George Morrison to be honored with new stamp series

Native man wants to reform police. His son wants to be a cop

Women Water Protectors exhibit highlights water warriors

UofMN launches financial aid for Native American students

The University of Minnesota’s Native American Promise Tuition Program will offer full tuition free and greatly reduced tuition financial assistance to first year Native Americans from Minnesota and to transferring students from Minnesota’s tribal colleges. (Photo from Wikipedia.)

By Lee Egestrom

Starting next school year, the University of Minnesota will offer full tuition free and greatly reduced tuition financial assistance to first year Native Americans from Minnesota and to transferring students from Minnesota’s tribal colleges.

University officials say this program will be among the most and possibly the most comprehensive free and greatly reduced tuition program in the nation.

It will apply to Native Minnesotans enrolling at the University’s Twin Cities, Crookston, Duluth, Morris and Rochester campuses. The tuition assistance program is available for new and tribal college transfer students who are enrolled members of Minnesota’s 11 federally recognized tribal nations.

It was not immediately known how many first-year students and transfer students will qualify for this aid or the potential cost to the university. Karen Diver, the former chairwoman at the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa who now serves as senior advisor to the President for Native American affairs at the university, said the students and university will learn as they go.

It does represent a major commitment to Native education in Minnesota by the university, its leaders and Board of Regents, she told The Circle.

In a virtual event on the Internet with Diver on Nov. 11, University of Minnesota President Joan Gable said, “Our goal is to form mutually beneficial partnerships, research, policies, and practices that respect tribal traditions, languages, and governance.”

Gable said she’s committed to building partnerships with the tribes and Native American students. The university wants to be a welcoming community that values belonging, equity, diversity and dignity for people and ideas, she said.

“In my view, this new program is a meaningful step to increasing access and continuing to improve retention and graduation rates while closing opportunity gaps for the state’s Native students. Ours is now among the nation’s most comprehensive free and reduced tuition programs for Native American students.”

Diver has held academic positions at the University of Minnesota Duluth, the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth and at Arizona State University and was special assistant to the President on Native American Affairs for President Barack Obama before taking the university position with Gabel.

She said this program was shaped through meetings with Minnesota tribal leaders on ways the university could help meet tribal needs. A key participant in those discussions was her colleague Tadd Johnson, who is senior director of American Indian Tribal Relations in the University’s Office of Equity and Diversity.

Business is on a roll in Northern Minnesota tribal communities

Northern Minnesota tribes have expanded their investments and roles in providing food security for their communities and in providing education and training for skilled 21st Century jobs for the future.

In a flurry of activity announced in November and late October, tribal business leaders stressed these actions provide security for local, sustainable foods as well as security for jobs in their communities.

The largest such move was the acquisition of the former Teal’s Market in Cass Lake by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. In late October, the Band took position and reopened the supermarket under the name Leech Lake Market.

The Teal family, originally from International Falls, had operated the Cass Lake store since the 1940s. It continues to run a family-owned grocery chain in various communities of Minnesota, North and South Dakota.

Store manager Jay Hinkemeyer told The Circle that the transition was smooth. “Everyone stayed in place,” he said of the nearly 80 employees at the store. “So far, it has been a real smooth transfer.”

Leech Lake’s tribal council has a goal of expanding business activity beyond gaming. LLBO Chairman Faron Jackson Sr. told the Leech Lake News for an Oct. 15 article, “The purchase of Teal’s is a milestone in the assurance of food sovereignty for the Band as well as continuing diversification of the businesses the Band owns and operates.”

Leech Lake has other tribal businesses that include Northern Lights Express, a gas and convenience store at Walker; Che We Supply, an office supply business at Cass Lake; and Ojibwe Wild Rice, based at Cass Lake that processes and markets natural, hand-harvested wild rice for Leech Lake members.
The Senior LinkAge Line is a free, statewide service of the Minnesota Board on Aging in partnership with Minnesota’s area agencies on aging. The Senior LinkAge Line helps older Minnesotans and caregivers find answers and connect to the services and support they need.
Celebrated Minnesota artist George Morrison—who was born in a Native American fishing village along the North Shore of Lake Superior in 1919, but whose art career took him around the world—will be featured on a new stamp series to be released next year by the U.S. Postal Service.

Morrison is regarded as one of the greatest American abstract expressionist painters, a contemporary and friend of artists like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning during the modern art movement that flourished in New York after World War II.

Five of Morrison’s colorful, abstract landscape paintings will be featured as part of the Postal Service’s Forever Stamp release in the spring of 2022. In making the announcement, the Postal Service called him one of the nation’s “greatest modernist artists and a founding figure of Native American modernism,” saying Morrison “challenged prevailing ideas of what Native American art should be, arguing that an artist’s identity can exist independently from the nature of the art he creates.”

Morrison’s body of work spans six decades. He taught at several colleges and art schools in the eastern U.S., before coming home to teach at the University of Minnesota. After he retired, he returned to the Grand Portage reservation and built Red Rock, a home and studio where he continued to work until he died in 2000.

“It is just so exciting to have this work find a really broad audience,” said Kristin Makholm, an art historian and curator who co-wrote a book about George Morrison.

“To enjoy this work in this context is really fabulous, not only for the people who are lucky enough to buy and receive these stamps, but also for George Morrison and his work.”

The five paintings selected to appear on the stamps all feature a distinctive feature of Morrison’s, a horizon line that appeared about a quarter of the way down from the top of the work.

“I think I began using the horizon probably earlier in my career because of my living near Lake Superior, that horizon line was always there, and it affected me subconsciously,” Morrison explained in an interview with MPR News in 1990.

Morrison’s signature horizon line “was a real symbolic motif that resonated with how we look at life,” said Makholm. “You know that it’s out there, but [you’re always] striving to something that you can never really reach.”

Makholm says that Morrison was able to take all the tenets of modernist abstraction that he learned in New York, and in Paris where he studied under a Fulbright scholarship, and combine them with the landscape he absorbed living on the Grand Portage reservation in far northeastern Minnesota.

“I’m grateful that they’re honoring a Native American artist,” said Morrison’s son Briand Morrison, a jazz guitarist who lives in the home his father built on the reservation.

George Morrison grew up speaking only Ojibwe until he was in the first grade, Briand said, before he was taken away to boarding school.

“I think the images that were chosen are a good representation of his work, his paintings,” said Briand Morrison. “If you look at his legacy, and the art that he did do, the Abstract Impressionist style, combined with his take on it, he is world-class.”

Other notable Americans to be recognized with stamps next year include Katharine Graham, the first female head of a Fortune 500 company, pioneering marine biologist Eugenie Clark, and folk music icon Pete Seeger.

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

---

**ARE YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER WORRIED ABOUT THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF BEING OVERWEIGHT AND/OR HAVING DIABETES?**

“My passion is helping members of the Native community with issues related to weight loss and endocrine problems, such as diabetes.”

— Tiffany Beckman, MD, MPH
— Member of Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Call 612-336-2727 to make an appointment to see her via virtual and phone visits.

Providers at M Health Fairview are in-network on many insurance plans. Please see here for more information: [www.mhealth.org/patients-and-visitors/health-insurance-plans-accepted](http://www.mhealth.org/patients-and-visitors/health-insurance-plans-accepted)

---

**DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN WORK**

**INTERFAITH ACTION OF GREATER SAINT PAUL**

**We’re here to help!**

Call us to get connected to resources for:

• COVID-19 testing,
• vaccines,
• housing
• food,
• mental health, and more.

Twin Cities American Indian COVID-19 Resource Hotline

651-304-9986

Monday-Friday 8am–5pm
Jonathan Thunder, multimedia artist and member of the Red Lake Nation, has described his work as “...a story line that reflects my personal lens as a filter to the social, political, environmental and spiritual climate around me.

Thunder attended the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and has since had his artwork featured in numerous publications, some of which are in permanent museum and university collections. His work stems from surrealism to digital animation, though Thunder would consider himself first and foremost a painter. “I wouldn't consider myself a cartoonist. I feel like each animation I make is a one-time film that exists on its own terms.” Thunder was also the illustrator for the children’s book Bowwow Powwow by Brenda Child.

His latest project is a mural titled My Grandma and Your Grandma that was commissioned by the University of Minnesota, Duluth and installed alongside various UMD students who volunteered their time. The piece draws directly from Thunder’s life, a notion that he finds crucial in his artwork. “I mainly just pull from my own experience because I don’t like to try to present myself as an expert on any one subject other than my own experience in this world. And sometimes that is my experience as an Ojibwe person. Other times, it’s my experience as somebody who thinks critically about things.”

It seems, then, that in this particular piece, Thunder has combined these two modes of thought to create a reflection on his own experience as well as a consideration of his surroundings.

When speaking to how the idea for the piece came about, Thunder said, “I guess it started with my connection to hip hop culture. I wanted to explore that a little deeper in light of everything that happened in Minnesota this year, you know, around the George Floyd incident, and some of the community actions that happened with the Black and Indigenous community in Minneapolis, which is my hometown, where I grew up.”

Thunder described the process as researching history between black and Indigenous communities and adding some of his own personal narrative.

An excerpt from Thunder’s artist statement regarding the imagery used in the mural says, “In this narrative the grandmother or Nokomis, is the center. A traditional dancer is flanked by members of the Dixie Cups. The band came from New Orleans where the Mardi Gras Indians pay tribute to their Indigenous roots with a parade each year. The Mardi Gras Indians look back to a time when tribes took in runaway slaves and gave them safe refuge. On the far right I have placed reference to a Disney cartoon called Little Hiawatha. The image contrasts the use of Indigenous imagery for profit vs the use of imagery through real connection. A giant rabbit with the letter 3 on its stomach speaks on the Line 3 conflict that continues in Minnesota, and how police are privately funded to work against community members rather than protect them in this conflict.

My Grandma and Your Grandma went on display at the University of Minnesota’s Tweed Museum of Art in late November.

For more information on Jonathan Thunder and his artwork, see: https://thunderfineart.com
https://www.instagram.com/jonthunder
Get Medicare and Medicaid benefits in the only plan with 5 out of 5 stars for 2021

One plan. $0 monthly premium. Extra benefits.
If you’re 65+, get Medicare and Medical Assistance services from one easy plan.

Minnesota Senior Health Options (MSHO)
• Medical, dental, prescription drug benefits
• Long-term care
• Personal care coordinator
• Home and community-based services

Enjoy extra benefits for safe, healthy living
• Home safety support
• A fitness program with gym membership
• Programs or tools to support mental health and well-being

HealthPartners® MSHO (HMO SNP) is Minnesota's first and only MSHO plan with 5 out of 5 stars for 2021.

Sign up today or learn more
Contact our MSHO experts to switch plans or enroll in MSHO for the first time. We’re ready to answer questions or help you enroll.

Call 952-883-5050 or 877-713-8215 (TTY 711)
Email MSHOsales@healthpartners.com
Visit healthpartners.com/MSHOplan

HealthPartners is a health plan that contracts with both Medicare and the Minnesota Medical Assistance (Medicaid) program to provide benefits of both programs to enrollees. Enrollment in HealthPartners depends on contract renewal. Every year, Medicare evaluates plans based on a 5-star rating system. Available in 12 Minnesota counties.
A Native man wants police reform in Duluth. His son wants to be a cop

BY DAN KRAKER

Earlier this year, in a plaza in downtown Duluth, Blair Powless stood alongside dozens of other community members still hurt over the killing of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer and demanded reform from Duluth’s Police Department.

“Generations of suffering and sacrifice have brought us to this moment,” Powless told the crowd, speaking on behalf of a group called the Duluth Community Safety Initiative. “It is our intention that the relationships between community and public safety come to be based in a sincere mutual respect.”

The group asked city leaders for a racial audit of the Police Department, and to reallocate some traditional police funding toward the creation of an alternative crisis response team.

Powless was there on behalf of his community – his late father was instrumental in founding the Duluth Citizen Review Board, a citizen’s advisory body to the Police Department.

But he also has a personal stake in the matter. Over his lifetime, he said, he’d had several "negative, condescending, humiliating interactions" with police officers, experiences he said that, even if they don’t end in violence, can nonetheless be traumatic.

And secondly, he said, at the same time he was working to reform policing, his son was well on his way to becoming a police officer. “And I’m very concerned that the environment, the culture, that he goes into, is a healthy one.”

Demeaning experiences

Several years ago Blair Powless took his two young sons on a bus trip from Duluth to Indiana, where they planned to meet his parents and continue to Florida for a vacation.

Along the way, the bus stopped near Eau Claire, Wis. Powless and his sons hopped out to grab something to eat.

“Somebody must have called the police on us,” Powless recalled. “And so we were walking back to the bus, and a sheriff’s deputy pulled up in their car and said he wanted to talk to us. And I was like, ‘what do you want to talk to us about?’”

The deputy told Powless his kids should be in school. Powless replied that they were on a family trip. But the officer persisted and asked for his ID.

“And I, of course, was extremely upset at this point. I wasn’t yelling at him. But, I told him, ‘I don’t have to show you anything. I’m minding my own business.’ And this guy was so cocky. [He] had just this, I can’t say, ‘something’ eating grin on his face the whole time and just this awful attitude.”

The deputy separated Powless and his kids, one of whom was only 3 or 4 at the time, to ask them questions. He eventually let them get back on the bus.

Registration open now for no-cost job training

Celebrate Native American Heritage Month by building your future

Takoda.org

(612) 341-3358

TAKODA

TRAINING - JOBS - GED

But for Powless, the day, if not the entire trip, was ruined.

“It’s just those types of instances that I’ve encountered more than once where somebody seems to not only overstep their boundaries and abuse their authority, but to be almost a cruel or sadistic person,” he said.

For Powless, who’s 51 now, that wasn’t an isolated incident. He said he’s had several other demeaning, humiliating encounters with police over the years.

His son Key remembers many of them. A couple years after the incident in Wisconsin, they were returning to Minnesota from Canada when a Border Patrol agent again split him up from his father, and asked him repeatedly whether Powless was his real dad.

“And I just remembered, who are you to ask me that?” said Key Powless, who was 12 at the time.

And now, whenever he crosses the border, “I’m a little eerie about what their true intent actually is. When in all actuality it could be good, but that one experience kind of tainted it for me,” he said.

Blair and Key Powless are Native American, members of the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin. But Key Powless, as he says, “looks white.” He said he’s never had a negative encounter with a police officer alone; they’ve only occurred when he’s been with his father.

The elder Powless suspects his appearance has played a role in how police have treated him. “I can’t say for certain, but it seems like I’ve had far more negative interactions than most people I know, for doing nothing.”

Those experiences have motivated Blair Powless in his current work. But those same troubling encounters with police have also fueled Key Powless’ desire to become a police officer.

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 –

Takoda.org

(612) 341-3358

TAKODA

TRAINING - JOBS - GED

https://thecirclenews.org
We put care into your community and our plans.

UCare has had health plans for everyone since 1984.
Medicaid | Individual & Family | Medicare

Call 1-866-323-1327 | TTY 1-800-688-2534 | Visit ucare.org/care
“Affordability and student support are among my biggest priorities and those of the Board of Regents,” Diver said in the virtual conversation with President Gabel.

The program is called the University of Minnesota Native American Promise Tuition Program and expands on a full waiver tuition program in place at the U’s Morris campus that acknowledges the campus’ past history and use as a Native American boarding school.

Here is how it will work:

Full tuition scholarships will be available for first-year and tribal college transfer students who are enrolled tribal members of Minnesota tribes from families with less than $75,000 in annual income.

Students from families earning up to $125,000 in annual income will be eligible to receive up to 80 and 90 percent discounted tuition scholarships.

Recipients must come directly from high schools or transfer from the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (Cloquet), Leech Lake Tribal College (Cass Lake), Red Lake Nation College (Red Lake) or White Earth Tribal and Community College (Mahnomen).

They must be degree-seeking students, enroll as full-time students, and maintain a 2.0 or better grade point average (GPA) in their studies. They must also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) papers that are routinely required for financial aid and scholarships at colleges and universities.

Scholarships and financial aid programs can be found all across the nation. Many are just token gestures for people joining campus groups, or planning to major in specific academic fields. Some are specific to certain communities or schools. Others are keyed to attracting top notch students, are generous in support, but limited to a relatively small number of applicants.

Diver said she knows Massachusetts, Michigan and Montana are among states that have scholarship and financial aid programs for their residents. Some colleges and universities have programs for students from nearby communities.

Minnesota’s Native American Promise Tuition Program has the potential of the being the largest and least restrictive for a state’s Native students, she said.

The Circle found directories of more than 230 scholarship programs for Native American students online. None appeared at first glance to be as wide open and encompassing to a population as the new Minnesota program.

Karen Diver serves as senior advisor to the President for Native American affairs at the university. (Photo courtesy Karen Diver.)

Join Our Team at the FDL Minneapolis Tagwii Location

Fond du lac (FDL) Human Services Division, Tagwii Substance Use Disorder Department Treatment Program at Mino Bimaadizi Waakaa’igan (2020 Bloomington Avenue, Minneapolis, MN) Our Program is a culturally based, co-occurring intensive outpatient program. Staff will be a part of a treatment team designed to address all areas of their clients’ lives and will work alongside FDL Medical, Behavioral health, and Social Services.

We have current openings for Alcohol & Drug Counselors II (ADC-T, III (LADC) and IV (Dual license LADC/MHT), Lead recovery Case Manager, and Recovery Case Manager. FDL also offers qualified individuals the ability to apply for a tribal ADC licensure.

For more information on tribal licensure, contact richardcolsen@fdlrez.com.

For job description information and job applications visit http://www.fdlrez.com/hr/mpslistings.htm

For more information on the American Indian substance use disorder treatment program, visit https://thecirclenews.org
Along another path that combines Native food and culture with environmental preservation, the Red Lake Nation released a YouTube video in November showing progress it is making in establishing Mashkode Bizhikiwag, or the Red Lake Bison Ranch and Hemp Farms. It can be accessed online at https://youtube.com/watch?v=OGSdf37iCPg.

A spokesman explains for non-Ojibwe speakers that the name essentially means buffalo or bison, literally “prairie cow,” and that adding “wag” to Bizhiki makes it plural.

Red Lake and its allies are indeed making it plural.

The video shows how the operation started with help from South Dakota tribal friends with seven buffalo in 2020. Fifteen more were added in the past year.

“You can’t be sovereign unless you feed your own people,” Cherilyn Spears, Red Lake Economic Development Project Coordinator, explains in the video. She calls the return of the buffalo as a “life-line for our people to have good and healthy food.”

It is a restoration project to bring back bison to their Red Lake area natural habitat. Ed Iron Cloud III, from Porcupine, S.D. on the Pine Ridge reservation, explains how the project has progressed and Dell Perkins, a Red Lake agricultural specialist, stresses the importance of both restoring the animals and a sustainable tribal food source.

While these food related investments shore up tribal businesses with Ojibwe culture and the past, another major Northland project will help position people for evolving jobs of the future.

Wells Technology in Bemidji, a sophisticated designer and maker of computer controlled manufacturing tools and equipment, opened a training program in early November at the Oshkimaajitahdah (“new beginning”) Center in Redby, on the Red Lake reservation.

The Redby program is an initial step in a vocational training program run by the Wells Academy in Bemidji, a Native American machinists training branch of Wells Technology.

Students are at the same time apprentices and are paid during their training. In the process, they learn to operate computer controlled manufacturing machines, known in industry as Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines.

CNC machines replace a lot of human involvement in manufacturing. But sophisticated, trained workers oversee the automated manufacturing process.

Andrew (Andy) Wells III, an enrolled member of the Red Lake Band, started Wells Technology in 1985. He continues as president and chief executive officer (CEO).

The company expanded along the way to provide design and manufacturing equipment for other companies that provide maintenance, repair and operating (MRO) tools and equipment for its customers, and for original equipment manufacturers (OEM) customers.

Industry information describe the latter as makers of systems or components used in another company’s product. An example would be computer manufacturers who combine processors and software, for instance, into the systems and products they sell.

Among especially timely Wells Technology products are solar tracking equipment for solar panels. Solar panels become up to 35 percent more productive when moving with the sun during daylight. Wells products are designed to serve the Defense, aerospace, automotive, electronic, medical and food industries.

Several members of the Wells family are involved in the family-owned company. They include Andy Wells IV as chief financial officer (CFO).

In an article distributed for the Red Lake Nation, the senior Wells said Oshkimaajitahdah students will get advance training at the Wells Academy site at Bemidji. The year-long training “will assist students in securing full-time employment in the industry of their choice, and hopefully, many will want to stay at Wells Technology where many jobs are open and employees are needed,” he said.
Molly Saboo: Pursuing Her Dream to Compete In College Cross Country

Molly Saboo, 18, is a member of the Bay Mills Indian Community located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She is a graduating senior this school year at Onamia Public Schools in Minnesota. She competed for the Mille Lacs Raiders cross country team, a co-op between Onamia and Isle schools.

Saboo is continuing on her journey to be a fast and smart runner on the cross country course. Although the fall season is over, she is continuing to train with plans to continue to run at the college level. She has the credentials to continue her climb to higher goals.

“I was a state participant this past cross country season,” said Saboo. “I have lettered in cross country and track six times each. I was an All-Conference runner in cross country five times and All-Conference honorable mention once. I was an All-Conference honorable mention runner in the 800m and 1600m on the track. I placed fifth in the 800m and sixth in the 1600m run at sections.”

She holds the record for every 5k course at her school. Her personal bests are: 5k - 20:05, 1600m - 5:34, and 800m - 2:29.

“Love, respect, and courage are some of the most prominent indigenous core values that made me the runner I am today,” said Saboo. “Love is my love for running. Ever since I could talk I always told my mom I was going to be a runner.”

“Respect is for all the other fellow runners that I race with every day, but also respect for myself. I have to respect myself enough to be able to go out onto every course and believe that I am meant to be there and I am going to run the best race I can that day.”

“Courage is running through the pain and keep pushing forward no matter what. Courage was to keep going out for cross country even when I had no team. It also is having big dreams about going to state and running in college, and then achieving them.”

“I run for myself but I also run for my people, those who can’t run, my friends and family members that were taken too soon, and for all the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls across North America,” added Saboo.

“My mother, Nancy Saboo, is my main mentor and supporter,” said Saboo. “She pushes me to be the best I can be, shows up to every single one of my meets, and most importantly she believes that I can do anything I set my mind to.”

“Being Molly’s mom I have the honor of watching her grow into the young woman she is today,” said Nancy Saboo. “It was from an early age that Namaadibaawin was going to be a runner.”

According to her mom, Molly chose to use the time during the pandemic to focus on her academics as well as her running. In the months spent at home, she researched nutrition and training strategies to improve her skill. She used this time to run, train and study. She wrote her goals and inspirational quotes on the walls of her bedroom and read them each day. She continued to run on the treadmill, around Onamia, and on the school track when it wasn’t covered in snow.

“It has been my honor to witness her life and see her reach and surpass the goals she set for herself,” said Nancy.

“My cross country coach, Jeff Walz, is my other mentor,” said Saboo. “He taught me a lot of what I know now about running and running strategies. He gave me all the help I can ask for and he too believes in me very much.”

“I knew Molly was a special young lady when she came to Onamia HS in junior high,” said Jeff Walz, head varsity cross country coach for the Mille Lacs Raiders. “She played basketball, and ran track and cross country for me. In all three sports she competed with a fire in her belly.”

“Molly loved the competition and being part of a team. As Molly grew older she started to train harder and incorporate nutrition and hydration into her routine, and it was at that time I knew Molly would be a special athlete.”

“In my opinion, Molly has just scratched the surface of her greatness,” added Coach Walz.
Remembering Lee Cook

In November, I was sad to learn that Leon “Lee” Cook had walked on. According to a news obituary in the Star Tribune, Cook died Oct. 13 at Sanford Bemidji Medical Center of a breakthrough COVID-19 infection. He was 82.

A member of the Red Lake Nation, Cook was orphaned at the age of six. As the newspaper noted, “Cook overcame childhood poverty and tragedy to become one of the nation’s most influential and best-known advocates for Native American rights. He rose to the highest levels of government during a period of tumult in the early 1970s and helped to lay the foundation for a new era of self-determination for tribes throughout Indian Country.”

The Star Tribune remembrance mentioned that Cook, at age 31, became the youngest person ever elected president of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). Among many career accomplishments, he served in the Nixon administration as director of economic development at the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I’m not sure when I first met Lee Cook. Around 1984, I was on trial in Minneapolis municipal court for trespass and making a terroristic threat against Honeywell. I was charged with entering the Honeywell building and setting up audio and video equipment to record employee statements. The judge seemed to think that I was trying to avert a much greater harm: the end of humanity in a thermonuclear war. The jury continued its deliberations and eventually came around to Cook’s way of thinking, which was that our direct action at Honeywell was justified by a higher goal.

Lee Cook, of Cass Lake, whose Ojibwe name was Waase Waagosh or “Shining Fox,” dedicated his life to improving the fortunes of American Indians; and many years ago, he kept me from going to jail again.

May his memory be a blessing for his friends and loved ones.

In hard rock mining news

Sulfide mining schemes have been fodder for the “Political Matters” column for the past dozen years. I’ve written about PolyMet Mining’s NorthMet copper-nickel mine, which is close to operation; and the Twin Metals Minnesota proposed sulfide mine, which is on hold after the federal Bureau of Land Management recently rejected the company’s mineral leases and exploration permits for a site south of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

In late November, the Star Tribune reported that Talon Metals is exploring for nickel near Tamarack, Minn.

The project is in its early stages, but environmental groups and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe are “closely scrutinizing” the proposal, according to the Star Tribune: “Parts of the band’s reservation are within 10 miles of Tamarack. So are prime waters for wild rice, which are sacred to the Ojibwe.”

I’ll be writing about the Tamarack mine in the months to come.
Health insurance for every Minnesota story

Every family has a story. We can help find health coverage that fits yours.

Get FREE help from our assisters at mnsure.org/help

We are helping to build Indigenous Nations
MHA Nation Cultural Interpretive Center
Mandan Hidatsa & Arikara Nation
New Town, North Dakota

Health insurance
for every
Minnesota story

Every family has a story. We can help find health coverage that fits yours.

Get FREE help from our assisters at mnsure.org/help

Health insurance
for every
Minnesota story

Every family has a story. We can help find health coverage that fits yours.

Get FREE help from our assisters at mnsure.org/help

Lightning Strike, a “must read”

REVIEW BY DEBORAH LOCKE

The reading of “Lightning Strike” by Minnesota writer William Kent Krueger came about randomly. An acquaintance emailed that I just had to read the book, with a plot and characters set in northern Minnesota. He said this book was even better than Krueger’s highly acclaimed “This Tender Land.” Then he mailed it to my home.

Dear readers: my nightstand is six books high with recommended reading for Circle reviews. All were shoved to the side. “Lightning Strike,” which has an equal number of Ojibwe and non-Indian characters, touches you in a way that lasts. It’s mostly a thriller who-done-it, which means the plot assumes the most importance, yet it’s also character-driven, introducing people who you will not forget. It is a story I needed to hear right now, a story ripe with wisdom, touched by sorrow, and hopeful.

The book opens in 1989, but backtracks to 1963 where all the action takes place. Protagonist, Cork O’Connor, part Ojibwe, is the new sheriff in Tamarack County in northern Minnesota, located close to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. He had barely settled into his new office before the reader is whisked back in time to when Cork’s father, Liam, served as sheriff. At that point, Cork is 12, lives with his parents in the small town of Aurora, and gets around mostly on his bike.

One day he and a friend bike to a place in the Superior National Forest called “Lightning Strike.” The remote meadow is the site of a former logging camp. There they find the body of Big John Manydeeds, a well-liked community member who appears to have committed suicide.

An investigation leads the sheriff and his deputies to presume that Big John died by his own hand. But the nearby Ojibwe community begs to differ. At the same time, young Cork finds a clue that suggests more complexity to the case, and a broader cast of involved characters. Sheriff Liam gets caught in conflict between the Ojibwe who rail against a quick open-and-shut assessment of the Big John’s death, and his own deputies and townspeople who assume this was just another Indian suicide.

The investigation widens, and Liam begins to suspect foul play in Big John’s death. It’s fascinating the way Krueger builds the intrigue while at the same time, exploring the growing relationship between father and son. The weight of truth falls squarely on Liam whose every move in the investigation is suspect by both the Ojibwe and non-Indians.

One group is determined that the death of Big John not be swept under the rug as astereotypical occurrence, while the other group is determined to do just that. Strains of racism run through this 1960’s northern Minnesota community. Natives are viewed by many non-Indians as invisible or subordinate.

Krueger’s primary traditional Ojibwe character is Grandma Dilsey, a spunky elder who happily takes on Liam and anyone else who disrespects Big John. Like all Indian communities in Minnesota, everyone knows each other’s business. And the Iron Lake Reservation members know that Big John, though not perfect, was neither abusing alcohol at the end of his life, nor was he suffering from untreated depression.

In addition to memorable, believable characters, Krueger also gets the smaller details right, like the satisfaction one gains at a campfire. Krueger wrote:

“All his life, Cork would love the magnetism of a campfire, as did anyone who’s spent nights outside the glare of a city’s light. There was something elemental in fire, which warmed the heart as well as the body, mesmerized the eyes, cleared the brain of worry, let in a healing peace… Grandma Dilsey had told Cork that Nanaboozhoo, the trickster, had stolen fire and given it as a gift to human beings. Cork thought it was a generous gift.”

Along with a familiar setting in Minnesota, and insights into conflict and father/son relationships, there’s another reason for reading this book. About two-thirds of the way in, it becomes a classic page-turner. Surprises abound through clever twists. After a lifetime of reading mysteries and thrillers, I’ve always figured out who-done-it long before the last chapter, but not here. Krueger is as masterful at forging a plot as he is at extrapolating universal truths from large and small events. A couple of his characters comment about the bigness of life and death in ways that catch in your throat.

In short, you leave this book with a deeper understanding than when you arrived. That understanding must be at least one of the points my generous, insistent colleague wanted to make.

A new photography exhibit by photographer John Kaul will highlight Native American women Water Protectors, which will be on display in December.

Kaul has photographed and interviewed 20 Native American women about why they work to protect the water. The exhibit will tell the story of the Indigenous women he met at the Line 3 protests.

Kaul writes in his press release: “In March, I participated in a Line 3 protest in Park Rapids. Jane Fonda was there, but the faces that riveted my attention were those of the indigenous grandmothers who came to peacefully protest an oil pipeline that violated the terms of a treaty signed many decades ago and ignored just like the other 409 treaties with Native Americans. I decided on the spot that day that I would pull together a portrait exhibit honoring these indigenous women water protectors.”

Each portrait in the exhibit is accompanied by a brief biographical sketch that explains who the water warriors are, what motivates their involvement in protecting water, and something about their lives.

Kaul says there are two types of activists. First, there are the water walkers who cover the entire lengths of our rivers, like the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Red, Potomac, Wisconsin, and many others. The second type are those who attempt to disrupt the construction of oil pipelines by sitting in front of bulldozers or handcuffing themselves to fences and the like.

The Unity Unitarian Church, 732 Holly Avenue in St. Paul is hosting the exhibition during the month of December.

**Excerpts from the exhibit for Chas Jewett:**

“Chas Jewett (Mnicojan Lakota) lives on a reservation that is just south of Standing Rock in a little town called Jewett Creek which is named after one of her ancestors. She is an environmental activist and an outspoken and articulate critic of our time. Her family has an interesting history in that one of her grandfathers had the unenviable task of serving on the first council that was forced to allot land on an ever-shrinking reservation. Her grandmother helped shelter Indians fleeing the Wounded Knee Massacre. Her father and grandfather were forced to attend boarding schools.”

**Excerpts from the exhibit for Tania Aubid:**

“When I took this portrait, Tania was still recovering from a 35-day hunger strike. She said she had been on a hunger strike to protest the treatment of Mother Earth, and the threat to wild rice and water posed by Line 3. She was, at that time, optimistic that the courts would uphold provisions of the 1855 treaty regarding Native sovereignty in that area. Her hopes with dashed by the court decision.

Tania grew up on a reservation in the town of East Lake, which is in Aitkin County. She refers to that part of the state as “The Deep North,” because the hatred for Native peoples remains strong there and because of the prejudicial and aggressive tactics of local law enforcement. It is also the heart of Trump country with banners proclaiming continuing fealty to the former president plastered on homes, farms, pick-ups, and stores - daily reminders that prejudice surrounds the reservation.”
“That makes me want to be a cop even more,” Key Powless said. “If I can try to be the one cop, that’s not going to do that to somebody, that’s one less person to be the one cop, that’s not going to do more,” Key Powless said. “If I can try to be compassionate. At powwows, he instilled in him by his grandfather, a community advocate in Duluth. He cites the example of a friend who’s looking to leave a sheriff’s office in rural Minnesota where he currently works, for the simple fact of, these people put on a face when they go out and deal with the public. And behind closed doors, it’s a very large, almost a racist boys club that he doesn’t feel comfortable being around.”

Key Powless knows it’s not realistic to think he can come into a department and change how people view people of color, or how they treat people they encounter during a traffic stop. Still, he believes he can make a difference. “I know I probably can’t change it, but I can be a part of a better part of the system.”

Uncomfortable conversations
For Blair Powless, he knows that police departments need more people of color like his son, who treat people with respect, and who understand Native American culture. But at the same time, he said “it’s creepy” to think that one or two Native Americans entering a police department are going to be able to singlehandedly change its culture. “It’s a lot more complicated than just throwing a couple of people of color into an otherwise white group and expecting that to make a difference,” Blair Powless said. He said larger, structural changes are needed to really change police culture. That’s why he’s working on efforts like a racial bias audit of the Duluth Police Department, something the city has agreed to.

Meanwhile, Key Powless has applied for a job as an officer with the Oneida Nation. His dream, he said, is to eventually work as an officer in the Duluth area. “So that’s kind of the next step for me, I think, is just to take the leap and go become a cop and really see what it’s like to be out there doing that kind of work.”

In the meantime, this father and son continue to have long, sometimes difficult conversations about policing, something they fear is increasingly rare in what has become a polarized debate, often framed as Black Lives Matter on one side, and “blue lives matter” on the other. “If we can sit down and really try to listen to each other, and try to have these hard, uncomfortable conversations and walk away, sometimes unsatisfied, at least we’re learning something,” said Blair Powless. “And we’re keeping in touch with the humanity of other people.”

Montessori American Indian Childcare Center (MAICC)

**Transportation Specialist**

**Part Time Non-Exempt 15-20 hours/week**

**Position Purpose:** To provide safe bus transportation for Montessori American Indian Childcare Center (MAICC) children, assuring that each child is picked up and delivered on schedule. Cooperate with staff to promote the health and education of each child, and to work with center staff to assure a smooth flow of written communication between families and MAICC.

**Requires:** High School Diploma/GED; an Excellent Driving Record; Must pass a background check.

**Benefits:** $21/hr based upon experience and qualifications;

**Bus Aide**

**Part-Time Non-Exempt 15-20 hours/week**

**Position Purpose:** To assist the bus driver in the safe bus transportation for Montessori American Indian Childcare Center (MAICC) children, assuring that each child is picked up and $15/hr based upon experience and qualifications

Contact Janice LaFloe at 651-774-1620 or See website for full description at www.americanindianmontessori.net

---

Skyline Tower
1247 St. Anthony Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-999-7500

**NOTICE: OPENING THE STUDIO & 2 BEDROOM WAIT LIST**

Project based Section 8, rent based on income for qualified applicants.

Applications may be downloaded from [www.skylinetower.commonbond.org](http://www.skylinetower.commonbond.org) starting at 9AM Nov. 30, 2021 until 4PM Dec. 3, 2021. Completed applications must be received by mail on or before December 16th, 2021.

All qualified applicants will be placed on the Waiting List in the order they are received.

CommonBond Communities Equal Housing Opportunity

---

**CLIENT SERVICES/INTAKE**

Full-time Client Services/Intake Worker for Central Minnesota Legal Services Mpls office. Exc. oral & written communication skills req. WORD+. Second language+.


---

**FOR RENT**

Find your new home with At Home Apartments. Call 651-224-1234 or visit AtHomeApts.com for an apartment or town home. Equal Housing Opportunity.
Well dag-nabbit! I’m so mad I didn’t get back to you last month. See, I was involved in a social experiment where if you don’t pay for WiFi services, they cut you off!!! Ah, no, actually I was mad at the SAT company who wanted $650+ for service I never got. So the good news is I’m back online.

I admit here I am addicted to a social medium that starts with an “F” in every sense of the letter. On Sesame Street they would introduce the “F” word and then say, “It means Fraud – see also Foolish.” Well, that is how I feel sometimes but like my other quirks, Ima hang out there for a while just to see what happens.

The effects I was anxious about is what is gonna happen to me without electricity? Umm....I had electricity, just not for the narcissistic electronic junk tools I use every day. I only had my phone to use! Then I became more aware of the sounds outside, the birds yelling, but only if I was up early. It took time but I have come to appreciate the outside again, even though I wasn’t in it very long.

As I have written many times now, I suffer from depression, anxiety and other mental issues. The reason I do this is so that the attached stigma is erased. Some people may recognize some symptoms and seek counsel, which is there when you need it. Do that no matter what, for you and those who love you and need you here. Word.

That said, I thought it would be harder not having satellite TV as I had ‘my’ shows I HAD to watch. So week one, week two and three went just fine. I got my WiFi back and can now go to any online broadcast outlet and get depressed, broken and inconsolable at the suffering in this world. I do not recommend not watching the news media, just turn it off if you can’t do something about it. Eya, eya! We are all responsible for each other in our shared humanity.

The next grant round for the American Indian Family Empowerment Program opens January 1. Apply for up to $2,500 for funding in one of four areas:

- Health/Wellness
- Economic Independence
- Education
- Culture

www.tiwahefoundation.org
COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for pregnant people

- We know that pregnant people are at a higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease compared to non-pregnant people.

- There is growing data about the safety of COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy and how well the vaccine works in pregnant people.

- Pregnancy outcomes are not affected by vaccination. This includes outcomes that affect the baby. Data supports that the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination during pregnancy.

- If you are pregnant, get vaccinated to help protect you from severe illness from COVID-19.

- Talk with your health care provider if you have questions.

COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for people who want to have a baby one day

- If you are trying to become pregnant now or want to get pregnant in the future, it is recommended that you get a COVID-19 vaccine.

- There is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any COVID-19 vaccine.