislature, Patti Cullen, president and chief executive of the Care Providers of Minnesota organization, specifically noted it was done before the health crisis of the past year.

“No one contemplated then that we would be crafting the rules for this new framework in the middle of a pandemic, which has made the transition more complex with less time to prepare,” she said.

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# Hemp and the New Green Revolution are game changers

BY WINONA LADUKE

Mid May's New Green Revolution Pre Party - Farm Day at Winona's Hemp went well. Alex White Plume, known as the "Hemperer", took a road trip with grandson Mato White Plume to rural Osage, Minn. Alex White Plume's work in hemp restoration has been inspirational to many projects nationally and a number of people were very happy to see him in northern Minnesota. Winona's Hemp and Anishinaabe Agriculture in Osage sponsored the gathering to learn about construction and paper making with hemp.

An informal gathering of about 50 people from the region and beyond came to the educational event. Red Lake, White Earth, Sisseton, Nett Lake and other tribes were represented, as well as many local people who came to visit and see the work. Hemp was featured in foods, salves, paper and construction materials. The word canvas comes from cannabis, and hemp indeed has the potential to transform the building, materials and textiles economies. That's why it's called the New Green Revolution.

White Plume served as a co-host of the gathering, sharing stories of his work in hemp, community healing, and offering suggestions as the various projects were demonstrated. White Plume built a house in rural Manderson, So. Dak. in the 1990s out of hempcrete, had the Drug Enforcement Agency seize his crop and is now heralded as the "Hemperer" as the plant is part of a renaissance. "I liked seeing the work of our relatives and how this plant is making a come back," White Plume said.

Roman Vyskocil finished off a hempcrete greenhouse, putting some plaster on the outside of the greenhouse, dug into a hill. "I'm really pleased with how it turned out", he said, and then tracked down Alex White Plume for another picture. The greenhouse was sponsored by the West Central Minnesota Foundation.

Hempcrete is a valuable alternative to concrete in many forms of construction, and produces about four times the amount of fiber in a fraction of the time of wood. That has good opportunity and potential for not only construction, but also the pulp and paper industry. This spring, the cost of framing lumber, Oriented Strand Board (OSB) plywood and other materials has increased steeply, adding an average of \$36,000 to homes. That's causing the building industry to take another look at the centuries of hemp building, and new innovations in hempcrete blocks, which add structural integrity as well as create a reduced carbon house.

"We have been working to decarbonize the construction sector for 10 years now



Winona LaDuke with Alex White Plume (second from left) and others at the New Green Revolution Pre Party - Farm Day at Winona's Hemp held in May. (Photo courtesy of Winona LaDuke.)

and we remain 100% convinced that the hemp block has a crucial role to play," Charlotte De Bellefroid, spokesperson for Belgium-based IsoHemp, wrote in an email to *Hemp Build Mag*. The company manufactures 1 million hemp blocks per year and will increase production to 5 million blocks per year with a new robotic factory to keep up with demand. It will be "impossible" to halve U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 "without rapid decarbonization of the building sector," Alliance to Save Energy (ASE) President Paula Glover said in a statement in May.

Henry Red Cloud, of Oglala on the Pine Ridge reservation, sent along a hempcrete block maker, and the participants worked with various block making composition. The hope is to make an adobe like block for construction. Red Cloud called in over the phone and gave instructions. With the more glamorous cousin, cannabis sativa, in recreational and medical form, going through major expansion, industrial hemp has been sidelined. That's about to change.

"According to the research study, the global Industrial Hemp Market was estimated at USD 5 Billion in 2019 and is expected to reach USD 36 Billion by 2026. The global Industrial Hemp Market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 34% from 2019 to 2026", according to the *Industrial Hemp Market Research Report by Type* report.

Anishinaabe Agriculture is interested in making sure that Native farmers have a place at the table, not on the menu.

George D. Weiblen, Science Director at the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum, came to the conference to meet Alex White Plume and other

Native farmers in the region. White Plume is a hero to the museum director. Weiblen has been working on hemp and cannabis varieties for the past decade, and is keen on building new collaborative relationships with tribes, starting at Sisseton S.D., where his department has helped the Sisseton Oyate with their hemp work, and another colleague has been working with the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota. Indeed, Weiblen represents a new era of collaboration between universities and Indigenous peoples.

That's what the hemp economy represents well, the need to learn together and work together. An integrated hemp and cannabis economy represents a multi billion dollar industry, which is a brand new industry- a brand new pie.

That is a game changer.

Hemp is considered a carbon sink, meaning that the plant grows so quickly (up to twelve feet in four months), that it absorbs huge quantities of carbon. More than that, the plant can replace carbon intensive manufacturing from plastics to concrete, creating a new carbon friendly economy. Add to that the legalization of cannabis, state by state, and that's a brand new multi billion dollar economy.

That's what we need to survive the decades ahead, and hemp can be a part of that - the New Green Revolution. The New Green Revolution Pre party was this spring, let's see what the fall brings to the north country for the hemp economy.

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# The push is on to vaccinate our way to “herd immunity”

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Minnesota came roaring back to normalcy for the Memorial Day weekend and start of summer but the coronavirus threat lingers on with health officials continuing to stress the importance of getting COVID-19 vaccine protection.

At the same time that Gov. Tim Walz and federal officials were lifting restraints on businesses and gatherings in time for the memorial weekend, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) data showed the state is still far short of desired vaccination rates.

The generally accepted target for getting state and national populations vaccinated is 70 percent for now eligible people age 12 and older. Some experts, however, say it should be 80 percent to insure what is called “herd immunity.” That should make a protection level needed to prevent spreading the virus to vulnerable people.

Governor Walz wants Minnesota at the 70 percent or higher level by July 1. As of Saturday, May 29, MDH said 62 percent of the state’s population of age 12 and up had received at least one dose of a COVID vaccine. That means 2,911,375 Minnesotans have at least one dose, and 2,578,633 have completed their vaccinations.

State and local health providers and program officials are making progress in diverse communities and among various ethnic groups in reaching people. Steadily declining numbers of diagnosed infections and hospitalization rates show the results.

Vaccination rates and infection cases in counties around Minnesota’s 11 Native reservations are producing average or above statistical results. But with nearly three-quarters of Minnesota’s Native pop-



ulation spread throughout the state, the task of reaching people in various urban settings is a bigger challenge.

To keep pushing vaccinations as the first line of defense, the MDH and Minnesota Department of Human Services announced in mid-May they had partnered with nine major health plans across the state to identify hardest hit and hardest to serve communities.

Dr. Nathan Chomilo, COVID-19 vaccine equity director and Medicaid medical director at MDH, explained the strategy this way:

“Immunizing for impact requires us to measure our success not only by how fast we are able to get the most Minnesotans vaccinated but also by how we are reaching communities at highest risk for COVID-19 who have already been hardest hit by the pandemic.”

Health plans participating in this push include Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, HealthPartners, Hennepin

Health, Itasca Medical Care, Medica, PreferredOne, PrimeWest Health, South Country Health Alliance and UCare.

They are reaching out to Minnesotans enrolled in Minnesota Health Care Programs (MCHP) such as Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare programs that are partnered with county health plans. Research conducted in 2019 showed that 44 percent of African Americans, 39 percent of Native Americans, 31 percent of Hispanic and 20 percent of Asian Minnesota under age 65 use these programs.

“It takes local partnering and responsiveness to effectively address care inequities,” said Steve Gottwalt, executive director of the Minnesota Association of County Health Plans. “Our county-based plans continue working to improve vaccination rates among communities most impacted by COVID-19 and who still face barriers.”

Various city COVID protection rules remain in place but state officials on May 28 removed most state restrictions on businesses and how people may congregate indoors and out. Some restrictions still apply in the Twin Cities, for instance. Businesses may still require facemasks and social distancing to keep customers and employees safe.

The Red Lake Nation lifted its Medical Martial Law at the tribal council meeting on May 11, 13 months after sweeping safeguards were put in place to protect members, tribal employees and the general area population.

As a result, facemasks are no longer required for outdoor activities, non-members can again enter the reservation, and restrictions were lifted on the number of people attending indoor activities.

These steps toward “normalcy,” if there is such a thing, are consistent with

what state and federal health officials have since announced.

Loosening restraints on general public behavior doesn’t lessen the need to aggressively push for vaccinations and personal caution. Minnesota may be approaching the 70 percent vaccinated rate and may achieve it by July, but health data for the state’s 87 counties show great disparity.

Heading into the Memorial Day weekend, MDH said only five counties are currently at or above the 70 percent adult vaccinated target. Taking top honors is Cook County, around the Grand Portage reservation, which registers 80.9 percent of residents as vaccinated.

The other four counties topping the list include Olmsted, surrounding health-conscience Rochester and the Mayo Clinic, at 76.6 percent vaccinated; Hennepin (Minneapolis) at 74.1 percent; Ramsey (St. Paul) at 72.2 percent; and Washington County – the east metro suburbs – at 70.1 percent.

Only 18 other Minnesota counties are in fairly easy reach of the 70 percent vaccinated target.

They are Dakota and Houston counties, at 68.9 percent; Carlton and Carver at 68.7, Scott at 67.4, Big Stone at 66.6, Fillmore that 66, Wabasha at 64.9, Goodhue at 64.5, Lake at 64.3, Brown at 64.2, St. Louis at 63.9, Mahnommen at 63.4, Nicollet at 62.3, Mower at 61.1, Rice at 60.9 and Red Lake at 60 percent.

For point of reference, the Fond du Lac reservation is in Carlton and partly in St. Louis counties, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community is in Scott, Prairie Island Indian Community is in Goodhue and the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa is scattered in parts of St. Louis and Koochiching counties.

That leaves 64 Minnesota counties with catching up to do if Minnesota is to reach the 70 percent vaccinated threshold by July.

Again, for *The Circle* readers’ reference, these include Yellow Medicine County around Upper Sioux Community, Redwood around Lower Sioux Community; Beltrami, Clearwater and parts of seven other counties around the Red Lake Nation; Mahnommen, Becker and Clearwater around White Earth Nation; Cass, Itasca, Beltrami and Hubbard around Leech Lake reservation; and Mille Lacs, Pine, Aitkin and Crow Wing counties around the Mille Lacs reservation.

For more information, see: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/index.html>; <https://mn.gov/covid19>, and <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html>.

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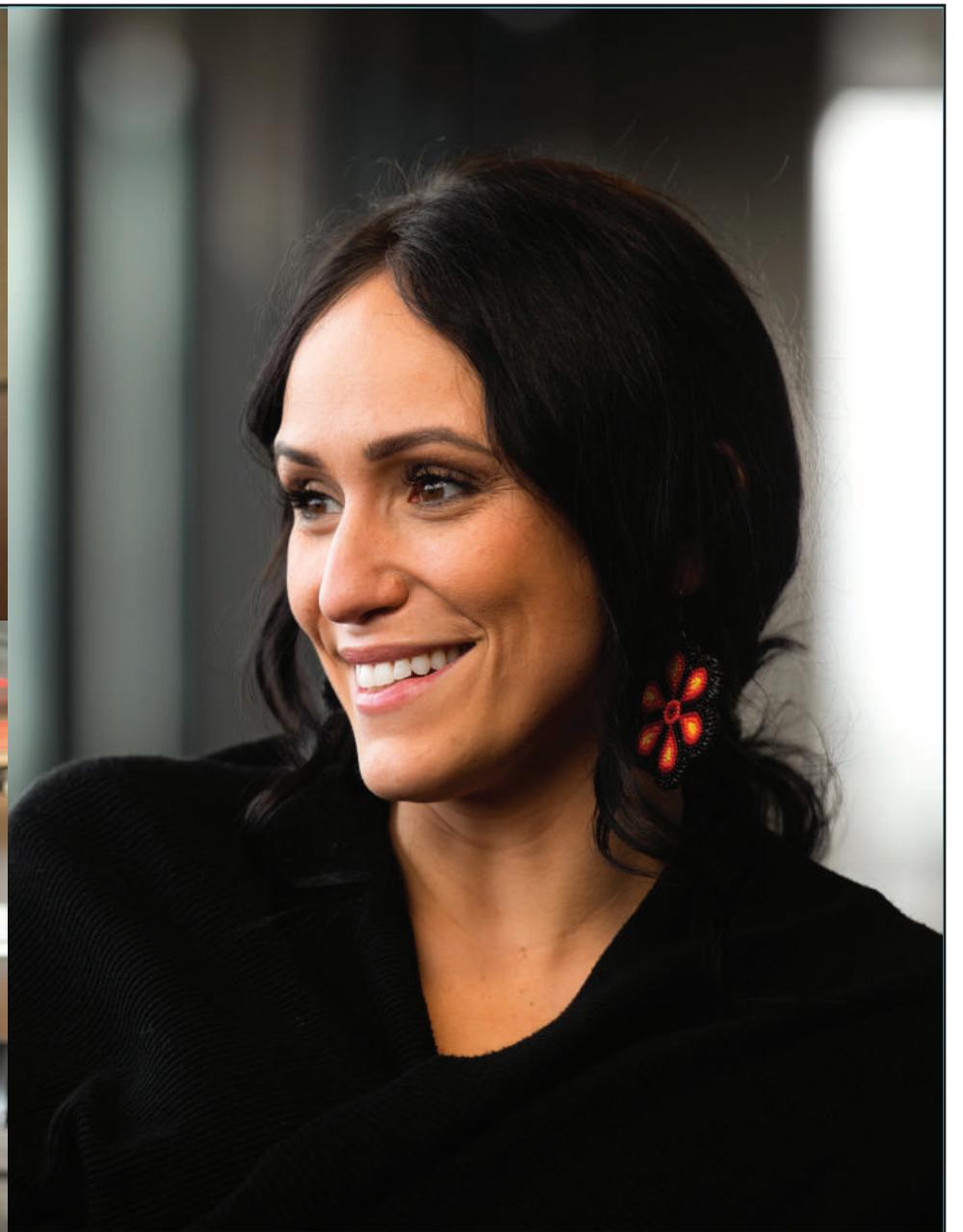
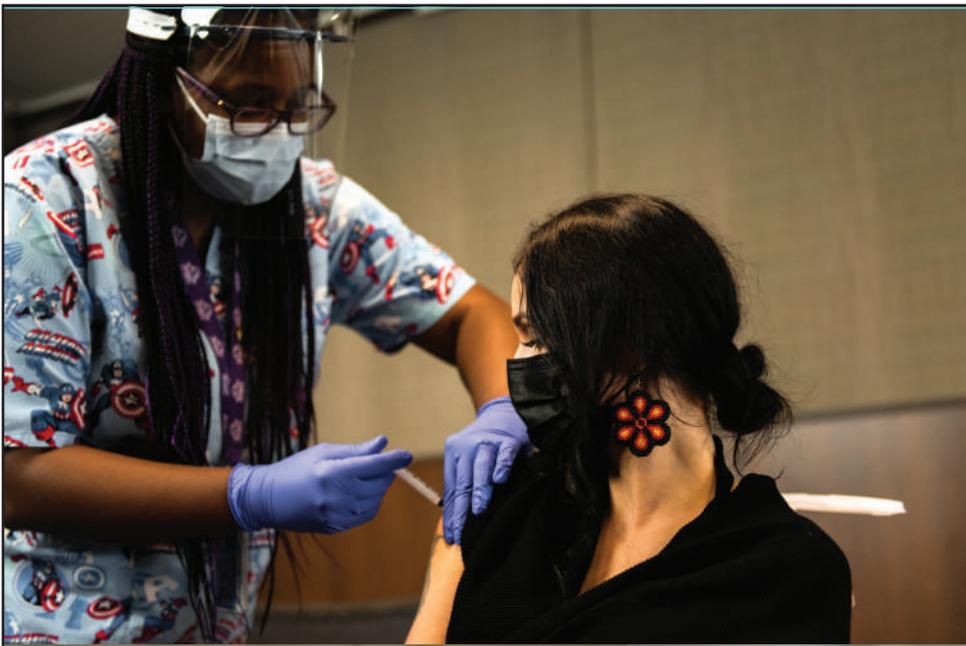
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# Families, advocates mark day of awareness for Native victims

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

From Washington to Indigenous communities across the American Southwest, top government officials, family members and advocates gathered May 5 as part of a call to action to address the ongoing problem of violence against Indigenous women and children.

U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland and other federal officials commemorated the annual day of awareness as a caravan of female motorcycle riders planned to hit the streets in Phoenix, advocates took to social media, and families prepared for a night of candlelight and prayer vigils.

In Washington, an event hosted by federal officials started with a prayer asking for guidance and grace for the Indigenous families who have lost relatives and those who have been victims of violence. Before and after a moment of silence, officials from various agencies vowed to continue working with tribes to address the crisis.

As part of the ceremony, a red memorial shawl with the names of missing and slain Indigenous women was draped across a long table to remember the lives behind what Haaland called alarming and unacceptable statistics. More names were added to the shawl that day.



Jeannie Hovland, the deputy assistant secretary for Native American Affairs for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, poses with a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women mask, in Anchorage, Alaska, while attending the opening of a Lady Justice Task Force cold case office in Anchorage, which will investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women. (Photo by Mark Thiessen / AP 2020.)

Haaland, the first Native American to lead a U.S. cabinet agency and a former Democratic U.S. representative from New Mexico, recalled hearing families testify about searching for loved ones on their own and bringing a red ribbon skirt to a congressional hearing that represented missing and slain Native Americans.

Haaland displayed the red shawl in her office to symbolize those who have disappeared and honor the movement that rang the alarm. She believes the nation has reached an inflection point, saying it's time to solve the crisis.

"Everyone deserves to feel safe in their communities, but the missing and murdered Indigenous peoples crisis is one that Native communities have faced since the dawn of colonization," she said as she joined the ceremony virtually. "For too long, this issue has been swept under the rug with the lack of urgency, attention and funding."

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland also issued a statement, saying the Justice Department is "committed to finding lasting solutions to the public safety challenges tribal communities encounter and to protecting them from violence, abuse and exploitation."

Indigenous women have been victimized at astonishing rates, with federal figures showing that they – along with non-Hispanic Black women – have experienced the highest homicide rates.

Yet an Associated Press investigation in 2018 found that nobody knows the precise number of cases of missing and murdered Native Americans nationwide because many go unreported, others aren't well documented, and no government database specifically tracks them.

In New Mexico, members of the state's task force shared some of the findings of their work over the past year, which included combing through public records and requesting data from nearly two dozen law enforcement agencies to better understand the scope of the problem.

Five agencies responded, noting that limited data showed there were an estimated 660 cases involving missing Indigenous people between 2014 and

2019 in the state's largest urban center, putting Albuquerque among U.S. cities with the highest number of cases.

New Mexico's task force will be expanded and its work extended into 2022, with the goal of recommending policy changes and legislation. Other states also have established task forces or commissions to focus on the problem.

President Joe Biden issued a proclamation on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day. He has promised to bolster resources to address the crisis and better consult with tribes to hold perpetrators accountable and keep communities safe.

Haaland said that includes more staffing in a U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs unit dedicated to solving cold cases and coordinating with Mexico and Canada to combat human trafficking.

The administration's work will build on some of the initiatives started during Donald Trump's tenure. That included a task force made up of the Interior Department, the Justice Department and other federal agencies to address violent crime in Indian Country.

Advocates have said a lack of resources, language barriers and complex jurisdictional issues have exacerbated efforts to locate those who are missing and solve other crimes in Indian Country. They also have pointed to the need for more culturally appropriate services and training for how to handle such cases.

Over the past year, advocacy groups also have reported that cases of domestic violence against Indigenous women and children and sexual assault increased as nonprofit groups and social workers scrambled to meet the added challenges that stemmed from the coronavirus pandemic.

Bryan Newland, principal assistant secretary for Indian Affairs at the Interior Department, said staffing at the Bureau of Indian Affairs unit will go from a team of 10 to more than 20 officers and special agents with administrative and support staff it previously didn't have.

He also said the federal government has started distributing funding under the American Rescue Plan Act, including \$60 million for public safety and law enforcement in Indian Country.

"We're really looking to build upon many of the things that have been done, to expand them and bring focus to them," Newland said.

Haaland told reporters that success would be measured by solving cold cases.

"Right now there are people in this country who don't know where their loved ones are. They haven't been found," she said. "We want to be able to answer that question. We want to make sure that folks can have some closure about their missing loved ones."

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“The George Floyd murder last year had a lot to do with it. People became more aware and wanted to help small, minority-owned businesses when they could. The (COVID-19) pandemic had people think that way too, but it mostly just changed where we do business.”

Growth over the past year came from the residential side of her business, St. Germaine said. The pandemic slowed commercial construction. People less affected by COVID strains on the economy, and others working from home, triggered a wave of residential construction during the past year.

That continues to this day. Raven Construction’s website notes that residential construction business is booked through summer 2021. The company is only taking price quote requests for projects that would begin in the fall.

The commercial side of the business, however, is a full service design and build firm that especially seeks to help small businesses and nonprofit organizations that, in turn, will help strengthen communities.

The recently added mechanical services unit is a logical and technological expansion for both commercial and residential construction. It brings in what industry calls HVAC services, or heating, ventilation and air conditioning, to make indoor environments more comfortable and healthy.

St. Germaine describes herself as a

realtor, general contractor, wife, mother “and active community member in the Twin Cities.”

The latter involves work over the years with 826 MSP, the educational and art support group working with schools in the Twin Cities; CAPI, a coalition of church groups working with the diverse groups of refugees in Minnesota; and Pillsbury United Communities whose activities and enterprises also strive to build and sustain equitable communities.

She has also served as a consultant to Lake Street Council helping riot damaged businesses connect with minority-owned firms after the George Floyd death on May 25, 2020. And, she is the real estate director for the Creative Opportunity Zone that is helping revitalize part of the Midway area in St. Paul.

**Keep on truckin**

Roper, meanwhile, is in a sector that is influenced by Mother Nature and public budgets. It can get jostled by unpredictable, outside influences such as the coronavirus.

Her Mission Trucking company was incorporated in 2014. It has four dump trucks, a semi, plus trailers; and nine employees including the bookkeeper “who does what I don’t like to do.”

“I drive a truck myself,” she said.

Mission Trucking is primarily a sub-

contractor doing hauling for prime contractors building and repairing roads and highways. This work was impacted during the past year so she sought help through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and a federal COVID relief loan program for small businesses.

It kept the employees, she said. “It kept us going.”

Roper was a trucker before starting her own business. She was always around trucks. Her husband, a farmer, and his dad, who had bread truck routes, always had trucks.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation, City of Duluth and St. Louis County kept up with road plans over the past year. But limitations were placed on how many hours you could work during the prime construction season, and no Saturday work was allowed during that time.

Coping with COVID did add more day-to-day work to keep trucks and truckers working in the region, she said.

Hoarders from out of the region stripped store shelves clean in many parts of Northeast Minnesota. Truckers had to be stocked in the cab for what they might need because they couldn’t stop and pick up items at local stores.

This was a complication for truckers and others working in the region, she said. “It really hurt people living up here, too.”

Other trucking firms in Northeast

Minnesota had problems with drivers getting COVID, she knows. The firms all had to develop COVID safety plans. Social distancing wasn’t a problem because there is only one person in the truck. And outside, people on the ground usually work alone or can keep distances. But trucks and surfaces people touch had to be cleaned after every shift and use.

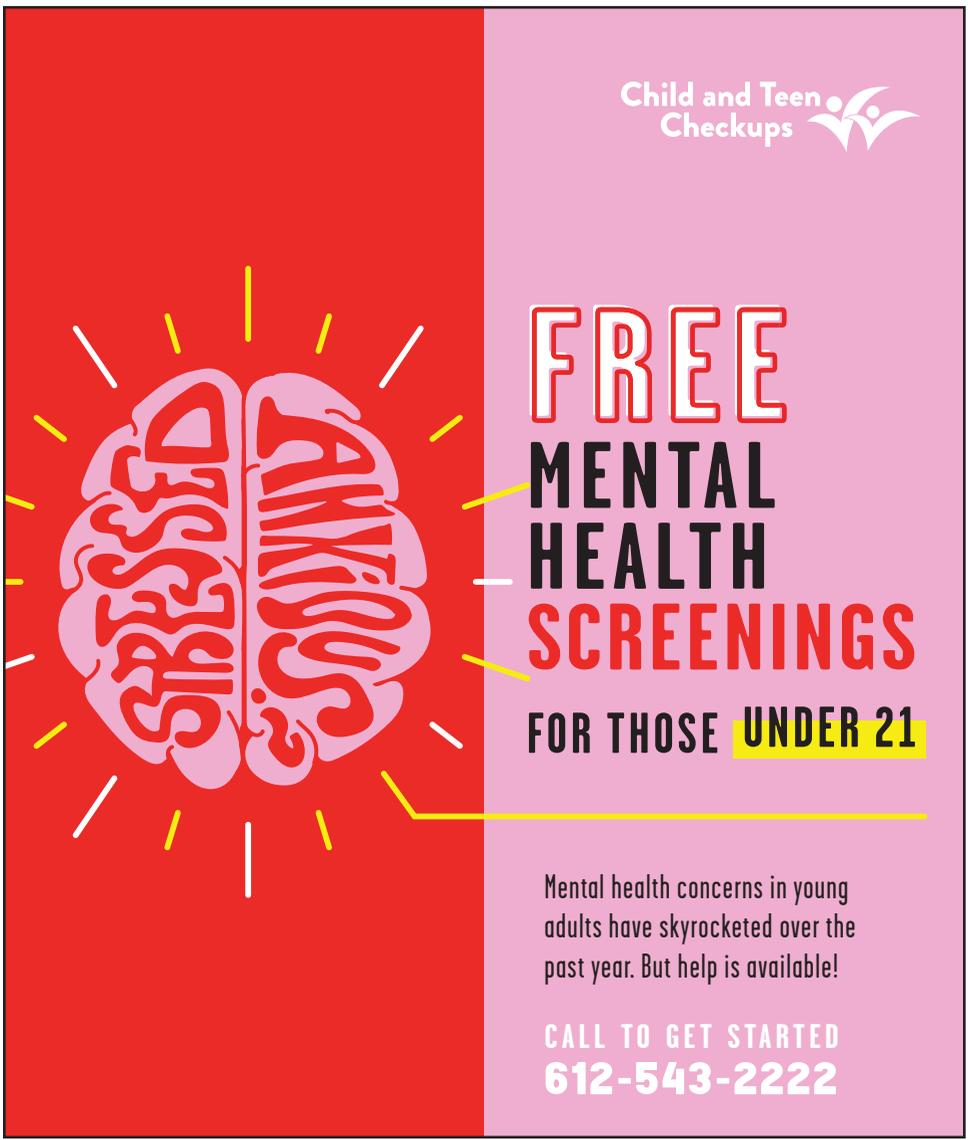
“We’ve never had such clean trucks,” she said.

Roper said she isn’t surprised that different companies in other industry sectors, such as Raven Construction, had totally different experiences during the past year.

“If you are home all day, every day, you see what work needs to be done. You want to make your home more comfortable and useful. You are there and can plan improvements, and you will be there if you call in workers. You aren’t leaving them in your house and going off to offices.”

With more people focused on their homes for both work and living, Roper is confident most of the construction sector will remain strong going forward.

Much road work is needed throughout the state, she said. But road construction has another influence that will influence work in the year ahead. That is weather, and the length of the prime construction season in the Duluth area.



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## Lauren Sheets: Committed to Concordia-St. Paul University

**L**auren Sheets, 17, is a junior lacrosse player at Lakeville South High School in Lakeville, Minnesota. She has committed to play at Concordia-St. Paul University.

“I am a descendent of the Prairie Band Potawatomi tribe on my mother’s side,” said Lauren.

“I have played lacrosse since fifth grade and play the attack position,” said Lauren. “As a freshman, I started on varsity and was named Rookie of the Year, Attack MVP, and South Suburban Conference honorable mention on my high school team.”

“Lacrosse has a very important part of my life and I have come to respect the aspects of the game as it is rooted in Native culture,” said Lauren. “Not only do I love playing lacrosse, it helps me bring native representation in the sport in teaching other people about it. Lacrosse has given me opportunities to travel and represent Minnesota on a national level.

Tribal core values define how student-athletes carry themselves on and off the field.

“One of my tribe’s core values is to show pride and support the endeavors of our youth,” said Lauren.

“I believe this is important because I started playing in fifth grade, and from my experience playing sports at a young age can help build character and teach important life lessons.”

“Another one of my tribe’s core values is to promote education, and this is a very important aspect of being an athlete. It is also because we were always told that school comes first before sports,” added Lauren.

“My parents and my coaches have both had a great

influence on my life,” said Lauren. “They have always been there to support me and to encourage me through everything. My mom and dad have driven me to countless practices over the years, and have also supported me at all my games.”

“Her stick skills are amazing, as we are often saying, ‘How did she shoot that?’ as she twists it up over the goalie,” said mom Jodie Sheets. “She is an unselfish player and loves playing with her friends. She thanks God for giving her the skills to play the game she loves.”

“I am blessed to have many coaches who have helped develop me as a player and person,” said Lauren.

“My club director, Krista Crandall, has been there for me since the moment I joined Minnesota True Lacrosse. Krista is always there for me when I need someone to talk to about my lacrosse performance and guiding me to become a better lacrosse player and a better person in life. She has been extremely helpful along the recruiting process in order to ensure I can choose the school that is the right fit for me. She sees my potential before I do.”

“Lauren can find angles on a shot that before Lauren, haven’t existed,” said Krista Crandall. “If she finds the middle of the ‘8’ with the ball, she’s scoring. She’s just a fun player to watch.”

“Go watch her high school team play, and you’ll hear the sideline all erupt with a ‘SHEEEEEETS’ at least a few times a game,” added Krista.

“I’d put money on the fact that she has taken more shots on her backyard net, than a lot of current col-



Lauren Sheets is a junior lacrosse player at Lakeville South High School, and has committed to play at Concordia-St. Paul University. (Photo by Jim Lindquist.)

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lege players,” said Krista. “She’s willing to put in the work and that’s what will make her successful at the next level.”

“My club coach, Kelsey Long, has always been by my side throughout my entire lacrosse career,” said Lauren. “She has coached me for the past couple years and is always offering encouraging words and pushing me to be my best.”

“My high school coach, Patrick Crandall, has encouraged me throughout the years and gives me advice on how to use my strengths to my advantage,” said Lauren.

“My lacrosse journey shaped me to become the person I am today,” said Lauren.

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## POLITICAL MATTERS: Native Issues in the Halls of Government – by Mordecai Specktor

editor@ajwnews.com

### Santorum is cancelled

In late May, former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum was fired by CNN from his senior political commentator job after making some benighted remarks about Native people.

Santorum spoke at an April event for the Young Americans Foundation, a conservative youth group, and said that there was “nothing” in the U.S. before Europeans colonizers arrived, according to *The Guardian* (London).

“We came here and created a blank slate,” he said. “We birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here. I mean, yes we have Native Americans, but candidly there isn’t much Native American culture in American culture.”

Native groups took umbrage at Santorum’s ignorant comments.

“Rick Santorum is an unhinged and embarrassing racist who disgraces CNN and any other media company that provides him a platform,” responded Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians (ncai.org), according to a story on the *Huffington Post* (huffpost.com). “Televising someone with his views on Native American genocide is fundamentally no different than putting an outright Nazi on television to justify the Holocaust. Any mainstream media organization should fire him or face a boycott from more than 500 tribal nations and our allies from across the country and worldwide.”

In her statement, Sharp pointed out that “European colonizers” encountered “thousands of complex, sophisticated and sovereign” tribal nations in this land, “each with millennia of distinct cultural, spiritual and technological development. Over millennia they bred, cultivated and showed the world how to utilize such plants as cotton, rubber, chocolate, corn, potatoes, tomatoes and tobacco. Imagine the history of the United States without the economic contributions of cotton and tobacco alone. It’s inconceivable.”

*Huffington Post* also quoted Crystal Echo Hawk, executive director of IllumiNative, a nonprofit focused on combating the erasure of Native Americans, who also called on CNN to fire Santorum: “American history that does not include Native peoples is a lie, and Rick Santorum is fueling white supremacy by erasing the history of Native peoples. CNN must do more to include Indigenous and diverse voices in its programming and fire Rick Santorum.”

### The Kamloops Indian Residential School

My Swedish brother-in-law, Bent Syse, is a retired archeologist. In 2001, he

became semi-famous in Sweden and across Scandinavia for his discovery of a mass grave near Uppsala. Before any road or building project can proceed in Sweden, an archeology assessment is required.

In his former capacity as director of archeology at Upplandsmuseet, Bent was contacted by the police after human bones were found in a ditch below the 16th century castle in Uppsala. The authorities wanted to rule out a recent homicide, or that the bodies were victims of a 14th century plague or an 18th century cholera epidemic. The bones showed evidence of cut marks and sword injury; and it was determined that bodies in the mass grave were killed in the Battle of Good Friday, April 6, 1512. Danish forces under King Christian II had occupied Uppsala, and a battle ensued between Swedes and Danes. Perhaps, 4,000 combatants were killed in battle.

I thought of the Swedish mass grave discovered by my brother-in-law when I read the horrifying recent story of a mass burial at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. The *New York Times* reported that “215 children were buried on the grounds of the British Columbia school, one of the many in Canada set up to forcibly assimilate them.”

The newspaper quoted Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk’emlups te Secwepemc First Nation, who said that ground-penetrating radar had discovered the remains near the site of the school, which operated from 1890 until the late 1970s.

“It’s a harsh reality and it’s our truth, it’s our history,” Chief Casimir said. “And it’s something that we’ve always had to fight to prove. To me, it’s always been a horrible, horrible history.”

Chief Casimir described the mass burial as “many, many years old – decades,” and it included bodies of children as young as three.

In the way of background, the *New York Times* story noted: “Starting in the 19th century, Canada was home to a system of residential schools, mostly operated by churches, that Indigenous children were forced to attend. The system went into decline during the 1970s, with the last school closing in 1996.”

A National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (nctr.ca) set up as part of a Canadian government apology and settlement over the schools, “concluded that at least 4,100 students died while attending the schools, many from mistreatment or neglect, others from disease or accident. It found that in many cases, families never learned the fate of their offspring, who are now known as the missing children.”



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# New podcast addresses opioid abuse in tribal communities

BY ERIN MATHE

Jase Roe has vivid childhood memories of their mom coming home with big bottles of Vicodin prescribed for her pain. Roe didn't know it at the time, but that was their first introduction to opioids.

Roe and other Native Americans speak candidly about their own opioid addiction experiences on a new Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) podcast series called "Stories from the Field" aimed at addressing the evolving opioid epidemic.

The goals of the podcast series are to provide a voice to those who have experienced substance use disorder, offer resources to those helping people who use drugs make safer choices, and to illustrate the complexities of the epidemic. The podcasts host a series of experts in the health care field, as well as community leaders and others devoted to reducing the number of Minnesotans affected by this crisis.

Two of the podcasts focus on the opioid epidemic specifically in the Native American community.

## How it All Began

Roe believes overprescribing of opioids

in the Native American community is where the problem started.

"We get hit the hardest and it's not just one generation, it's generational," Roe says. As a Case Manager at Homeward Bound Behavioral Health Treatment Center, they see the reality of addiction every day. Roe cites an MDH report that from 2010 to 2019, there was a 178% increase of opioid use in the Native American Community that resulted in abuse.

Roe struggled with addiction for years, saying heroine caused at least one overdose where they needed to be brought back to life.

"Addiction is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week job," Roe says. "You need to stay ahead of it, so you don't come down. It's constantly on your mind and it's all you can think about."

Roe believes that having been through opioid addiction and being a member of the Native American community and sharing those experiences are the best ways to help other Native Americans.

"No one even looked at the opioid issue until it hit the white community," Roe says. "But on a reservation, once you introduce opioids and they spread, now you have people who are caught, thrown in jail, and you have a whole community left addicted to opioids."



Jase Roe speaks about opioid addiction on the new Minnesota Department of Health podcast series "Stories from the Field".

## Providing Access to Services

Roe says the efforts of organizations like Homeward Bound help meet people where they are. Simple barriers like not having a phone to call for an appointment or reliable transportation to get there make it hard for people to access services. Roe says if people can get to the center, they can access harm reduction services such as clean needles to prevent infection, or Naloxone or Narcan, a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose. Those kinds of treatments are not always accepted due to the stigma of drug addiction.

"Even in a hospital, you face bias, racism and judgment," says Dr. Ryan Kelly, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

"And then you get home, after your treatment ends, and who is more likely to have resources? Someone in the suburbs with a support system or someone who's homeless? Access to resources is a big factor," Kelly says.

They're both proponents of Medically Assisted Treatments, or drugs approved by the FDA for the treatment of opioid dependence, such as buprenorphine, methadone and naltrexone. All three treatments have been demonstrated to be safe and effective for those struggling with addiction. They help normalize brain chemistry by blocking effects of opioid, reducing physical cravings and helping treat withdrawal symptoms.

"Not everyone believes in those treatments," Roe says. "I'd rather have someone on methadone than shooting up."

## Turning Experience into Action

Another podcast interviewee is Curtis Jackson, an Alcohol and Drug Counselor for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. His addiction experience lasted 19 years, resulting in a lost marriage, lost jobs, losing contact with his children and other lost opportunities. Today Jackson is celebrating five years

of sobriety and firmly believes that recovery is possible.

"Along the way, I fought for my kids and I fought for my recovery and I got a second chance at life," he says.

He started "The Sober Squad" in Grand Rapids, a recovery support organization that now has 22 chapters in Minnesota. He sees his kids regularly, has a great job, and like Roe, is happy to be giving back to the community.

Both Roe and Jackson chose to speak on the podcast to help others who have struggled with addiction and may not be able to find their way out.

"I'm not ashamed of my journey," Roe says. "The big thing is taking away stigma and getting the word out that these are our sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, moms and dads. In our culture, we're all related. Natives need to help Natives. There's no better way to help."

## Podcast One Tool of Many

The "Stories from the Field" podcast series tells real stories from real people throughout the state and are just one tool in MDH's opioid overdose prevention work. The series reveals the raw emotions of people who have battled substance misuse, lost loved ones, and managed to get through it. The diverse group of guests represent communities of color, tribal communities, the LGBTQ population, and a variety of economic backgrounds. Community advocates, medical professionals and other front-line prevention specialists discuss the problem, efforts to destigmatize substance use, and possible solutions.

"We know that every death by overdose is a preventable death," says Minnesota Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm. "We need to set our sights on providing support and resources to all Minnesotans who are affected by opioid use disorder, and all communities where substance use leads to personal, family, and community suffering."

"Podcasts are just one way the Injury and Violence Prevention section at MDH engages with our communities to address the emerging opioid crisis," said Dana Farley, injury and violence prevention supervisor. "By featuring the work being done throughout the state, we hope to leave listeners with a sense of hope and that help is available."

To listen to the 5-part podcast series, visit Stories from the Field at: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/communities/field-stories.html#historyofopioids>.

For information on MDH's Opioid Overdose Prevention website page, see: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids>.

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Ethnic groups, including Minnesota's Native communities, are known for commonly providing care for intergenerational family members. These in-home family arrangements should not change, said Lindsey Krueger, a Registered Nurse and a program manager for the assisted living programs at MDH.

The new law specifically exclude several family and other group homes and lodging arrangements, and housing facilities covered by a variety of other state and federal laws.

One such exception that would include most Native family care arrangements identifies "a private home in which the residents are related by kinship, law, or affinity with the provider of services," Krueger said.

Another exemption that would also affect housing programs for Natives, especially in urban settings, include "emergency shelter, transitional housing, or any other residential units serving exclusively or primarily homeless individuals..."

Others include various licensed nursing homes, hospitals, certified boarding care and supervised living facilities licensed under laws; licensed lodging establishments, other services and residential settings - including adult foster care - that are licensed under law; and a variety of other housing ownership arrangement and programs assisted by other state and federal programs.

MDH is working with families and health care providers to make sure long term assisted living facilities are in compliance by Aug. 1, Krueger said.

In addition, MDH is helping assisted living providers and their staff to get new required training to be operational when the new requirements go into effect, said Amy Hyers, an Assisted Living Licensure program supervisor.

For instance, she said, homes with a dementia services ward will need to keep a trained person in the ward at all times and not leave to provide assistance elsewhere in the facility during that time. This is a requirement of the new Assisted Living with Dementia Care License, she said. It will make such facilities safer places for residents with special needs.

State officials encouraged families and assisted living care residents to discuss with care providers what changes in services may occur beginning in August. Such discussions should include whether new housing arrangements should be made in the coming two months.

Changes in services that might impact assisted living residents include such things as assisting with dressing, self-feeding, oral hygiene, hair care, grooming, toileting and bathing; standby assistance and medication services, hands-on assistance with transfers and mobility; and treatment and therapies.

Preparing for the new law changes has been a work in progress for both health officials and the long-term care industry. Cullen, from the Care Providers organization, said her members "are fully committed to the successful implementations of the new assisted living rules in our communities."

Info on the Assisted Living Licensure requirements can be found at: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/facilities/regulations/assistedliving/index.html>.



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# Tromblay's memoir recounts painful truths, encourages advocacy

BY DEBORAH LOCKE

In his memoir "As You Were," Duluth native David Tromblay wrote with an outcome in mind. It is: when you the reader see something, say something. Act. Never merely witness brutality without intervention. When brutality is used on a child, you have a special obligation to intercede.

This raw, remarkable book follows Tromblay through a childhood of trauma while living on the Fond du Lac Ojibwe Reservation near Cloquet, and in the Morgan Park neighborhood of Duluth. Written in the second person, the reader sees life through the eyes of David as a child, adolescent, new military recruit and present day. While still a small boy, his impoverished mother dropped him off as a Christmas gift to his Morgan Park grandparents, where nearly every day brought beatings, humiliation, isolation, intimidation and pain.

If you the reader experienced cruelty and beatings as a child, the story may trigger post-traumatic stress syndrome, so consider that. Turns out Grandma Audrey spent her youth at a boarding school for American Indians, where cor-

poral punishment was meted out frequently. She took that experience to the Nth degree with her grandson, flying into uncontrollable rages when he ate from the wrong box of cereal or didn't put clothes hangers away quickly enough, or said the wrong thing which led to pouring Liquid Palmolive down his throat.

When David's hair starts to bleach out in the summer to the color of his Irish American mother's hair, Grandma shaves his head with dull clippers on the front porch, leaving a bloodied scalp and clumps of hair blowing around the yard. Tromblay wrote that neighbors watched this display from their front porches and living room windows and merely closed the curtains or retreated further inside, after calling their own children into the house.

With each chapter of horror, I waited for a hero. Which neighbor would report the in-plain-sight child abuse? Which family member who heard the screaming and saw the beatings would call child services? None. Tromblay hopes that his book will convince today's generation to act, not just close the curtains.

Oddly, the least violent chapters in the book start in 1996 when David goes to

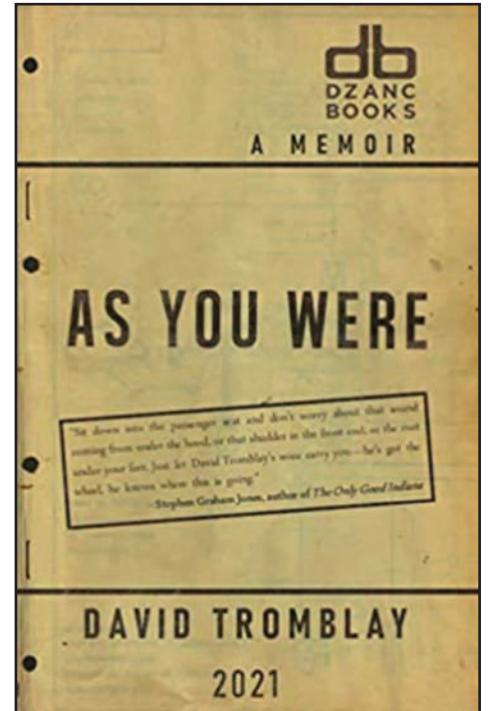
boot camp and then to war. After a lifetime of brutal treatment in Duluth, the drill sergeants offer protection. They don't scare David. "There are rules of what they can and cannot do. If they break those rules, they'll lose their hat and maybe even their careers. You know you're safe with them."

One of the book's most poignant scenes shows a drill sergeant reminding David that he's not at his messed up childhood home anymore, he's a survivor, and if he learns what his officers have to teach, he'll survive the battlefield.

Kind words also came at age 12 from an unexpected source, a heavily tattooed member of the Thunderbirds Motorcycle Club in Morgan Park named Bones. When Bones learned that David's dad took off, leaving him hungry, he hollers at his wife to fix David something to eat. David hangs around with Bones, drawn to the rough-around-the-edges biker who teaches bike mechanics to David. Once some guy asked Bones if David was his son. "I wish!" Bones replied. Up to this very day, David cherishes that reply.

The man who could call David his son claimed that he wasn't a complete failure as a father, because he served well as an example of what not to be and how not to act. "This is how alcoholics operate," Tromblay wrote. "Able to justify anything," adding that his father wasn't a bad Indian, he was a bad man who happened to have some Indian blood.

Dotted through the violence and chaos in this book is genuine humor. (You didn't see that coming, did you?) But it's true. The clueless retelling of a Hmong wedding is hilarious. A prison break in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, leads to an amusing



As You Were Paperback  
David Tromblay  
Dzanc Books  
February 2021  
256 pages

mad dash in underpants. I hope truth teller Tromblay writes more about his years of military service with the same unflinching style in "As You Were."

My bookcase holds a shelf of mind and heart changing books that weren't easy to digest. Authors Zora Neale Hurston, John Steinbeck, and Louise Erdrich are all represented. David Tromblay just earned a place.

The May 2021 interview is located at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXeHfbS4PM8&t=9s>.



## Call for Parent Committee Members for the Minneapolis Johnson O'Malley Program

### QUALIFICATIONS FOR PARENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Local Indian Education Committee (LIEC) is a governing body which is comprised of parents/guardians of **\*Eligible JOM Students** within the Minneapolis Public School District.

The JOM parent committee is a governing body, not an advisory body. The mission of the Johnson O'Malley program is to address the unique cultural needs of American Indian students attending the Minneapolis Public Schools through a supplemental program of services.

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he scoffed it off saying, “They card everyone now! Even if you’re 99!” That shot me down real quick. Jeez.

We ate prime rib and I had a layered cheesecake for dessert, it was yummy and I enjoyed being treated to an evening out. I’ve been missing going to the casino to socialize and donate and now everything is different, all of it due to the COVID-19 virus. Not many people in there are wearing masks now, but the staff has to and there is polyglass protection everywhere. There are many new rules and the casino does not have the same vibe, like that of the sensual depravity I used to enjoy. LOL!

Well, in the past I could go there to relax or get wound up, and just be alone in a place with a thousand other people. Now one cannot even smoke! Might as well go to church yanno and repent for very vague, stupid human actions they call ‘sin’ – which no Indigenous person has ever been born into. \*putting brakes on that for now\*

Come time to leave the security guards were not letting anyone out, with no explanation. I sez to my Unk I sez, is this how they (the tribe) are making money now? By not letting us leave? Lemme tell you it is agonizing to be in a casino with zero, zip money for one’s self to gamble with.

We finally got to leave and while I did

bring baggies so I could kipe some treats for the dogettes, my leftover prime rib was rudely swept away by a thoughtless server who must hate little dogs.

This pandemic has taken so much away that we took for granted in our daily lives. I have gotten hugs I needed for so long from my niece and nephew, who are both fully vaxxed as I am. But I won’t be breathing in the air of, or touching people who have not gotten vaccinated or refuse to. That is my stance; y’all have your own and I respect your choice.

My dear friend Jo sent me a birthday care package with yummys for all of the rez-idents of this house. Miigwech! My Unk brought me a laundry basket of his mother’s old shoes and only one pair matches. Maybe I can make a shoe collage like some kinda art with them or throw them at the dogs when they get too screechy barking at dandelion fluff. Naw, don’t go there, I’m a bad thrower.

Going outside my comfortable lair into a coronavirus world got me all anxious. Not of being afraid to die – no, more like after so long noting the differences of how things are today. I was all like, “Look! People!” “The trees have leaves!” “No snow or ice on the roads!” In a recent foray into this small-minded and racist town, I forgot how to ‘people’ and use my own debit card in a store. The

young pink cashier yelled out, “We have a problem here!” And he was right. So that experience brought me back to reality in that I am a ‘problem.’ They just don’t even know. I’ve had a lot of time to think, which is dangerous, and while I’ve talked out my sassy side my whole life, I cannot be completely silent any longer.

If anything spoke as loud as the virus, it was the murder of George Floyd last year and the following eruption of good people who had enough horror and acted. They marched and made sure that his horrific death would not go through the blue sieve like it always has. Some, not all, changes in policing have been made but there is minuscule progress as yet.

The only reason my fingerprints are on the Minneapolis Police Department files is that I was arrested on ‘probable cause’ and somehow when I went to sue the department there were no records of the incident at all. Corruption.

Ima be lighting a Solstice fire even if I’m all by myself. I hope I don’t fall into one again. We will see. Sending out love, blessings and comfort to all.



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