



# NEWS FROM A NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

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## Beyond Land Acknowledgement Fund



Screenshot of the Indian Land Tenure Foundation's website at <https://iltf.org>.

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Thanks to a seed grant from a Minneapolis church congregation, the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF) has launched a new program to help Native groups recover land stolen from the tribes in earlier colonial times.

In effect, the "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Fund" started by ILTF is intended to be a conduit for churches, institutions, governmental units and other civic and nonprofit organizations to "put their money where their mouth is," ILTF said in announcing the program.

The Little Canada-based national foundation provides legal resources and grants to help tribes across the U.S. recover important land resources and ancestral homeland territories.

Examples close to home include helping the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa recover more than 28,000 acres in the past year. In earlier work with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, ILTF helped get Congress to approve the return of about 12,000 acres of its original land that is now in the works.

The stepped up effort through ILTF has come about with a boost from an unexpected source. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, which has an aggressive social

ministry, had a group studying the Doctrine of Discovery theory that is the backbone of colonial conquest.

In practice, it means non-Christian indigenous people don't count and thus don't actually own their homelands. Land supposedly discovered by European Christian explorers could then be claimed as property by colonial powers.

This theory got locked up in practice and in national and international laws over the years. Growing public awareness of this has United Nations agencies and governments – including here and in Canada with its First Nations – struggling with ways to take corrective actions.

This global problem from colonial times is also the reason why the world now uses the term indigenous for native populations. It is at least an accurate term for a local people.

Holy Trinity's Doctrine of Discovery Task Force, as the group was known, had meetings with staff at the Land Tenure Foundation for background starting in 2019. It then invited ILTF President Chris Stainbrook (Oglala Lakota) to speak about Indian land issues at a congregational meeting last fall.

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## Cultural warriors now entrepreneurs with a Native flair



Arlene Fairbanks (L) and Jessica Travis (R) got matching tattoos during Arlene's cancer journey. (Photo by Jessica Travis.)

BY LEE EGERSTROM

A pair of Twin Cities Native women with common bonds evolved over time to become advocates for cultural arts and understanding and have now emerged as entrepreneurs owning and operating Fire Mountain Fabrics & Supply.

Their online website clearly states their business objective: "Carrying the latest Native designed fabrics and supplies for our next ribbon and regalia projects."

The business is up and running and does show an extensive collection of fabrics and colors. Shoppers can see for themselves in person at the Fire Mountain store at 6264 Boone Ave. N. in Brooklyn Park.

Owners Arlene Fairbanks, a Navajo originally from Arizona, and Jessica Travis, a Lakota and member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, are planning an open house for their business on Saturday, Feb. 11, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Events will start with drummers, a singer and blessing, and drawings throughout the day. The merchandise offered is geared to equip artists, parents and others who sew to make

regalia and cloth products using fabrics that reflect the many Native cultures here in Minnesota and across the nation.

Fairbanks said Fire Mountain went online and worked with nonprofits and other groups last fall. "But we wanted a store. I found a property down the road from my home that would work," she said.

They have taken over what was a thrift shop in a strip mall in Brooklyn Park.

Both women are versed in Native culture, in sewing and use of fabrics, and both have outside jobs as well.

Travis is a registered nurse at M Health Fairview Hospital in Edina. "I have worked in the postpartum unit for nearly 18 years now, caring for new moms and babies," she said.

Fairbanks, meanwhile, grew up in a Navajo hogan without electricity and running water at Jeddito, Ariz. She has had a business career over the years and has earned an accounting degree from Metropolitan State University. She is currently the finance manager at the American Indian Family Center in St. Paul.

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# Native Americans left out of 'deaths of despair' research

BY RHITU CHATTERJEE/NPR

For more than a decade, Americans have been dying younger than people in other developed countries. Researchers attribute much of this rise in mid-life deaths to what are called “deaths of despair” – that is suicides, drug overdoses and deaths from alcoholic liver disease – among middle-aged white Americans.

But a study published in *The Lancet* shows that these premature deaths have affected American Indian and Alaska Native communities far more than white communities.

“The whole sort of premise of the ‘death of despair’ idea that this is unique to white communities really didn’t stand up when we took a close look at the data,” says Dr. Joseph Friedman, a physician and researcher at the University of California Los Angeles.

“The *Lancet* article underscores a number of things that we’ve known for a substantial period of time, but have never articulated it in such a sharp fashion,” says Spero Manson, director of the University of Colorado’s Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health who wasn’t involved in the new study.

The idea that the rise in deaths of despair was the highest in middle aged white Americans was put forward by two Princeton economists in a study published in 2015. They had looked at death rates for 45-54 year-olds from 1999-2013, and compared the numbers by race and ethnicity.

“Ideally no one should die in that age group, certainly not of overdose, suicide and alcoholic liver disease,” says Friedman.

When he and his colleagues analyzed the mortality data more closely, they found that American Indians and Alaska Native people had been completely left out of the analysis in the original study. And the midlife mortality rates for these groups were far higher than among whites.

“In the same period that deaths among white Americans did go up by about 9 percent, deaths among Native Americans

When he and his colleagues analyzed the mortality data more closely, they found that American Indians and Alaska Native people had been completely left out of the analysis in the original study.

And the midlife mortality rates for these groups were far higher than among whites.

went up by 30 percent,” says Friedman.

“The entire narrative about deaths of despair among white Americans depended on the invisibility, or, we might say, the erasure of indigenous presence, invisibility in those datasets,” says psychologist-anthropologist Joseph Gone of Harvard University, a member of the Aaniiih Gros Ventre tribal nation of Montana and a co-author of the *Lancet* study. “And that’s a problem from our vantage point.”

Data on Native communities are often missing from public health research, he adds, because “our numbers are small and we often get folded into a category like ‘Other’ instead of being reported distinctively for indigenous peoples.”

While the recent rise in deaths among white Americans is, of course, alarming, Gone says, that the factors driving these deaths have affected Native communities for much longer.

“Indian country problems rise and fall with the economy like everyone else’s,” he says, “but we’re just used to a lack of resources and opportunities for a whole bunch of reasons that go way back.”

He adds that “colonial subjugation” by European settlers and historical attacks on the ways of life and livelihoods of indigenous communities have shaped the health and lifespans of Native communities since the early days of this country.

“Part of what I think we’re seeing in these [rising rates of] deaths of despair are attacks on livelihoods,” he says, “and decline in

the ability to have good livelihoods.”

“If you look at matters of poverty, education, decreased employment opportunities, restricted access to other kinds of resources that are typically associated with these kinds of health disparities,” says Manson, “they’re very powerful and widely present in American and Alaska Native communities.”

The new study also found that the disparities in midlife mortality have only worsened since 2013, especially exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. In 2020, the death rates among middle-aged Native people due to despair-related causes was twice that among white people.

“This is a sort of astronomical inequality, you know, that should be unthinkable in our society,” says Friedman.

But Manson believes that addressing these longstanding disparities in health and mortality will take more than just focusing on deaths of despair.

“The problem is if we only focus on deaths of despair, we ignore and do not have adequate attention paid to the sources that promote health and well-being in Native people,” he says.

For example, he says, Native people have one of the highest rates of COVID vaccination compared to other racial and ethnic groups. According to the CDC, as of Jan.

25, 2023, nearly 78 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native people have received at least one dose of the vaccine – the highest rate compared to all other racial and ethnic groups. And 64 percent of this group had completed the primary series of vaccination, second only to Asian Americans.

As NPR reported before, this was in large part because of Native people wanting to protect their elders and being more willing to get vaccinated.

Manson has been studying COVID testing and vaccination in six large urban Indian health organizations and found their efforts to be very successful.

“It has been their coming together across their programs, working not only with their urban partners that are non-native, but also working with reservation-based communities adjacent to their catchment areas,” he says.

Reducing deaths of despair, Manson says, will require harnessing the strength and resilience of Native communities and supporting them with resources.

“There are possible solutions,” he adds. “Those solutions are often local. They have to do with self-determination and the ability to have access to the necessary resources to mobilize those solutions.”

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# Audrey Thayer elected Bemidji City Council At Large Councilor

BY DAN NINHAM

There are regional and national indigenous women leaders who are not only being elected into political office but are being re-elected as well. Many of the leaders are also social activists and educators.

Audrey Thayer is an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation. She has been an instructor on the faculty of Leech Lake Tribal College for the past ten years. Thayer also serves as the At Large Councilor for the Bemidji City Council. She served two years as Ward 1 Councilmember and is now the newly elected At Large Councilor.

Thayer also has continued her higher education toward a terminal doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at the University of St. Thomas. Her expected graduation date is in December of 2023. The University of St. Thomas is a private Catholic university in St. Paul/Minneapolis, MN.

Thayer's personal history includes activism in many social justice issues. St. Thomas had a strong history in social justice, and she had a bias about the Catholic tradition because her family including her mother and grandmother were in government and Catholic boarding schools. "I had at a young age blamed all of the inter-

generational issues in our family on inter-generational trauma from Christianity and Colonialism," said Thayer. "I have added capitalism in my words of issues that plague Indigenous-American peoples."

"My philosophy was to select a private institution exposing me to people in a different socio-economic class system, with priests with whom I had issues," shared Thayer. "A person can do anything if they genuinely seek to improve their minds. I started my first year of doctoral work at age 64. There is nothing that can stop our people including age."

Earlier in her undergraduate years, Thayer realized in order to make life better for her growing family and extended families, and ultimately her community and extended communities, she needed higher education.

Thayer attended Cambridge College in Massachusetts. "I carted five of my eight children I raised from the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation in Wisconsin to the big city of Boston to complete my Masters in Education in Counseling/Psychology. It was a two-year program I finished in a year and a half. Juggling a part-time job, full-time school, and five children was a huge challenge. I wanted better for our family."

Thayer also graduated with a B.A. degree in Native American Studies/Sociology at



Audrey Thayer. (Photo by Dan Ninham.)

the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis. "Always pregnant – I had only three of the eight children I raised," she said. "Drove back and forth from the St. Croix Reservation to get the degree completed. Driving a beat-up old pickup with a big belly. During this time of history I learned about unconditional love and compassion for people. We are pitiful people and must put our asema down for those hurting and struggling."

Truth is one of the Seven Grandfather's Teachings that Thayer practices daily as an educator and a politician. She said, "I am a truth speaker. This leads to wanting justice for the unheard voices in our communities. In leadership, truth and transparency are essential."

Being a professional mentor starts with also being mentored and guided. Thayer considers Colette Hyman a friend that she also connected with as a professor. They are co-writing a book project.

"Audrey Thayer and I met in June 2015 at a Minnesota Campus Compact conference on diversity and community engagement," said Colette Hyman. "As two of the oldest participants, we immediately gravitated to each other and then struck up a wonderful friendship."

"We decided to work together on a book about women and leadership in the Twin Cities Indigenous community because we both saw a need to highlight amazing work that Indigenous women, primarily Dakota and Anishinaabe, had done starting in the 1960's to build the institutions that are still central to Indigenous life in Minneapolis and St Paul," added Hyman.

Hyman continued, "Audrey saw the need among her students at Leech Lake Tribal College and young women in the Bemidji area. I had been doing research with Dakota women and teaching Native history for almost 15 years and wanted to work on a research project with Audrey."

"As a leader herself, Audrey wanted

us to be able to convey to younger Native women the importance of taking action on behalf of their communities and wants them to see themselves as potential leaders. We wanted them to see the women who had done so much in this community as role models for their own work," added Hyman.

Audrey and Colette conducted archival research on organizations like the Division of Indian Work in Minneapolis and the St Paul American Indian Center at the Minnesota Historical Society, but the bulk of their research has been interviewing the women themselves.

"In drafting the chapters of this book, we highlight the voices of these women," said Hyman. "We really want their stories and their experiences to drive the overall story that we tell."

The work is quickly evolving and there has yet to be a title for the book. The co-authors expect to have a draft completed by the spring of 2024, and to have the book published in 2025.

There are others that also mentor Thayer. "The other folks that guide me are the community and the spiritual world around me," said Thayer. "I utilize spiritual leaders from the three reservations to assist me in all I do politically."

"As an educator I exhaust myself seeking resources to share, empower students that there is hope, to understand that the history of intergenerational trauma almost destroyed our people," said Thayer. "We are rebuilding, learning, and being who we were meant to be as we live on Turtle Island."

"As a servant leader, a person elected to lead a city of people is to be true to myself and the people. Our teachings suggested that we live well and lead all peoples. I am doing as instructed with honesty," added Thayer. Honesty ... is another one of the Seven Grandfather's Teachings.

Thayer continued to talk about working with issues in a broader scale. She said, "This is not easy. The amount of lateral, institutional, governmental, and internalized oppression is accurate. The marginalization, the creation of powerlessness for specific populations within the dominant western world views is real. There are allies that understand privilege and want to make our world better."

"I humbly appreciate those standing alongside the Indigenous Americans in support of the change that must happen for all people to move forward," added Thayer.

"I am a servant leader," said Thayer. "A truthfinder. An Anishinaabe Ikwe leading. It is our responsibility to participate, engage to be part of caretaking for every living being on our Mother Earth. It truly brings gratitude to your life. It is done by action, education and love."

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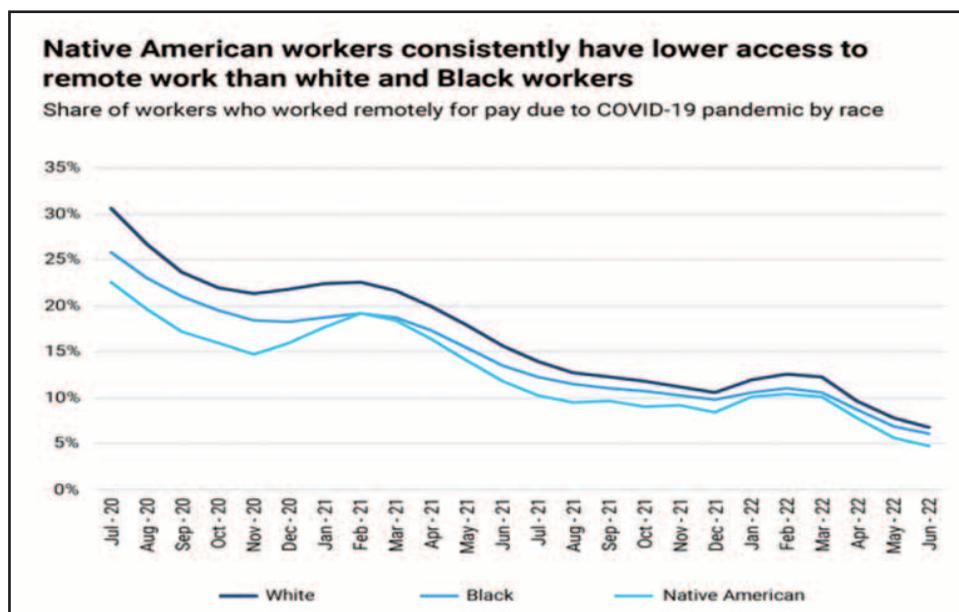


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## Native Americans had fewer opportunities to work remotely during pandemic



Screenshot from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/native-americans-are-getting-left-behind-in-the-remote-work-economy/>

BY LEE EGERSTROM

The Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank and its Center for Indian Country Development (CICD) have turned up data showing what you may have suspected. Native Americans had fewer opportunities to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Caryn Mohr, a writer and analyst at the CICD center, reviewed research in January with Matthew Gregg and Robert Maxim who recently conducted a study of Native American participation in what Mohr called “the remote work revolution.”

Gregg is a senior economist at the Minneapolis Fed and focuses on research for CICD. Maxim is a Brookings Institution researcher and a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe of Massachusetts.

They produced a report, “Native Americans are getting left behind in the remote work economy,” for Brookings, the Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

Much attention has been given to how American workers and employers adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, the American workforce adjusted to the pandemic and continues to work remotely better than most experts had expected.

But that wasn’t the case for American Indian and Alaskan Native people, the researchers found. A peak in pandemic-related remote work occurred from May to July 2020, Census documents showed. During that time 31 percent of employed White workers were working from homes and away from central offices and business buildings. Only 23 percent of AIAN identified workers had that opportunity.

“I don’t think I anticipated the magnitude of the difference there,” Maxim said in the article Mohr prepared for the Minneapolis Fed.

The researchers found Native workers were less likely to work from home during the period of May 2020 to June 2022 where employment and the domestic economy were impacted by the pandemic.

One reason for the gap was occupational differences. About a quarter of the gap was the result of Native Americans being more inclined than the general public to be frontline workers in jobs that cannot be done from home.

Gregg cited another reason, the tribal digital divide, which he has studied at the Fed.

“Roughly speaking, access to fast, affordable Internet is scarce not only in Indian Country but even when compared to Internet access just outside Indian Country,” he said. “The size of the tribal digital divide is pretty substantial so it’s not hard to imagine how that could contribute to a remote work gap.”

Maxim went further, saying the lack of opportunities to work from home is a result of the lack of investment by government in tribal economies and Native workers.

“I think when you look at the geography of where Native people live it’s not a coincidence that many tribes and reservations are either at the periphery of metro areas or in nonmetro rural areas with less access to resources – digital infrastructure, employment opportunities, or otherwise.”

This, Maxim said, is a consequence of the federal government’s terminating reservations, disenrolling tribal citizens, and forcing Native people to move to urban areas. The latter often come with minimal skills training and employment opportunities.

“Even today when there are tribes being forced to put a disproportionate amount of resources into maintaining their land and sovereignty in the face of efforts to take it away, it leaves fewer resources to focus on economic and

community development,” he said.

Gregg and Maxim stressed the need to invest in employment training and in building opportunities. This should be done at reservations, they noted, and it should be done in urban areas as well.

They specifically cited the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center in Minneapolis as an example of how to improve Native American workforce development.

“Scaling up Native American-led programs like these not only helps provide culturally appropriate services, but can

also help job seekers to tap into broader networks of Native American workers and Native American-led employers,” they said.

The Gregg and Maxim report for Brookings is available at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/native-americans-are-getting-left-behind-in-the-remote-work-economy/>.

Mohr’s report for the Minneapolis Fed is at <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2023/native-americans-have-fewer-opportunities-to-work-remotely?>

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# AICHO youth art exhibition on “what bravery means”

In January, the American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) hosted its first art exhibit of the year with Brave Art Youth Exhibition which showcased 2D and 3D artwork from nineteen youth. The theme for the show was Healing Through Community, with youth creating artwork that represented what bravery means to them. There were 22 art pieces on display during the January exhibit.

Youth artists included: Anastasia Keeler, Nimise Martin, Nishiime Martin, Nevaeh Hardy, Sylva Hanson, Jozalynn Thompson, Preston Conway, Patience Thompson, Elijah Kot, Aiyanna Hellman, Victoria Marro, Gia Charging Hawk, Ayeden Diver Anderson, Kendal Kot, Mosgaadace Casuse, Pearl Swanson, Max Defoe, and Natalia Shinkle.

The Duluth Human Trafficking Committee and AICHO organized and hosted this event.



Left top: “The Reach” by Aiyanna Hellman.

Left bottom: “Confidence” by Patience Thompson.

Right top: Youth artists with their participation awards for the Brave Art Youth Exhibition.

Right middle: “Ishwaase” by Nimise Martin.

Right bottom: “First Step Goes a Long Way” by Kendal Kot.

All photos by Ivy Vaino.





Left top: Ivy Vainio with Jozzy Thompson.

Left middle: "Together in Love" by Natalia Shinkle.

Left bottom: "Listen to the Thoughts of Our Youth" by Max Defoe.

Middle top: "Noozhe-Makwa oniiganiwinaan a'aw makoons" (Mother Bear leading baby bear) by Nishiime Martin

Middle bottom: "402 Years of Silenced Thought" by Pearl Swanson.

Above: "People of the Stars" by Mosgaadace Casuse



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**mn** DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING SERVICES DIVISION

When he finished, the Rev. Ingrid Arneson Rasmussen thanked him and handed him an envelope. "Here's a little something to help you get land back," Stainbrook recalls her saying.

"When I opened the envelope, I was in shock," he said. It contained a check for \$250,000.

With that, ILTF has started its Beyond Land Acknowledgement Fund.

Stainbrook said universities all across the country have become sensitized that they occupy stolen land. Other institutions have made similar acknowledgements, and some government units have as well. But just saying that you recognized you are on indigenous land is only words unless you do something constructive, Stainbrook said.

"These organizations do the acknowledgement and figure that lets them off the hook," he said.

"It alleviates their guilt a little I guess. The organization gets nice press coverage, but it never results in any change in behavior or any land back to the tribes. There needs to be some sort of action taken or the land acknowledgement is meaningless," he said in a statement launching the program.

This program now becomes a way for churches and groups to actually take steps to help, Stainbrook said. The fund "offers a vehicle for those entities that want to take that extra step and actually do something about returning land and

making it right."

This "extra step" is consistent for the Holy Trinity congregation. Located at 2730 E. 31st St. in Minneapolis, it shared an alley with MIGIZI until the native nonprofit youth organization's facilities were burned and destroyed following the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020.

Kelly Drummer, MIGIZI president, was especially helpful in making Holy Trinity congregants aware of land issues, Rasmussen told *The Circle*. That, in turn, prompted the congregation to adopt the following statement it uses on its website and in church bulletins:

"We acknowledge that we gather on the Dakota Homeland."

Rasmussen said about a dozen people took up indigenous land issues a few years back. "Kelly (Drummer) was who we went to with questions."

The reference to being on Dakota Homeland is an appropriate statement for a church in Minneapolis, Rasmussen said, and especially so for a church in a neighborhood close to MIGIZI and many Native businesses and organizations.

The church's social ministry is built around what it calls its Justice program.

This includes offering statements to guide personal lives and actions in "Caring for Creation," citing the loss of biodiversity and environmental harm; "Immigration" and the need for all to

assist vulnerable children and families; "Indigenous Rights," as the statement and grant to ILTF attests; "LGBTQIA+," in which Holy Trinity was an early church in welcoming people of all sexual orientations and genders; a "Palestine-Israel Working Group" consistent with the church's Indigenous support everywhere; and an especially strong statement on "Racial Justice," including ties to the George Floyd murder in its Longfellow Neighborhood (see links below.)

Putting words into action, Holy Trinity opened its doors and used it as a medic center during the demonstrations and rioting following the Floyd murder. It also became a center for food and medical supplies for neighborhood people caught in the chaos.

And, for more than 40 years, Holy Trinity has been a force in providing affordable housing in Minneapolis. It developed two apartment buildings on the church campus that houses about 135 people in affordable housing. A more recent mixed use building provides eight units of housing at market rates, eight units of affordable housing, and eight units for people with special needs.

Church members have also worked on 25 Habitat for Humanity home construction projects and have contributed to a Habitat for Humanity project in El Salvador.

In a strange case of what comes around, goes around, one of the church's apartment projects needed major repairs. It was easier for a partner firm in that project to secure financing alone so Holy Trinity gave up its ownership stake.

"We actually got some funds unexpectedly," Rasmussen said.

That was the source of the money that Holy Trinity passed along to ILTF.

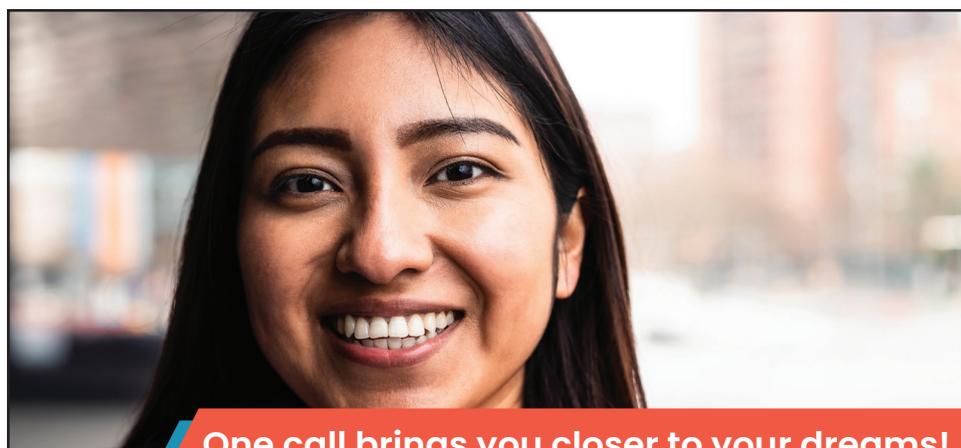
The congregation didn't want to use the money for ongoing church expenses, the pastor said. "They wanted it to go to some creative, useful purpose. So, it became what could be called a reparation payment," she said.

That it has. The new Beyond Land Acknowledgement Fund allows ILTF to pool money to make land purchases, Stainbrook said.

*Information about the Beyond Land Acknowledge Fund and Indian Land Tenure Foundation can be found at <https://iltf.org>.*

*Good background information about the Doctrine of Discovery Theory is available at <https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/what-is-the-doctrine-of-discovery>.*

*Holy Trinity Lutheran Church's website and explanation of its Justice program can be found at <https://htlcmpls.org>.*



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Both have moved around, both have longed to keep culturally connected with their roots, and both have learned how sewing and the arts keep them and their families connected.

While a Lakota from the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock tribes, Travis was born on the Leech Lake Reservation and grew up in Bemidji in Minnesota. She got her RN nursing degree from the University of Southern Maine before returning to Minnesota.

“I have always enjoyed creating artwork,” Travis said. “My first influence was my dad. I remember him sitting at the kitchen table beading, creating jewelry and carving when I was younger.

“The first pair of moccasins that I made was for him when I was in my early twenties.”

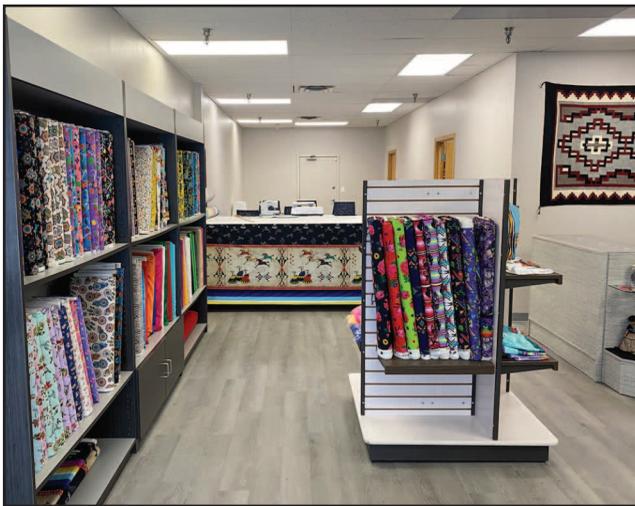
Travis said she has spent many hours drawing, beading and sewing in the years since. “Sewing is a craft of its own and I’m still trying to master it with different fabrics.”

She became serious about sewing when she made regalia and beadwork when her five year old daughter started fancy shawl dancing. “My daughter sat with me as I was learning how to sew because I wanted her to be a part of the process in creating her regalia,” she said.

Travis has since made ribbon shirts and ribbon skirts for different family members. She does that now for customers through the fabric business.

Fairbanks moved off the Navajo reservation while in her teens. She received two accounting certificates from a tech school in Oklahoma City and worked as a store manager and as an accountant for businesses along the way before getting an accounting degree from Metro State.

She has a son who is part Ojibwe and Kickapoo.



Both his uncles are dancers, and that became important. After a divorce, Fairbanks found she had no cultural ties in Minnesota. Something was missing after growing up with a traditional Navajo way of life. “I sought out the beat of the drum to feel a connection to my culture,” she said.

“In Minnesota, I only had local powwows to reconnect. As I took my boys to drum and dance within their school district, my youngest was drawn to grass dance and that was when I started sewing regalia pieces.

Fairbanks then had sisters move to Minnesota. “I encouraged my nieces and nephews to also dance,” she said. “I have made all their regalia.”

The two business partners met as parents through an Indian education program in Osseo Area Public Schools (ISD 279). Travis said this was where she learned how to sew, where she became friends with Fairbanks, and where the two have since worked

together to help other parents learn to sew and make regalia.

“We have been sewing together since that time and we’ve been actively involved in the (school) district’s American Indian Parent Advisory Committee as well,” Travis said. “We advocate for our youth to ensure their cultural identity isn’t lost in mainstream schooling.”

The circles of friendships, and cultural connectedness, expand with these ties. They led to the naming of the new fabric business Fire Mountain and to bonds between friends.

Travis tells it this way:

“We knew right away that we wanted to incorporate ‘mountain’ into the name. When we first learned that Arlene (Fairbanks) would be in for a fight with Stage 4 Ovarian Cancer, there were six of us, along with Arlene, that had mountains tattooed on our arms.

“The mountains represent Arlene’s journey of climbing the highest and most grueling mountain of her life – cancer. It connected all of us and let her know that she wasn’t fighting cancer alone and could always count on us to help her and lift her up.”

Fire, Travis said, is important to their Native way of life and ceremonies. “Fire is medicine and healing.”

It is working.

A few weeks back, Fairbanks said, she had surgery. Tests show “they got all the cancer. I won’t need chemo,” she said. There will be other therapy, however, that will be manageable and tolerable with launching a new retail business.

Their Open House will be held on Saturday, Feb. 11, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Fire Mountain Fabrics, 6264 Boone Ave. N. in Brooklyn Park.

The Fire Mountain Fabrics & Supply website is at <https://firemountainfabrics.com>.



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## Tanisha Beetso returns to coach CLC women's basketball

The Central Lakes College (CLC) Raiders in Brainerd, MN have drawn indigenous athletes, coaches and administrators to its athletic programs for several years.

Tanisha Beetso, a member of the Navajo Nation, is a long way from her homelands in the four corners area of Farmington, NM. She is the assistant coach for the CLC women's basketball program. Beetso was also a former star basketball player for the CLC Raiders.

During her CLC Raiders playing career, she received first team all-region, all-state and all-northern division awards. She graduated from CLC in the spring of 2019 and continued her education at Mayville State University in Mayville, N. Dak. where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Applied Psychology with a coaching certificate in the spring of 2022.

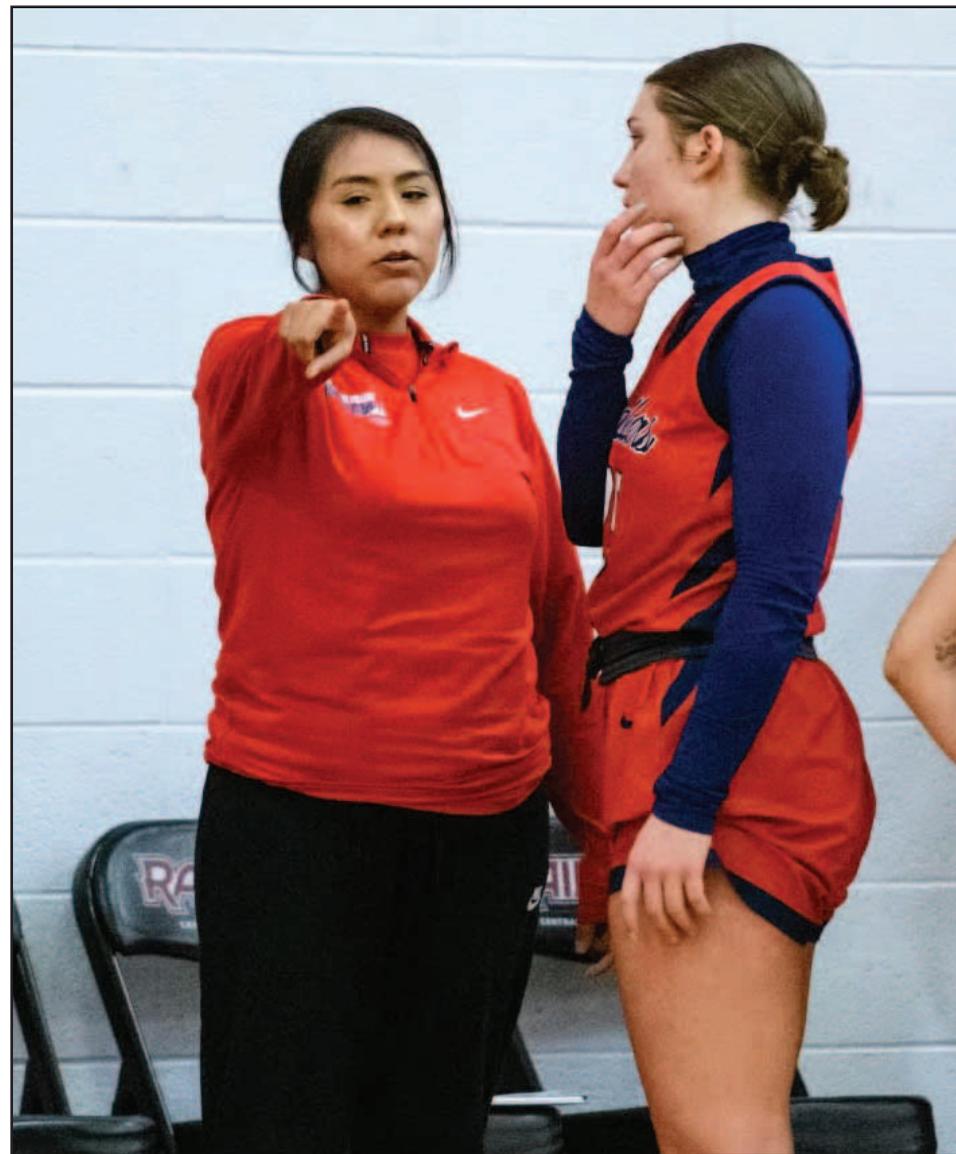
"After I graduated from Mayville State in North Dakota, CLC staff member Mary Sam reached out to me and told me CLC had a new head coach for women's basketball," said Tanisha Beetso. "Head Coach Krystal Brodeen and I got along very quickly. We shared the same goals for the program and our personalities meshed well."

As a Navajo woman, Beetso also connects well with the northern Minnesota indigenous people and ceremonies. She said, "I am very involved with my culture as well as other tribe's cultures."

"During the summer I travel all over the U.S and Canada to attend powwows as I dance the jingle dress. I attend round dances ... and sometimes I attend the Ojibwe big drum ceremonies. Attending these different cultural events helps me shape into who I am today," added Beetso.

Mentors help guide professional people to make a good transition helping others. "One of my professional mentors is Mary Sam," said Beetso. "During my years, she was the one person I would always go to when I was having difficulties with anything and she was there even after I left CLC."

"As a student athlete at Central Lakes College, Tanisha inspired players around her to be and to do better, on and off the court," said Mary Sam, CLC Dean of Students, Equity and Inclusion. "As a first year assistant coach, Tanisha is using her grit, passion for the game and voice to challenge, model and help her players see and believe in their value on and off the court. Her players would tell



Central Lakes College assistant women's basketball coach Tanisha Beetso, on left, is instructing a player during a recent game. (Photo by Jeff Collins Photography.)

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you that she believes in them, is a quiet leader, and when she speaks up everyone listens and responds."

"Tanisha inspires our other Indigenous athletes to follow their dreams. Our indigenous athletes are inspired to see someone that walks in two worlds as a basketball coach. As Indigenous women, we have the opportunity to play a huge role in mentoring and role modeling taking risks, believing in ourselves and lifting one another up," added Sam.

"Head Coach Krystal Brodeen is always one step ahead of the game and always makes sure to include everyone within our program," said Beetso. "She is strong and resilient and stands up for what she believes in and observing her for the past few months is teaching me to do the same."

"Tanisha has been an amazing asset to our coaching staff and team this year," said CLC head women's basketball coach Krystal Brodeen. "I was a coach at another college in our conference when she played at CLC, and remembered how much of a talented player she was. So when Mary Sam mentioned last

spring that she was back in town, I agreed to reach out."

"I always try to remember how I felt as a new coach starting out, and the mentorship I wish I had gotten, preferably from another female coach. I try my best to share with Tanisha the lessons I've learned and give her opportunities to grow as a coach and work with the team in different ways," added Brodeen.

CLC Assistant Coach Beetso she has the support of the CLC coaching staff. "It's been such an adventure," she said. "We have two native women, Samantha Quigley, Navajo, and Clara Meyer, Ojibwe, on our team and it's been so much fun learning about them and having similar interests. Being able to joke around with them like I used to while living near the Navajo reservation has made me feel so much at home, especially because Samantha and I are the same tribe."

"It makes me proud to see other native athletes succeed outside our homelands and continuing to get educated," she added.

### Water is life

In a victory for Minnesota's Ojibwe bands and environmentalists, the Biden-Harris administration took action in late January to protect the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the surrounding watershed from potential mining pollution.

The U.S. Department of the Interior announced in a Jan. 26 press release that Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) "signed Public Land Order 7917 withdrawing approximately 225,504 acres in the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota from disposition under the United States mineral and geothermal leasing laws for a 20-year period, subject to valid existing rights."

The Interior press release explained that the order "will help protect the Rainy River watershed, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and the 1854 Ceded Territory of the Chippewa Bands, from the potential adverse impacts of new mineral and geothermal exploration and development."

Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) reported that the decision "places another roadblock in front of the proposed \$1.7 billion dollar Twin Metals project, an underground copper-nickel mine near Ely, just south of the Boundary Waters and within the mineral withdrawal area."

MPR noted that the Biden administration canceled two federal mineral leases held by Twin Metals along Birch Lake in the Superior National Forest last year. The leases are required "to mine the valuable metals underground," according to MPR.

A spokesperson for Twin Metals Minnesota said the company was "deeply disappointed" by the federal government's decision.

### Yucatán, land of the Maya

I hadn't taken a winter vacation in many years; but Maj-Britt, my wife, and I, ahead of our 39th wedding anniversary, flew down to Mérida, the capital of Yucatán, in early January. Our friends Bruce and Maren have been living in Mérida for the past two years, so we stayed in their roomy rented house. Their place in the Itzimná neighborhood is a stone's throw from the iconic Monumento a la Patria, a massive historical marker that incorporates design motifs from the Maya civilization. Mérida, with a million residents, is known for its Spanish colonial architecture. It is built on the ancient Maya city of T'ho, and carved Maya stones were used to build the main cathedral and other buildings.

We also spent three nights in an Airbnb rental on the beach in Celestun,

a fishing village on the Gulf of Mexico. The weather was perfect, in the 80s most days, and it was wonderful to have a beautiful beach right out the back door. I hadn't visited Mexico in 50 years, and I'd never been to Yucatán, which offers numerous attractions for the locals and visitors. Adding to the fun, my son Max and Silvia, his Italian girlfriend, flew in from Copenhagen to join us.

We popped for two guided tours during our visit: a boat tour of the Ria Celestun estuary, where we saw hundreds of flamingos mating, among other tropical birds; and a tour of Uxmal, a Late Classical Maya city. At Uxmal, which dates back 1,500 years, as per the Maya chronicles, Gregorio, our tour guide, began with a Mayan language lesson, pointing out that lengthening vowel sounds changes the meaning of words.

A visitor to Uxmal first encounters the towering Pyramid of the Magician, which rises more than 130 feet above ground level. Gregorio had a binder of photos showing how the ruins looked nearly 100 years ago, prior to the clearing and reconstruction of edifices. We later visited the Maya World Museum in Mérida, and the displays corroborated much of what Gregorio had shown us about Mayan advances in architecture, language (many Mayan words have entered the Spanish spoken today in Mexico), mathematics (a numbering system that included zero), etc.

I have long been fascinated by the Maya, both the ancient civilization and the more recent struggles in the face of deadly repression, especially the dirty and criminal actions of dictatorial regimes in Guatemala.

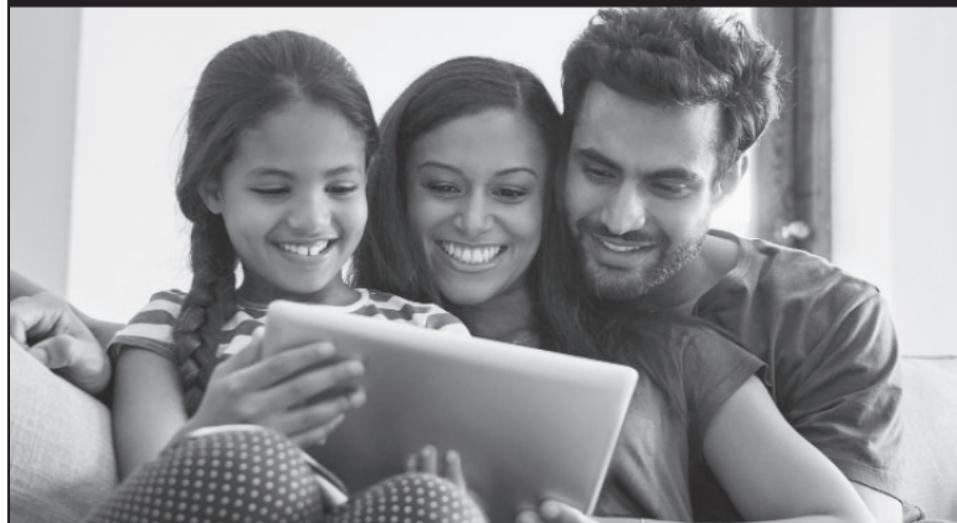
In the 1980s, I met Mayan activists from Guatemala through American Indian Movement conferences, and wrote about the resistance to massacres and other depredations. I recall meeting a young Mayan man in Minneapolis who survived the Jan. 31, 1980 siege of the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala. Government forces burned the building, resulting in deaths of 37 Maya who had occupied the premises in protest of the repression of their communities under the regime of General Efraín Ríos Montt.

I can't make any definitive statements about the conditions of the Maya people of Yucatán, where 30 percent of residents speak the Mayan language. However, Minority Rights Group International ([minorityrights.org](http://minorityrights.org)) finds that the situation of the Maya in Guatemala remains grim: "In reality, apart from the few remedial policies of recent years and the gradual emergence of a slightly more tolerant climate, little that is concrete has occurred to improve the lot of the indigenous population following the end of the 36-year civil war."



The Monumento a la Patria (Monument to the Fatherland) in Mérida, Mexico. (Photo courtesy of Mordecai Specktor.)

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**Thru Feb 18**

**Gaa-miinigoowiziyan - What We were Given**

This exhibit showcases cultural knowledge and art forms revitalized by their organization and their Anishinaabe connections. The exhibit will be on display through February 18 in Watermark's Miikanan Gallery. Manidoo Ogitigaan is a Native grassroots organization based in Bemidji, Minn. Together with the Great Lakes Lifeways Institute based out of Michigan and Obaashing University, they teach, share and relearn land-based life skills that include birch bark canoe building, basketry, woodworking, and weaving. Manidoo Ogitigaan and Great Lakes Lifeways Institute work together to

revitalize art forms and cultural knowledge in a meaningful way while bridging gaps and building lasting relationships to rebuild a cultural legacy for generations. Watermark galleries are free and open to the public Monday - Saturday from 10 to 5pm and located at 505 Bemidji Avenue N, Bemidji, MN. For info, call 218-444-7570 or see: Visit WatermarkArtCenter.org.

**Thru March 26**  
**Visions from the Land: Native Interpretations**

Don't miss this unique opportunity to view the work of four regional Indigenous artists — James Autio, Gordon Coons, Anna Johnson and

Ivy Vainio. Each artist uses a different technique or process to produce captivating art inspired by the natural world. Visions from the Land **Pop-Up Events:** As part of the "Visions from the Land: Native Interpretations" exhibit, visitors are also invited to a series of pop-up events featuring Indigenous artists and organizations on select weekends at the Arboretum. Pop-up events run from 11am to 2pm. This exhibit is included with general daily admission; free for members, \$15 for non-members ages 16 and older; free for ages 15 and younger. Reedy Gallery, Oswald Visitor Center, 3675 Arboretum Dr, Chaska, MN. For info, see: <https://arb.umn.edu/art-galleries/reedy-gallery>. Pop-Up Events:

- **Feb. 11-12:** U.S. Dept of Interior Indian Arts and Crafts Board
- **Feb. 25-26:** Birchbark Books
- **March 4-5:** Josef Reiter
- **March 18-19:** Ramona Morrow
- **March 25-26:** Charles Statley

**Feb 7 & 21**

**Intro to Stage Management**

Presented by New Native Theatre. Division of Indian Work, 1001 E Lake St, Mpls. Tuition for classes is pay-what-you-can, with the suggested price of \$150. For info, contact [charli@newnativetheatre.org](mailto:charli@newnativetheatre.org). See NNT website for upcoming class info at <https://newnativetheatre.org>. Other upcoming classes:

- **Feb 7 & 21** – Intro to Stage Management
- **March 6** – Intro to Stage Carpentry, followed by independent apprenticeship
- **March 28, Apr 4 & 11** – Backstage Basics
- **May 20** – Acting & Singing for Native Musical Theater
- **July 10-14** – Native Theatre Youth Camp

**Feb 11**

**Fire Mountain Fabrics Grand Opening**

A new Native American owned fabric shop will be opening in the TC area on Saturday from 10am-5pm. Grand Opening begins at 10am with a blessing and prayer. Giveaways throughout the day to say thank you to all customers and community members. Fire Mountain Fabrics, 6264 Boone Ave N, Brooklyn Park. For info, see: <https://firemountainfabrics.com>.

**Feb 11-12**

**Cherish the Children Traditional Powwow**

The 24th Annual Cherish the Children Traditional Powwow will be on Saturday and Sunday at Johnson Senior High School. For questions, email [admin@adycenter.org](mailto:admin@adycenter.org). American Indian Craft Vendors, please email [maricella.pacheco@adycenter.org](mailto:maricella.pacheco@adycenter.org).

**Feb 13**

**Tapping History: Lake Minnetonka as a Native American Place**

Part of the ELMHS Winter/Spring 2023 Events collection. Paul Maravelas will share a history of

Native People at Lake Minnetonka. Lake Minnetonka has been a productive hunting, fishing, and gathering area for more than ten thousand years. Paul Maravelas will discuss sites connected with ancient American Indian people as well as sites connected with the Dakota Indians of the 1800s, including ancient earthworks, sugar and wild rice camps and the Dakota sacred site at Breezy Point (or Spirit Knob) Doors open at 6pm and seating is first come, first seated. Free registration is required and there is a \$5.00 suggested contribution. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tapping-history-lake-minnetonka-as-a-native-american-place-tickets-491306740687>.

**Feb 14**

**MMIWR 2023 Relatives March**

We invite you to join us on February 14 for the MMIWR 2023: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Relatives March. Speakers start at 11am with March beginning at NOON. ALL are welcome! East Phillips Community and Cultural Center, 2307 17th Ave S, Mpls. For info, contact Naida at: [nmedicinecrow@miwsac.org](mailto:nmedicinecrow@miwsac.org).

**Feb 16, Mar 14**

**American Indian Community Gathering**

Lower Phalen Creek Project is excited to host this series of community conversations along with their co-hosts from the American Indian Family Center, Ain Duh Yung Center, Oyate Hotanin/InEquality, Metropolitan State University, and Saint Paul Indians in Action. This series is designed specifically to engage the American Indian community in learning sessions led by LPCP's Cultural Resources Manager, Franky Jackson, and guest speakers, followed by conversations facilitated by LeMoine LaPointe that focus on the landscape at what is now known as Indian Mounds Regional Park in Saint Paul. All three sessions will be at Metropolitan State University in the Great Hall from 5 – 7:30 pm and includes dinner and parking. The February 16th session will focus on the history of repatriation at the site and the potential for future repatriation. The March 14th session will be a guided community conversation that builds on our learning, as we explore the question, "What does our future relationship look like at Indian Mounds

Park"? RSVP is required: <https://app.etapestry.com/.../LowerPhalen.../MoundsPark.html>. For info, see: <https://aifcmn.org/event/american-indian-community-gathering-reimagining-the-mounds/2023-02-16>.

**Feb 17 - 19**

**Old Town Indigenous Art Fair**

Join the Old Town Mankato community as we host indigenous artists, food vendors, hand made good vendors, and amazing Indigenous Snow sculpture artists. Old Town Dental Clinic, 224 E Washington St, Mankato, MN. For info, see: <https://www.exploreminnesota.com/event/old-town-indigenous-art-fair/26878>.

**Feb 17 -19**

**Prairie Island Waniyetu Wacipi**

The Prairie Island Indian Community invites you to learn about Native American history and experience traditions at their Winter Wacipi. Grand Entries will be Friday at 7pm, Saturday at 1pm and 7pm, and Sunday at 1pm. Admission to the Wacipi is free and open to all ages. For more info, see: <https://prairieisland.org> or [facebook.com/piicwacipipowwow](https://facebook.com/piicwacipipowwow).

**Feb 25, Apr 22**

**Upper Mississippi Academy Open House**

Your student will thrive here. Find out how by visiting us during an Open House. A public charter school located in St. Paul, Upper Mississippi Academy is a collaborative community engaging lifelong learners in active, authentic experiences. If you're looking for a vibrant, pioneering, experience-based charter school with a growing student body, UMA could be for you. UMA will be hosting open houses for prospective students, their families and the community on February 25th, April 22nd and June 3rd. 9am - 3pm. For info contact: [recruitment@umissacademy.org](mailto:recruitment@umissacademy.org).

**Feb. 26**

**Race Against Racism**

Race Against Racism is a 2K/5K event at the Minneapolis Sports Center at YWCA Midtown. Bring your friends and families together for a casual (or competitive) walk/run/roll against racism. We

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Please consider becoming a supporting donor of The Circle. Your contribution will help The Circle continue to cover news, arts, and events in Minnesota's Native American community, the only non-tribally owned newspaper in Minnesota. This is a great way to let your friends, colleagues, and co-workers know that you support an important service in the Indian community. And you'll have the joy of knowing your money is going to a worthy service.

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**[thecirclenews@gmail.com](mailto:thecirclenews@gmail.com)** by the 20th of the month.

make every effort to accommodate adaptive participants in this event. Choose from a 2K or 5K distance. Kids up to age 11 can participate in the 2K for free. 8am – 1pm. Cost: \$0 – \$20. Minneapolis Sports Center, YWCA Midtown, 2121 Elake St, Minneapolis, MN. For info, see: <https://www.ywcampls.org/event/race-against-racism>.

### March 1

#### AIFEP grant application info

Join us to learn about Tiwaha Foundation, our open AIFEP grant opportunity and how to submit a successful application. You should join if you'd like to: Learn how an AIFEP grant can support you; Participate in activities that help you identify and develop your interests/passions into a project idea; Gain skills to put together a strong grant application. (AIFEP Microgrant Applications Due March 15th.) Led by Tony Drews, AIFEP Grant Coordinator, 5:30-7:30pm, 570 Asbury St, Saint Paul. A limited number of spots are available so make sure to register. <https://tiwahafoundation.org/family-empowerment-program>.

### March 2

#### Honoring Language Warriors : An evening of inspiring words

Wicoie Nandagikendan, Dakota and Ojibwe language immersion preschool, is hosting an evening of inspiration for Indigenous Languages. Wicoie Nandagikendan, a Dakota and Ojibwe language immersion preschool will host an evening of inspiration and hope. The line-up is an impressive one; Message from \*Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan (White Earth), Message from MN 2022 Book Award Author Diane Wilson (Lakota/Dakota) \*Minnesota

Supreme Court Justice Anne McKeig (White Earth), AIM Executive Director Lisa Bellanger and Cultural Educator (Leech Lake Band of the Ojibwe), Executive Director Women Winning Nevada Littlewolf (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe) and Minneapolis City Council President Andrea Jenkins. This will be a hybrid event with the VIP reception an in-person event and our general admission will be accessed virtually. The VIP reception will be catered by "Owamni." Dana Thompson, co-owner of Owamni, will be entertaining our guests as she is also a Jazz singer. Asignaak, A women's hand drum will also perform. 6pm – 8:30pm. VIP reception \$125 (+ General Admission \$40). The VIP reception begins at 6pm. Day Block Event Center, 1103 S Washington Ave, Mpls. For info, see: [wicoienandagikendan.org](https://wicoienandagikendan.org). \*At the time of this PR speakers have not confirmed.

### March 3

#### Winter Storytelling with Hope Flanagan and Astrid Clem

Enjoy a morning of storytelling with Hope Flanagan and Astrid Clem. Learn why many Ojibwe stories can only be told when the snow is on the ground. And hear how Hope is always on the lookout for the next generation of storytellers who will carry on this ancient tradition. Hope Flanagan (Seneca) is from the turtle clan. She is an elder who teaches about plants and wild plant gathering. She is also a Storyteller in the Native Community. She has taught and worked in the Twin Cities Native Community since the late 70's. Most recently, Hope taught in an Ojibwe Immersion classroom for ten years, and prior to that as a Storyteller for Minneapolis Public Schools in drug and alcohol prevention for six years. This is free and sponsored by a

Multi Campus Grant with North Hennepin Community College and Bemidji State University: 10:30am – 1:30pm, Eastman Nature Ctr, 13351 Elm Creek Rd, Maple Grove, MN.

### March 8

#### Native American Mounds History with Jon Quijano

Jon Quijano is an award-winning history documentary writer. His latest field research is taking place in the St. Croix River Valley, gathering knowledge about the people who have called the valley home for thousands of years. Join us for a talk on his findings and his research process. ONLINE on Zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87469304529?pwd=TnU0SFZpd2RVVWdFkGk2UEExYjZjQ090>. For info, see: <https://www.wchsmn.org/event/mounds>.

### March 21-22

#### Annual ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) Conference

The University of Minnesota Duluth's Annual ICWA Conference for county and tribal social workers. 9am to 4:30pm each day. The conference will be held at Grand Casino Hinckley in Hinckley MN. For info, contact Karen Nichols at [knichols@d.umn.edu](mailto:knichols@d.umn.edu) or 218-726-8023.

### April 1

#### Circle of Nations Indigenous Association Contest Powwow

23rd Annual contest powwow. Categories: Adult (18-54), Teen (12-17), Junior (6-11), Tiny Tots (0-5). Specials: Woodland Special Dance (300, 200, 100); Hand Drum Contest (200, 150, 100); Potato Dance 20; Drum Split – First 10 drums, 200 each. Cougar Sports Center, 600 E 4th St, Morris, MN.

For info, contact: Dylan Young at 605- 488-9489 or email: [Youn2535@morris.umn.edu](mailto:Youn2535@morris.umn.edu).

### April 2-5

#### 41st Annual Protecting Our Children Conference

Each year, NICWA hosts the largest national gathering on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) child advocacy issues. With over 1,400 attendees—and growing every year—this three-day conference has become the premiere national event addressing tribal child welfare and well-being. Keynote speakers range from federal officials at the highest level of government to youth with lived experience in child welfare systems. NICWA provides meaningful programming to conference attendees, creating a space where participants can learn about the latest developments and best practices from experts in the field and from one another. Participants represent a cross-section of fields and interests including child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice service providers; legal professionals; students; advocates for children; and tribal, state, and federal leaders. Year after year, attendees share their enthusiasm and the value of their time spent together during the NICWA conference. For info, see: <https://www.nicwa.org/conference>.

### April 6

#### Dabinoo'Igan "One Community, Many Voices, Stop The Silence" fundraiser

Dabinoo'Igan is empowering the voices that are often silenced due to Domestic Violence. "One Community, Many Voices, Stop the Silence" is an opportunity for our community to come together for the victims who are silenced. Enjoy

musical performances by Erik Koskinen and Band, Anishinaabeg national music award winners Annie Humphrey and Keith Secola along with the Miziwekaamikiinang Drum Group. AICHO is expanding our culturally responsive domestic violence shelter Dabinoo'Igan to help more victims of domestic and sexual violence in our community. Mark your calendars and save the date for AICHO's first concert fundraiser, in partnership with the Ordean Foundation. All monies raised will go toward the Dabinoo'Igan Shelter expansion. For more info, see: <https://ci.ovantiox.com/35679/production/1148933>

### April 15

#### 32nd Annual Woodlands and High Plains Powwow

The traditional powwow is sponsored by MSUM, Concordia College, Minnesota State Community and Technical College, North Dakota State University, and North Dakota State College of Science. This year's theme is "Together We Thrive." Grand Entries are 1pm and 7pm. A meal will be served during the 5pm break. Admission for the event will be free for children five and under; \$3 for youth 6-18 and adults 55 and over; \$5 for adults 19-54. College Students (from Concordia College, M State, MSUM, NDSU, NDSUS) are admitted free with a valid student ID. MSUM Nemzek Fieldhouse, 1711 6th Ave. S, Moorhead, MN. For info, see: <https://www.facebook.com/Woodlands-and-High-Plains-Powwow-WHPP-126720620767390>.

### Apr 18

#### 38th Annual Minnesota Indian Education Association Conference

The Minnesota Indian Education Association (MIEA) Board of Directors would like to invite administrators in your school, Indian Education staff, teachers, students and AIPAC's to attend our 2023 conference. This conference attendance is integral to the Indian Education staff, Parent Advisory committee members, students, and especially those administrators who have accepted the monies for Indian Education in your district. You will greatly benefit from the information presented to align teaching and curriculum with current legislation. Early Registration begins April 18 in the evening, and the conference starts Wednesday morning. TBD: Educators Day, Apr 18 thru Apr 21. Mystic Lake Events, 240 Mystic Lake Blvd, Northwest Prior Lake, MN. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/38th-annual-minnesota-indian-education-association-conference-tickets-420081423847>.

### April 15 (deadline)

#### Lacek Group scholarships

Minneapolis-based The Lacek Group, is offering two \$5,000 scholarships to two BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/People Of Color) students, one each for a high school senior and a college student. Recipients must pursue an area of study in or related to marketing, communication, business, finance, creative arts, analytics, or computer science. Applicants must reside in Minnesota but may attend college in Minnesota or Wisconsin. The deadline for submitting an application is April 15, 2023. The Lacek Group will contact finalists for a phone or online interview. Recipients will be selected and informed by June 30. To learn more or apply, visit [www.lacek.com/scholarship](http://www.lacek.com/scholarship).

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# Zoongide'ewin is the Ojibwe word for courage

BY ARNE VAINIO, MD

Something incredible happened in 2020. Former First Lady Michelle Obama posted on Twitter and Instagram on National Doctor's Day and requested people comment on loved ones who are physicians. My wife Ivy sent in my photo with a short caption. That photo ended up getting almost a thousand comments and on World Health Day Michelle Obama shared a post with 6 photos of health care providers and my photo was in the middle on the bottom row.

The response on Facebook and texts and emails, Messenger and Twitter was immediate and strong and positive. The responses came from local friends and co-workers, but they also came from across the country and from as far away as Bangladesh and Finland. As of today the responses to that post with those six photos, just on Instagram, is over 675,000 and climbing. I am one of the faces of all those physicians out there and for hundreds of American Indian health providers.

It's humbling to have that kind of response and it would be easy to get a big head about it.

The truth is, Ivy originated that

response and she doesn't always get the credit she deserves. Also not getting the credit they deserve are all the other providers who take care of us. This includes physicians, but it also includes pharmacists filling medications and continuing to educate patients, pharmacy techs running prescriptions out for curbside pickup, x-ray techs, respiratory therapists, lab, receptionists, certified nursing assistants and the maintenance staff who keep our health care facilities running and to the janitorial staff who sanitize and clean to keep everyone safe.

All of these are essential employees and are required to stay on the job.

The World Health Organization proclaimed 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. This was before the pandemic was a pandemic and those nurses and midwives are proving themselves worthy of that recognition.

Every single day.

As a physician I work with people who went into health care to make the world a better place. They go to work to make sure your children are healthy and safe and they work to make sure a diabetic foot wound doesn't turn into an amputation. They are integral to delivering babies to end of life care and everything in between.

This is a huge responsibility and no

one had a pandemic in their future plans when they were graduating. Not one of them thought they would be wearing a surgical mask all day and avoiding eating or drinking so they wouldn't have to touch their masks and undressing in the garage when they got home to avoid bringing COVID-19 home to their families.

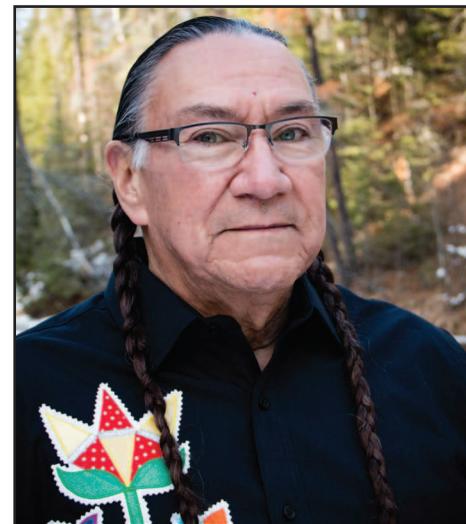
There are far too many stories of decisions forced when there are too many critically ill patients and not enough equipment. No one should have to choose who gets a ventilator and who doesn't, especially in a country as rich as ours.

But those decisions happen.

I am indebted to Former First Lady Michelle Obama for posting my photograph and spotlighting all our selfless essential workers. Thank you to everyone who commented or sent well wishes, it is truly humbling. We are all indebted to the nurses and other health-care providers and everyone providing front line care.

Zoongide'ewin is the Ojibwe word for courage and this is one of our grandfather teachings. Zoongide'ewin means to do what is right when the consequences are unpleasant, to do what is right even when you're afraid.

This is the time for courage. This is the



time to stay strong. The virus is depending on you to bring it to others and we cannot let that happen if we can help it.

Protect our elders and those most vulnerable. Protect our essential workers. Help slow the spread of this virus and give us time to care for as many as we can. We go to work for you. Please, stay home for us.

*Arne Vainio, M.D. is an enrolled member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and is a family practice physician on the Fond du Lac Ojibwe reservation in Cloquet, Minnesota. He can be contacted at [avainio@hotmail.com](mailto:avainio@hotmail.com).*

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