



## NEWS FROM A NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

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Distributors of Indigneous foods  
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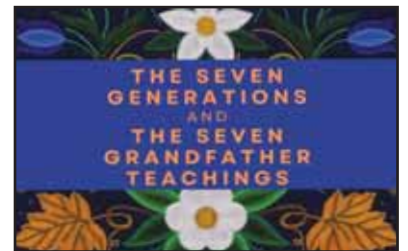
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Casts light on ancient wisdom  
while teaching Ojibwe



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DECEMBER 2023 • VOLUME 44, ISSUE 12

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## PIIC's Net Zero community goals



A field of solar equipment, called a "solar array," has been constructed near Treasure Island Resort and Casino as part of Prairie Island Indian Community's Net Zero projects. (Photo courtesy of PIIC.)

BY LEE EGERSTROM

The Prairie Island Indian Community (PIIC) is making great strides towards becoming a Net Zero climate change community. The tribe hosted state officials, broader southeastern Minnesota community members, friends and media at an open house in September to show progress it is making in achieving Net Zero carbon emissions goals. Tied in with this effort, the tribe also has projects seeking energy and food sovereignty that include restoration of a bison herd on reservation property.

Andrea Zimmerman, the scientist working as Energy Program Manager at Prairie Island, briefed *The Circle* on PIIC's progress.

Two large projects are underway, she said, including development of a 5.4 megawatt solar field for supplying the community with electricity and a large geothermal commercial project "to move a large portion of commercial property off natural gas, massively reducing our carbon footprint."

The latter can be sizeable. While PIIC has only 1,100 enrolled members mostly in its tight, original reservation surroundings, it does have several business entities that help make it the biggest employer in Goodhue County (1,500 employees).

These ventures include Treasure Island Resort and Casino, which with 788 guest rooms and suites is the second largest hotel in the state; Mount Frontenac Golf Course, Dakota Station and Tinta Wita Tipi. The latter is a senior assisted-living residence.

PIIC's stated goal of eliminating or offsetting carbon emissions would mean an annual reduc-

tion of more than 20 million pounds of carbon. That is equivalent to eliminating emissions from 75 oil tanker rail cars that pass through Prairie Island every day.

Tied in with PIIC's major projects, the tribe is also taking steps to cut carbon corners in other, smaller ways, she said.

One project involves cleaner water for landscaping on tribal property, switching from gas powered to electric vehicles for tribal use, and making tribal homes more electricity efficient to both lower energy bills and reduce carbon.

"There are people who are very proud and delighted to take part in this work," she said. "It can bring Dakota values to life in the community."

Tribal members are participating in many of these projects, Zimmerman added, including five members working on the large solar project.

Tribal leaders have coped with energy issues and accompanying energy-related threats for decades. The small Mdewakanton Band of Eastern Dakota reservation on Prairie Island, down the Mississippi River from St. Paul, sits adjacent to an Xcel Energy nuclear power plant and storage area for nuclear waste materials. Federal authorities have failed to find a place anywhere for safer storage. All efforts to transfer and store the wastes run into NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) opposition everywhere, something that Prairie Islanders and nearby residents of Red Wing fully understand.

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## PIIC leaders move on. Is Congress in the future?

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Newly elected Community Tribal Council members of Prairie Island Indian Community will select new officers this month, replacing both its president, Johnny Johnson, and its vice president and former president, Shelley Buck.

Neither Johnson nor Buck sought reelection in the October tribal elections. That closed out 14 terms on the tribal council for Johnson, and two terms as president. Buck has served six terms on the council and was tribal president for three terms.

Both have extensive roles away from Prairie Island that will keep them busy. And Buck, for instance, just might seek an even larger public role down the road. "Federal or state," she told *The Circle*.

"It would have to be for the right reasons, not because 'so-and-so' asked me to," she explained. "Anyway I can help my people, I want to do it."

"Looking ahead, my goal is to do whatever I can to help, and not only help Dakota people," she said.

That is consistent with both outgoing tribal leaders. Johnson is on the board of directors for the nearby Red Wing Chamber of Commerce and is a former member of the Red Wing Human Rights Commission.

He is also a former board member for the Red Wing School Foundation and the Red Wing Hockey Association, and he has long-time connections with youth sports in the surrounding area and in working with elders.

His biographical information from the Tribal Council described him as a well-rounded person. It states, "He enjoys attending youth sporting events, watching hockey, golfing and traveling."

Minnesota is "the state of

hockey," as the state proclaims, and Minnesota's indigenous people are no small contributors to that nickname.

Buck currently serves on the board of directors for the Minnesota Wild Foundation. Prairie Island has had numerous promotions and programs with the professional hockey team in recent years. Prairie Island also has a loose connection with the Wild from the naming rights to the Treasure Island Center in downtown St. Paul.

While the Wild play their home games at the Xcel Energy Center, they have practice facilities in the grand old building that had been a major department store location for Dayton's, then Dayton-Hudson and later Macy's. It is now a mixed use building for several businesses, physical therapy providers and office space for businesses, professionals and groups.

### Among the latter is the PIIC

"It makes me proud to see our Prairie Island flag on that building," Buck said. "I see that when walking down the street. I know it makes my ancestors happy and proud."

The prominent St. Paul building is a salute to Prairie Island's huge Treasure Island entertainment complex. Buck said she feels proud when using PIIC offices in the building for meetings the tribe has from time to time in the Capitol City.

That, too, shows Buck's view of the world around her isn't limited to the tight confines of Prairie Island.

Buck also serves on the board for the Great River Passage Conservancy organization that works to make the Mississippi River running through the city available to all. Part of that mission is to educate Minnesotans and visitors that those 17 miles pass through the heart of a Dakota historic settlement.

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# Native voters could decide major elections in 2024

BY XIMENA BUSTILLO/NPR

**G**rassroots efforts to get Native American voters to turn in their ballots for the 2024 election are in motion across swing states as Democrats and Republicans are both vying for power.

There are predicted to be at least 5 million Native and Alaska Native-identifying voters in the U.S. in both rural and urban communities, according to the U.S. Census Bureau — although estimates are expected to be an undercount.

"Native Americans are incredibly influential and have the ability to really swing those elections on the margins," said Jacqueline De León, a senior staff attorney at the Native American Rights Fund, adding that she sees the potential for Native voters to decide elections where the population of Native Americans is bigger than the vote differentials that decide those races.

There are some challenges ahead. Native voting activists have filed several lawsuits, aimed at challenging laws and efforts that would limit access to voting for Indigenous people, De León said. These include laws that limit poll availability, identification card barriers, and issues with mail-in ballots on reservations.

Hanging in the balance is control of House, Senate and the Oval Office in 2024. In a country in which turnout can make or break campaigns, organizers said courting Native voters can dictate a candidate's success. Organizers argue Native voters are increasingly a coalition to watch.

"Both political parties have been really negligent when it comes to the Native American vote," De León said. "Often there is an unfamiliarity. There's a fear of approaching Native communities that may seem unapproachable or there's uncertainty over how to approach Native communities. And so there just hasn't been an investment."

Those who have been successful, advocates said, are those who use traditional organizing and voter mobilization tactics, especially among the rural Native coalitions.

"Rural America broadly, but especially rural Indian country, still operates on very importantly, on relationships, on handshakes... And that's that's how voters gain confidence, either in an individual running or a ballot initiative or any sort of change to policy or election requires that kind of investment in it," said Ta'jin Perez, deputy director for Western Native Voice.

States where Native voters could have a significant impact on 2024 races for Congress, Senate and for president:

- **Alaska** is home to over 200 federally and non-federally recognized tribes, with American Indian and Alaskan Natives making up at least 22% of the state's population. The communities have been credited

with helping Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski, and Democrat Rep. Mary Peltola win their respective elections, according to the Native American Rights Fund's De León.

The Native American Rights Fund has pending litigation in Alaska, however, that alleges ballots coming from Alaska Native communities are rejected at much higher rates than other communities.

"When you have a flux of political power, we usually also see a corresponding backlash that makes attempts to make it more difficult to vote as well," she explained of the legal action, De León said.

- **Arizona** has 22 federally recognized Native nations within its borders. The U.S. Census estimates that more than 6% of the state's population identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native. In a swing state, like Arizona, where only a few thousand votes can make the difference, voting advocates say political parties need to recognize Native voters' power.

Voter turnout on tribal lands in Arizona helped President Biden secure a win in 2020, the first Democrat to win the state in more than two decades. Native Americans also turned out in large numbers during the 2022 midterms, according to Castillo-Nunez, helping Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs secure a win.

- **Michigan** flipped from Donald Trump to Biden in 2020. Native voting advocates said that Indigenous turnout is what helped strengthen Democratic strongholds. The Native American Rights Fund argues that with more than 100,000 Native people eligible to vote, the population is four times the size of the margin of victory for Trump in the 2016 election.

Tori McGeshick, the first Indigenous organizer for We the People Michigan Action Fund, has been working to connect Indigenous communities with politics. She sees outreach to Native communities as a continual work in progress, even for her organization.

"A lot of times Indigenous peoples just don't have the means to get out and vote, whether it be transportation or being able to get an ID, and then not to mention we're also in a very rural area. So when people are expected to travel, it's not like it's just down the road," McGeshick said, adding that she has done a lot of tabling at powwows and local grocery stores.

- **Montana** is estimated to have a population of more than 1 million people. Just over 9% of the state identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native. While Montana is considered a Republican stronghold for the presidential race, voters in the state will be facing a potential swing election in the race for the Senate.

Incumbent Democrat Sen. John Tester thanked Native voters for helping him win in 2018.

"Last time Senator Tester ran for the Senate, his election was secure because of

the Native vote," said Perez of Western Native Voice out of Billings, Mont. "On election night, before I went to bed and before all of the Native precincts started reporting fully, it looked like a loss for for Tester. But by morning, after the Native precincts reported completely the victory was Tester's."

Western Native Voice, according to Perez, is already working on voter registration efforts — initiatives they usually don't begin this far ahead of an election.

The key here, he said, is turnout and making sure that candidates and parties make a direct connection with voters and inform voters of upcoming elections.

- **Nevada** has more than 62,000 Indigenous people living in it, which generally account for 3.5% of the state's population, have been credited with helping Democrats secure wins in recent elections.

"We know that Native American voters in what is now the state of Nevada are voting in bigger numbers," said Stacey Montooth, executive director of the Nevada Indian Commission, a state agency. "There are thousands and thousands of Native Americans who want to be involved in the process."

Montooth said, as a result of lawsuits, there are services in the state that make it easier for Indigenous voters to vote including laws requiring any voting services available to Nevadans generally be available on tribal land as well.

All Voting is Local, a voting rights group with a Nevada chapter, pointed to an increase in Native American turnout rates in 2020 compared to 2016 as a reason why mail-in ballot efforts from the pandemic should be expanded and made permanent. The measure was passed ahead of the 2022 midterm elections.

- **North Carolina** has around 3% of its population identifying as Native American or Alaska Native. That includes the Lumbee Tribe, which is state recognized but, unlike 574 tribes across the country,

is not fully federally recognized. The tribe, concentrated in the southeast portion of the North Carolina around Robeson County, has notably grown more conservative in recent presidential elections, voting Democrat until 2016, when it flipped for Trump, who supported its federal recognition.

"North Carolina has a very active Native caucus that's a very large Native electorate," said Judith LeBlanc, executive director of the Native Organizers Alliance, adding that while Indigenous voters could trend Democrat, they also will vote Republican.

President Biden's campaign is already investing in the state generally, three years after he lost it by just under 75,000 votes. Some say that the Democratic party took the Native vote for granted in the last election.

The only federally recognized tribe within North Carolina is the Eastern Band of Cherokees, with about 16,000 members. Although the district where the tribe is located is primarily Republican, tribal members have also been known to vote for Democrats.

- **Wisconsin** is another key state that helped deliver Biden a win after voting for Trump in 2016. There, 2.5% of the population identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native.

Wisconsin Native voters, like in other aforementioned states, are credited with helping deliver Biden a win in 2020 along tight margins.

Dee Sweet, manager for Wisconsin Native Vote, boasts increasing voter turnout across the 11 federally recognized tribes in the state and said she noticed an increased interest in the electoral process.

Organizers point to Wisconsin, as well as other midwestern swing states like Michigan, as a place where political parties need to recognize urban Native voters in addition to rural voters.



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# Distributors of Indigenous foods highlights MN connection

BY LEE EGERSTROM

The holiday season brings a cultural mix of gift-giving with friends and loved one and celebrating special foods. Tribal and Indigenous entrepreneurs are making it easier for online shoppers to find special Indigenous products to send this year.

Osage entrepreneurs from a base in Denver offer nationwide distribution of prominent Indigenous food products and ship meals through their Tocabe Indigenous Marketplace.

Some of these products come from Minnesota tribes and Native farms. Tocabe lists Red Lake Nation Foods, Wozupi Tribal Gardens, and Spirit Lake Native Farms as “partners,” or as key suppliers.

Also marketing through the Internet, Red Lake Nation is a large supplier of food products, art gifts and other Indigenous produced products through Nawapo, its Bemidji based marketing company. Like Tocabe, Nawapo vets its suppliers to guarantee authentic foods, ingredients, art works and other gifts.

Both these marketing companies share some suppliers listed as business partners.

For Tocabe, Red Lake Nation Foods has a variety of products including wild rice and syrups on its menu and product offerings. Wozupi Tribal Gardens, a unit of Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, and Spirit Lake Native Farms



Screenshot of the Tocabe website with its Native-owned foods for sale.

on the Fond du Lac reservation, both have maple syrup products on that firm’s lists.

Cheyenne River Buffalo Co. of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota is a supplier of bison meat products for Tocabe. Others vendors include Sakari Farms, a women-owned Native food company from Tumalo, Ore., that provides salts, teas and hot sauces; and Navajo Mike’s, from Arizona, that supplies hot sauce and barbeque sauces along with herbs and spices.

Two companies offer blue corn, white corn and yellow corn products. They are Ramona Farms and Bow & Arrow, units of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in Colorado.

Seka Hills, from the Yocha Dehe tribe in Northern California, makes olive oils, elderberry balsamic vinegar and honey.

The Tocabe Indigenous Marketplace

is an extension of a Denver restaurant owned by Matt Chandra and Ben Jacobs (Osage Nation). They explain their venture was inspired by another restaurant, Grayhorse: An American Indian Eatery, which the Jacobs family started in 1989.

“Founded over 14 years ago as Tocabe: An American Indian Eatery, our mission has always been to remove the barriers and challenges that make Native foods inaccessible,” they explain. The Marketplace business aim is to simplify the supply chain “by building relationships between local communities and Native producers,” they said.

Nawapo, which means “to take provisions along” in Ojibwe, states its purpose is to serve both buyers and sellers by authenticating the merchandise.

With that, it markets artworks and gift item products beyond its Native food

offerings. It explains:

“By choosing Nawapo, you not only get access to a wide range of authentic and culturally significant products but also contribute to the preservation of Native American heritage. Our vendors’ dedication and craftsmanship shine through in every item they create, making each purchase a meaningful and impactful experience.

“We invite you to explore the profiles of our vendors, learn about their artistic journey, and understand the cultural significance behind the products they offer.”

Those outside vendors include Seka Hills and Sakari Farms, suppliers to Tocabe as well.

Other Native-owned vendors Nawapo lists include Native American Tea Co. of Aberdeen, S.D.; KC’s Best Wild Rice, a Bemidji-based brand of Red Lake Foods; Thunder Island Coffee from the Shinnecock Indian Reservation in New York, and Woodenknife Co, a Lakota fry bread mix maker from the Badlands.

Tribal stores and select retailers have special Native food and gift items available for the holidays and year around.

*Nawapo products can be accessed at <https://nawapo.com>.*

*And Tocabe Indigenous Marketplace products and prepared meals can be accessed at <https://shoptocabe.com>.*

# Fanning the Flames: Native-run solar thermal company ignites careers

BY EMILY HAEG NGUYEN

Heating accounts for the majority of energy used in an average U.S. household. The cost of this heat, especially in many of Minnesota’s tribal and rural communities, can be a serious burden.

“There’s a dilemma for people on the reservation that we call, ‘heat vs eat.’ Are they gonna pay for propane to keep themselves warm or are they going to pay for groceries?” says Gwe Gasco, Marketing and Sales Director at 8th Fire Solar.

8th Fire Solar is a solar thermal business located on the White Earth Reservation in Northwestern Minnesota. The business primarily manufactures and installs thermal solar systems on privately owned properties. They also take part in grant-funded installations in low-income communities.

The use of solar thermal technology reduces the need for other forms of heating which are typically fossil fuel based. Solar thermal panels can supplement as much as 20-40% of typical heating needs.

“No matter how many late fees and invoices that you have, you’re never



Gwe Gasco is Marketing and Sales Director at 8th Fire Solar. (Photo courtesy of 8th Fire Solar.)

gonna get a past due bill from the sun, right?” says Gasco.

As a Native-run organization, they hope their sustainable and renewable energy product can help build a better future for everyone, especially Native American communities.

“This is an economic and reliable energy choice that helps lower bills and reduces our reliance on fossil fuels,” says

Gasco. “So it’s nice to be able to show people that there’s another way to do things. And at the same time, we’re also kind of creating a tribal workforce.”

“I liked the idea of solar power,” recalls Gwe Gasco, thinking back on his life before the start of his career. “Where I’m situated on the reservation, there aren’t a lot of opportunities. So when I got out of high school, I thought 8th

Fire Solar could be a cool thing to get into,” he says.

Gasco is an Ojibwe Odawa descendant from the White Earth Tribal Nation and the Little Traverse Bay Bands. He’s proud to live and work on White Earth, the same reservation where he was raised.

“I grew up running around the woods and swimming all day. You can’t really beat that as a kid,” recalls Gasco. “I think that’s why I’ve always had that...I don’t know if I would call it ‘a love’ or ‘an understanding,’ or just ‘a connection.’ But I’m very fond of the area and its resources.”

During high school, things shifted. Gasco attended several high schools and had trouble staying settled. After completing school, he took on odd jobs and struggled to find his path forward. However, things changed five years ago when he joined 8th Fire Solar. The move launched his career into a new trajectory. He’s since worked his way through the company, mastering various roles – from labor to office work.

“It’s been an experience!” says Gasco with a laugh. “I didn’t have any back-



ground working with anything solar, electric stuff, or even power tools! My mom raised me traditionally. She taught me about maple sugar harvesting and wild rice harvesting, traditional Ojibwe ways. So it's been kind of cool to learn all these different skills, trades and techniques."

Gasco says he's grateful not only for his career, but the chance to help ignite others' careers. Looking to spread the knowledge, 8th Fire Solar has started partnering with other tribes to host solar panel installation training sessions.

"This is a great technology, and I don't think any one person should just have it to themselves," says Gasco. "It should be made accessible to whoever needs it."

**Passing the torch**

On a sunny day in Redwood County, two communities joined together. Gasco and the Northwest Minnesota based 8th Fire Solar team made the trek to the Lower Sioux Indian Community in Southwestern Minnesota. 8th Fire Solar led the group from Lower Sioux in classroom training on solar thermal installation. After, the groups teamed up to install solar furnaces on two separate family homes on the Lower Sioux Reservation. Labor funds for this cross-community training come from a CERTs Seed Grant.

"We knew that Lower Sioux was doing innovative work with hempcrete construction. The solar thermal work seemed like more Indigenous innovation that they

would be interested in. They were!" says Joel Haskard, CERTs' Co-Director. "Later, we were also able to help provide some resources to do a similar cross-community training between the 8th Fire crew and a Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe cohort of future installers."

"Working with CERTs on the workforce development piece has been great. Where there's not many job opportunities, we can do the training. Then they have a trained workforce. The tribal members can branch out to do more installations and sort of make their own little micro-economy," said Gwe Gasco

Looking to deepen the impact of this work, the University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDPs)

have also tapped in. Northwest RSDP is currently working in partnership with 8th Fire Solar to develop a series of educational videos that will help train new installers. 8th Fire Solar hopes that more well-trained installers will lead to fewer homes without affordable heat.

"At the end of the day, we want to provide sustainable, efficient heat to low income tribal communities," says Gasco. "We want to help people feel comfortable and safe. That's what space heat does. That's what makes a house a home, isn't it?"

To learn more about CERT, see: <https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org>

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Riding to Dairy Queen. Photo by Earl Seubert. From "Indians Visit Bryant School," *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 13, 1971. Paul Mitchell, Marty Kegg, Duane Wind, Dennis Sam, and Robert Samek on their way to the local Dairy Queen.



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# Casts light on ancient wisdom while teaching Ojibwe

REVIEW BY DEBORAH LOCKE

A book about the Ojibwe language with large type and about the length of an essay sat on my book pile for a while. I figured I'd get to it one of these days, presuming it was for young readers judging from its type size and brevity.

Instead, "The Seven Generations and The Seven Grandfather Teachings" (self-published, 2023) will cast light on ancient wisdom for readers of any age, all the while teaching the Ojibwe language. Author James Vukelich Kaagegaabaw (Turtle Mountain descendant) is well practiced at explaining the heart of the Ojibwe language. You may have viewed his "Ojibwe Word of the Day" series on YouTube, FaceBook or Instagram, which has amassed thousands of followers. His sonorous, rich voice is ideal for instruction.

Of course, the book lacks sound, but it excels as an introduction to Ojibwe expression. I have listened to native Ojibwe speakers throughout my life starting with my grandfather, Vincent Lemieux. I never recognized nor comprehended the amazing precision of the language, or knew what a gift it is until now.

Grandparents – family connections gen-

erally – figure largely in Vukelich's story of the way Ojibwe was handed down by a people who well knew the land and their place on it. He wrote that when we hear a word like Nookomis (my grandmother), we hear a sound "created by a person who knew this land back when it was covered by ice a mile high, before Gichi-gami, the Great Lake, Lake Superior, existed. When we use the old words, we are using words that were spoken by someone who saw woolly mammoths, giant Mooz (moose) and Misamik (giant beaver)."

Vukelich said that certain words contain seeds to important questions like why am I here on this earth? He explicates the language, breaking words into small parts for an understanding of their meaning. The language offers a "Great Law" or a "Sacred Law" that helps speakers live in peace and balance. He cites the Iroquois tradition of making every decision in life with a thought to the action's impact on seven generations to come. The Seven Generations concept of connectivity can be found in indigenous communities across North America. For example, Black Elk (Oglala Lakota; 1863-1950) referred to Seven Generations.

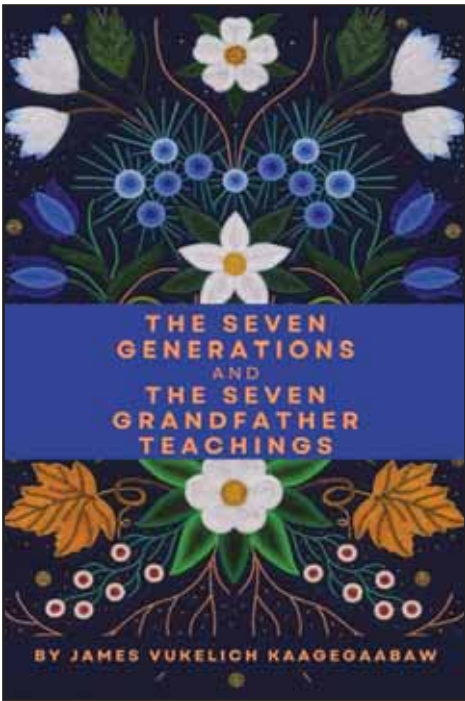
The seven generation teachings, known as Gichi-dibaakonigwewinan, are truth, humility, respect, love, bravery, courage, honesty, and wisdom. The chapter on hon-

esty states that just speaking the truth isn't enough, it's also imperative to live honestly, align your words with action, and lead a wholistic life. Vukelich asks why would we use a sacred gift from the Creator, the Ojibwe language, to deceive others? The language shows that a consequence of deceit is disorder. Only those not in balance will lie. He wrote:

"A person with peace, balance, and order in their life will act with honesty, virtue, and righteousness. It will be a natural reflection in their life. The words we say are not so important as the deeds we do. We must align our actions, thoughts, and words in order to lead a holistic life – a holy life."

He closes by pointing out that when we change and improve ourselves, we change and improve those who went before us and those to come. History including that of our own families points to American Indian survivors of colonization, boarding schools, the lack of liberty and civil rights in our very homeland. Our relatives who were without any tools for dealing with that pain may still be healed through our interconnections with them. "I can still heal them," Vukelich wrote. "We are still writing our ancestors' stories."

The book delivers a nudge to learn more native language to find peace and heal the past. Perhaps many of us missed the oppor-



The Seven Generations and The Seven Grandfather Teachings  
By James Vukelich  
Self-published June 21, 2023  
All ages, 63 pages

tunity to learn our native languages when our grandparents were alive and available. "The Seven Generations" shows that the grandparents are still here speaking to and through us, still a part of us.



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# Read this book and you may yearn to see a clear night sky

REVIEW BY DEBORAH LOCKE

**I**t seems fair to conclude that most of us pay heed to a daylit sky: is the sun shining, is snow predicted, when is sunset?

“Spirits Dancing – The Night Sky, Indigenous Knowledge, & Living Connections to the Cosmos” brings to life the science and cultural significance of an active cosmos complete with 400 billion stars. Read this book and you may yearn to see a clear night sky with its pinpoints of light, some of them dancing. Then, you’ll act on that impulse. Read this book and for sure, your views of the night sky will be enriched, layered and never the same.

“Spirits Dancing” by Travis Novitsky (Grand Portage Ojibwe) and Annette Lee is a treasure trove of gorgeous night images taken near Grand Portage, Minnesota. Lee, an astrophysicist, explains the science of the northern lights – the way the sun and earth’s magnetic fields interact to produce the dramatic light that transforms the night sky into a massive kaleido-

scope of movement. She succinctly tells the evolution of Western thought that ultimately concludes that the light show is caused by electricity.

Lee’s overview provides a good prologue for the heart of the book which is the interpretation of a night sky by Indigenous people. Whereas Western scientists use measurement and theory to explain natural phenomena, native perspectives see the night sky “not solely as an abstract collection of facts that exists externally to be measured, but rather like a close relative who exists nearby and whose influence is vast.”

For example, the Ojibwe view the Milky Way (“Jiibay Ziibi”) as the place where spirits return to the stars. The Dakota describe the northern lights as “spirits dancing.” Some Dakota believe that humans originated with the stars, and eventually return to them. The route their spirits take is on the Wanagi Thacharjku, the Road of the Spirits (Milky Way).

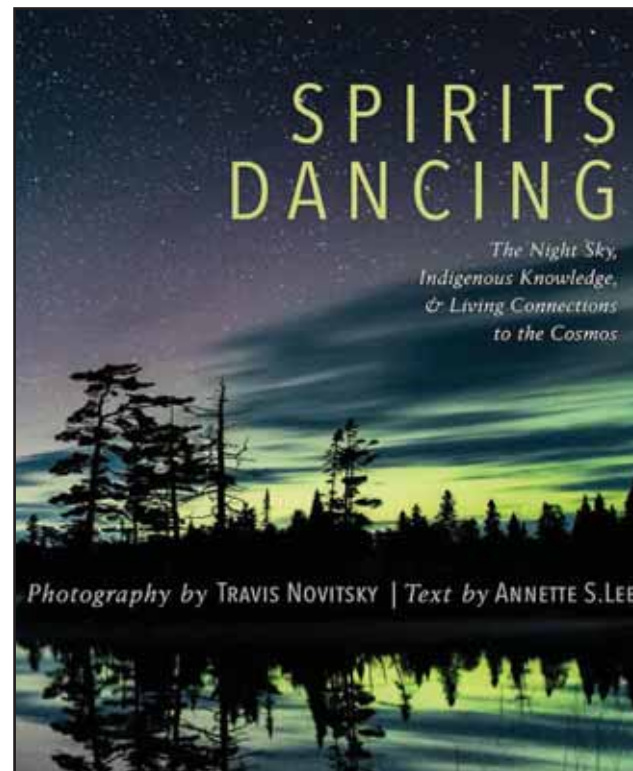
The Dene natives, who live from Alaska to Hudson Bay, Canada, connect the appearance of the

northern lights with large herds of caribou on the ground. That is, the lights are a signal that earth bound caribou are moving. Lee writes: “The interconnectedness of all living beings and the participatory relationship with sky and Earth are cornerstones of Indigenous science and ways of knowing.”

Years ago, I saw the Aurora Borealis in a late-night sky near St. Cloud, Minnesota. The lights resembled a massive velvet purple curtain that shimmered and flowed. It was breathtaking. The book gives recommendations on locating the northern lights, a goal requiring patience and the ability to stay awake into the early hours of the morning.

Novitsky’s accounts of his late-night trips in search of a night sky suggest that sometimes it’s hard to tell who finds who. Do we find the enveloping night sky, or did it find us?

Novitsky’s exquisite photos prefaced by Lee’s mini astronomy lesson explain the dancing sky I once saw and will never forget.



**Spirits Dancing: The Night Sky, Indigenous Knowledge, and Living Connections to the Cosmos**  
by Travis Novitsky (Author)  
and Annette S. Lee PhD MFA (Author)  
Paperback  
November 7, 2023  
160 pages

## Visit the Bell Museum this holiday season!

Make memories at Minnesota’s official natural history museum and planetarium during special holiday hours:

Tuesday, December 26, 10 am – 4 pm  
Tuesday, January 2, 10 am – 4 pm

**Plan your visit today: [z.umn.edu/visittoday](https://z.umn.edu/visittoday)**

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](https://bellmuseum.umn.edu/mnisota-makhoche)





Prairie Island and Red Wing residents were given another reminder of their precarious location earlier this year. On May 27, one of the two nuclear reactors had an incident that temporarily shut down one of the reactors.

Shelley Buck, a veteran PIIC leader and current Tribal Council vice president, looked back at the neighboring relationship with the plant in a statement for *The Circle*:

"For the past 50-plus years, our Tribe's energy story has been negatively linked to the nuclear power plant and nuclear waste storage that sit adjacent to our reservation. We wanted to change that narrative and make energy a positive force for our Tribe," she said.

"Our Net Zero program will allow us to achieve energy sovereignty by honoring nature and harvesting its potential. I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to bring this to our future generations and create balance for our community with Ui Maka (grandmother earth)."

Buck and Prairie Island Tribal Council president Johnny Johnson did not seek reelection to the council in a recent election. The newly elected council will select their successors in December. But coexistence with the power plant and its various safety and environmental issues have been constant elements of their tribal civic engagement for decades, and for their successors.



Solar panels at Prairie Island. (Photo from the PIIC website.)

Partly as precautions that the tribe may sometime need to move, and partly for investment purposes, the tribe has purchased 300 acres of land near the east side of St. Paul and 1,000 acres to the west, near Rochester.

Combined, Prairie Islanders now possess 534 acres of original land and 2,774 acres of other trust lands.

Terms such as Net Zero, climate change, environmental degradation and other entries to modern language may often sound just like a never-ending trail of new buzzwords. It might be helpful to reassess how these have emerged.

These terms aren't exactly new but haven't been well known away from the various fields of science.

Net Zero emphasis took a giant step

forward in in 2015 when 196 nations at the United Nation Climate Change Conference in Paris approved an international treaty on climate change. It committed nations to move towards Net Zero goals to halt climate change, and to do annual appraisals on what is and isn't being achieved.

Bottom line goals for the international participants are still well short of Net Zero targets. The effort is to keep average global temperature increases to below 2 degrees Celsius, or 35.6 degrees Fahrenheit, above "pre-industrial levels" of temperature and pursue longer term efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 C, or 34.7 F. Simply put, the world and its nations aren't keeping pace with these international goals.

Only a few communities around the globe have made as substantial a commitment as Prairie Island. Meanwhile, members of Congress from oil and gas states protect the fossil fuel industries and greatly resist U.S. government and science-led efforts to achieve those goals. Indigenous tribes are among communities around the globe that have established such goals.

Prairie Island set Net Zero goals in motion in 2018, Zimmerman said. It really "took off" in 2020 when the Minnesota Legislature approved a \$46.2 million grant for Prairie Island to pursue its plan.

This makes Prairie Island among the first, and most likely the first tribal nation with such a broad based plan in place, she said.

Two other noteworthy aspects of this project might interest readers. Prairie Island has two outside, environmental consulting firms engaged in the plan. Both are 100 percent Native-owned and operated.

They include Indian Energy LLC, based in California; and Chief Strategy Group, based in North Carolina. Indian Energy develops advanced energy systems, including for the U.S. Defense Department; and has a joint venture company, Chippewa Sustainable Solutions Inc. It is a partnership with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa.

## CALL TO ARTISTS 2024! CRAZY HORSE MEMORIAL®

The Indian Museum of North America® of Crazy Horse Memorial® is now accepting Cultural Program applications! A vital part of the Memorial's mission is providing educational opportunities to encourage harmony and reconciliation among all peoples and nations. Programs include Artist in Residence, daily dance and music performers and storytellers, an art show and sale, and craft workshops - most programs include stipend, travel assistance, lodging, and meals! Please visit us at [crazyhorse.org](https://crazyhorse.org) for more information!



**APPLY NOW!  
DEADLINE IS  
JANUARY 21!**



All Photos: ©Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation



More recently, she was elected to the board of Meet Minneapolis, an organization that promotes the city as a meeting place and host for major events. Her ties to that comes from Buck serving as president of Owamniyomni Okhodayapi, the Dakota name now used for the former Friends of the Falls nonprofit organization.

The Dakota name describes what colonizers called St. Anthony Falls and means “turbulent waters.” The organization is supported by the city of Minneapolis, its Parks Department, and it serves as the city negotiating agent with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on issues with the falls.

Elsewhere, Buck also has a national role. She has been reelected the Midwest Regional Vice President Alternate for the National Congress of American Indians.

The Prairie Island biography describes her this way: “In her spare time, Buck enjoys playing and watching sports, and hanging out and traveling with her daughters and friends.”

Looking back over the years of service, Buck said she sees a lot of accomplishments made by the Prairie Island community.

The Net Zero project, described in an accompanying article, took a lot of work and required successful working with the Minnesota Legislature, she said.



Top: Michael Childs Jr. (Treasurer), and Cody Whitebear (Assistant Secretary/Treasurer). Bottom: Shelley Buck (Vice President), Johnny Johnson (President), Valentina Mgeni (Secretary). (Photo from the PIIC website.)

Another accomplishment involves all 11 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota, she said. Early on, there was some cooperative actions with the other Dakota communities but little with the seven Ojibwe tribes to the north.

“We worked with the Dakota but not the other tribes in the state. That has really changed.”

Capitol reporters have observed this past session of the Minnesota Legislature was probably the best ever

for Native Americans.

Education achievements are also important accomplishments, both for Native children and for the general public “to know who we are,” she said. Serving on boards and with outside groups have let her be one of the “educators” to movers and shakers who are not Natives.

Prairie Island is the largest employer in Goodhue County, and relations with nearby communities have steadily

improved over the years, she added. Farther away, she said PIIC has great relations with Pine Island, where the tribe has purchased more land, and “improving” relationships with other nearby townships and groups.

The biggest lack of success involves the nuclear power plant and nuclear waste storage that shares land and river space with the tribe. The federal government cannot find a storage site for the spent fuel rods.

“This is very unfortunate. I don’t see this changing anytime soon. I don’t see this being resolved in my lifetime, but I hope I am wrong,” she said.

That lingering problem is now passed on to the new council.

Michael Childs Jr. and Valentina Mgeni were reelected to third terms in the Oct. 10 PIIC tribal elections. Constance (Tori) Campbell, Grant Johnson, and Ron Johnson were elected to new terms on the board.

Grant Johnson is the tribal administrator. Campbell is with PIIC’s education department. Ron Johnson previously served 14 years on the council and was president for two terms.

The new Tribal Council will be sworn in on December 12. They will then select their leadership by electing a new president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and an assistant secretary-treasurer for the coming year.

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



# HISTORY FORUM

*American Indians & the American Dream with Kasey Keeler*

SAT, JAN 6, 2024 • 10 AM & 2 PM

Kasey Keeler (Tuolumne Me-Wuk and Citizen Potawatomi) shows how American Indians have navigated federal policies to access homeownership in Minnesota.

IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL TICKETS

[mnhs.info/forum](https://mnhs.info/forum)





MINNESOTA  
HISTORY CENTER



## Howes a game changer for Cloquet HS varsity soccer team

**R**izal Agaton Howes is an enrolled Muscogee and a descendant of the Fond du Lac Ojibwe. His Ojibwe name is giniwens, meaning little golden eagle. He is a junior at Cloquet Senior High School in Cloquet, Minnesota and is a varsity soccer athlete for the Lumberjacks.

During Agaton Howes varsity tenure, the team have been Lake Superior Conference champions twice, were two-time Section 7AA champions, and placed

third in the state tournament. Agaton Howes scored two goals in his varsity debut and had 10 goals this past season.

“My indigenous values have served as my moral compass and guided me through much of my soccer career,” Agaton Howes said. “The first one that comes to mind is dabasenindizowin, or humility. Soccer is a vast and powerful sport that a lot of people put their lives into, so having humility in the face of passion is really important. I’ve had to compete with many people even



**Rizal Agaton Howes plays soccer for the Cloquet Senior HS Lumberjacks. (Photo by Dave Harwig.)**

just to play, and maintaining humility is something I really value in order to stay centered.”

“(Other values that) really dictated my athletic experience is endurance and patience. Having the ability to stick out the harder times has been really crucial for me,” he added.

Howes said, "In both my 2022 and 2023 varsity seasons, we started with a 1-2 record. This year our third game was a 0-4 loss. Despite that, both times we managed to pull our seasons together and make it to state both times."

“Towards the middle of my 2023 varsity season I had a goal drought too, so to have the patience and focus to push on was key. Indigenous people had to endure and survive centuries of colonization, and for us to still have our own unique culture is truly something to be proud of. This is a virtue that has been at the heart of our survival as a culture, and I try my hardest to carry it on,” he added.

Agaton Howes' high school head coach and club coach is John Sundquist. He considers him to be his mentor on and off the soccer field. Howes is striving to show varsity team leadership skills and his progress as a varsity level athlete is continuing to show progress. "Rizal is one of those silent leaders who lets his play speak for him," said John Sundquist, Cloquet-Esko-Carlton varsity head coach.

“There isn’t a player on the team that had shown more progress and toughness than Rizal,” added Coach Sundquist.

Coaches remember when their athletes perform at their highest level either in prac-

tice or games. Coach Sundquist said, "There was a game against Hibbing that Rizal had an assist on the first goal to break the game open and then scored the first goal of the second half to seal the victory when I thought he could be a game changer. I'm excited for his senior year!"

Agaton Howes is making goals for his senior year but also has plans post high school. "After high school, I'm planning on playing soccer in college," he said. "I've been looking into colleges across the last year, and I've built relationships with some coaches. I'd like to study something related to the human mind such as psychology or sociology, but I haven't decided on that either. I'm only in my junior year, so I have some time to make decisions."

Athletes also remember their favorite moments that stick out in their minds and pushes them forward. Agaton Howes share his favorite: "It's a pretty obvious pick for me, which was my 2023 varsity season. Being ranked as high as second in state, scoring even more goals and conceding less as a team than last year where we won third in state is a huge accomplishment for any team. We made history for our school and team."

"It ended in heartbreak though, as we were knocked out in the first round of state in a penalty shootout. Despite that, I couldn't be more proud to be a part of that team. Our team chemistry and cohesion was something to behold, and we put our heart and souls into that season," he added.

# CHECK YOUR MAIL

- Watch for the circle in blue when it's time to renew
- Update and return forms immediately so you don't lose your Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare
- Free, in-person help is available



[mn.gov/dhs/renewmycoverage](https://mn.gov/dhs/renewmycoverage)



PolyMet scheme hits another snag

In late November, an administrative law judge issued a report that recommended that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) deny a “Permit to Mine” for the proposed NorthMet copper-nickel mine in northeastern Minnesota.

This is a victory for the Fond du Lac Band and environmentalists that have been campaigning to derail what would be the state’s first copper-nickel mine.

“Judge James E. LaFave found that the mine’s proposed method of storing reactive mine waste, by lining the mine’s tailings waste facility with a type of clay known as bentonite, ‘is not a practical and workable reclamation technique,’” Minnesota Public Radio reported on Nov. 28.

The sulfide mining project Up North is now branded as NewRange Copper Nickel. PolyMet is owned by Glencore, a mining giant based in Switzerland, which formed a joint venture earlier this year with Teck, a Canadian mining company.

There has been long-running campaign to derail copper-nickel projects in the state’s Arrowhead region. I’ve been writing about this issue for about 15 years. In the July issue of *The Circle*, I wrote that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had revoked a permit for the NorthMet copper-nickel mine because the permit did not ensure compliance with water quality requirements of the

Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Band has been intervening in the lengthy environmental review process.

The NewRange open-pit mine would operate near Babbitt, Minnesota, and the ore would be processed at the old LTV Steel site near Hoyt Lakes. This type of “hard rock” mining has been a disaster across the American West for decades, leaving polluted surface and groundwater in the aftermath of failed projects that have left local and state governments holding the bag for clean-up operations.

You can read the administrative law judge’s report here: [bit.ly/northmet-report](https://bit.ly/northmet-report).

War in the Middle East

In my November column, I briefly mentioned traveling in Scandinavia in October. Shortly after my wife and I arrived in Denmark, Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and slaughtered more than 1,200 people, mainly civilians, including elders and children, and kidnapped some 240 people that they dragged back into tunnels under the Gaza Strip. This was the worst mass killing of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust.

The situation has gotten worse over the past month, as Israel has pulverized much of the densely populated coastal

enclave, killing thousands of civilians, including elders and children. We’ve all been disturbed by seeing TV news footage of children, some dead and some alive, being removed from the rubble of collapsed buildings.

This is off topic for *The Circle*, but I see that several Native organizations have publicly rallied to the Palestinian cause and decried the ongoing military campaign by Israel, the “racist colonial settler state,” in the popular rhetoric. Of course, the United States is a prime example of a colonial settler state, along with South Africa, Australia and other countries in the global south invaded by various European empires over the centuries.

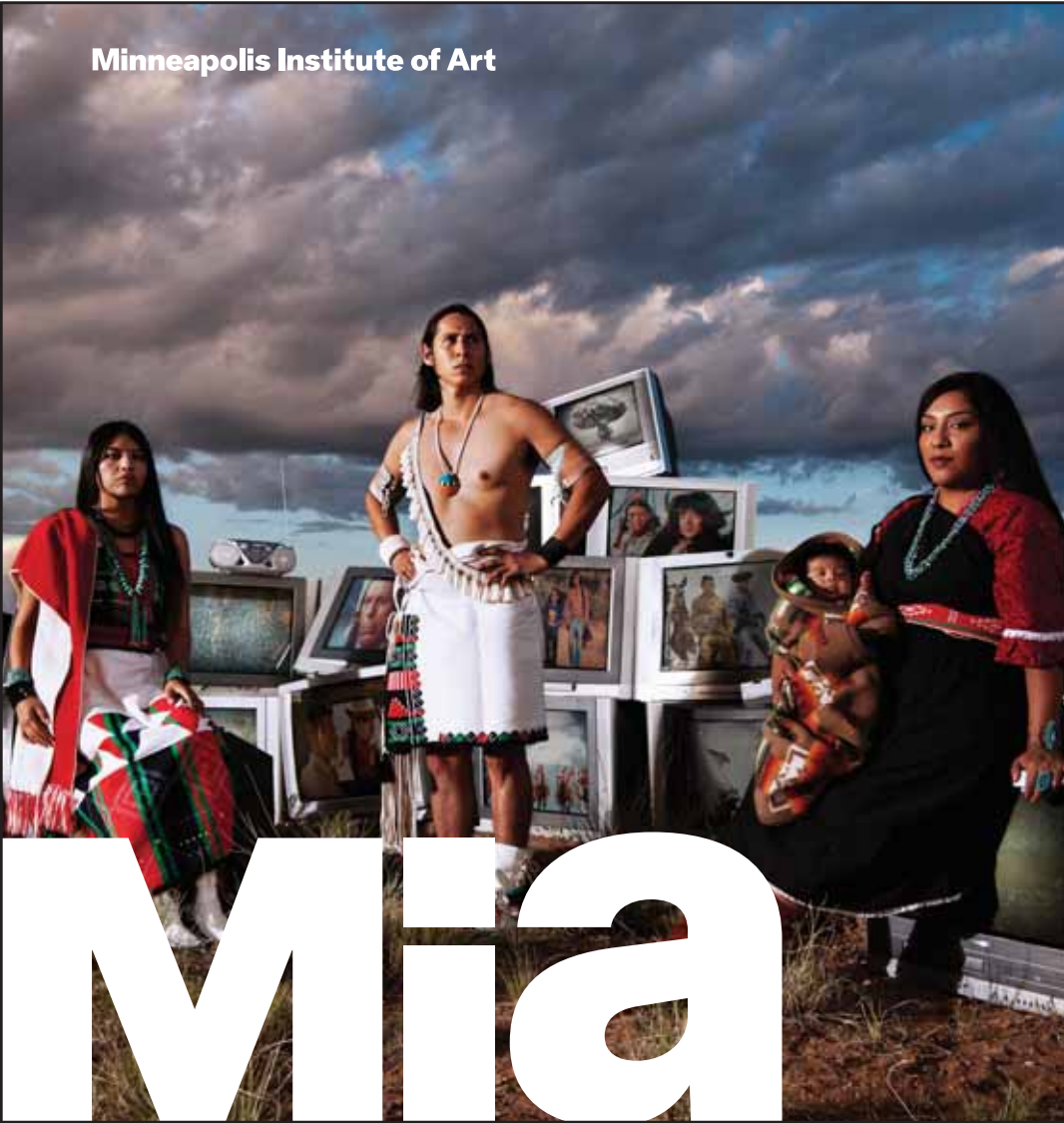
It’s a complicated situation, the Israel-Hamas conflict – and it didn’t start on October 7 – but I’ll just mention that Jews have historical roots in the so-called Holy Land that go back about 3,000 years. There was a Kingdom of Judah that had Jerusalem as its capital – the name “Jew” comes from Judah. And this patch of real estate has been conquered and colonized by numerous empires going back to antiquity. The Jews were banished from their ancestral home about 2,000 years ago, when the Roman Empire sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Second Temple.

We’ve wandered the earth since then, strangers in strange lands. Jews were

regarded as “the other” in European countries, subjected to discrimination, disputations, dispossessions and massacres, in the run-up to the Shoah, the “cataclysm,” as we call the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazi regime. It was the rough treatment of Jews in Europe that gave birth to Zionism in the late 19th century. In May 1948, Jews living in Palestine, then under the control of the British, declared independence and a war between Israel and neighboring Arab states ensued, which led to more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fleeing their homes. Palestinians refer to this as the Nakba, “catastrophe.”

There’s much more to this history, but I want to jump ahead to 2023, and the rise of antisemitic and Islamophobic violence around the world ignited by the conflict in Israel and Palestine. In late November, three 20-year-old Palestinian students in Vermont were shot by a 48-year-old white man in what appears to be a hate crime. Other gruesome violence has been directed against Jews and Palestinians in the U.S.

Whatever your political views on Israel and Palestine, I hope that we can strive to find common ground and avoid bringing the hate and carnage in the Middle East back to this country. We have plenty of social dysfunction here; we don’t need to import more problems from a faraway land.



# In Our Hands Native Photography, 1890 to Now

October 22, 2023–January 14, 2024

This sweeping exhibition traces the histories of photography and diverse Indigenous cultures from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Circle. Organized by a council of primarily Native artists, scholars, and knowledge sharers, in partnership with Mia curators, “In Our Hands” presents more than 150 photographs of, by, and for Indigenous people. See through the lens held by Native photographers and celebrate their influence on photography today.

**Get tickets!   artsmia.org   612.870.3000**

*In Our Hands: Native Photography, 1890 to Now* is organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

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Cara Romero (Chemehuevi, born 1977), *TV Indians* (detail), 2017, archival inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist © Cara Romero



Ongoing

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: puc-mn.org/waite-house.

Ongoing

Reading tutors needed for AIMS

Reading Partners is a national education nonprofit that mobilizes communities to provide students with proven, individualized reading support they need to read at grade level. Community-based volunteers are trained to use our accessible curriculum while building a one-on-one relationship with their student(s). We work exclusively with students of elementary age, kindergarten through 5th grade. We are presently serving students of the American Indian Youth Enrichment program, an after-school initiative hosted between 3:30-4:30pm Mondays and Wednesdays in the American Indian Magnet School in Dayton's Bluff, Saint Paul. If you would like to be a tutor contact: kalju.maegi@reading-partners.org or lara.posner@reading-partners.org.

Ongoing

Call for Native Artists

Native American artists, performers, and culture bearers looking for opportunities to exhibit, enhance, or share their artistic talents and cultural knowledge are invited to apply to the Cultural Programs offered through THE INDIAN MUSEUM OF NORTH AMERICA® at the Crazy Horse Memorial in S.D. Applications for the 2024 season are coming soon. Programs include: Artist in Residence, Gift from Mother Earth Art Show and Sale, Talking Circle Speaker Series, Living Treasures Indian Arts Cultural Exchange, and Daily Cultural Performances. For info, see: <https://crazyhorsememorial.org/the-museums/cultural-programs-opportunities> or call 605-673-4681, ext. 286.

Thru Dec 31

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

Aabijijiwan Ukeyat yanalleh Exhibit

Aabijijiwan 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/aabijijiwan-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>.

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>.

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>.

Thru 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! 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](http://www.newnativetheatre.org) or [boxoffice@newnativetheatre.org](mailto:boxoffice@newnativetheatre.org).

Dec 6

Alison Hiltner and Prerna

Join AMRA as we welcome artists/curators/installers Alison Hiltner and Prerna for a visionary workshop on gallery design and installation. Bring images, videos, or drawings to share a specific installation challenge you have with your practice, and Alison Hiltner and Prerna will share their problem-solving processes with you. Get hands-on experience in gallery design & installation and learn what it takes to turn a blank wall into a visually appealing exhibition space. All are welcome. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. 6-8 pm. All My Relations Arts, NACDI, 1414 E Franklin Ave, #1, Minneapolis. Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/expanding-the-blank-wall-tickets-769718397447?aff=oddttdtcreator>.

Dec 7

Community Vaccine Clinic

There is still time to get a Covid-19 shot. 4pm to 7pm. Pre-registration is encouraged, call 612-724-0023. Little Earth Gym, 2501 Cedar Ave, Mpls.

Dec 7

Reading and Celebration with Erin Marie Lynch

Join us for a reading and conversation with Erin Marie Lynch and Halee Kirkwood to celebrate Erin's debut collection, Removal Acts. Drawing its title from the 1863 Federal Act that banished the Dakota people from their homelands, this remarkable debut collection reckons with the present-day repercussions of historical violence.

Through an array of brief lyrics, visual forms, chronologies, and sequences, these virtuosic poems trace a path through the labyrinth of distances and absences haunting the American colonial experiment. Erin Marie Lynch is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing and Literature at the U of Southern California. 7 - 9pm. Birchbark Bizhiw, 1629 Hennepin Ave, #275, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://birchbark-books.com/pages/events>.

Dec 7

Mary Kunesch and Jaspur Lepak

Sue Scott's Island of Discarded Women: Joining Sue for this show is special guest Mary Kunesch, a Minnesota State Senator who is a champion of racial and gender justice. The first indigenous woman to serve in the Minnesota Senate, Mary is the chief author of the Equal Rights Amendment bill, working tirelessly to enshrine the ERA in our State Constitution. Her legislative focus on Native American issues, education achievement and economic security is influenced by her personal experience as a once struggling single mom with 3 kids and 25 years as an educator. Joining this show as the musical guest is Jaspur Lepak a folk/Americana songwriter. Dinner and cocktail seating and service begins 1 hour before showtimes. 7:30 - 9pm. Doors open at 6:30pm. Crooners Main Stage, 6161 Hwy 65 NE, Mpls. For info, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sue-scotts-island-of-discarded-women-with-mary-kunesch-and-jaspur-lepak-tickets-742580477197>.

Dec 7, 14, 21, 28

Gigibaaga'adowewin

Join the Fond du Lac Language Program and FDLTCC for baaga'adowewin (traditional stick lacrosse) on Thursdays this winter from 5pm to 8pm in the FDLTCC Gym, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, 2101 14th St, Cloquet, MN. For info, see: <https://fdltcc.edu> or email [taylor.warnes@fdltcc.edu](mailto:taylor.warnes@fdltcc.edu).

Dec 7, Jan 4

Recovery Is Happening

We are a sustainable grassroots Wellbriety Movement that provides culturally based healing for the next seven generations of Indigenous people. 7 - 8pm. We meet at the Recovery Is Happening Rochester Community Center, 25 16th St NE, Rochester, MN. For info, see: <https://recoveryishappening.org/event/wellbriety-movement-meeting/2023-12-07>.

Dec 8, 9

Indigenous Intergenerational Winter Holiday Market

Blue Hummingbird Woman, Native Youth Arts Collective and Indigenous Roots are cohosting this holiday market event. Indigenous Roots Cultural Arts Center, 788 E 7th St, St Paul. For info, see: <https://indigenous-roots.org>.

ALL MY RELATIONS ARTS PRESENTS

AABIJIIWAN / UKEYAT YANALLEH

On view until January 13, 2024



Monique Verdin, ReIndigenized 1861 Mississippi Watershed Map, 2022



Karen Goulet "Always in the Deep," Unfinished Business series, 2022

Aabijijiwan / Ukeyat yanalleh is a collaborative exhibition reflecting on the Misi-ziibi (Big River, Ojibwe) by artists Karen Goulet (White Earth Ojibwe) and Monique Verdin (Houma).

Karen and Monique have created multimedia artworks inspired by their research, past residencies and cross-cultural conversations about how the Big River or Misi-ziibi Headwaters and Delta Mississippi have been in conversation with each other for thousands of years.

On Thursday, December 7th, 5:30 - 7 pm, join us for **Water Rights: Local Justice, Advocacy and Protection Panel** moderated by Tara Widner, with Shelley Buck, Gabby Menomin, and Maggie Lorenz.



Community Calendar listings are FREE

To have your event listed, email them to:  
**[thecirclenews@gmail.com](mailto:thecirclenews@gmail.com)**  
by the 20th of the month.



**Dec 8, 9, 15, 16**

**Holiday Craft Kick Off**

Home crafters will be selling their goods. Come by for xmas gifts and to support local artists and makers. 10am to 4pm each day. Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Building (front room), 1308 E Franklin Ave, Mpls. For info, call Jacque at 612-747-5247.

**Dec 9**

**North Star Voices:  
Endurance and Identity**

Alexandra Houchin is an Ojibwe woman who has won numerous cross-country national bike tours including becoming the first woman to win the Tour Divide, which is the country's most grueling, off-pavement, self-supported cycling race that straddles the continental divide. Join Alexandra as she discusses her hopes to increase representation of Indigenous people in all spaces, including in parks and on trails everywhere. You'll hear her share her story as an unexpected athlete, her drive for shattering barriers and becoming a young biking champion. 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm. Minnesota History Center, 345 W Kellogg Blvd, St Paul. Free, but RSVP requested to reserve seating, at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/north-star-voices-endurance-and-identity-tickets-732376025407>.

**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](http://www.mnhum.org) or contact Laura Adams, at: [laura.adams@mnhum.org](mailto:laura.adams@mnhum.org).

**Dec 12**

**Native American Storytelling  
with Hope Flanagan**

Join us for an enchanting evening of Native American storytelling as Seneca Elder Hope Flanagan shares her captivating tales and wisdom. Immerse yourself in rich cultural heritage as Hope weaves tales passed down through generations. Through her captivating stories, she will transport you to a world filled with ancient wisdom, legends, and traditions. Don't miss this unique opportunity to experience the power of storytelling firsthand. 6am - 7pm, Friedli Gallery and Studio, 943 7th St, West St Paul. For info, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/native-american-storytelling-with-seneca-elder-hope-flanagan-tickets-759089756897>. If you can not join us in person, join on Zoom at: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86537238741?pwd=GeyF8SzcQL4MiCndmb4wiLPHfkoxM>.

**Jan 6**

**American Indians &  
the American Dream**

History Forum In-Person: American Indians & the American Dream pres-

ents Kasey Keeler. In her groundbreaking history of the urbanization and suburbanization of Native communities in Minnesota, Kasey Keeler shows how American Indians have navigated the intersection of federal Indian policy and federal housing policy to access homeownership, particularly in the suburbs. From the Homestead Act of 1862 to the housing bubble of the early 2000s and today's Wall of Forgotten Natives, Keeler offers new ways to think about histories of place and place-making for American Indians here in Minnesota and highlights the contradictions and limits of the ever-alluring "American Dream." Keeler (Tuolumne Me-Wuk and Potawatomi) is an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a joint appointment in the Department of Civil Society & Community Studies and the American Indian & Indigenous Studies Program. She is author of American Indians and the American Dream: Policies, Place, and Property in Minnesota. She received her PhD in American Studies from the University of Minnesota. 10am and 2pm. \$16. MHS, 345 W Kellogg Blvd, St. Paul. For info, see: <https://cart.mnhs.org/86745/86752>.

**Jan 7**

**Okizi (To Heal) Call for Artists**

All My Relations Arts invites artists to participate in the group exhibition, Okizi (To Heal). All American Indian artists are welcome to apply. All works must be original and can be 2D, 3D, video, or performance. Okizi (To Heal) is a partner exhibition with the American Swedish Institute in response to their upcoming traveling exhibition, Arctic Highways: Unbound Indigenous People. A common theme of these dual exhibitions as the meeting of two Indigenous peoples is the healing impacts of cultural revitalization. While efforts were made to separate Native peoples from their spirituality, language, and cultural knowledge and traditions, Okizi (To Heal) will highlight the revitalization efforts that reconnect this generation and future generations to our language, land, and culture as a means of healing from historical and generational trauma. Deadline is Jan 7, 2024. For info, see: <https://allmyrelationsarts.org/opportunities/calls/okizi-to-heal-call-for-artists>.

**Jan 19 (deadline)**

**ArtsHERE: New  
Grant Initiative**

ArtsHERE: A New Grant Initiative from National Endowment for the Arts is now Accepting Statements of Interest. These grants range from \$65,000 to \$130,000 and support projects focused on equity, community engagement, and increasing arts access. 501(c3) organizations and federally recognized tribes just need to submit a simple statement of interest by Jan.19, 2024. ArtsHERE supports organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to equity within their practices and programming and have undertaken consistent engagement with underserved groups/communities. Grants are for specific projects that will strengthen the organization's capacity to sustain meaningful community engagement and increase arts participation for underserved groups/communities. To learn more, see: [ArtsHERE.org](https://artsHERE.org).



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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.



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# I won't miss my opportunity next time

BY ARNE VAINIO, MD

I missed the print deadline for my last story. Something always happens around Christmas to make me appreciate the gifts we have and the things we do for each other and our interdependence. This year I didn't have anything.

The snow was coming down hard and it was the beginning of another cold spell.

The thermometer read 2.4 degrees above zero at 6 AM when I left the house. I had to get up an hour earlier and I had four patients to round on. One of them was a complicated patient in the ICU. The morning took longer than I intended and I knew I was going to be late for clinic as I walked out of the hospital and into the parking ramp.

The ramp was full of slush and big chunks of dirty ice that had fallen off cars and I was trying to walk around them as I hurried to mine. There was a rusty old grey car with one red door and a black hood and I could see someone crouched by the front tire on the driver's side. It was a woman in her late fifties to early sixties and she was trying to loosen the lug nuts on a flat tire.

She was wet from kneeling in the frozen slush and her hands were white from the cold and the jack was lying

next to the car. Her jacket was old and dirty and wasn't warm enough for the weather. Fixing a flat tire normally doesn't take long and I could see she wasn't able to do it.

I walked up to her car and she looked up at me. I nodded at her and she slowly got up and moved aside. It took me less than a minute to loosen the lug nuts and I put the jack under her car. The lug wrench didn't fit on the jack and kept slipping when I tried to turn it.

"This isn't the right jack for this car", I told her.

"I guess not", she said. "Someone gave me this car and I need to make it last. It just needs to get me through the winter."

I had some tools in the trunk of my car and found a ratchet and a socket that fit the jack and I started to raise up the car. I was able to get it high enough to get the flat tire off. She went into the trunk and got out the spare tire and rolled it to the front of the car. The tire was much bigger than the one I took off and I had to raise the car up further. As I started to raise it, I could see the jack starting to bend and I lowered the car until the jack looked better.

"We need to put the old tire back on. That jack is going to collapse."

"I'm not surprised", she said. "Like I said, someone gave me the car. I should

have been more careful, I cut that last corner too close in the snow and I hit the curb and I could feel the tire go flat."

I went into the trunk of my car and took out my jack. It wasn't the right one either, but I figured both jacks together would be enough to change the tire. As I was getting the jack under her car, my pager went off. I had a patient in clinic waiting for me and the clinic was a half hour away. I knew I needed to hurry and figured I could have the tire on in ten more minutes and try to make up some time on the freeway. I called the clinic and let them know I was going to be late.

The woman didn't have gloves and she was blowing into her hands to keep them warm. The snow blew in through the open sides of the parking ramp and she tried to keep her back to the wind.

"I had to work all night and I was tired and that's why I hit the curb. My husband is in the intensive care unit and I was coming to see him. He's pretty sick and he isn't getting better." She said that matter-of-factly and I could tell life dealt her disappointments and difficult situations on a regular basis. She didn't mention any children or other relatives and I had the impression there was no one only a phone call away to come and help her. Everything I could see spoke of poverty.

I was trying to get my jack under the car without kneeling and I didn't want to have my pants wet all day in the clinic. I finally got my jack under the car next to hers and raised the car enough to put the old tire back on. I had two of the lug nuts halfway on when her jack buckled and collapsed and the car lurched forward. That put all the weight of the car on my jack and as the car went forward, my jack collapsed and folded and the old tire was barely on the car.

It was plain to see there was no way we were going to get her tire changed. She seemed resigned to another setback and she sighed a deep sigh that told me she couldn't miss a day of work. Losing her job could spiral into losing her place to live and I knew that rusty old car was her independence.

My pager went off and I had another patient waiting for me. I felt guilty as I picked up my tools and put them back in the trunk. My jack was bent and tangled in her bent jack under the car and I didn't even try to get it out of there.



"Is there anyone you can call to come and help you?"

"I don't know. Maybe my landlord, but he isn't very nice. I know you have to leave and I appreciate what you tried to do for me."

I drove out of the ramp and the snow was coming down hard as I turned onto the freeway. I thought of my mother after my dad's suicide when I was four years old.

I remember her going to the Co-op and she would always get two dollars worth of gas. I remember her getting a flat tire on the rusty old Ford she drove and she couldn't get the lug nuts loose. My brother Kelly and I were too young to help and I remember us trying and trying to loosen them and we couldn't do it. I remember her standing in the hot sun on the side of the road crying and I don't remember who saved us.

I thought back to the woman in the parking ramp. I wish I would have had a better jack. I wish I would have had more time. I wish I would have given her some money. I wanted a do-over. I wanted a Christmas miracle and it didn't happen.

Sometimes things don't go the way we want them to. Sometimes we see someone in trouble and it's easier to keep walking and hope someone else stops.

All of us are that someone and we are all capable of making things just a little bit better for someone else. I won't miss my opportunity next time.

Make sure you don't miss yours.

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



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Ah...Buffy Sainte Marie was not the first 'Pretendian.' When she was outed by The Fifth Estate in Canada, I was disappointed and sorrowful even though I only remember one song of hers; He's an Indian Cowboy in the rodeo/and I'm just a little girl who loves him so...! As a child I never questioned her ethnicity because Buffy was a trailblazer and brought Indigenous causes to light using her platform.

So Ima bring some thoughts I have about this bombshell. Now who would want to have the identity of a historically and currently oppressed and suppressed civilization of The Original People of Turtle Island???

We were not supposed to even be here but our ancestors just kept snagging and fighting. The Man was unable to wipe us Indigenous People out by genocide alone so they adopted other measures such as, "Kill the Indian-save the man". A-hem! Boarding schools. I leave that for another time

Attention. Basically, in my view, Buffy who is allegedly of entirely European descent, had big cheek bones and spent many moons in a tanning bed so as to be taken seriously. Allegedly.

I was smoking in a hotel room with others when Buffy busted in and then busted out. There were a few other famous ne'er do wells there too. She's a tiny female; when she locked eyes with me, she left.

That is just one Buffy story thus far. Very much like when people actually meet me, and I laugh about me being put on a pedestal. In no way am I that great, but I do worry about yooz and love yooz, too. That is my purpose.

When I was born my Gramma Rose and family came to see me in the new-born ward. Rose said this over and over, "When you were born you were ours." I still am. It is a lot to carry on my weak and fragile bones but I will go on nevertheless. I am a warrior.

Can't nobody take that away from me and my kin. No threats whatsoever, just letting yooz know. I believe we have indomitable souls and have been here before and only come back to help and look after our progeny, relatives, snags, etc....

Yanno? My guardians came through for me so much that they are probably exhausted and so approve of my current lifestyle, if one could call it that.

Whoops! I forgot to put on my Witchy-Poo hat while writing. It's purple, of course. \*Puts hat on\* Done. So now I have to come up with some witty and sideways out-my-mouth observations. It's a lot of pressure my people! I spend the next month after submitting a column, tell myself to write down my thoughts, whisk it all and then I don't write it down, so I'm at a loss when I go to write the next month's piece.

Ya, ya I know, poor pitiful me who has to pull stuff out of her hiney so I can get my column in on time, mostly. The thing is, I am now soooo boring and can only whine about my physical disabilities and my mental and emotional well-being.

I remember sitting on the bus behind old women whose entire conversations were about their current

health problems. Thirteen year old me did not know I would live this long, especially not knowing what was in store for me; to crumble, to die and that has not happened.

When I say I was a mark, believe me. I was born into a loving family but as I got older their protection was minimized as I went about my clueless way and adulthood crept up on me.

It turns out there are people in your sphere who do not want you to succeed. So I say g'wan den and do it for yourself and the generations to come behind you. The others mean nothing, except to stay away from their toxicity. I have.

Ya. I went on a tangent I didn't know was inside me so thank you reading and I pray you are healing from unwanted trauma. I so want to hug yooz! Group hug, y'all. I love yooz!

I have been writing this column forever, it's been 25 years yo!!! My mind cannot wrap around that. Just so yooz know this has been the privilege of my lifetime and the best I get out of it. My Gramma Rose was proud of me.



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