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Legacy of Wounded Knee
occupation lives on 50 years later



page 3

Turtle Mountain first to put organ
donor designation on Tribal IDs



page 4

Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan:
A Legislative update



page 11

FREE

MARCH 2023 • VOLUME 44, ISSUE 3

FREE

Legislation to protect Native children if ICWA overturned



Gertrude Buckanaga (White Earth Nation) on the left, and Sen. Mary Kunesh at the Feb. 7th Minnesota Senate hearing. (Photo courtesy of Senate DFL Media.)

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Several bills for Native American Minnesotans, their families and communities are gaining momentum early in the Minnesota Legislature with high chances of becoming law. One big jump occurred Feb. 27 when the Minnesota Senate voted 66-1 to approve Senate File 667, which seeks to add children protection measures in the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to the existing Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).

The federal act is being challenged before the U.S. Supreme Court and it could be declared unconstitutional, thus void, later this year.

Sen. Mary Kunesh (DFL-New Brighton) is convinced her bill that sailed through the Senate will also win broad support in the House and will land on Gov. Tim Walz's desk to become law. While the future of the federal law is cloudy, its best protections for preventing removal and disconnecting children from their families and tribal culture will become Minnesota law.

Kunesh, a Standing Rock Sioux Tribe descendant and the lead author of the Senate bill, recalled the painful past for Native people when the bill was passed.

"Every Native family has been affected by the history of U.S. and Minnesotan family separations, which were weaponized as tools for genocide and jeopardized, rather than protected, Native children," she said.

The companion bill is also making progress

in the House. It has had a few hearings. But it has a powerful list of co-authors of that looks like an ad hoc committee at large.

Rep. Heather Keeler (DFL-Moorhead), an enrolled member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, is the lead author for the House bill (H.F. 1071). Co-authors include House Speaker Melissa Hartman, Brooklyn Park; Assistant Majority Leader Brad Tabke, Shakopee; and Native American lawmakers Alicia Kozlowki, Duluth; and Jamie Becker-Finn, Roseville.

Other co-authors include Reps. Dave Pinto, St. Paul; Mike Freiberg, Golden Valley, Zack Stephenson, Coon Rapids, Emma Greenman, Minneapolis; and Amanda Hemmingsen-Jaeger, Woodbury, plus two Republicans who make this a bipartisan bill, Reps. Walter Hudson, of Albertville, and Matt Bliss, from the unincorporated village of Pennington, also called Cass River, on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation.

The urgency for this legislative action comes from the challenge to the federal law.

The state of Texas and some non-Native families have a case before the U.S. Supreme Court (*Haaland v. Brackeen*) seeking to have the ICWA declared unconstitutional. If that is done, perhaps in June, state laws regarding adoption and placement of indigenous children in non-Native homes would guide future child welfare practices.

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 —

Land taken from the FDL a century ago may be coming "home"

BY LEE EGERSTROM

The University of Minnesota administrators and Board of Regents are exploring ways for the University to return 3,400 acres of land effectively stolen from the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in the late 1800s.

That land on the Fond du Lac Reservation has housed the University's Cloquet Forestry Center since 1909.

When Congress was passing laws in the 1880s and states took actions to misappropriate millions of acres of Indian lands that were established by earlier treaties, the targeting of Fond du Lac forestry resources was a clear cut case of frontier economics. Land near Cloquet taken from the Band was given to lumber companies with the provision that title would transfer to the University after trees were harvested.

That brought the University onto the reservation to establish a research center for helping the environment and Minnesota's forest economy from a dubious platform on stolen land. New sensitivities about this history has universities and institutions all across America looking at ways to return indigenous property and sacred items to tribes (see February edition, "Beyond Land Acknowledgement Fund: Indian Lands in Indian Hands.")

The Board of Regents listened to University President Joan Gabel explain that the University and Minnesota state officials are looking at ways to legally return the land to Fond du Lac, and explore what arrangements for cooperation may be taken among the parties.

In media reports, Gabel told the Regents: "This is the right time to talk about repatriation of this land, returning it to Fond du Lac and what that would mean going forward."

The *Duluth News Tribune*

expanded on her sentiments in a Feb. 17 article. It quoted Gabel as saying, "We've also been having very productive and much-appreciated conversations with Fond du Lac and its members and leadership about the future and the practice needs involved with repatriation and returning ownership, control, care for the land, and what might happen in the future."

The *News Tribune* report by Joe Bowen found an initial reaction from Fond du Lac that appears receptive to President Gabel's comments and intentions:

"The Cloquet Forestry Center land was taken from the Band and return of the land will help to restore the Band's homeland," said Rita Karppinen, a spokesperson for the Fond du Lac Band.

Regent Tadd Johnson, who possesses a deep knowledge of how Indian land was taken, commented to fellow Regents, "I think this is a good direction to go in."

Johnson, a member of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and the first Native American appointed to the Board of Regents, said the federal government turned over two-thirds of the land on Ojibwe reservations in 1889, mainly to timber companies. Fond du Lac's land was secured in the La Pointe Treaty of 1854, or about 30 years before Federal laws began chipping away land from sovereign treaty agreements.

Johnson, a national expert on Indian legal matters, knows that history.

He is Professor Emeritus of the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth and was UMD's director of graduate studies. He also served the University of Minnesota system as its first senior director of American Indian Tribal Nations Relations.

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 —

6 — NDN Way Comedy fills Parkway Theater with laughter
7 — Minneapolis Roof Depot demolition halted for now
10 — Profiles in Sports: Celleia Simmons Merrill

12 — Community Calendar
14 — Health: Arne Vainio, MD.
15 — It Ain't Easy Being Indian



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Legacy of Wounded Knee occupation lives on 50 years later

BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madonna Thunder Hawk remembers the firefights. As a medic during the occupation of Wounded Knee in early 1973, Thunder Hawk was stationed nightly in a frontline bunker in the combat zone between Native American activists and U.S. government agents in South Dakota.

"I would crawl out there every night, and we'd just be out there in case anybody got hit," said Thunder Hawk, of the Oohenumpa band of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, one of four women assigned to the bunkers.

Memories of the Wounded Knee occupation — one in a string of protests from 1969 to 1973 that pushed the American Indian Movement to the forefront of Native activism — still run deep within people like Thunder Hawk who were there.

Thunder Hawk, now 83, is careful about what she says today about AIM and the occupation, but she can't forget that tribal elders in 1973 had been raised by grandparents who still remembered the 1890 slaughter of hundreds of Lakota people at Wounded Knee by U.S. soldiers.

"That's how close we are to our history," she told *Indian Country Today* (ICT) recently. "So anything that goes on, anything we do, even today with the land-back issue, all of that is just a continuation. It's nothing new."

Other feelings linger, too, over the tensions that emerged in Lakota communities after Wounded Knee and the virtual destruction of the small community. Many still don't want to talk about it.

But the legacy of activism lives on among those who have followed in their footsteps, including the new generations of Native people who turned out at Standing Rock beginning in 2016 for the pipeline protests.

"For me, it's important to acknowledge the generation before us — to acknowledge their risk," said Nick Tilsen, founder of NDN Collective and a leader in the Standing Rock protests, whose parents were AIM activists. "It's important for us to honor them. It's important for us to thank them."

Akim D. Reinhardt, who wrote the book, "Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee," said the AIM protests had powerful social and cultural impacts.

"Collectively, they helped establish a sense of the permanence of Red Power in much the way that Black Power had for African Americans, a permanent legacy," said Reinhardt, a history professor at Towson University in Towson, Maryland.



Madonna Thunder Hawk, 83, sits in her home near Rapid City, S.D., on Feb. 9, 2023. She was one of the four women medics during the occupation of Wounded Knee, which started on Feb. 27, 1973 and ended May 8, 1973. (Photo by Kalle Benallie/Indian Country Today via AP.)



Nick Tilsen, NDN Collective founder and CEO, traces the roots of his activism to Wounded Knee. His parents, JoAnn Tall and Mark Tilsen, met there, and he praises the women of the movement who sustained the traditional matriarchal system during the occupation. (Photo by Kalle Benallie/Indian Country Today via AP.)

"It was the cultural legacy that racism isn't OK and people don't need to be quiet and accept it anymore," he said. "That it's OK to be proud of who you are."

A series of events in South Dakota in recent days recognized the 50th anniversary of the occupation, including powwows, a documentary film showing and a special honor for the women of Wounded Knee.

'Thunderbolt' of protest

The occupation began on the night of Feb. 27, 1973, when a group of warriors led by Oklahoma AIM leader Carter Camp, who was Ponca, moved into the small town of Wounded Knee. The group took over the trading post and established a base of operations along with AIM leaders Russell Means, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe; Dennis Banks, who was Ojibwe; and Clyde Bellecourt, of the White Earth Nation.

Within days, hundreds of activists had joined them for what became a 71-day standoff with the U.S. government and

other law enforcement.

It was the fourth protest in as many years for AIM. The organization formed in the late 1960s and drew international attention with the occupation of Alcatraz in the San Francisco Bay from 1969-1971. In 1972, the Trail of Broken Treaties brought a cross-country caravan of hundreds of Indigenous activists to Washington, D.C., where they occupied the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters for six days.

Then, on Feb. 6, 1973, AIM members and others gathered at the courthouse in Custer County, South Dakota, to protest the killing of Wesley Bad Heart Bull, who was Oglala Lakota, and the lenient sentences given to some perpetrators of violence against Native Americans. When they were denied access into the courthouse, the protest turned violent, with the burning of the local chamber of commerce and other buildings.

Three weeks later, AIM leaders took over Wounded Knee.

"It had been waiting to happen for

generations," said Kevin McKiernan, who covered the Wounded Knee occupation as a journalist in his late 20s and who later directed the 2019 documentary film, "From Wounded Knee to Standing Rock."

"If you look at it as a storm, the storm had been building through abuse, land theft, genocide, religious intolerance, for generations and generations," he said. "The storm built up, and built up and built up. The American Indian Movement was simply the thunderbolt."

The takeover at Wounded Knee grew out of a dispute with Oglala Sioux tribal leader Richard Wilson but also put a spotlight on demands that the U.S. government uphold its treaty obligations to the Lakota people.

By March 8, the occupation leaders had declared the Wounded Knee territory to be the Independent Oglala Nation, granting citizenship papers to those who wanted them and demanding recognition as a sovereign nation.

The standoff was often violent, and supplies became scarce within the occupied territory as the U.S. government worked to cut off support for those behind the lines. Discussions were ongoing throughout much of the occupation, with several government officials working with AIM leaders to try and resolve the issues.

The siege finally ended on May 8 with an agreement to disarm and to further discuss the treaty obligations. By then, at least three people had been killed and more than a dozen wounded, according to reports.

Two Native men died. Frank Clearwater, identified as Cherokee and Apache, was shot on April 17, 1973, and died eight days later. Lawrence "Buddy" Lamont, who was Oglala Lakota, was shot and killed on April 26, 1973.

Another man, Black activist Ray Robinson, who had been working with the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization, went missing during the siege. The FBI confirmed in 2014 that he had died at Wounded Knee, but his body was never recovered. A U.S. marshal who was shot and paralyzed died many years later.

Camp was later convicted of abducting and beating four postal inspectors during the occupation and served three years in federal prison. Banks and Means were indicted on charges related to the events, but their cases were dismissed by a federal court for prosecutorial misconduct.

Today, the Wounded Knee National Historic Landmark identifies the site of the 1890 massacre, most of which is now under joint ownership of the Oglala Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes.

— WOUNDED KNEE CONTINUED ON 14 —

Turtle Mountain first to put organ donor designation on Tribal IDs

BY SARAH SONN

On November 14, 2022, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa of Belcourt, North Dakota became the first tribe in the United States to offer organ donor registration through their tribal identification cards.

“Today is a monumental day that people will remember, especially Native nations, for decades to come,” Turtle Mountain Tribal Chairman Jamie Azure said at an event to launch the ID initiative.

Known as the “The Greyson Initiative,” the effort was led by tribal member Joan Azure in partnership with LifeSource, the non-profit organization who manages the organ, eye and tissue donation for the Upper Midwest. Joan Azure was familiar with organ donation through her career as the Director of Quality Assurance at Quentin Burdick Memorial Healthcare, but organ donation became personal when her seven-month-old grandson, Greyson, needed a heart transplant.

A need for more organ donors

As of January 2023, there are nearly 3,000 people across Minnesota, North



Joan Azure shares Greyson’s heart transplant story at “The Greyson Initiative” launch celebration on November 14, 2022, in Belcourt, ND.

Dakota and South Dakota waiting for a life-saving transplant. Of those, 142 identify as Native American/Alaskan Native. Every nine minutes, across the country, someone dies waiting. There simply aren’t enough organs to meet the need.

Only about 20 percent of people who identify as Native American say “yes” to donation when approached in the

hospital, compared to 60 percent of people who identify as white. While race and ethnicity aren’t required to match for successful transplantation, it helps, especially with rarer blood types required to match.

Directed donation is also an option, which involves identifying a specific person to donate to when you pass away. You can include instructions in a living

will or advanced directive, or your family can make that request at the time of your passing.

A case for tribal donor registration

Right now, the primary mode of registration as an organ, eye and tissue donor is on a driver’s license or state ID. However, on average, only 56 percent of people in the upper Midwest

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Greyson Parisien receives treatment at The Mayo Clinic with mom, Reaanne, and sister, Parker, surrounding his hospital bed.



The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa tribal identification card documents organ “DONOR” registration, like a driver’s license or state ID.

have “DONOR” on their driver’s license.

After seeing a heat map of registration rates across North Dakota – with the lowest rates corresponding with tribal lands – Joan Azure had the idea around adding the option to tribal identification documents.

The Greyson Initiative would provide the opportunity for Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa tribal members who don’t have a state ID.

Checking the “DONOR” box honors Greyson

Although Greyson’s time on earth was

short, he left a profound legacy on his family, his tribe and the entire country though this initiative.

“So when you check the box, remember the little boy with the black-rimmed glasses who smiled through every hardship,” said Joan Azure to her fellow tribal members. “By doing this, we’re honoring him. And we’re keeping him alive so to speak. Now with people checking the box, they’re going to save lives. And that’s what his legacy is all about.”

Many lives will be saved because of Greyson’s story and his grandmother, Joan’s, passionate advocacy.

How organ donation works

Becoming an organ donor is extremely rare. A potential organ donor must experience a life-ending injury and pass away at a hospital while connected to a ventilator that is keeping the organs functioning artificially.

After a hospital has exhausted all possibilities to save a patients’ life, they call LifeSource to perform testing and medical evaluations. Then, someone from LifeSource talks to the patient’s family about donation. If the person was a registered donor, LifeSource will honor those wishes and move forward with donation. If the patient was not registered, the next of kin is asked to decide on their behalf.

If one or more organs is deemed viable for transplant, details from medical tests

are put in a database under an anonymous identifier. The database matches the donor with the safest recipients based on blood type, tissue type, need and location. The sickest recipients are listed first.

Once recipients are located, the recipient’s surgeons travel to the donor’s hospital to perform the recovery surgery. Often, an “honor walk” is performed for the patient where hospital staff line the hallway leading to the operating room. When the surgery is over, those surgeons return to their transplant center with the recovered organ to perform the transplant surgery.

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NDN Way Comedy fills Parkway Theater with laughter

BY ZIBIQUAH DENNY

If Native comedy is the “new” thing these days it sure showed on January 28 when NDN Way Comedy made its way to Minneapolis where three Native American comedians filled the Parkway Theater on one of the coldest nights this winter. Based on all the laughter heard in the mostly mixed crowd that night, NDN comedy warmed everyone up at the sold-out, show with half the crowd was non-Native.

The show presented three Ojibwe comedians, Jon Roberts, Trish Cook and Rob, “The Rez Reporter” Fairbanks. Jon Roberts played host and welcomed everyone to the show and said, “We have an all Ojibwe show, or Jibs as we say in the house tonight.”

Roberts mentioned that he was born and lived in the Little Earth housing projects less than two miles from the venue. Little Earth is one of the only urban Native housing projects in the country. He now lives on the Red Lake reservation where he is a father of twelve, which includes his own children and some foster kids. He’s been married for twenty two years. Roberts did his stand up routine and then introduced the next comedian.

Trish Cook, from Red Lake, was also born in Minneapolis, as most of her comedy set was of her childhood spent in the city. She told the story of being in the store called Banks and if you grew up here in the 1990’s you know Banks. It was a store which sold irregular or tainted goods at a big discounted price.



NDN Way Comedy made its way to Minneapolis where three Native American comedians performed at the Parkway Theater on January 28th to a full house. (Photo by Zibiquah Denny.)

The store was four floors of damaged goods for sale and every impoverished person who lived in the city went there at one time or another. She said, “I was lost for three days in that store and nobody missed me.” She also mentioned the Mall of America (MOA), nobody goes there that lives here. “I never figured out which exit to take, the Killebrew or the Lindau. We don’t go to MOA, it’s like New Yorkers don’t go to Times Square.”

Cook did the longest set but no one seemed to care. She got much hooting and laughing even though she had to look at her notes once or twice, slowing down the momentum a bit. But she got right back in the laughs and she was appreciated as she talked about motherhood, being a divorcee and funerals. She made it all funny.

The next comedian from Leech Lake was Rob “The Rez Reporter” Fairbanks. He is no stranger to comedy and has been at it for a while. He started out by thanking everyone for coming out on such a cold night and then he said he hitchhiked all the way from Leech Lake. He also has Dakota heritage and told some funny stories about his Dakota experiences.

He does lots of physical comedy and showed us some of his Yoga moves. He said Yoga helped with his “commod bod.” He joked, “I am so homely that the leeches, mosquitoes and gnats go vegetarian when they see me.” Toward the end of the set he thanked the show Rez Dogs for making Indian comedy so popular.

After Fairbanks was finished, Roberts came out and brought the comedians back and thanked everyone again. The three comedians bowed and waved in front of childhood photographs of them to the thunderous applause of the audience. The show lasted for a solid two hours.

Filling up the Parkway Theater is no small feat. The Parkway Theater, in south Minneapolis, was built in 1930 and refurbished in 2018. These days it hosts concerts, old movies and special shows with 365 seats. It was the perfect venue for the show.

This NDN comedy trio worked together since last summer and have been working mostly in the midwest. After the show Roberts said he believed that the popular comedy show Rez Dogs helped them get more gigs. He also said, “It’s time to break out, stop being shy and say what we need to say.”

A sense of humor is universal in Native culture. While most non-Native people do not think Native people have a sense of humor, nothing could be further from the truth. Who else can make poverty funny? Native culture teaches us to not take ourselves too seriously for the most part. With the entertainment industry finally opening up to hear Native comedy and recognizing Native talent without typecasting and sticking Natives only in the past, perhaps Natives will be able to write and produce more of their own shows. It is important that Native people be given the power to share their lives, philosophy and culture with the world on their own terms.

As Roberts said, “Humor and laughter is medicine.” Let’s all strengthen that medicine.

Trauma Study Notification

Trauma is the leading cause of death in patients under the age of 45. Hennepin Healthcare – HCMC is one of the lead hospitals in a research trial at 100 hospitals worldwide that will enroll trauma patients who have significant bleeding and will receive massive blood transfusions.

Eligible patients will receive prothrombin complex concentrate (PCC), an FDA approved product, or placebo. PCC is a medicine that contains clotting factors and may help slow bleeding in trauma patients. Because patients who are bleeding to death are typically not able to provide informed consent and normally don’t have a family member with them, this trial is planned to occur using Exception from Informed Consent. The FDA and a national IRB have approved the protocol.

As part of the local IRB review process, Hennepin Healthcare is notifying the community through meetings and messages like this. Use the code, go to uab.edu/medicine/cis/tap-trial-at-hennepin, or call 612-873-7448 for more information or to opt out.



Minneapolis Roof Depot demolition halted for now

BY NINA MOINI AND
REGINA MEDINA/MPR NEWS

A Hennepin County judge ruled on Friday, Feb. 24 that the City of Minneapolis may not move forward with a planned demolition of the empty Roof Depot site in the East Phillips neighborhood.

The city wants to use the space to construct a public works facility. Residents who oppose demolition have proposed alternatives for the site such as an urban farm, a community center and a site for tiny homes to shelter unhoused people.

The group sued the city in 2020 saying the demolition poses pollution hazards. The city has maintained that it will employ soil remediation experts to clean up the site and have said the process would be safe.

At a media availability after the judge's ruling, Minneapolis public works director Margaret Anderson Kelliher said the city has done its due diligence.

"We would not be going forward with this project if the City of Minneapolis did not believe it was a safe project. And a project that is going to improve the area," she said.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency spokesperson Michael Rafferty said in an email to MPR News that the agency "reviewed and approved the project's



A general view of the old Roof Depot building on Earth Day, 2022. (Photo by Kerem Yücel for MPR News.)

response action plan for the portion pertaining to air monitoring for potentially impacted soil. That plan also outlines measures for dust control and other air monitoring activities which should minimize airborne dust from the potential disturbance of soil during the demolition."

Earlier this month, Judge Edward Wahl denied the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute's (EPNI) request for a preliminary injunction saying there was "insufficient evidence" to show that contamination would be dispersed throughout the neighborhood.

The neighborhood group filed an appeal and requested a temporary

restraining order be issued while the appeal makes its way through the courts.

Wahl granted that motion Friday, temporarily stopping the demolition scheduled for the next week so the case can be heard by the Minnesota Court of Appeals. However, Wahl did not back away from his earlier ruling on the contamination risk.

East Phillips is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Minnesota, where 70 percent of residents are people of color and 30 percent speak languages other than English at home. It is home to Little Earth of United Tribes, a large and historic urban Native American community.

Activists occupied the site in February and were removed by police. They also interrupted a Minneapolis City Council meeting where council members reconsidered moving forward with current plans for demolition, but ultimately decided to move ahead.

Judge Wahl ordered the plaintiffs to raise money to cover some of the cost to the city to delay the project and secure the building, giving them two weeks to raise funds for coverage through a \$10,000 bond.

EPNI is calling the temporary injunction a "win" for East Phillips and Little Earth.

"We thank Judge Wahl for recognizing the need to pause the city's plans to begin demolition next week," reads a statement posted on Instagram. "We will continue with our appeal process while consulting with community members to determine next steps."

As a part of the conditions of the temporary injunction EPNI will tell community members that no one should enter the Roof Depot property or building.

It is not yet known when the Court of Appeals will hear the case.

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Native and allied groups defending the ICWA before the court see this as a challenge to tribal sovereignty. Kunesh told *The Circle* the legislation was shaped by lawmakers working with a tribal MIFPA working group. It included tribal officials and attorneys, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators and other social welfare groups. They seek to avoid what could become almost endless litigation if the federal law is voided, Kunesh said. Minnesota law would continue current federal protections afforded Indigenous children, their families and the tribes no matter how the Supreme Court rules. Her co-authors of the Senate bill are Sens. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka; Melissa Wiklund, DFL-Bloomington; Grant Hauschild, DFL-Hermantown; and Clare Oumou Verbetem, DFL-St. Paul.

At a Senate Health and Human Services Committee meeting on Feb. 7, Kunesh reminded senators of the long and painful history American Indians have experienced with children being removed for their homes and sent to boarding schools or to live with non-Native families. This was an intentional effort to destroy Native cultures, she said.

Tribal leaders from across the state and other Native community leaders told of personal, family and tribal experiences backing up the senator's call for urgent action.

Among them were Robert Larsen, president of the Lower Sioux Community; Laurie York, executive director at the White Earth Nation; and Bobbi Jo Potter, manager of Ramsey County's Indian Child Welfare program. She is a Bois Forte Band of Chippewa member and descendant of St. Croix Band of Chippewa.

Kevin Dupuis, Fond du Lac Band chairman, summed up the damage losing children causes the tribes. "No one man or group of people has the right to deny us the right to exist as who we are as a people," he said. "Our children are our future, and that goes for any society."

Gertrude Buckanaga (White Earth Nation), executive director of the Upper Midwest American Indian Center, told how she and her siblings were sent to boarding schools after their mother died in 1946. They were only allowed to go home a year later to visit with a baby sister and baby brother being raised by an uncle.

"We were kept from our dad, our grandparents, our aunts and uncles, cousins - family members that we grew up with when we were young."

Another personal experience was told by Faron Jackson Sr., chairman of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Two younger brothers were removed from his home in the 1960s before the ICWA was passed (1978). "Even though they're my biological brothers, they feel like strangers when we are together."

Tribal leaders and elders don't want to

risk seeing those days come back if the ICWA is struck down by the Supreme Court, they told the committee.

That is but one of several pieces of legislation for Native communities that has a strong chance of passing in the current session, Kunesh said in an interview. Some others are supportive of emotional causes and others, naturally, involve providing funds for projects.

She is chief author of six such bills currently making progress through committees. One allows student data to be shared with tribal nations under certain circumstances, and another, Teachers of Color Act, that she described as a broad way to deal with racism in education that damages students and teachers. "We might fine tune this some, but I'm confident it will pass."

Kunesh and Keeler have bills in their respective houses to create special auto license plates calling attention to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives. Kunesh is confident that will pass, and she also thinks a bill she is sponsoring in the Senate that is also part of Gov. Tim Walz's agenda will become law. It would prohibit school districts from prohibiting students from wearing regalia or objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies.

She also is chief author of a routine bill providing operating funds for the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. And, she is co-author of a bill to appropriate \$3 million for tribal colleges. "They are historically underfunded," she said.

On other issues before the Legislature, there does seem to be momentum for a bill allowing sports betting in Minnesota. The bill making headway for passage would keep betting in the hands of tribal gaming enterprises.

There was also strong possibility that funding for projects sought by the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID) and its related Urban Indigenous Legacy Initiative (UILI) will be approved in a two-step process this year.

Sixteen non-profit Native organizations banded to form a joint effort in the past to seek state appropriations for buildings and selected other projects. Those efforts stalled in 2022 as some members feared who might get credit for legislative action.

Kunesh is involved in seeking funding for UILI projects. She also recently introduced a bill that would exempt the Office of Ombudsman for American Indian Families from paying court fees.

Many of these bills need perusal and approval by judiciary committees in the two legislative houses. That, too, is a reason for Kunesh to be optimistic about progress this session. Rep. Jamie Becker-Finn, DFL-Roseville and a Leech Lake Ojibwe descendant, is chair of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee that will handle many of these bills. And she, like Kunesh, is a founding member of the People of Color & Indigenous (POCI) Caucus in the Legislature that formed on the theory there is strength in numbers.

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Johnson has extensive experience with legal issues involving the Native communities. He was a tribal attorney for more than 30 years and has served as judge in tribal courts. He currently serves as a senior advisor for government affairs for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians.

Johnson worked with the U.S. House of Representatives and was staff director and counsel to the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs.

The University and the Minnesota's 11 tribal nations are riding reparation sensitivities that are gaining momentum all across the nation. But clearing obstacles to repatriation isn't easy anywhere.

In one report, Jana Peterson of the *Pine Knot News* at Cloquet found opposition to the land transfer within the University itself and what might be implied opposition from forestry industries.

The Cloquet Forestry Center (CFC) is the oldest forestry experiment station in the nation. It has an arboretum in its grounds that encompasses Camp 8, a 44-acre forest of 200 to 300 year old red pine trees.

There's more than a hundred years of forestry research tied to the CFC, Peterson noted. Opponents of the transfer said this involves important knowledge of care for forestry, the environment, and wildlife. While that triggers paternalistic thoughts within some faculty members, others may need



A sign on the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Reservation. (Photo courtesy of Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.)

to point out those are all important interests to the Fond du Lac Band, who regards the land as sacred.

President Gabel told the Regents the University will seek a memorandum of understanding or some other type of agreement with Fond du Lac over continuing CFC research "if the Fond du Lac Band agrees that such research is consistent with the Fond du Lac Band's mission."

This, too, would be in step with other actions involving tribes, government agencies and educational institutions.

While the Regents were exploring future ties with Fond du Lac, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced it

has renewed a 30-year memorandum of agreement it has with the 36 federally recognized tribal colleges and universities that are part of the federal land-grant system.

That relationship is geared to help tribal educational institutions produce agricultural, forestry and related food and nutrition leaders for tribal communities. About 75 percent of Indian Country land is either agricultural or forested.

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College at Cloquet, Leech Lake Tribal College at Cass Lake, and White Earth Tribal and Community College are among colleges connected with USDA through the American Indian Higher

Education Consortium.

The University of Minnesota is the main land grant institution in Minnesota with agricultural and forestry research ties with USDA.

Regarding communications of concern from some forestry industry officials, Gabel said she understood there was industry assumptions that Regents were ready to act on the land transfer at that February meeting.

She stressed the university has legal requirements to confer with the band, with several state agencies, and with others who have interests in the land and university's mission.

That, she stressed, is a process now underway for which the university doesn't have a time schedule.

Background stories that can be helpful to the general public can be found at:

- <https://www.duluthnewtribune.com/news/local/still-work-to-be-done-on-cloquet-forestry-center-transfer>;
- <https://www.pineknotnews.com/story/2023/02/10/news/university-declares-intent-to-return-forestry-center-land-to-fond-du-lac/8723.html>;
- <https://www.startribune.com/university-of-minnesota-return-forestry-land-to-fond-du-lac-band-of-lake-superior-chippewa/600250488>;
- <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2023/02/10/u-recommends-returning-cloquet-forestry-center-land-to-fond-du-lac-band>.

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The Bell Museum waives general museum and planetarium show admission for Dakota and all Indigenous peoples.
For more information visit: bellmuseum.umn.edu/mnisota-makhoche

Senior for Raiders girls' basketball team is amazing role model

Celleia Simmons Merrill is Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota and she is also from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. She is a senior at Isle High School during the school day and competes with the Mille Lacs Raiders basketball team after school. The Raiders are a cooperative school between Isle HS and Onamia HS. She has played basketball in Isle since the fourth grade and also competed for the Finest Basketball Club (FBC) AAU basketball team.

Simmons Merrill has had more than a few highlights in her basketball career. She was named the Most Valuable Player of her team and also named honorable mention All Great River Conference her junior year.

Another highlight of her athletic career was being named team captain as a junior and senior. Her leadership was a strong part of her game to show others they can play and practice the best they can.

"I think a major value I have while competing is having humility while playing and practicing," said Simmons Merrill. "But also having respect for my teammates and opponents."

During her recent senior night, she had a career high 21 points. She said, "It was just a fun night with my team, and after hearing my teammates' speeches about the seniors it made me want to play harder."

Mentors help guide student athletes to work for their goals on and off the court. Gail and Terry Oswald, Celleia's junior high coaches, also served as her mentors. "They really made me into the player I am today, and without them I probably wouldn't have played basketball at all."



Celleia Simmons Merrill was the senior leader of the Mille Lacs Raiders. (Photo by Wendy Merrill.)

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"I think being honorable mention really pushed me my senior year," said Simmons Merrill. "I wanted to try new things outside of my conformist zone like being the point guard or just having the ball more. It was kind of reassuring, and it made me feel actually good at the sport and made me feel like I had made a lot of progress throughout the years."

"Being captain helped me learn to advocate for other players on the team and also advocate for myself about my exceptions for the team. It was also a big responsibility, like making sure I stayed focused at practice and holding my teammates accountable," she added.

"My junior high coaches really impacted my basketball career my seventh and eighth grade years," said Simmons Merrill. "They urged me to be confident when I had the ball and taught me all my post moves. This is also when I started getting varsity playing time and they were really supportive and helped me whenever I was nervous about practicing or playing varsity. They were always willing to go to the gym during summer or off season and practice shooting and helping me get stronger underneath the basket."

Gail Oswald talked about one of her junior high volleyball and basketball athletes. She said, "My husband and I continued to help and support her throughout her high school athletic career by working with her on her skills

and attending her games. I have watched Celleia over the years grow into being a leader on and off the court. She earned the title of captain her junior and senior year which is indicative of her leadership skills. She was the voice for her team between the players and Coach when needed."

"Celleia also organized Captain's practice and communicated team information. Celleia took an active role in organizing and participating in a Native American presentation for our student body," added Oswald.

Katie Raverty, American Indian Liaison for Isle Schools, has a daughter on the team this season. She looks up to Celleia as many others do.

"Celleia is an amazing role model, excels in sports and academics, and has the best sense of humor," said Raverty.

"Celleia is our senior captain," said Aleia Haggberg, head varsity girls basketball coach for the Mille Lacs Raiders. "She is an outstanding young lady. She creates a fun atmosphere on the court for our team. On the court she is averaging 7.6 points, almost eight rebounds, two assists, and one block a game for the season. She took on a new role this season as our ball handler."

"Off the floor Celleia is a great student. She is currently undecided on a college but wants to pursue a degree in tribal policies. Our team will miss Celleia next season!" added Haggberg.

A legislative update from Lieutenant Governor Flanagan



Boozhoo! I'm honored and humbled to serve another term as your Lieutenant Governor with Governor Tim Walz as we work to make Minnesota the best state in the country for all kids and families, including across Indian Country.

Governor Walz and I are committed to building strong government-to-government relationships with the 11 tribal nations that share geography with Minnesota and partnering with the robust urban Indian communities across the state. During our first term, we worked together across community to achieve important victories, including establishing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office, codifying tribal consultation, and creating a Tribal-State Relations Office housed within the governor's office.

It was heartening to begin our second term and this year's legislative session by taking part in the first-ever round dance in the Minnesota State Capitol rotunda. The event celebrated the Native American Legislative Caucus, which includes including Senator Mary Kunesch and Representatives Jamie Becker-Finn, Heather Keeler, and Alicia Kozlowski. It was incredibly powerful to hear the drums, songs, and laughter resounding throughout the halls of power; Native voices are needed in the Capitol when decisions are made that impact our lives and our communities. Something shifted at the Capitol that day – the space is forever changed. Miigwech to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors for convening such an impactful event.

This legislative session got off to a fast and productive start. Gov. Walz has already signed several bills into law, including the Protect Reproductive Options (PRO) Act, which protects abortion access in Minnesota; the CROWN Act, which prohibits discrimination based on natural hair styles and texture; and Restore the Vote, which will restore right to vote to thousands of people with felony convictions who have completed their incarceration.

There is more work ahead of us. The Governor and I released our budget recommendations, which includes more than \$7 billion in proposals and investments that advance shared state and tribal priorities. I wanted to highlight a few of these items that I'm particularly excited about.

Investing in Native students. Part of making Minnesota the best place for kids to grow up is investing in a world-class education for every child. It matters when children can see themselves reflected in their classrooms and curriculum. We are asking lawmakers to fund: 1) An increase base funding for American Indian Education Aid to improve academic outcomes and meet the needs of Native students; 2) Native Language Revitalization Grants to school districts to offer instruction in Dakota, Anishinaabe, and other Indigenous languages, so students can stay connected to their cultures; and 3) the Minnesota American Indian Scholars Program, to provide tuition support and free pathways for Native students through their undergraduate education.

Building stability in housing. Housing is the foundation for health, safety, and growth – but far too many of our relatives are experiencing housing instability. That's why our historic housing budget includes \$44 million directly to Minnesota's 11 sovereign nations to address their urgent housing needs; \$100 million to preserve and rehabilitate existing housing so it can remain affordable; \$128 million in down payment and closing cost assistance to help more Minnesotans become homeowners; and resources to help connect our relatives experiencing homelessness with shelter and resources, as well as preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place.

Tackling addiction and the opioid crisis. While addiction has touched every part of our country, we all know the opioid crisis has disproportionately impacted Native communities. We're focused on investments to expedite access to behavioral health services and targeted investments to reduce disparities for opioid use disorders. We're also working to ensure traditional healing practices are covered in substance use disorder grant funding because we know what treatments are effective for our community and that healing must address whole health and root causes of inter-generational trauma. And we are providing grants to recruit and train more Indigenous people and other people of color to become mental health professionals and licensed alcohol and drug counselors.

Growing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office. We're

proud to be the first state to create a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office, but the work didn't stop there. We now want to add resources and additional staff to that office and expand their capacity, as well as create an advisory board to help direct their work.

This is just a glimpse into what's possible this legislative session, and it only happens when we work together. What is so deeply meaningful about what

we've accomplished is that it was driven by tribes, tribal members, urban Indian leaders, and community. It makes a tremendous difference when we show up as our full Indigenous selves in the places and spaces where decisions are made – as elected officials, as advocates, as members of community.

I look forward to continuing to work in partnership to push for policies and investments that make a difference for all kids and families in Minnesota.



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Thru March 26

Visions from the Land: Native Interpretations

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 week-ends 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:

- **March 4-5:** Josef Reiter
- **March 18-19:** Ramona Morrow
- **March 25-26:** Charles Statley

Thru April 29

Now You See It, Now You Don't Exhibit

Bockley Gallery is pleased to welcome Natalie Ball (Black, Modoc, Klamath), Grace Rosario Perkins (Diné, Akimel O’odham) and Eric-Paul Riege (Diné) for the group exhibition, featuring new and recent works in painting, sculpture, and performance. Bockley Gallery, 2123 W 21st St (west of Lake of the Isles, near Franklin), Minneapolis. For info see: bockleygallery.com.

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=TnU0SFZpd2RVVWFdFeGk2UExxYjZjQT09>. For info, see: <https://www.wchsmn.org/event/mounds>.

04529?pwd=TnU0SFZpd2RVVWFdFeGk2UExxYjZjQT09. For info, see: <https://www.wchsmn.org/event/mounds>.

March 13 – 24

Why Treaties Matter

“Why Treaties Matter: Self-Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations”—a traveling exhibit made in partnership with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian — explores relationships between Dakota and Ojibwe Indian Nations and the U.S. government in Minnesota. Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High School, 301 4th St, Walker, MN. For info, see: <https://www.mnhum.org/event/walker-why-treaties-matter>.

March 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. For info, see: <https://aifcrmn.org/venue/metropolitan-state-university>.

March 15

Celebrate Native Basketball at AIOIC

March is basketball month in Minnesota: Come celebrate Native hoops with us! Watch 2 episodes of “Basketball or Nothing” (Netflix), with have dinner. There will also be a raffle. American Indian OIC is also conducting a food drive in support of DIW's Horizon's Unlimited food shelf during the month of March. Donations welcome. 5:30 – 7:30pm. Takoda, AIOIC, 1845 E Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/celebrate-native-basketball-at-aioic-tickets-558888690117>.

March 16

A Night of Native Documentaries

Spend an evening with Native storytellers sharing tales of culture, history, and hope. Screening: Why We Dance (OSP Productions); Tama Flint: A Meskwaki Tradition (Oogie_Push); and BRING HER HOME (Leya Hale). You can sample Meskwaki Corn Soup from the documentary Tama Flint: A Meskwaki Tradition. There will be a Q&A with the film participants in attendance. Food and drinks available. Donation-based. 6 – 9:30pm. CDT Public Functionary, 1500 Jackson St NE, Studio 144, Minneapolis. Tickets: <https://allevents.in/minneapolis/a-night-of-native-documentaries/>

10000551892383977.

March 20, 27, April 17 Native American Performer Series Spring 2023

Native American powwow dancers will perform. All performances are free and open to the public. For parking please use the North Lot. For accessibility information or questions: desr0019@morris.umn.edu. Humanities Fine Arts Building, 600 E 4th St, Morris, MN. For info, see: https://events.morris.umn.edu/event/native_american_performer_show-case#.ZAEps7TMKwA.

• **March 20:** Clayton Crawford, Men’s Fancy Dance, 1:30 - 2:45pm, HFA 6

• **March 27:** Dianne Desrosiers, Jingle Dress, 1:30 - 2:45pm, HFA 6

• **April17:** Jackie Bird, Women’s Fancy Shawl, 1:30 - 2:45pm, Oyate Hall

• **May 1:** Bryan Akipa, Men’s Traditional Dance, 1:30 - 2:45pm, Edson Auditorium.

March 21-22

Annual ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) Conference

The U 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: Karen Nichols at knichols@d.umn.edu or 218-726-8023.

March 23

Feathers from Above

Join Native American art therapist, Stacy Atkins of Olive Art, in a

art therapy acrylic painting session with peaceful music and aromatherapy. Paint a beautiful feather, which symbolizes so much for so many. Anastasia Stacy Atkins-Gardner is a direct descendant of Chief Mattie Mitchel of the Indigenous Canadian Mi’kmaq tribe. 6pm - 8:30pm. Cost: \$25. White Bear Lake High School South Campus, 3551 McKnight Ave, White Bear Lake, MN. For info, see: <https://manyfaceswblarea.org/event/feathers-from-above>.

March 24 (deadline)

Native American Undergraduate Museum Fellowship

The Native American Undergraduate Museum Fellowship Program will expose undergraduates to the museum field by participating in a 10-week paid program: 3 weeks of seminar/workshops and 7 weeks in an internship program designed to engage and expose undergraduates to the professional opportunities within the museum, cultural resource, public history, and tribal historic preservation fields. Fellows will learn about various career paths and academic requirements for working in these types of organizations, both on and off reservations, as well as particular challenges faced by American Indian Communities related to preserving tribal history and challenging the traditional historical narratives of Native people. Deadline is March 24. Dates of the Fellowship are June 5th-August 10th, 2023. For questions, contact Regan Kluver at: regan.kluver@mnhs.org.

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1/2V Page	5” x 12-1/2”	\$650
3/8 Page	5” x 9-1/4”	\$450
1/3 Page	6-11/16” x 6-1/8”	\$400
1/4H Page	5” x 6-1/8”	\$350
1/4V Page	3-5/16” x 9-1/4”	\$350
1/6 Page	3-5/16” x 6-1/8”	\$275
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Community Calendar listings are FREE

To have your event listed, email them to: thecirclenews@gmail.com by the 20th of the month.

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March 28

Backstage Basics and more

Erin Gustafson will teach backstage basics. Erin is a Theater Technician (Carpenter, Stage Manager, Electrician, and Painter) and Teaching Artist based in Minneapolis. Currently they are the Lead Carpenter at Park Square Theatre and the 2022-2023 Season Stage Manager at Youth Performance Company (YPC). 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. See NNT website for upcoming class info at <https://newnativetheatre.org>. Other upcoming classes:

- **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

March 29

People & Planet: Indigenous Fires in the Great Lakes Region

Indigenous peoples around the world, including those of the Great Lakes region, have regularly worked with fire both culturally and ecologically as a means to managing these ecosystems for thousands of years until federal laws halting this practice emerged to “protect” lands. This was under the falsehood that by “maintaining” an “untouched and pristine” wilderness, unintentional and uncontrolled wildfires could be prevented. Fire exclusion policies criminalized Indigenous

burnings – suppressing and damaging cultural relationships with the land and vital knowledge of fire’s necessary presence in many forested ecosystems. Join Ferin Davis Anderson, Supervisor of Environmental Sciences, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community; Lane Johnson, UMN Cloquet Forestry Center Research Forester; Melonee Montano, UMN-TC Natural Resources Science; and moderator Mike Dockry, IonE Fellow, Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center Program Lead for Tribal Relations and UMN Assistant Professor, for a conversation on Indigenous fire in the Great Lakes region. 4 – 5pm. For info, contact ioneevents@umn.edu. Learning and Environmental Sciences Building, 1954 Buford Ave, St Paul. Registration required at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/people-planet-indigenous-fires-in-the-great-lakes-region-tickets-551599808877>.

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.

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, 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. For info, see: <https://www.nicwa.org/conference>.

April 6

Dabinoo’lgan “One Community, Many Voices, Stop The Silence” fundraiser

Dabinoo’lgan 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’lgan 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’lgan Shelter expansion. For more info, see: <https://ci.ovationix.com/35679/production/1148933>.

April 7 (deadline)

Cora’s Kids Summer Program

Cora’s Kids - Sessions 1 & 2 is now accepting applications. Cora’s Kids is a four day program for Native kids ages 8-12, at the Dream of Wild Health farm in Hugo, MN. We will be learning about growing and eating healthy and tasty food, culture, and language along with traditional crafts and games. Youth also will experience cooking healthy lunches in the kitchen. Cora’s Kids Session 1: June 19th-22nd. Cora’s Kids Session 2: June 26th-June 29th. For info, contact Matt at matthew@dreamofwildhealth.org or call at 612-254-7327. Or see: <https://dreamofwildhealth.org>.

April 7 (deadline)

Garden Warriors

Garden Warriors - Sessions 1 & 2 is now accepting applications. Our three-week sessions covering gardening, nutrition, physical activity, and Native culture and language for teens ages 13-18. Youth have the opportunity to work in the kitchen cooking healthy and indigenous foods, as well as the opportunity to work at our Farmer’s Market. Participants are paid a stipend for their work in program. Garden Warriors Session I - Three Week Session (July 10th - July 27th). Garden Warriors Session II - Three Week Session (August 7th- August 24th). For info, contact Matt at matthew@dreamofwildhealth.org or call at 612-254-7327. Or see <https://dreamofwildhealth.org>.

April 11-13

Sacred Trails of Our Grandmothers Conference

Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition’s Restoring the Sacred Trails of Our Grandmothers Annual Conference “Emerging With New Visions to End Sexual Violence” will be in Bemidji. The conference is free and open to anyone interested in ending gender based violence, particularly advocates, survivors, community members, service providers and practitioners who work with those who have experienced violence. For info, see: <https://miwsac.coalitionmanager.org>.

April 15

32nd Annual Woodlands & 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, NDSU) 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>.

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.

April 18

38th Annual Minnesota Indian Education 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. For info, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/38th-annual-minnesota-indian-education-association-conference-tickets-420081423847>.

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Application open **February 1, 2023 - March 31, 2023**

We Need You

BY ARNE VAINIO, MD

He wasn't my patient, but he told his mother he was having suicidal thoughts and he needed to be seen right away. He had been started on an antidepressant by someone else a few weeks earlier and the new medicine made him feel better for a while, then he started having thoughts of harming himself.

He was a nice young man, age 16 and he was polite and respectful. He was with his mother and I introduced myself as I sat down.

"Tell me what's going on," I said.

He replied, "I was started on the new medicine and it seemed to help for a little bit, then I started to feel worse. I had thoughts initially of wishing I had never been born and then started thinking everyone would be better off if I wasn't here. Then I started actually thinking about killing myself."

"Do you have a plan for how you would do that?" I asked.

"No plan and I don't allow myself to think about it enough to come up with one. I know how much it would hurt everyone if I did that. I just want to feel better," He answered.

He was articulate and I could tell he was bright and I asked him, "How do

you do in school?"

"Mostly As, some Bs, but they've been slipping this year," He answered.

"And what do you want to do after you graduate?" I asked.

"I want to be a psychiatrist," He answered.

"That's an important field," I said. "You could go anywhere and find work easily. Are you seeing a counselor?"

"I am," He answered. "That's been helpful and she told me to come in to talk with you."

"I'm glad you did," I told him. "I think we can help you. I don't want to talk down to you and I don't want to talk to you like you're still too young to make decisions. I don't want to make plans behind your back and I promise I won't do that. I want to tell you my father committed suicide when I was four years old and that affected everyone in my family and it still has effects over fifty years later. At 16, the world is waiting for you and it can be an uncertain place, especially for someone as bright as you clearly are. I want to tell you some things I wish my father would have told me. In just a few short years, you have to be thinking about the direction you want your life to go. That's a big responsibility and it's a decision that requires some thought. You need to sort out sexuality

and what that means for you in a society that thinks that's their business. Social media is always there and reaches you in ways adults can't even imagine. Bullies are out there and I have no doubt they were in middle school and in high school."

I could tell by the look on his face I had struck a nerve.

"Bullies are still bullies in the adult world and all too often they get to be bosses and they can make your life difficult. Paying rent and tuition and other stresses are in your future. Going to college when your friends have jobs and are making money is hard and the temptation to quit will be strong. You need to look beyond and, in retrospect, that time will go fast.

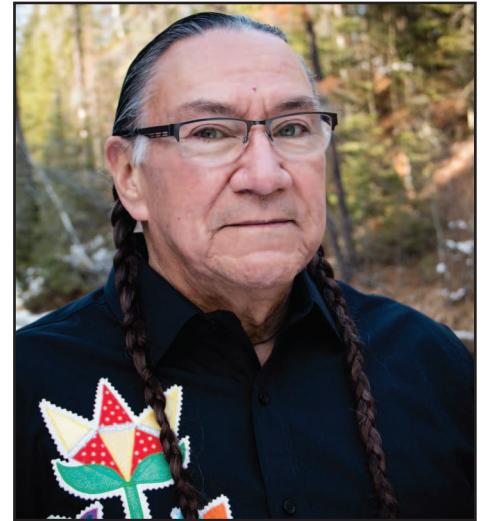
The antidepressant you were started on is a good one and is one I would have chosen. Someone didn't make a bad decision when they started it. If there was only one antidepressant that worked for everyone and didn't have any side effects, this would be easy. Most primary care providers use just a few of them and are familiar with them. I'm going to give you your first pharmacology lesson."

I went into a long and fairly technical explanation about serotonin release, receptor up regulation and down regulation and biological mechanisms for clearing neurotransmitters. I could tell he was interested in that conversation and that he understood it.

"All of these medicines are going to have black box warnings in someone under 18 years of age. That means there is an increased risk of suicide with these medicines and you need to be aware of that. Those black box warnings make some providers reluctant to prescribe them. The fact that you need to be on one of these medicines increases your risk of suicide all by itself and we need to talk about suicide. Having a plan increases your risk of suicide and having the means to carry out that plan increases it more. Having a history of previous suicide attempts increases it even further. There is the suicide hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and that number is answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. People are afraid to talk about suicide because they think they'll put that idea in your head, but that idea is already there and talking about it helps."

I asked him and his mom if anyone in their family had a problem with a particular antidepressant or if anyone had particularly good luck with one of them. His aunt was on one that worked well for her for the past 5 years and they chose that one.

"All of these medicines work and they've been well studied," I told them. "I don't want you to get the impression we're just putting you on a medicine to



hide your problems. Having depression is more common than you know. Continuing to see the counselor is important and right now you need to be seen frequently. These medicines are safe and really have minimal side effects. They don't make you look at the world through rose colored glasses and needing them is not a character flaw and taking them is not a sign of weakness. They are not addicting. These are a tool, just like a calculator or a pencil or a shovel. These are a tool to help you feel better and get some successes behind you. This medicine won't make school work any easier and you still have to make up any classes you're behind in. The bullies will still be bullies and you still have to figure out your goals.

Life can be difficult at times and everyone here recognizes that. We want to help you aim for your dreams and if there's anything we can do to help you talk to someone at a college or medical school, we'll do it. There are lots of hurdles on the path you've chosen and most of them we've seen before.

You will start feeling better soon and the circles you travel in will get better as you get better. You have a mother who clearly loves you and cares about you. Your goals are sensible and not everyone your age has such ambitions. I believe in you and we are always here to help you."

I could see he and his mother felt better and I could see hope in the way they carried themselves as we ended the visit.

"Thank you, Dr. Vainio," He shook my hand and looked directly into my eyes.

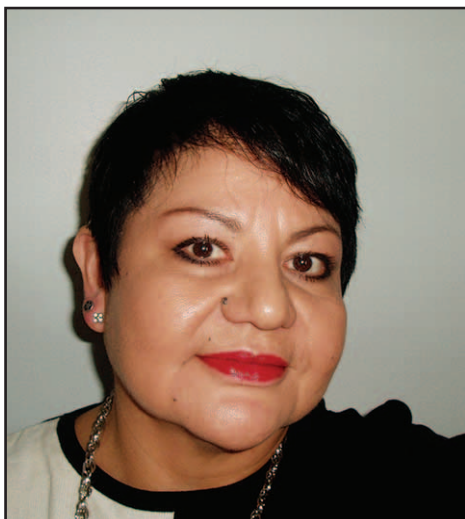
"One last thing," I told him. "You come from people who survived incredible hardships and community is what has always kept us going. That resilience is in your blood. I know this is a lot to take in in a single visit, but I want you to know this. We need you more than we ever have. We need your youth and your dedication and your sense of direction. I don't remember ever hearing my father's voice, but this is what I would have wanted him to say.

"We need you."

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Recently, in my self-isolation and health limitations, I have come to miss some people in my life, but I will never tell them, nuh-ah! I think I want more to talk to them about all the crazy times and adventures we had together. When certain memories come to mind or I need to laugh, I do. Some are so clear like it happened yesterday. Then I say to myself, “Self, did that really happen?” It did and I keep the good memories in a treasure chest.

The bad times are locked away in a different compartment and that’s why I’ve been in therapy for 30 years. There are real monsters, human ones, in this world. Unfortunately, I had more than

my share of dreadful experiences directly due to them and I resent it greatly. Of course, I am completely exonerated of any responsibility for those situations Your Honor! No court in the world could convict me. Well...Shhhh!!!

What I have done in my years here is on a need to know...ya, well you get the gist. The most awful thoughts that really get to me are missed or lost opportunities. Those I take to heart and so sad I didn’t do that, this or the other thing. Now I’m still on YouTube trying to keep my remaining experience, well in this life, by watching spiritual, self-help videos. Hehe! Hey, gimme a fist bump, I am trying to do my best, yo!

The world we all live in now is even nuttier post-pandemic and a lot of us are still sorting out the fallout. Oops! Bad word but yanno what I mean. I send alla yooz love and hugs, we all need it. Lucky for me I have my Fuzz-Butts for love and comfort in a warm home with a few family members and friends who still sorta put up with me and my eccentric ways. Miigwech nijjiwag! (Thank you friends).

It will be 25 years writing this column now and I hope to make it to that point this coming November, if my beleaguered editor lets me get that far. It’s just that unforeseen things happen and it takes my mind away from deadlines.

I for sure need to write about Moosie, my fictional-romance-gorgeous-Indian-guy who only comes to the Rez when one of his many kids hit 18-years-old so he can get some money off them, only to make a few more. Moosie is a knockin’ on my door, I feel his presence.

Since I’m so ancient, I want to share a few stories with yooz that I wrote about in past columns, plus a few more. Plus I wanna write about how I, and I alone, can save the Earth and its occupants (minus the too many who are attacking our Mother Earth, Aki) who have my blessings to blast off to Mars. Just get them outta here, ignorant, hateful, greedy monsters that they are. If yooz don’t follow the current news I applaud you. I’m still tryna wean myself off by watching anything else but.

Up here in Rezberry we did not get hit with the ‘Historical Winter Storm’ last month. Instead it hit below us and there was even a blizzard in California that had me suppressing giggles at their collective, entitled astonishment – that they of all inhabitants should be so inconvenienced. Now listen! I don’t want anyone to suffer or die because of climate change (every sentient being) but my hope is ‘they’ will get a clue about how dire our situation is. Yay, thanks MAGA nuts! It’s not all about you.

Spring is around the next big rock you see, go to the left and then over the river and behind a stand of trees. It is still playing with us and makes snuffly chuckles. So rude! During March Madness there is always a major snow-storm in Minnesota, so we still have it coming. But we know that we’ve made it through the roughest parts and the ice and snow will melt away. Take that you Southerners! Buncha wimps you are.

When warmer weather does get this far up north I vow to sit outside and visit with the pines and birch that surround my home. My friends the hummingbirds and other critters will come out of their winter lairs, so I must too. I look forward to that so I can get a bit of sun because I’m so pale now, I could pass for a light-skin Indian. Nayyyy!!! Not even!

To say I’ve been through a lot in a short amount of time is putting it lightly, but I persist. How and why is the great question of all time. I’ll just have to see what happens next. It’s always something, ennit?

I am so done with being an inaction star. I gotta DO something!

– WOUNDED KNEE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 –

The tribes agreed in 2022 to purchase 40 acres that included the area where most of the carnage took place in 1890, the ravine where victims fled and the area where the trading post was located.

The purchase, from a descendant of the original owners of the trading post, included a covenant requiring the land to be preserved as a sacred site and memorial without commercial development.

And though internal tensions emerged in the AIM organization in the years after the Wounded Knee occupation, AIM continues to operate throughout the U.S. in tribal communities and urban areas.

In recent years, members participated in the Standing Rock protests and have persisted in pushing for the release from prison of former AIM leader Leonard Peltier, who was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder despite inconsistencies in the evidence in the deaths of two FBI agents during a shootout in 1975 on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

A new generation

Tilsen, now president and chief executive of NDN Collective, an Indigenous-led organization centered around building Indigenous power,

traces the roots of his activism to Wounded Knee.

His parents, JoAnn Tall and Mark Tilsen, met at Wounded Knee, and he praises the women of the movement who sustained the traditional matriarchal system during the occupation.

“I grew up in the American Indian Movement,” said Tilsen, a citizen of the Oglala Lakota Nation. “It wasn’t a question about what you were fighting for. You were raised up in it. In fact, if you didn’t fight, you weren’t going to live.”

Tilsen credits AIM and others for most of the rights Native Americans have today, including the ability to operate casinos and tribal colleges, enter into contracts with the federal government to oversee schools and other services, and religious freedom.

He said the movement showed the world that tribes were sovereign nations and their treaties were being violated. And when AIM and spiritual leaders such as Henry Crow Dog, Leonard Crow Dog and Matthew King joined the fight, it became intergenerational.

“It became a spiritual revolution,” he said. “It also became a fight that was about human rights. It became a fight that was about where Indigenous people aren’t just within the political system of America, but within the broader context of the system; of the world.”

Tilsen appreciates that his parents were willing to participate in an armed revolution to achieve one of their dreams of establishing KILI radio station, known as the “Voice of the Lakota Nation,” which began operating in 1983 as the first Indigenous-owned radio station in the United States.

The Dakota Access Pipeline protest in 2016 became a defining moment for him and his brother. They had wondered, he said, what would be their Wounded Knee?

“What made it so powerful and what made it different was that you actually had grassroots organizers and revolutionaries and official tribal governments coming together, too,” Tilsen said. “I think that Standing Rock in particular actually reached way further than Wounded Knee because of how the issue was framed around ‘water is life.’”

Alex Fire Thunder, deputy director of the Lakota Language Consortium, said the occupation of Wounded Knee and other activism helped revitalize Indigenous languages and cultures. His mother was too young to have participated in the occupation but he said she remembered visits from AIM members in the community.

“The whole point of AIM, the American Indian Movement, was to bring back a sense of pride in our cul-

ture,” Fire Thunder, Oglala Lakota, told ICT.

Future generations

For Thunder Hawk, the issues became her lifelong work rather than momentary activism.

She joined AIM in 1968 and participated in the occupation at Alcatraz, the BIA headquarters, the Custer County Courthouse and Wounded Knee, as well as the Standing Rock pipeline protest in 2016.

She said work being done today by a new generation is a continuation of the work her ancestors did.

“That’s why we were successful in Indian Country, because we were a movement of families,” she said. “It wasn’t just an age group, a bunch of young people carrying on.”

She hopes her legacy will live on, that her great-great-grandchildren will see not just a photo of her but know what she sounded like and the person she seemed to be.

It’s something that she can’t have when she looks at a photo of her paternal great-grandparents.

“Hopefully that’s what my descendants will see, you know?” she said. “And with the technology nowadays, they can press a button, maybe, and it’ll come up.”

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