



NEWS FROM A NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

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Locals build sweatlodge for PA prisoners



Volunteers arrive at CSI Benner Township prison to build a sweatlodge. (L to R) Lon Navarre, Lisa Yankton, Chaplain Erroll Wilson, Dr. Tom Weaver, Johnny Creed Coe (kneeling), Rev. Mattias Peterson-Brandt, and Joy Sorensen Navarre. (Photo courtesy of Cherokee Park United Church.)

BY LEE EGERSTROM

A unique bond with Pennsylvania prisoners resulted in Minnesota volunteers spending a few days in early October building a sweat lodge for incarcerated Native Americans who wanted a place to pray to improve their lives.

“It was a life changing, spiritual experience,” said Lisa Yankton, a Spirit Lake Dakota, Minneapolis poet, and Dakota language and culture teacher at American Indian Magnet School in St. Paul. That was how the experience impacted a volunteer.

Getting the sweat lodge up and going was also “a deeply personal, sacred, religious moment” for the volunteers and for Pennsylvania Department of Corrections personnel at State Correctional Institution Benner Township, said retired Chaplain Erroll Wilson. Department officials and CSI Benner Township (SCI Benner) corrections staff watched construction and monitored the drumming and singing from Native prisoners, Wilson said.

One Corrections officials told Wilson “he could feel the power of the spirit.”

“I don’t think there will be much institutional opposition to sweat lodges at Pennsylvania prisons going forward,” Wilson said.

But foremost, the sweat lodge was created for the benefit of prisoners.

It is extremely important for incarcerated

Native Americans “who want to change their lives. They need strength and a place to pray,” said former inmate Benjamin Simpson (Lakota/Taino). He is a Pennsylvanian and an original organizer of legal actions that brought the sweat lodge to reality.

“I explain to non-Natives, people who don’t understand, that the sweat lodge is a place for rebirth. It’s a lot like baptism,” he said in a telephone interview. “This is important for prisoners who want to turn their lives around.”

He and another former inmate, Marvin “Running River” Banks (Native American/Congo), began petitioning corrections officials for a sweat lodge two years ago at SCI Benner, a medium security prison for males located at Bellefonte, near College Park in central Pennsylvania.

A prison in Pittsburgh had a sweat lodge about 35 years ago. It was destroyed in a flood 30 years ago and wasn’t restored. The Benner Township sweat lodge is the first since then in the state’s 26 prison system.

The prisoners went to court when their petition was rejected. They won. The court ruled SCI Benner and other correctional institutions should allow sweat lodge ceremonies for constitutionally protected religious purposes. It also ruled the institutions didn’t need to provide the sweat lodge.

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 –

NACDI receives national honor for promoting Native voting

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon presented a national award to the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) on Indigenous Peoples Day (Oct. 9) for its efforts in expanding voter education and getting Minnesota’s Native people more involved in their civic affairs.

While voter education isn’t easy to quantify, getting voters registered to vote can be counted. A year ago, for instance, NACDI’s Make Voting a Tradition program got 2,000 Native Minnesotans squared away to vote, said Darek Delille (Bad River Ojibwe), manager of the nine-year-old NACDI program.

By October this year, more than 2,500 more Native Minnesotans had registered. “We’re running ahead,” he said. “It keeps gaining.”

That is one important part but not the entirety of the voting program, or MVAT, that Delille and colleagues promote to make Native Minnesotans more visible in public affairs. It takes civic engagement to not become invisible to the people shaping programs and policies.

“Strengthening democratic participation demands community engagement and trust,” NACDI explains on its website. “MVAT in particular draws people into the process of defining the future of their community and builds ownership of the solutions required to reach that future.”

The combined goals of the program has been nationally noted. Secretary Simon presented the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) Medallion Award to NACDI, noting that its program has grown civic participation from its base in the American Indian Cultural Corridor in south Minneapolis on out throughout the state.

Simon said the Make Voting a

Tradition program “is a national model of a voter outreach effort that carefully considers the needs and wants of the community.”

This, he said, has increased awareness and participation in local elections “while empowering community members to take part in our shared democracy.”

The national Medallion Award is given to individuals, groups or organizations that promote one of more goals of the NASS. These include programs promoting voter education and participation; civic education, including teaching and promotion; service to state government, specifically to the duties of secretaries of state; and a commitment to giving to improve the quality of life for a local or regional area within, or for an entire state.

Simon’s announcement of the award to NACDI noted the group has increased voter turnout and civic engagement in its community with “culturally specific, year-around, multi-generational outreach.”

Delille said NACDI has been expanding beyond its Cultural Corridor home base and is working with tribal organizations and other civic groups to expand the Make Voting a Tradition program reach more people.

Tribal groups have similar programs on reservations, he said. But they don’t always reach people in nearby off-reservation communities such as Bemidji, Duluth or Moorhead.

Working with Delille at NACDI is Jolene Jones, the Make Voting a Tradition manager. She is Ojibwe and a life-long resident of Little Earth of United Tribes housing in Minneapolis.

Pitching in when needed, Delille said, are Alex Buffalohead (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), the NACDI director of communications; and the crew from NACDI’s Development department. John Williams (Cheyenne River Lakota), is the NACDI vice president of Development.



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A story of genocide, colonization, greed and deforestation

BY WINONA LADUKE

In late August, the *New York Times* covered a story about two Indigenous Piripkura Men who had saved some land in the Amazon. That's to say, that despite all the deforestation, cattlemen, murders and genocide, two Indigenous men managed to hold on to 1000 square miles.

The headline reads, "1000 Square Miles, Preserved for a Tribe of 2". That story is on the front page of the *New York Times*. The article states how it was almost impossible to find these men, they had hidden themselves so far away in the forest, and now they had some land.

The question posed by the *New York Times* seemed to be, how did these two Native people get all this land?

Maybe we should ask where all the Natives went, and why there were only two. This is a deeper story. It's a story of genocide, colonization, greed, and deforestation. I remember a time when Indigenous people of the Amazon were hunted like deer, hung by their hamstrings. That was the 1970s. Not that long ago.

There are 1.7 million Native people who survived a five-hundred-year invasion, most of them living in the Amazon. They've even survived the aggressive policies of ex-Brazilian President Bolsonaro.

The *New York Times* article talks about how the last woman from that tribe left, dashing hopes of the Piripkura ever flourishing again. Well, what if these people grow a new nation, from their land and those who remain? Let the people live, I say.

In late September, the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled in favor of Indigenous land rights in a case where agribusiness tried to take Native land to expand cattle ranching, coffee, and more. A national law in Brazil had been moved in the Congress which would have stripped Native people of land if their cultural traits had changed. In this day and age, that's a tough bar, and who is the cultural trait judge?

The law would have also deprived Native people of their land if they were not on their traditional lands in 1988, the year Brazil's constitution was enacted.

Native people are in the way of roads, mining, dams, and GMO crops, that's the way it is everywhere. The law would have opened the floodgates of contacting "isolated groups" – Native people who have hidden deep in the Amazon and are trying to avoid the death that Brazil and the loggers have doled out for a hundred years. That sounds so... American.

In the majority opinion, Supreme



Logging of the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. (Photo by Wikipedia.)

Court Judge Cármen Lúcia Antunes Rocha said, "We are caring for the ethnic dignity of a people who have been decimated and oppressed during five centuries of history." Brazilian society had "an unpayable debt" to the country's native peoples, Rocha said.

We live in one world, the birds who come to the lakes of the northland, Akiing, are the same as those in the rainforest. The Amazon Rainforest is considered the lungs of Mother Earth, and the people who live there need to stay there, not be replaced by some cows for MacDonalds, and some briquettes for your Green Egg barbeque. People have a right to live. That's the basic story.

These stories are not so far away, as the markets which drive the destruction of the Brazilian Amazon are coddled and fed by North American consumers. The Brazilian model is the Paul Bunyan model of how you make a future – lots of clear cutting, dams and mining. We can do better, it's time.

This August, Ecuadorians voted to protect the heart of Yasuni National Park in the Amazon rainforest in a referendum. It is the first time a national referendum will halt new and existing fossil fuel operations. Things can get done when greed and corporations are taken out.

That's not the first action in Ecuador. With the recognition of the Rights of Mother Earth as a part of Ecuador's constitution in 2008, the courts have reviewed over 55 cases on the Rights of Nature, and in December 2021, overturned mining permits in a separate area of Ecuador, the Cloud Forest, to protect the biodiversity and to protect nature. That's the model for the future, for all of us, protecting the Sacred.

The story of Brazil is the story of northern Minnesota, and indeed the intergenerational struggle of Native peoples to keep land, water, ecosystems and a way of life.

Meanwhile, in Minnesota

This October 12, ("Columbus Day"), the Giiwedining Museum opened in downtown Park Rapids, the heart of the 1855 Treaty Territory. We opened in the

former Carnegie Library, which was later turned into the Enbridge Office, the offices of greed and empire.

About 300 people came from across the region, all looking to understand better the culture, history, legal, and political issues surrounding treaties with the Anishinaabe, in this case, treaties between the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous Nations and the treaties made with the United States. And they came for the frybread, the food, the puppets, and the dancing.

It turns out that the treaties made between Indigenous nations are more just and sustainable than the treaties made with the US government. That should not be a surprise, but it should make any governance student think.

The museum, created mostly with volunteers, shows a deep commitment by Anishinaabe people, and to the stories of courageous people who protect Mother Earth, including the Water Protectors.

"It's a new concept, an important concept," says museum board member Travis Zimmerman, a descendent of the Grand Portage Ojibwe. Zimmerman is also the site manager for the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, which is run by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Giiwedining is different, he said. "A museum run by an American Indian organization, having American Indian curators, and really having that Native voice come out, is something that you don't really see much of, anywhere really, much less in Minnesota," Zimmerman told a reporter.

Sarah LittleRedFeather Kalmanson, a White Earth descendant, co-curated the museum. "We had tens of thousands of people at Standing Rock. I was there. And I want to honor that. There were a lot of atrocities that happened," she said.

Curating the museum has been healing, she says. "It was pretty brutal, what we all went through, and I just feel really energized and I'm so happy to share and carry this on," Kalmanson says. "I'm really excited to have folks come in and see how beautiful we are."

The stories of Brazil today follow the narrative of history in northern Minnesota. This is a history of settler colonialism, mining corporations, loggers, Paul Bunyan and of how things change for good and for bad. Maybe if we learn from our past, we can make a better future.

Every day is Indigenous People's Day for some of us, and really it should be for all of us, after all, we are all on Indigenous land.

The Brazilian Court decision created a worldwide celebration. We rejoiced that in some legal and political space, even the smallest, most beat up Native people could have some part of their lives and land protected. We will continue to celebrate and work for justice.

Come visit us at the museum- Thursday to Sunday or email us for special times.

For information on the new museum, see: <https://giiwedining.org>.

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MIGIZI youth center reopens after burning in Floyd unrest

BY NICOLE KI / MPR NEWS

Around 500 people gathered on October 5th to celebrate the grand opening of MIGIZI, a Native American youth center based in south Minneapolis that burned down during the unrest around the police murder of George Floyd in 2020.

“I think it really speaks to kind of this idea that we, you know, like the phoenix, right, like rising from the ashes,” said Binesikwe Means, lead media instructor at MIGIZI Communications. “That’s how we always spoke about it and talked about it.”

The ceremony took place at MIGIZI’s new, larger space at 1845 E. Lake St., which is less than a mile down Lake Street from the old location. The grand opening began with a prayer from community members and included performances from Little Earth drummers and jingle dancers to bless the center.

“This shows the resilience and the strength of the Native American community,” said Mayor Jacob Frey. “The fact that there are so many young people that will be walking through these doors, to learn and to grow, to get mentorship and to make friends, I think shows not just where we’ve come from, but where we’re going. And so this truly is a proud moment.”

Students at the center, like Cameron Toal, said they were excited that the space is finally open.

“I meet a lot of people here and I make a lot of friends and stuff like that,” said Toal. “And that to me is just like it means community to me.”

Bringing back MIGIZI after the fire

Since losing the building, MIGIZI has had to operate out of a temporary location.

“During our time in the temporary space, we didn’t have room for all of our programs,” said Means. “It was really hard to envision expanding and growing numbers because we were so limited in space.”

MIGIZI has been around since 1974 and has existed in multiple locations over the years. It does programming on green tech, media storytelling and language and culture for youth ages 14 to 20.

The new location, which is nearly double the size of the burned-down location, has been open to students since July and added a teen tech center that’s equipped with computers, camera equipment and a studio to produce music and creative art.

“With this building and all of the beautiful spaces that we’ve really created

together, I think with the new buzz of an influx of students, we’ve just really enjoyed and really felt this building come alive of all the possibilities that can happen for our community, for our programs and for the organization,” said Means.

In 2020, MIGIZI had been working out of its recently renovated center for eight months when the unrest broke out. It was one of the only buildings in that part of Lake Street that was untouched for the first couple days, but it eventually burned after a neighboring fire spread.

“It was unfortunate to lose the building,” said Means. “But we are also very proud of all the community members that showed up. The American Indian Movement came through and really helped us protect and secure our building and I think it speaks to the power of community, that we were the only business on that block that wasn’t looted, wasn’t broken into.”

MIGIZI deputy director Lisa Skjefte said the community helped salvage artwork and archive materials from the fire.

“It was really important to save the old digital, the old film, the old tapes, and we have so many stories, a collection of stories of American Indian perspective, and news and media going back to the 1970s,” said Skjefte.

The center’s comeback is funded by \$6.6 million raised in donations from across the country. It’s located just two blocks from South High School, where MIGIZI recruits Native students from their All Nations program, an academic program for American Indian students.

To bring the space to life, Means said it was important to ask for student input on what the center should look like. And she’s looking forward to seeing how the students use the new space.

“We’re just really excited for all of the different pieces that are coming through, how our program is growing and expanding in this new space, and how we can continue to keep the legacy of the original MIGIZI alive, this idea of raising the next generation of storytellers,” said Means.

Top: Jingle dancers, from left, Nina Berglund, Holly Henning and Lesley Shabaiash stand outside the new MIGIZI location in south Minneapolis during the grand opening. (All photos by Brooklynn Kascel / MPR News.)

Middle: Little Earth drummers, from left, Nation Wright, Vincent Dionne, Crow Bellecourt and Zack Red Bear perform during the grand opening.

Bottom: A large crowd attends the grand opening for MIGIZI.

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The board of directors and staff of the Minnesota Indigenous Business Alliance would like to Congratulate the 2023 Bush Prize Winners!

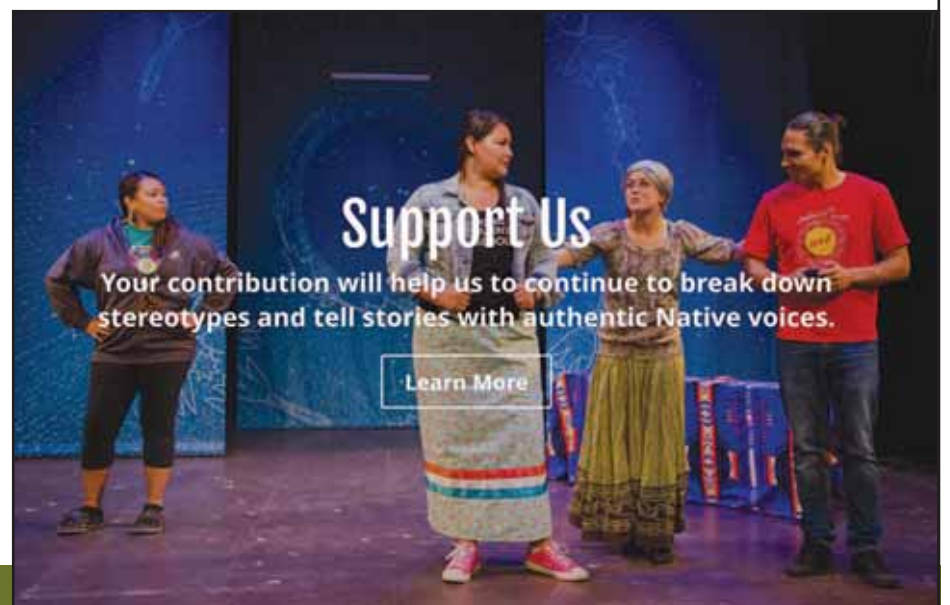
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IHB holds site blessing for future Menaandawiwe Healing Campus

On Indigenous Peoples' Day, October 9, the Indian Health Board of Minneapolis (IHB) held a site blessing for the future home of the Menaandawiwe Healing Campus at 2027 E. Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis.

The day kicked off with a "Make Voting a Tradition" event, a unique collaboration between IHB, American Indian OIC/Takoda (AIOIC), and Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI).

Attendees enjoyed wild rice soup, drumming, raffles, and tabling events. Special speeches were delivered by Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan and MN Secretary of State Steve Simon, who highlighted the importance of civic engagement and voting within the American Indian community.

The Southside Ramblers drum group and the Little Earth Protectors led a procession to the Menaandawiwe site. Upon arrival, IHB's CEO Dr. Patrick Rock (Leech Lake) welcomed the crowd and highlighted the integral role the new campus will play in community wellness. "Menaandawiwe isn't just a building; it's a commitment to the holistic well-being of our community," he said.

Dr. Rock honored four MN state legislators for their advocacy – Rep.



Top left: A drum procession makes its way from the AIOIC to the site of the future Menaandawiwe Healing Campus. (Photo by Frank Gomez.)



Top right: IHB Elder-in-Residence Richard Wright blesses the land for Menaandawiwe. (Photo by S-L Productions.)

Heather Keeler, Sen. Mary Kunesh, Rep. Samantha Sencer-Mura, and Sen. Zaynab Mohamed.

Special guests included Governor Tim Walz, Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, U.S. Senator Tina Smith, and Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. Each



Left to right: DHS Commissioner Jodi Harpstead, Gov. Tim Walz, Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, U.S. Senator Tina Smith, IHB CEO Dr. Patrick Rock, MN Sen. Melissa Wiklund, and MN Sen. Mary Kunish. (Photo by S-L Productions.)

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spoke to the transformative potential of the Menaandawiwe Healing Campus and the significance of having Indigenous Peoples' Day stand as its own holiday.

Following the speeches, the land itself was honored. Richard Wright (Leech Lake Elder-in-Residence at IHB) performed a site blessing. He explained how the name came to him for Menaandawiwe, which means "a place where healing happens." In a dream he saw an isolated site with encampments of Indian people surrounded by nature, which made him think of "an old-style Indian camp" in a sacred garden with people helping others and healing them.

The vision for Menaandawiwe is that

it becomes a place of healing and wellness for urban. The land was further prepared by traditional grass dancers, who then led a Round Dance, bringing community together.

Emcee Michael Harris (IHB Communications Director) gave special thanks to key partners. DSGW's Managing Principal, architect Mike Laverdure (Turtle Mountain), leads the design team which provided refreshments and giveaways. The Woodstone Inc. construction team, led by CEO Paul Meyer (White Earth), sponsored the IHB raffle and more refreshments.

A traveling song, offered by the Southside Ramblers, signaled the end to a day filled with purpose and promise.

New Native Theatre Presents A Christmas In Ochopee

BY NOREEN QUADIR

Join the Wheelleys, a loving Miccosukee family living in the Florida Everglades, as they try their best to prepare their holiday feast among the chaos of secret fiances, competitive lawn decorating, basketball gambling, and alligator wrestling in “A Christmas in Ochopee”, is a comedy produced by New Native Theatre that runs November 29th to December 17th at the Red Eye Theater in Minneapolis. It will be their first production since being named a 2023 recipient of Headwaters Foundation for Justice 2023 Bush Prize.

The Bush Prize recognizes New Native Theatre’s approach to decolonizing the theater ecosystem and creating a living expression of indigenous storytelling that centers Native artists and audiences. The theatre has a new way of thinking about, looking at, and creating authentic Native American stories for the stage. Based in the Twin Cities, it is the most frequently producing and largest professional Native American theatre company in the Midwest focusing exclusively on Native American playwrights, actors, directors, and audiences.

Artistic Director, Rhiana Yazzie, said “It’s an honor to be recognized for a prize that often goes to organizations fighting injustices in the social sector. Being a theater that brings the Native American experience to the stage, we can’t do business as usual, we must redefine what theater is and make it accessible and relevant to Native community.”

A Christmas in Ochopee was written by Miccosukee playwright Montana Cypress who is also a filmmaker and actor, and is the winner of the Von Marie Atchley Excellence in Playwriting Award and was a Semi-Finalist for the Eugene O’Neill Playwriting Conference.

New Native Theatre Artistic Producer, Charli Fool Bear says, “When planning our season, it was important for us to capture the joy and humor found in Native community. In A Christmas in Ochopee, Montana perfectly captures so much of the Native experience: large, loving, and dysfunctional families, sibling rivalry, a love of basketball, and above all, a reverence for community. Despite taking place in sunny Florida, I think this hilarious story will resonate with all of the different nations represented in the tapestry of Minneapolis’ Native community.”

The play features both up and coming and seasoned Native actors, typical of New Native Theatre’s aesthetic including, Bradley Lewis, JaLisa McKee, Thomas Draskovic, Genevieve Lane, David Valentine, Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra, James Harvin, and Roya Taylor.

Artistic Producer, Trey Porter, added that the production features an Ojibwe clothing designer, “We have the pleasure of working with Amber Buckanaga, a New York Fashion Week featured designer and founder of Buckanaga Social Club, who will create our costumes!”

New Native Theatre, based in the Twin Cities, is the most frequently producing and largest professional Native American theatre company in the

Midwest focusing exclusively on Native American playwrights, actors, directors, and audiences.

According to their website: “Since 2009, NNT has created authentic and transformative plays and events through the lens of the Native American experience. Artistic Director, Rhiana Yazzie, enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, started NNT to bridge the gap between the 100 theatres in town and the large urban Native community. NNT engages artists and audience by 1) Producing commissioned and existing plays by Native playwrights. 2) Producing community created plays about cultural and social justice topics. 3) Presenting the best Native American productions from around North America. 4) Providing an array of theatre training to Native American community members. 5) Engaging in collaborations with Native artists and Native organizations of varying artistic disciplines.”

A Christmas in Ochopee runs Wednesdays through Sundays between November 29th and December 17th. Tickets are pay-what-you-can with a suggested price of \$35. Audiences can buy tickets on New Native Theatre’s Brown Paper Tickets event page, achristmasinchopee.brownpapertickets.com.

For more details, contact New Native Theatre at 612-367-7639, by email at info@newnativetheatre.org, or visit www.newnativetheatre.org.

For ticket info, email: boxoffice@newnativetheatre.org.



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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

Given security considerations mostly anchored in not understanding the religious nature of sweatlodge ceremonies, the agreement with the Department of Corrections will allow Native prisons to have four such events annually. A second one is scheduled next month on Dec. 16.

With legal matters out of the way, prisoners, Native American chaplains and others went to work finding allies and supporters. Not surprisingly, that brought them in contact with Cherokee Park United Church (CPUC) in St. Paul's West Side. It is a civil rights-active congregation with long ties with the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Tribal Community (MMDTC).

The church is a merger of both Presbyterian and United Church of Christ congregations and continues to be members of both church bodies. Active within the church are MMDTC members connected to Native causes and events.

These latter ties led to Simpson, Banks and another prisoner, Dale Arnold, along with their prison chaplain friends, to reach out to the church, said Sue Sorensen Navarre, a MMDTC member, Twin Cities business owner and CPUC church member.

She and her husband Lon Navarre,



Volunteers dig up ground where the sweatlodge will be placed. (All photos by Cherokee Park United Church.)

a pipekeeper for the Mendota Mdewakanton tribe and retired St. Paul Public Works employee, were connected with people involved with the project. That included Chaplain Ammon Bailey, a Native American who provides services under contract with Pennsylvania Corrections, and Johnny Creed Coe, a nationally known artist from Pittsburgh who is

Lakota and originally from South Dakota.

Sue Sorensen Navarre told *The Circle* that Coe is a long-time sundancer who danced for four years at the American Indian Movement Sundance at Pipestone. "His sons dance there now," she said.

Among Minnesota volunteers who pitched in on the effort was Dr. Tom

Weaver, a retired Minneapolis and St. Cloud doctor who also had practiced medicine in prisons.

Such talents and personal commitments made a fit with the prisoners for the Cherokee Park church. It has a long involvement in civil rights activities and Martin Luther King Jr. observances, and with powwows with the Mendota Mdewakanton community.

Former Benner Township prisoners Arnold and Banks used an award from their successful litigation against the Pennsylvania corrections system to seed a GoFundMe campaign started by the Rev. Matthias Peterson-Brandt at CPUC.

In the GoFundMe appeal, Pastor Peterson-Brandt explains that the church (CPUC) is acting as the fiscal steward for United Native Prisoners of PA's religious ceremonies and works to procure supplies needed for sweatlodges.

These efforts have been in the works for several years. The fundraising objective is \$10,000 that will be used for the following items:

\$2,500 for tarpaulin covers, \$500 for saplings for the lodge frame, \$1,000 for lava stones, \$1,500 for outdoor heavy-duty storage boxes for sacred items and tools, \$1,000 for materials to build a lean-to structure

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for changing clothes, \$500 for sacred items, sage, smudge can, antlers, water dipper, and buckets for water; \$1,300 for cords of wood sufficient for seven or eight sweat lodge ceremonies, \$400 for shovels, globes and tools for tending fires; and \$1,300 for miscellaneous costs such as permit fees, honorarium for helpers and elders, waterline installation to the ceremony grounds, plus twine, blankets and seating around the ceremonial grounds.

“Establishing this sweatlodge will help many other inmates on their path of rehabilitation in the future,” Peterson-Brandt states in the appeal.

Such impacted prisoners do move on with their lives, Simpson and Banks said in an interview. They, for instance, are now working on establishing an American Indian Movement (AIM) chapter in Pennsylvania. Dennis Banks (Leech Lake Ojibwe), a founder of the AIM who died in 2017, continues to serve as an inspiration for the Pennsylvania movement but is not an ancestor, Running River Banks said.

The latter Banks has also written a book, published in 2021, *Our Ancestors Are Proud! A Native American Prison Story*. It is available through bookstores or from Amazon. And, he said, he has another book, *Forgotten Nation*, which will be published within weeks. It is a look back

at the long Native American history of this country that is usually ignored, Banks said.

Several participants in this joint Minnesota-Pennsylvania sweatlodge project used terms such as “spiritual,” “sacred,” “life-changing” to describe what they experienced in building the sweatlodge and then watching Native prisoners put it to use along with drummers and singers.

They weren’t alone, said Lisa Yankton. “As we were finishing, two eagles soared above us.” It was as if they were “checking out what we had done. I’ll never forget it.”

The GoFundMe online link can be found at <https://gofund.me/7a47c7dd>. The search title on the site is: “Inmates Need a Place to Pray.”

Additional information is available at: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-native-inmates-religious-rights> and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/cherokeeparkchurch/posts/10157972893303004>.

Running River Bank’s book, *Our Ancestors Are Proud! A Native American Prison Story*, is on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/Our-Ancestors-Are-Proud-American/dp/1637510268>.



Top: The sweatlodge’s “bones” and overall structure is complete.
Bottom: The sweatlodge is done and ready for use by the Native inmates.



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DJ Smith, three-sport athlete at Moorhead High School

DJ Smith (Yankton Sioux) is a senior at Moorhead High School. He is winding down his final season as a football captain and will be transitioning into the basketball season and ending up with the track season.

The Moorhead HS Spuds football team are 5-4 after winning their first round section game 42-0 versus winless Sartell-St. Stephen on October 24. They played 7-1 Brainerd a few days later and results were not avail-

able at press time.

Smith's athletic highlights include winning a past section championship in basketball and football. He has received college offers to play football.

This football season he has 504 yards, 40 receptions and nine touchdowns. His career stats are 830 yards and 11 touchdowns. Last basketball season he averaged 10.0 points, 4.5 rebounds and 3 assists as a starter. In



DJ Smith is a 3-sport athlete who participates in football, basketball and track. (Photo courtesy of Moorhead Highschool.)

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track last season he had personal bests: 11.5 in the 100m dash, and a 22.5 in the 200m.

Smith strives to connect to his indigenous core values on and off the field, court and track. He said, "Being a good leader to the younger generations that look up to me and showing them that hard work will pay off are my core values that I hold myself accountable. I also have to stay balanced, and to take care of myself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually."

As a three-sport athlete he is focusing on being at a high performing level each day. "I'm working to compete to finish my high-school football season with a state ring," said Smith. "I work hard at practice every day and to be the best leader possible."

Brandon Yoney is DJ's football position coach at Moorhead HS.

"DJ has all the assets you look for in a WR," said Coach Brandon Yoney. "He has the physical tools and ball skills to make plays. This year he

has really grown in his understanding of defensive coverage and using leverage to set up his routes."

"I have watched DJ develop as a leader and a player that looks out for his younger teammates. I cannot tell you how many times this season I have seen him talk to a young guy and correct their mistakes or let them know where they need to be. As a parent I am grateful my son has gotten to learn directly from DJ's example," added Yoney.

"DJ is a natural leader who is able to connect with all members of our team," said Matt Ellingson, head boys' basketball coach at Moorhead HS. "He has a great ability to know if someone needs to hear words of encouragement or if he needs to challenge someone to be at their best. It is truly a joy to coach a student-athlete like DJ Smith and I am looking forward to his upcoming senior season."

Spotlight on Native culture

I just got back from a Sunday night performance of “For the People,” a play about Native life on Franklin Avenue, at the Guthrie Theater. The satirical work, by Ty Defoe and Larissa FastHorse, concerns a plot to gentrify the Avenue and the spirited resistance to the evil plot. Since Mr. Arthur’s bar became a florist shop and then a Chase Bank branch, the gentrification ship has sailed, so to speak; but it’s best to suspend disbelief and enjoy the show.

The play features much self-deprecating humor and some surprising special effects. The endearing and talented cast includes Wes Studi, direct from his role as Bucky in “Reservation Dogs.” It’s Studi’s debut at the Guthrie.

Developed over four years with significant input from the local American Indian community, “For the People” is the Guthrie’s “first mainstage production written by Native playwrights about Native people,” according to Joseph Haj, the theater’s artistic director. The play runs through Nov. 12.

In addition to the Guthrie, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia), Walker Art Center and the Minnesota History Center currently are focusing on Native artists and lifeways. I can’t recall a similar moment like this in the Twin Cities over recent decades.

In October, I attended the preview party for the extensive exhibition titled “In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now,” which is on view at the Minneapolis Institute of Art’s Target Gallery through Jan. 14, 2024.

The photos range from intimate photos of Indians at home and at work to whimsical creations by contemporary artists. I was not aware that Native photographers were focusing on their people some 100 years ago. “In Our Hands,” which features some 150 photos, is curated by Jaida Grey Eagle (Oglala Lakota), a photojournalist and Mia guest curator; Casey Riley, Mia’s chair of global contemporary art and curator of photography and new media; and Jill Ahlberg Yohe, associate curator of Native American art. The three curators of the exhibit partnered with a curatorial council of 14 advisors, “internationally renowned artists, academics, and knowledge-sharers based in Canada and United States,” according to Mia publicity.

At the well-attended preview party, I chatted with Joe Allen, a former editor of *The Circle*, whose photo “Free the Land,” a chromogenic print, depicts an illuminated teepee adjacent to the Minneapolis Institute of Art. The photo appeared on the cover of the Jan. 1993 edition of *The Circle*.

Over in St. Paul, another photography exhibit, “Reframing Our Stories,” opened Oct. 21 at the Minnesota History Center. “From a decades-old box of photographs simply labeled ‘Indians,’ came the idea for a powerful new exhibit,” according to the MHS website. “Inside the box were dozens of pictures of Native community members, organizations, activities, and events that are relevant today. Now in the hands of Indigenous community members, those photos have new meaning.”

“Reframing Our Stories,” which will be on view for the next two years, is part of the larger “Our Home: Native Minnesota” exhibit, which encompasses the history and lifeways of the 11 sovereign tribal nations in what is now called Minnesota.

And the Walker Art Center is concluding a retrospective of films by Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki), who has been called “the grandmother of Indigenous film.” I was out of the country for much of October, so missed out on the film screenings. A concluding community reception and conversation with Obomsawin, on Nov. 2, will include a screening of her first film, “Christmas at Moose Factory” (1971, 13 min.), which is composed entirely of drawings and stories by young Cree children at an Ontario residential school. The event

will be recorded by MIGIZI’s First Person Productions, so it might be available for viewing online at some point.

On the road again

My wife and I flew to Copenhagen on Oct. 5. Our son Max has been living in the Danish capital for the past five years, and this was our fourth visit with him in his adopted land. Max and his girlfriend live in Nørrebro, which has been dubbed “the coolest neighborhood in the world” – you can check it out in numerous YouTube videos.

Shortly after our arrival in Denmark, Hamas fighters from Gaza invaded Israel and slaughtered 1,400 people, mainly civilians, including children and elderly residents. Of course, Israel responded and a horrific military assault on the tiny coastal enclave ensued. In Stockholm, we saw a large pro-Palestinian demonstration in Sergels Torg, a central plaza in the Swedish capital. Across the plaza, a group of neo-Nazis, the Nordic Resistance Movement, displayed their flags and a large banner that read KROSSA SIONISMEN! (Crush Zionism).

I wonder why war remains such a popular human activity.

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American Indian Group Prenatal

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Waite House Middle School Programming

Join our Middle School Programming! We will be offering tutoring services and craft making workshops. We will be doing tab bracelet's, candles, piñatas, plastic earrings and other projects. Drop-off transportation is provided within 1 mile-radius of Waite House. Mondays and Tuesdays from 3:30pm-6:30pm. For more info, email: Kaycm@pillsburyunited.org. Waite House, 2323 11th Ave. S., Minneapolis. For info, see: pucmn.org/waite-house.

Thru Nov 12 For the People

For the People, a world premiere comedy by Native voices. By Ty DeFoe and Larissa Fasthorse. April Dakota has well-meaning but misguided dreams of opening a wellness center on Franklin Avenue to serve the Indigenous community in her Minneapolis hometown. She's counting on a grant from the Franklin Avenue Task Force — a

group of endearing Native elders and leaders — to make it happen. But her presentation goes sideways and her proposal is rejected, forcing her to make a decision that puts her dream, the community and her culture at risk. Thankfully, the Task Force pulls together to help April fight for the future of Franklin Avenue and the people who call it home. Created in partnership with the local Indigenous community, this new comedy examines the myriad facets of contemporary Native life with humor and joy. Guthrie Theater, McGuire Proscenium Stage, 818 S 2nd St, Minneapolis. For info: <https://www.guthrietheater.org>.

Nov 3 (starts)

We Are Still Here Art Show
"We Are Still Here" features Native artists from across Turtle Island, "We Are Still Here" brings to the fore the life, histories and politics of what it means to be Indigenous in the 21st Century. Artists featured in this year's show include Jennifer Adams, Armond Antonio, Tamara Aupaumut, Racquel Banaszak, Aiyana Beaulieu, Carly Bordeau, Jamie Z Brown, Awanigiizhik Bruce, Shaun Chosa, Robert Desjarlait, Kent Estey, Gidinatiy Hartman, Madeline Hernandez, Rayshele Kamke, Chanti Manon-Ferguson, Niki Pico, Abby Sunde. Tammy Villegas, and Sam Zimmerman. "We Are Still Here" Opening Reception 6-8pm. For info, see: <http://www.friedliartsgallery.com>.

Thru Jan 13

Aabijjiwan Ukeyat yanalleh Exhibit

Aabijjiwan Ukeyat yanalleh is a collaborative exhibition from artists Karen Goulet (Ojibwe) and Monique Verdin (Houma). Karen and Monique are sisters of the same river, connected by the planetary life force known as the Misi-ziibi (Big River, Ojibwe) near the headwaters in the north and remembered as Misha sipokni (Older than Time, Chata) in the coastal territories of the southern Delta. All My Relations Arts, 1414 East Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://nacdi.org/events/aabijjiwan-ukeyat-yanalleh-opening-reception>.

Thru Jan 14

In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now

Enter into the vivid worlds of Native photography, as framed by generations of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Native American photographers themselves. Presenting over 150 photographs of, by, and for Indigenous people, "In Our Hands" welcomes all to see through the lens held by Native photographers. Organized by a council of primarily Native artists, scholars, and knowledge sharers, in partnership with Mia curators, this sweeping exhibition traces the intersecting histories of photography and diverse Indigenous cultures from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Circle. Beautiful, complex, and surprising, these artworks celebrate the legacy of groundbreaking photographers and their influence on the medium today. General Admission \$20; Contributor Member+ Free (additional tickets \$16); Youth 17 and under Free. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2400 Third Ave S, Minneapolis.

For info, see: <https://new.artsmia.org/exhibition/in-our-hands-native-photography-1890-to-now>.

Thru March '24 The Lyrical Artwork of Jim Denomie

The Minneapolis Institute of Art will survey Jim Denomie's expansive artistic career in The Lyrical Artwork of Jim Denomie. This exhibition surveys the artist's singular vision and signature style over the second half of the artist's career, from 2007 to 2022. Jim Denomie (Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, 1955–2022) drew inspiration from lived experiences, pop culture, Anishinaabe traditions, and American histories to tell compelling narratives that depict his experiences of being Native in America. The exhibition examines Denomie's creative process, tracing his ability to transform inspiration into monumental artworks. Free. MIA, 2400 3rd Ave S, Minneapolis. For more info, see: <https://new.artsmia.org/exhibition/the-lyrical-artwork-of-jim-denomie>.

Thru Oct 2025

Reframing Our Stories

Witness the resilience and strength of Minnesota's Native communities through stories reframed by their own words, experiences, and perspectives. From a decades-old box of photographs simply labeled "Indians," came the idea for a powerful new exhibit. Inside the box were dozens of pictures of Native community members, organizations, activities, and events that are relevant today. Now in the hands of Indigenous community members,

those photos have new meaning. As part of the Our Home: Native Minnesota exhibit, Reframing Our Stories showcases the strength and resilience of Native people and inspires audiences to learn about the past, present, and future of these communities. Native community members get in free. Minnesota Historical Society, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul. For info, see: <https://www.mnhs.org/historycenter/activities/museum/our-home/reframing-our-stories>.

Nov 3 (starts) Dances with Words

Are you interested in writing? Learn how to express yourself. Create wonderful pieces of poetry and connect with other young indigenous artists. We are recruiting up to 15 Native young adults (ages 18-24) for paid poetry workshops exploring identity, Dakota and Lakota literature and culture. Earn a stipend for participating. Workshop every Friday starting Nov 3rd, from 11am to 2pm. Open to all who identify as Indigenous/POC. All Nations Indian Church, 1515 E 23rd St, Mpls. For info, call 612-702-2640 or email janet@indigenouspeoplestf.org.

Nov 3, 17

Men's Warrior Society

Join NACC, Red Lake, and LERA for a Men's Warrior Society meeting where we will meet to create community level change. Food and beverages provided. We will meet every other Friday starting Nov 3. Little Earth Residence Association (LERA), 2495 18th Ave S, Minneapolis. For info, contact Vin Dion at 612-499-8262.

Nov 6 - Dec 29

Mazinibiigewiniwag Two Woodland Artists

AICHO Galleries is honored to bring together Gordon Coons (Lac Courte Oreilles) and Steven StandingCloud (Red Lake) in the group art exhibition "Mazinibiigewiniwag: Two Woodland Artists." This art exhibition will explore the power of connection to nature, culture, spirituality, and Ojibwe realities (past and present) through Coons and StandingCloud's strikingly bold and meaningful Anishinaabeg Woodland symbolic imagery. 10am - 5pm. AICHO, 212 W. 2nd St, Duluth. For info, see: <https://www.aicho.org/mazinibiigewiniwag.html>.

Nov 10

Larry Amik Smallwood

Make your way to Birchbark Bizhiw for what is sure to be a night full of

good laughs! Michael Mizigi Sullivan Sr. will join us to talk about the new book, Plums or Nuts: Ojibwe Stories of Anishinaabe Humor as told to him by Larry Amik Smallwood. Amik had the gift of making people laugh. Of all the teachings Amik strove to pass along to his students, he cherished most the humor of his Ojibwe people. In this bilingual collection, Amik tells of his many adventures and those of others he knew. This book also provides plentiful Ojibwe-language idioms, plays on words, and puns, showing that it really is funnier in Ojibwe. Michael Sullivan Sr., Amik's language student and assistant, introduces the stories and presents them in Ojibwe and English with an Ojibwe-to-English glossary. Sullivan Sr. is a life-long student of the Ojibwe language, father, husband, ceremonial drum keeper of the Ojibwe, pow-wow emcee, up-and-coming storyteller, and teacher of the Ojibwe language. Sullivan earned his doctorate in linguistics at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, working under the tutelage of Larry Amik Smallwood. 7pm. Birchbark Bizhiw, 1629 Hennepin Ave, #275 Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://birchbarkbooks.com>.

Nov 11 (starts)

Secrets from a Forest

The Bell is pleased to announce its newest original planetarium production, Secrets from a Forest, that tells an interwoven story of the relationship between nature and art through the exquisite and rare Stradivarius Violin. The story begins deep in the Paneveggio Forest in the Dolomite Mountains of Northern Italy, where spruce trees grow over 200 feet tall in the crisp alpine air. During this feature-length planetarium show, audiences will explore the majestic Paneveggio Forest throughout the seasons and observe the role of smaller life forms that shape the growth of Paneveggio's towering trees. After a spruce is harvested on the winter solstice, audiences will be transported to a violin maker's studio, for an intimate and first-hand look at the creation of this exquisite instrument. Bell Museum, 2088 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul. For info, see: <https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/blog/secrets-forest>.

Nov 11

Free medical/dental clinic

Compassion Roseville is offering a one-day-only, free medical/dental clinic that will prioritize low income and uninsured people and families. Services provided first come, first served. No cost services will include:



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NOVEMBER 7TH Election Day. Vote.

Find out important voting information for your precinct by entering your address into the Polling Place Finder at: <https://pollfinder.sos.mn.go>.

Community Calendar listings are FREE

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

Dental fillings, extractions and cleaning; Medical exams for kids and adults; Vision checks and free glasses; Social services; and Physical therapy. From 9-4pm at the Anpétu Téca Education Center, 1910 County B Rd W, Roseville. For info, see: <https://compassionconnect.com/compassion-roseville-mn-free-health-clinic/>

Nov 12
IHB Bingo

Honoring our wellness and health. Lets play bingo and learn about diabetes, healthy living, wellness and more. Great prizes and more. Second Tuesdays of the month. Noon. Must register at least 24 hours in advance. Indian Health Board, 2020 Minneahaha Ave, Minneapolis. Bingo will also be held on **Dec 12th**. For info, see: <https://www.indianhealthboard.com>

Nov 15
Reading and Celebration with Linda LeGarde Grover

Join us in celebrating Linda LeGarde Grover's latest novel, *A Song Over Miskwaa Rapids*. In her latest novel, she weaves an intimate and complex novel of Mochay Point and its people with *A Song over Miskwaa Rapids*. Margie Robineau, fighting for her family's long-held allotment land, uncovers events connected to a long-ago escape plan, and the burial—at once figurative and painfully real—of not one crime but two. LeGarde Grover is professor of American Indian studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth and a member of the Bois Forte Band of Ojibwe. 7pm. Birchbark Bizhiw, 1629 Hennepin Ave, #275 Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://birchbarkbooks.com>.

Nov 16
Women's Health Day

Pap-tests start at age 21 and should be completed every 3 to 5 years. Mammograms start at age 40 and should be completed annually. Appointments available to pre-existing patients at IHB. Call to schedule an appointment at 612-721-9800. Indian Health Board, 1315 E 24th St, Minneapolis.

Nov 16
Poetry SLAM

Watermark's 2023 Spoken Word Series continues with another Poetry SLAM to be held LIVE at Fozzie's BBQ. A poetry slam is a competitive art event in which poets perform spoken word poetry before a live audience and a panel of judges. Slammers can secure their spot by pre-registering with Watermark Art Center at 218-444-7570 or sign up at Fozzie's in downtown Bemidji beginning at 6:30pm the night of the SLAM! Performances start at 7pm. There is no charge to participate. Fozzie's BBQ, 114 3rd St NW, Bemidji, MN For info, see: <https://watermarkartcenter.org>.

Nov 16 - 17
DIW Fall Feast Basket Giveaway

It is time again to sign up for Fall Feast Baskets! You must sign up by Nov 15th at 12pm or until the list is full. Pickups will take place November 16th from noon to 3 pm (elders only 55 and up); and Nov 17th from noon to 3pm (ages 54 and under). How to sign up: come in person during food shelf hours or call the food shelf at 612-279-6343 to sign up (one household per call). Must have ID on pick-up day. Division of Indian Work, 1001 E

Lake St, Minneapolis. For info, call Sandra Rivera 612-722-8722.

Nov 17
NativeRISE: Soaring to New Heights

NativeRISE brings together more than 250 community and business leaders, supporters and elected officials to celebrate American Indian OIC's impact in the community. We'll begin the evening with a social hour, followed by a welcome, prayer, honor song and dinner. The program will highlight several soaring "eagles" among us, including invited speakers: Cara Jade Myers, an actress currently appearing in *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a new film directed by Martin Scorsese (Wichita Tribe); Peggy Flanagan, Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor (White Earth Nation); Eddie Chuculate, author of *This Indian Kid* and *Cheyenne Madonna*, *Star Tribune* copy editor (Cherokee & Muscogee Nation); and Trish Cook, local comedian and the evening's emcee (Red Lake Nation). 5:30pm – Social Hour. 6:30pm – Dinner & Program. 8:30pm – DJ & Dancing. *Windows on Minnesota in the IDS Center*, 50th Floor, 710 S, Marquette Ave, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://www.aioic.org/get-involved/nativerise>.

Nov 20 (deadline)
Capacity Strengthening Initiative grants

The Center for Health Equity (CHE) at MDH announces Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Capacity Strengthening Grant (CSG) program, which will award \$1.832 million in state general funds for smaller community- and faith-based organizations serving BIPOC communities,

American Indians, LGBTQIA+ people, and people living with disabilities among metro and rural communities across Minnesota. Applicants will be asked to provide a plan that includes, but is not limited to, activities contributing to three key objectives: Strengthening organizational partnerships to improve health outcomes; Infrastructure improvement to be better equipped for success, and; Workforce development to create a positive impact. Applicants can expect to be notified about the status of their application in February 2024. For info, see: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/funding/csirfp2023/index.html>.

Nov 20
MUID Family Preservation Subcommittee

Join the Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors (MUID) Family Preservation Subcommittee for our annual ICWA Meet and Greet! From 11:30am to 1:30pm. The Meet and Greet will be followed by a CEU "Best Practices for Working with Native Families and Urban Native Agencies" and a CLE "ICWA/MIFPA Best Practices in Minnesota District Courts" from 2 – 3pm. Metro State University New Main, 403 Maria Avenue, St. Pau. Please RSVP here: <https://ICWA-Meet-and-Greet.eventbrite.com>.

Nov 29 - Dec 17
A Christmas in Ochopee by Montana Cypress

New Native Theatre presents *A Christmas in Ochopee* by Montana Cypress (Miccosukee), directed by Julia Rosa Sosa. Ever wanted to spend Christmas in the Everglades? Join us for this rollicking comedy this winter! Nov 29 - Dec 17,

Wednesdays to Saturdays at 7:30pm, and Sundays at 2pm. Tickets are all pay-what-you-can and are available using QR code. Red Eye Theater, 2213 Snelling Ave, Minneapolis. For info, see www.newnativetheatre.org or boxoffice@newnativetheatre.org.

Nov 30 (deadline)
Indigenous Youth Fellowships

Indigenous Youth Fellowships supports young Indigenous leaders aged 17-28 to develop capacities in Indigenous rights, Indigenous languages, cultures, and traditional knowledge. Cultural Survival's Indigenous Youth Fellowship Project was started to support young Indigenous leaders aged 17-28 in creating and disseminating knowledge through creative forms and critical thinking. Fellows work to represent the voices of their communities and bring awareness of local issues to global conversations through their proposed projects while strengthening their cultural identities and leadership. We highly value the participation and inclusion of women and underrepresented genders (cis women, trans women, trans men, Two-Spirits, non-binary people, and other marginalized genders). Fellowship range: \$2,500 - \$6,000. Deadline is Nov 30. For info, see: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/open-call-indigenous-youth-changemakers>

Dec 3
Artist Talk: Jaida Grey Eagle

Join Jaida Grey Eagle (Oglala Lakota), co-curator of *In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890-Now*, for a lecture and conversation regarding her multidisciplinary artistic practice. Grey Eagle is an internationally rec-

ognized photojournalist, producer, beadwork artist, and writer whose work has been featured in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Sahan Journal*, and will share her experiences in centering Indigenous voices through her work. The event will conclude in a Q&A with Grey Eagle and Casey Riley, Chair of Global Contemporary Art and Curator of Photography & New Media. All Native guests can attend the lecture for free with the code NATIVEPHOTO. 2pm. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2400 Third Ave S, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://new.artsmia.org/event/artist-talk-jaida-grey-eagle>.

Dec 11 (deadline)
Minnesota Humanities Center Funding

The Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) is extending the current grant opportunities deadline to December 11 for the following grant lines: \$8 million in Cultural Heritage for humanities organizations & individuals, to create programming and educational opportunities; \$750,000 in Capacity building for small non-profit humanities organizations, to assist with grant writing and fundraising; \$2.2 million in Children's museums for children's museums to provide education, outreach, and programming; and \$300,000 in Civics organizations and programs to provide and conduct civics education programs to youth. For info, see: www.mnhum.org or contact MHC's Grant Administrator, Laura Adams, at laura.adams@mnhum.org.



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New Native Theatre Presents

Ever wanted to spend Christmas in the Everglades? Join us for this rollicking comedy this winter!

A Christmas in Ochopee

by Montana Cypress (Miccosukee)
Directed by Julia Rosa Sosa

Red Eye Theater, 2213 Snelling Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55404

November 29th - December 17, 2023
Wednesdays to Saturdays @ 7:30pm/Sundays @ 2pm

For more information contact us! boxoffice@newnativetheatre.org (612)367-7639
Tickets are pay what you can, available here

www.newnativetheatre.org

This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

This big world can be a lonely place

BY ARNE VAINIO, MD

“**H**as it really been sixteen years?” “It has.” She answered. “I still think about him every day.”

She was 78 now and I could tell seeing me brought back a flood of memories. When he was dying, I saw them almost every week and I hadn’t seen her since his funeral. I remembered the flower arrangements and the bulletin boards covered with photos flanking his casket. Those old pictures had been pulled out of albums and were curling in the corners and they showed me a side of him I never knew.

She was too heartbroken and too busy at the funeral to talk to and I didn’t see her again, but I thought of them off and on over the years. They were married for just over forty years when he died. He was a veteran and there were photos of him when he came back from the war. He was young and thin in them and there was no hint of the liver cancer that would eventually take him.

I started to see him when his legs began to swell and his skin turned yellow. His liver tests were elevated and a CT scan showed several large masses in his liver had spread to other organs in his belly. He was hoping for surgery, but his cancer had spread into too many places. Chemotherapy made him sick, but he wanted to stay alive long enough to watch his tenth-grade granddaughter graduate and he was willing to do what he needed to do.

His hair fell out, but then began to come back and it was wavy and thick and gray. His liver tests seemed to get better for a while, then his jaundice and his swelling came back. He was following up with the Oncologist, the cancer specialist and they changed his chemotherapy to a different regimen.

I wasn’t really taking care of his cancer, but they liked that I explained everything to them in a way they could understand. They were both too respectful of the Oncologist to really ask him questions and they felt if they had to ask him to explain something again, it would mean they thought he wasn’t telling them the truth.

As his liver continued to fail, the complications increased. He started to get confused and had to start a medicine to get rid of ammonia and the medicine made him have diarrhea. Once he was in a store and he didn’t make it to the bathroom and he never went back to that store again.

His belly started to swell and it made it hard for him to breathe. He had the fluid drained off by the Radiologist and it came back a couple of weeks later. Clotting factors are made in the liver and he got a nosebleed that wouldn’t stop and had to have a nasal packing done in the emergency room. That was a painful procedure and he told me he never wanted to do that again.

His back started to hurt and a scan showed his cancer had spread to his spine. He had to take narcotic pain medicines and the resulting constipation was so severe he had to be seen in the emergency room several times for enemas.

All the while, they continued to see me and I followed him when he was in the hospital. They were both happy to see me and he was in the hospital the last morning I saw him. He was feeling hopeful to go home and it was coming up on Halloween. He told me one year he dressed up as a scarecrow and sat on the swing on the porch and jumped up when trick or treaters rang the doorbell. “I found more candy on the porch than I gave out that year.”

He felt sick to his stomach later that morning and he collapsed in his hospital

room. A code was called and they couldn’t resuscitate him. An autopsy found he had a massive bleed into his stomach and went into cardiac arrest due to the loss of so much blood. She was with him when he died.

Now it was sixteen years later and she was in the hospital for a COPD exacerbation. I could tell seeing me brought all of that and his last day back to her vividly. “That was a long and difficult journey we were on together, Dr. Vainio.”

“It was.” I said. “I’ve thought about you over the years and often thought I might run into you somewhere.”

She didn’t say anything for a while and then she spoke softly. “I’ve avoided you. I just couldn’t talk about him and I didn’t want to relive any of those days. I don’t know why I thought that, because I relive them all the time anyway.”

“Does seeing me now hurt as much as you thought it would?” I asked.

“It does.” She replied. “I was seventeen when we were married and everyone said he was too wild for me. He was at first and he ended up in jail a couple of times for fighting when he went into town. The police never sided with him and always assumed he was the one starting those fights. One of them was over me. One of the men in town called me a squaw and he tore right into him. He finally settled down and he was a good man and he was a great father.”

“I liked him a lot and I really respected him.” I told her.

“He really respected you, too and he was so proud that you became a doctor. He was proud that you treated him like he was worthy of your respect. Not everyone treated him that way. He grew up during hard times.”

“You grew up during those times, too.” I answered.

“That was a long time ago, Dr. Vainio. Those times were bad for us. People said some awful things and thought they were funny. I keep hoping people will see each other for who they are and not as something undeserving as they were led to believe. You saw him as a good and worthy man and he was all that and



more to me. He was my medicine and he was what kept me on this earth. My children and my grandchildren have lives of their own and I’m an old woman. Maybe not this time, but one of these times I will make that journey to join him. I’m ready for that and I’m not afraid.”

“I don’t think this is that time.” I replied. “I expect the antibiotic and the steroids we started will have you feeling better in a few days.”

“I suspect you’re right.” She said. “When my time does come, I want you to know I appreciate all you’ve done and I don’t want you to feel bad for me. Promise you’ll remember me when I didn’t need a walker and remember me as the young woman in those photographs.”

“I promise.” I replied.

“Can I ask you one more thing?” She asked.

“Yes.” I answered.

“Remind everyone to love those who are connected to them and to respect everyone. It’s easy to judge others if you don’t understand them. Ask them to visit someone who’s alone. Bring them a meal. Most importantly, sit and eat it with them. Tell each other your stories. This big world can be a lonely place if you’re just waiting for it to end.”

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zits and...well. I don't have warts as yet but the time is nigh. Life is strange. Keeps me around to see the next episode, ennit?

Life as a Hermit has not gone as well as I thought it would be. It turns out, I do appreciate human interaction, as I go to Wal-Fart and snidely judge the other shoppers whilst I'm looking through the Plus-Size clearance clothes. If I may say, I can wear cheap rags and make it look like Pee-Wee DeVille Fashion Week. Ask anyone who knows my style and charisma. Hollah!

There had been a glass jar of sauerkraut that had been in my scanty cupboard for about a year. So I decided to party like it's 1583 in Germany and fried it in butter until it got brown and then quaffed it down with a beer. Old style European stuff, yanno?! It was Dee-Burpuss. So I ordered another can from Wal-Butkiss so I could examine the difference between canned or jarred. This may take a while. I'm cold like that.

The drama never ends in this domicile. I love my pets. I live with two puppy-wuppies and three gorgeous fuzz-butt felines. I'm much more dramatic and needy than they are, except when I run out of treats mutiny will occur. We understand one another, especially since I'm the only one tall enough and have thumbs to get their

subsidence for them. They take good care of me when I'm ill, like now. I get the best cuddles and attention. I need them more than they need me. Shhhh!!!

I took an at-home COVID-19 test and it shows I'm negative thus far, so there is that. For solace, I'ma eat some ramen with jalapenos added to that fine dish! *eye roll* Yum. What I really want is Buffalo wings to clear up my sinuses and quell the coughing. Now I sound like an old mindimooye (old woman) talking about her aches and pains so that the entire bus hears all about it. My badness! And my apologies to those who are older and suffer.

So the other night I heard very loud gunshots near my home. I was dog-sitting and he and my two little foofy dogs were all startled and woofing away. I had been in bed already, not bothered at all since I knew I would hear something about it the next day. Word travels quick here in Rezberry no matter what stuff happens. When I left the Big City I thought such shenanigans would be in the past. Nope! Same old things, different locations. I now troll the county web page to see who's in or out.

When I was a kid I found about the American Indian Movement and benefitted directly from their activism, such as learning Anishinabemowin,

our Algonquin language and Indigenous culture. I cried when I was exposed to the history of Turtle Island, but as horrific and tragic it is we are still here. Our Creator put us here and here we shall stay. I carry that trauma in my DNA and when I'm down and disgusted by western European violence I remember just who I am and descended from.

That brings me to the war in the Middle East and the effect on what happened to the Palestinians whose land was stolen. I feel their pain and the seizure of their homelands. Hey! Wait now, stay with me please. First off this is my opinion and no one else's but mine. What angers me is not the Israelis but the governments who take innocent human lives, but not for religion. It's all about power, land and the resources to maintain their agendas.

I know, I know! I do not want to stick my nose in it but I feel I will not be the person I am if I don't say anything. Humanity, empathy and compassion are needed right now en masse. I like to say there are more of us who are sensitive to other situations and knowledge that it does not have to continue this way.

One Love.

Last month I missed y'all for Spooky time and I apologize. My laptop fuzzed out and I had no "O" on the keyboard, and then other keys stood in solidarity with that peculiar vowel. It was so tired of my...mess. So I stole some other people's apples, pumpkins and corn when I could get away with it and started selling them for a newer 'puter. I so love yooz and will attempt to keep space for you.

My lovely niece sent me a purple witch hat just like hers. Miigwech Stephanie, you fine witcheroo! I still have to post a profile picture of me wearing mine, also purple, so people can see the cute witch, not the one with

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