



First-of-its-kind statewide plan to combat homelessness in Minnesota rolls out this spring



Residents and volunteers built yurts, heated by wood stoves, to provide shelter and warmth through Minnesota's harsh winter at Camp Nenookaasi in south Minneapolis. Camp residents were evicted in early January 2024. (Photo by Aaron Nesheim/Sahan Journal.)

BY KATELYN VUE/SAHAN JOURNAL AND MPR NEWS

An ambitious plan to coordinate Minnesota's response to homelessness across agencies – shaped by those who have directly experienced housing instability – will swing into action this spring.

The "Crossroads to Justice" strategic plan aims to reduce homelessness statewide by 15 percent by 2026 and to narrow the large racial disparities in those experiencing homelessness. Another goal is to reduce the disparities in mortality and improve the health of people facing homelessness.

"This plan, which will be our north star for our state agencies, is comprehensive covering approaches like increasing shelter capacity, as well as how to approach related needs such as ensuring that addiction treatment and recovery resources are widely accessible," Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan said in a statement.

Last year, Governor Tim Walz signed a historic \$2.6 billion housing stability package; some of those funds will fuel the plan's action steps, including increased funding for homeless shelters, rental assistance, affordable housing and support to help people find and keep housing.

In 2022, Walz and Flanagan delegated the Minnesota Interagency Council on

Homelessness (MICH), a cabinet-level state advisory group leading state efforts on housing stability, to launch efforts crafting the plan. Over the next four years, about a dozen state and regional agencies will work to implement the plan's action steps to reduce barriers to benefits, housing and jobs, among other initiatives.

Agency-specific efforts range from better access to state workforce programs, to a pilot program to improve food assistance to those who cycle in and out of homelessness, to better housing and benefits for veterans, to more transitional housing for those leaving prison.

The plan will shape priorities during the next Legislative session, said MICH Executive Director Cathy ten Broeke, who has worked in state government and direct homelessness response for over 30 years.

The \$2.6 billion state investment in housing efforts "is a huge down payment on this work," she said.

Crossroads to Justice is the first plan of its kind to incorporate people who have experienced housing instability or homelessness justice consultants. The consultants will continue to be involved in the implementation stage.

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 –

Community honors Henry Boucha with screening of "Electric Indian"

BY DAN NINHAM

"The Electric Indian" documentary film was publicly screened at the pre-game event for the Hockey Day Minnesota in Warroad in January. The documentary followed Ojibwe hockey legend Henry Boucha, a hockey star from Warroad, Minnesota, who competed in the 1969 Minnesota High School Hockey Tournament, continued to the 1972 Olympics and finished in the NHL. An on-ice assault and injury ended his athletic career that unexpectedly led to a journey of healing and cultural reclamation.

Leya Hale, Dakota and Dine Nations, is the documentary film producer for Twin Cities PBS (TPT) and director of "The Electric Indian".

"Warroad is the hometown of Minnesota Hockey legend Henry Boucha so it was very meaningful for me to screen The Electric Indian for the first time in front of an audience that knew Henry so well," said Leya Hale. "I felt very emotional as I witnessed the audience react to the film through laughter and tears. I was grateful and honored to receive such a positive response from the audience with standing ovation once the film concluded."

"I felt blessed to receive encouraging words from Boucha family members that I did a good job," added Hale.

Following the screening, there was a question and answer session with three of Henry's grandchildren including Shalese Snowden, and Sky and Gaabi Boucha, all of whom also appeared in the film. Hale said, "They did an excellent job at explaining the impact of their grandfather's legacy on the community. I was very proud of them for speaking from their hearts."

Tara Boucha is Henry's daughter. She talked about her dad the hometown hero to so many and the documentary that keeps his

legacy alive. She said, "Since Warroad is his home community it fit to have it shown as part of the Hockey Day events. Prior to his death, he was involved with the idea of having a special 'sneak peek' for Warroad, which is where his career started."

"He was also honored on a special jersey that was created for the event worn by the boys' high school team," said Tara. "The hockey day committee had various visuals with him depicted throughout the Hockey Day Village. There was also an ice sculpture of him and his signature on display in town. Media coverage included various clips regarding his hockey career including his contributions to hockey and the Native community."

Granddaughter Sky Boucha, an Augsburg University student majoring in American Indian Studies and Finance, said, "Watching the documentary I was so proud of all the work my grandpa accomplished throughout his life. He had an amazing career in hockey, but the work I am most proud of his contributions to native communities. TPT and PBS did an amazing job telling his story."

After the screening of the film, there was a panel held with Director Leya Hale with grandchildren Sky, Shalese and Gaabi Boucha.

Granddaughter Shalese Snowden, living in Warroad and in her third year at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law, said, "I want people to leave with the value of perseverance," said Shalese. "My grandpa persevered through major life obstacles in his life but chose to never give up. Once his hockey career ended, he discovered the Ojibwe culture and spirituality which helped him discover his lifelong path of helping Native American causes."

– CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 –



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Wiping Away the Tears

BY WINONA LADUKE

The ride is hard. Si Tanka Wokiksuye Omaka Tokatakiya, the Future Generations Ride, commemorates the Lakota ancestors and families who were brutally murdered in the Wounded Knee Massacre on December 29, 1890. The ancestors had ridden from Standing Rock to Pine Ridge to save their people; instead, they were shot by the United States Cavalry. Last year, the seven-day ride had 100 riders at the end, most of them under 20-years-old. The ride was grueling and there was suffering. That's part of the grieving process, the healing process. That's the next generation.

On December 29, 2023, the Lakota held a ceremony at the Wounded Knee gravesite and read the names of those who were killed, and identified – women, children and families wiped out by howitzers (artillery weapons). There were many who were not named but remembered.

It was somber. And for the second year, clothing, moccasins and pipes that belonged to the murdered victims were there at Wounded Knee, returned from a museum in the east, where a ghoulish collection had rested for over a century. We prayed, listening to songs, as we looked upon the dresses, shirts of the Ghost Dancers and baby moccasins, all stripped from those slain at Wounded Knee. Now, all sat in open boxes covering the gravesite where their people had been buried.

Sitting Bull

It was 1890 and the great leader Sitting Bull was incarcerated at Fort Yates with his people. More than a decade had passed since the U.S. government illegally seized the Black Hills, forcing the people off sacred land. The buffalo had been decimated. Incarcerated at prisoner-of-war camps, the Lakota's rations had been cut in half. The people were starving.

On December 15, Maj. James McLaughlin ordered the assassination of Sitting Bull by the Indian Police. Sitting Bull's ally, the Minneconjou Lakota leader Spotted Elk (dubbed "Big Foot" by the cavalry for the size of his shoes), fled south to the Pine Ridge Agency along with about 350 Lakota, mostly women and children.

They traveled under the cover of night, in the depths of winter. They rode over 200 hundred miles brutal conditions. Chased by Col. Forsyth and the U.S. Army's 7th Cavalry, they arrived at the village of Wounded Knee, where they sought safety and a chance to live. That chance was not given.

The next morning, Chief Spotted Elk and his people, camped just north of Wounded Knee, were surrounded by the 7th Cavalry. Spotted Elk was among the first to fall. Thirty minutes later as many as 300 Lakota people lay dead.

Forsyth commended his soldiers for their "gallant conduct... in an engagement with a band of Indians in desperate condition and crazed by religion." The Army awarded 23 Medals of Honor to soldiers who participated in the massacre. U.S. Cpl. Paul Weinert was cited for "firing his howitzer at several Indians in the ravine."

There's no way to whitewash this story, although many have tried. This is simply history, and, despite decades of erasure, the story is here to stay. The people remember and they work to heal.

Healing

How do you heal? That's a question still worth asking 133 years later. First, we must acknowledge what happened. Starting there, we grieve and begin to heal spiritually. In the early 1980s, Alex White Plume's uncle told him that because the Army had not allowed survivors and family members to perform grieving ceremonies at Wounded Knee, the spirits of the victims were unable to leave the "Land of the Breathing." In 1986, White Plume, his brother Percy and 17 other Lakota, calling themselves the Si Tanka Wokiksuye Okolakiciye – the "Big Foot Remembrance Group" – embarked on the first annual Big Foot Memorial Ride from Standing Rock to Pine Ridge.

It was an emotional experience, a time to remember the past and reflect on the future. "As men, we cried," said White Plume. "We used to try to be like the white man – don't show any pain and just be tough. But after you go through that ride, it's okay to cry. It heals your wounds."

The White Plume family has continued this ride for almost 40 years. Each year new young riders come. Stories and prayers recited; men and women suffer in honor of their ancestors. We all come to heal.

During the ride this year, I stood next to Andrea Eastman, (Sisseton Dakota) as she looked over the medical notes of her ancestor, Dr. Charles Eastman. Eastman was among the first Native Americans to be certified as a European-style doctor. After graduating from the University of Boston medical school in 1890, he became a physician at Pine Ridge. Eastman saved all the survivors from Wounded Knee that he could. Only seven died in his care. Sickened by the carnage, he was forced out of his position because his medical notes countered Forsyth's narrative.

Coming Home

At some point, collecting the heads, body parts and sacred items of Native people became a national pastime. Museums in the US and Europe filled themselves with such curiosities; private collectors did the same. One of the largest collections of goods and clothing associated with persons killed at Wounded Knee came to be housed in the Woods Memorial Library Museum (now the Founders Museum) in

Barre, Massachusetts, a small town in Massachusetts. The bodies had been stripped and their items were donated to the town's museum by Frank Root, a collector of such grisly remains.

In January 1993, more than a century after the day Root brought the collection to Barre, Nellie Two Bulls, Alex White Plume and Edgar Fire Thunder traveled from Pine Ridge to see the belongings. White Plume described his visit as "one of my saddest expeditions I had ever had." He said, "We didn't know what to expect but it was really sad. The reason was all the children's clothing and the cegpognaka, the amulets for the umbilical cords. Everything had bullet holes in it, blood and Big Foot's hair."

"The spirits still linger in the museum, I hear their voices and cries," Nellie Two Bulls said. These Lakota wanted to bring their ancestors' belongings home.

"These were trophies of war," says Wendell W. Yellow Bull. His great-grandfather survived the massacre.

It took 20 years for the museum to consider returning the clothes, the dolls and the hair. Museums want to keep their hoards of looted goods, until forced to give them up, either by law or because they recognized it was the right thing to do. Shortly after White Plume's visit to Barre, I spoke with Audrey Stevens, the Barre Museum curator, who gave me the whitewashed narrative of how the collection came to be.

Stevens told me that Root purchased the collection from its finders, two civilians in charge of putting the dead at Wounded Knee in a mass grave. "They had these wagons and mules which the bodies were on" says Stevens. "One of the mules stepped in a hole. They looked in and found all of these clothes. Big Foot's Band had buried them there on the way to Wounded Knee."

For a century, the Barre museum told people this story, that the Lakota had taken off their clothes before they went to Wounded Knee. The suggestion is absurd:

What sort of people take off their clothes in the middle of winter?

Upon finding their ancestors' clothing, considered cultural patrimony, the Lakota sought to bring them home. In 1990, Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act to address the widescale plunder of Native America by museums – the bodies, heads and other artifacts collected as booty of war by scientists and the military.

At the time, the Barre Museum said it was exempt from the law, because their collection received no federal funding. The Lakota, however, had allies. One was Mia Feroletto, editor and publisher of *New Observations*, who helped lead the movement to repatriate the museum's more than 150 pieces of stolen artifacts. "You can be an inspiration to others or you can be the next generation of perpetrators," Feroletto recalled telling the museum, Feroletto told the *New York Times*.

Elizabeth Almen Martin, a museum board member, said it became clear that the collection held more significance to the Lakota people than it did to Barre residents. "We decided that anything they wanted to have, they can have," Martin said. And so in 2022, the shirts, bullet hole-ridden children's dresses and baby moccasins returned to Wounded Knee.

The complexity of historic trauma is compounded in the healing process. Native people are asked to bury their ancestors again, and again.

As I stood looking over the grave site with the baby moccasins, I cried. We all did. But in our grieving, something else begins. A new chapter, a time to heal from the brutality of history. The time for massacres is long over. The time for healing is now. That's true, whether you live in North America, South America or Palestine.

As I witnessed those horse riders, I saw the coming of a new generation. They are the ones already here. It is time to wipe away the tears.



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New book about the Ho-Chunk removal exposes ethnic cleansing in MN

BY LEE EGERSTROM

A new book about Ho-Chunk experiences in Minnesota should prove once and for all that “Minnesota Nice” does not describe the state’s historic relationship with its Indigenous populations.

Or any other state’s, or the nation’s, for that matter.

Cathy Coats, a metadata specialist who works on cataloging research documents at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campuses, has written a new book on Ho-Chunk tribal experiences in Minnesota.

To Banish Forever: A Secret Society, the Ho-Chunk, and Ethnic Cleansing in Minnesota was published in January by Minnesota Historical Society Press. The book was launched at All My Relations Gallery in Minneapolis on Jan. 17. The following night Coats and friends presented the book at a Ho-Chunk regional meeting in St. Paul.

Ho-Chunk experiences are documented in various government reports, old newspaper articles, and in academic work that Coats accessed for her book. It includes Ho-Chunk interaction with a Minnesota-based hate group not all Minnesotans will want to know about, but should. That she and other researchers have found these links shows how unpleasant history sometimes hide in plain sight.

Such history isn’t often taught in schools. “What Ho-Chunk know about this is handed down from family experiences. Most Minnesotans don’t know any of it,” Coats said.

She discovered it in passing by reading a reference to it in *Last Woman Standing*, a 1981 fiction book by White Earth Nation’s Winona LaDuke. Coats was an undergraduate student at St. Cloud State University and it prompted the history-minded research student to dig further.

That continued into graduate school where her graduate advisor was Mary Lethert Wingerd, a SCSU history professor and prominent Minnesota historian, an experts on the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 and author of *North Country: The Making of Minnesota*.

Reception

At All My Relations Gallery, Ho-Chunk Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Bill Quackenbush from the Black River Falls tribal headquarters joined with Minnesota Ho-Chunk leader Robert Pilot and University of California Santa Cruz professor and author Amy Lonetree in presenting Coats a blanket depicting the Ho-Chunk flag.

Ceremonies using blankets and the giving of blankets are wrapped in nearly all tribal cultures through the Americas.

“It was emotional, for me,” Coats said.

Ho-Chunk from Minnesota, Wisconsin and elsewhere are thanking her for writing this book “in plain language so you don’t have to be an academic to understand it.” That should also help all Minnesotans connect with their own and their shared histories.

Key takeaways from Coats’ book

Efforts to banish the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin pushed many to live along the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota and adjacent areas of Iowa, thus giving the latter’s college town of Decorah its name. That became the first of five major movements forced on Ho-Chunk from poor, to fertile, to extremely unproductive, to eventually to passable land settings.

After moving from the Mississippi River banks, the Ho-Chunk settled at a short-lived reservation in a mostly wooded area around Long Prairie not suitable for their food production. Next stop was the desired, fertile land in what is now Blue Earth and Steele counties south of Mankato.

It was there that ethnic cleansing activities teamed with land speculation interests to produce an ugly and, until now, mostly hidden episode of Minnesota history. When movers and shakers at Mankato and some surrounding communities became aware of the fertile ground the Ho-Chunk inhabited, they started a huge political campaign to get state officials and Congress to move the Ho-Chunk again, or “to banish forever” from the state.

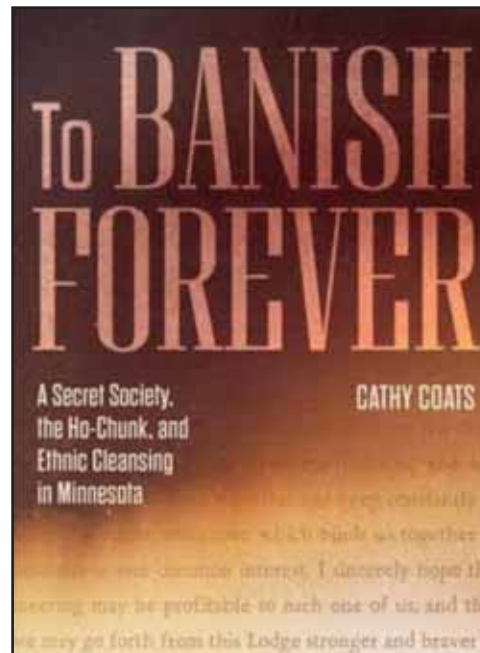
Those efforts had local terrorist support. Some Southern Minnesota movers and shakers formed a secret society call the Knights of the Forest. For a period of time, they posted guards camped around the Ho-Chunk reservation with instructions to shoot any Indians who crossed over the boundary lines.

Their political effort succeeded and was aided by Minnesota fears Ho-Chunk might join forces with nearby Dakota warriors during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Violence played a part as the Ho-Chunk were moved at gunpoint from the fertile lands near Mankato to desolate, unproductive land at Crow Creek, along the Missouri River in what became South Dakota. That instant failure of resettlement prompted another movement to shared reservation land in Nebraska.

Connections of the current with the past

The Knights of the Forest were a contemporary of the Ku Klux Klan, but not a product of that hate group’s movement. Coats puts their goals and timing in perspective. All various “knights” movements had ties to secret and fraternal organizations popular within Nineteenth Century society.

The Minnesota Knights group was



more like the Texas Rangers. The latter’s origins can also be traced to white settler efforts to remove Indigenous tribes from the Lone Star state. Thus, Minnesota baseball fans have even more reason to like their “Twins.”

Land speculators were the driving force behind Ho-Chunk removal efforts in Minnesota. Coats shows this clearly and notes fortunes were made by disposing Ho-Chunk and selling their land to new settlers.

Minnesota history lovers should be aware this wasn’t the only time property theft was masked behind public safety sounding rhetoric. A great historian at Augsburg College, Carl H. Chrislock, exposed how history was repeated when well-connected people teamed with pompous politicians to “protect” all from German-American farmers during World War I.

Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I, was published by Minnesota Historical Society Press in 1991. Again, according to legend in west-central and southern Minnesota, new fortunes was made recycling former Native lands again being taken from German-American farmers.

Chrislock’s book showed how farmers not German Americans were also harmed and driven out of the state at that time for holding political views not shared by the state’s political power trust.

Ho-Chunks still call Minnesota

Resilient Ho-Chunks still call Minnesota home despite state and national laws and removal actions that have been amended, eliminated or at least no longer enforced. That said, most promises to Ho-Chunk groups in treaties were never fulfilled. Land promised in Minnesota was not restored.

More than 1,000 Ho-Chunks continue to live in Minnesota. In a tongue-in-cheek comment on those leftover and ignored laws, local Ho-Chunk leader Robert Pilot

told *The Circle*, “I’m a criminal. I’m not supposed to be here.”

Regardless, he represents Minnesotan Ho-Chunk members in what the Ho-Chunk Nation regards as District 4 – people living outside Wisconsin. Pilot is a broadcaster on Native Roots Radio (am950), is an educator and a Native American civil rights activist.

Current global, national and local Minnesota events make the Coats book on the Ho-Chunk extremely timely.

Forced removals of Indigenous people continue with much bloodshed and starvation in parts of the Middle East, eastern Asia and in Africa; conquest of extremely fertile land is an objective behind an occupation attempt in Ukraine. Motives for these actions resonate with Minnesota history.

Long delayed remedial actions are taking place in Minnesota and around the U.S., however. Here at home, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will close the Upper Sioux Agency State Park on Feb. 16 and will return the land to the Upper Sioux Community.

This action, approved by the Minnesota Legislature in the past session, was long requested by the Dakota tribes. The DNR noted in its announcement, “This land is the site of starvation and death of Dakota people during the summer of 1882, when the U.S. Government failed to provide food promised to the Dakota by treaty.”

Also, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, Chicago’s Field Museum, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science have eliminated exhibits or have closed some for revamping how Native artifacts and cultures are displayed. This comes in response to tribal objections to past displays and requests for repatriation of human remains and artifacts, supported by the Biden Administration.

Strong support for these museum efforts came from Lonetree, the American Studies professor at UC Santa Cruz who was part of Coats’ book launch presentations. She is author of a 2012 book, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native Americans in National and Tribal Museums*; and co-author of a book on the Ho-Chunk Nation, *People of the Big Voice: Photographs of Ho-Chunk Families by Charles Van Schaick, 1879-1942*.

Details on future book events will be posted at the Minnesota Historical Society Press website <https://www.mnhs.org/mnhspress>.

A Minneapolis Star Tribune article about Coats’ master’s thesis at St. Cloud State University that lead to the book was published in 2018. It is accessible at <https://www.startribune.com/secret-hate-group-bent-on-banishing-ho-chunk-indians-in-1863/475744423>.



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Echo series brings new Native superhero to living rooms

A new Marvel Comics-inspired series called Echo focuses on the deaf Native American anti-hero/superhero. Native American newcomer Alaqua Cox (who is deaf), who grew up on the Menominee Indian Reservation in Wisconsin, stars as Echo.

Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige said Echo also will host an “incredible team of Indigenous writers, directors and cast members” including Zahn McClarnon (Dark Winds, Longmire), Graham Greene (Dances With Wolves, Wind River), Chaske Spencer (Wild Indian, The English), Tantoo Cardinal (Smoke Signals, Killers of the Flower Moon), Devery Jacobs (Rutherford Falls, Reservation Dogs) and Cody Lightning (Smoke Signals, Four Sheets to the Wind), and directors Sydney Freeland (Reservation Dogs, Drunktown’s Finest) and Catriona McKenzie (The Walking Dead, Shining Vale).

Echo is now streaming on Disney+, giving audiences their first series featuring a Native American comic character. It will also be the first Marvel Studios series to debut simultaneously on Disney+ and sister streaming service Hulu when all episodes are available Jan. 10.

Deadline extended for Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Tribes and Native entities have been given more time to submit applications for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, a national initiative to improve high-speed internet access on Native lands.

Eligible tribal and Native entities have until March 22 to apply for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).. Applications

can be submitted online, via email or through the postal system.

“The deadline extensions are intended to provide potential applicants with more time to develop competitive project proposals and project consortia,” the NTIA said in a news release. “Eligible Entities that previously submitted applications may submit revised applications (entire application must be resubmitted) on or before the new submission deadline.”

TBCP is a \$3 billion program, from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, to support Tribal governments bringing high-speed Internet to Tribal lands, including telehealth, distance learning, affordability, and digital inclusion initiatives. The program seeks to improve quality of life, spur economic development, and create opportunities for remote employment, online entrepreneurship, remote learning, and telehealth by expanding broadband access and by providing digital training and inclusion programs to Native American communities. This second round of funding from the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program will make approximately \$980 million available.

For info, see: <https://www.ntia.gov/page/tribal-broadband-connectivity-program>.

Do not Forget Us Fundraiser

Poets and musicians will hold an annual benefit in words and music for the victims of the wars on the earth, headlined by Spoken Word artist from Michigan Jamie Andress (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe). Andress was inspired a decade ago by Detroit rapper Eminem and specializes in long multi-factor rhyme performances of his generously open-hearted poems.

The title of the event quotes a young Minneapolis Ukrainian singer early in Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine who was asked by a audience member, “What can we do?” She answered, “Do not forget us.”

Participants include: Jamie Andress (Animikii) Anishinabe Spoken Word artist from Michigan. James Armstrong, Tim Frantzich, Sarina Partridge, Robert Robinson, Pierre Fulford, Alicia Tovpeko.

The evening also includes a special presentation of poems by Robert Bly, recited by Phil Bryant, Mike Hazard, Ezra Hyland, Tim Frantzich, Robert Johnson, Klecko, Jim Lenfestey, Freya Manfred, Dougie Padilla, Joshua Preston, Wang Ping, Thomas R. Smith, and Tim Young.

“Homelessness” continued from cover

One of the twelve justice consultants, Marlena Jasch, is an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe who currently lives in St. Cloud.

Between 2017 to 2019, Jasch was homeless while on a housing waitlist. She said she struggled to find safe, available spaces in shelters in the rural communities where she lived including Melrose and Sauk Centre. She spent summers living in a tent and winters in her car.

In 2019, a rapid rehousing program helped her secure an apartment, she said. She was also on track to become a licensed practice nurse.

However, she said COVID-19 restrictions disrupted her plans. And after police responded to a domestic violence call at her apartment, her landlord filed to evict her. In 2021, she became homeless again for a couple of months. Jasch said in those months, she was still fleeing her abuser while they were stalking her.

She sought temporary housing at a local shelter for domestic violence survivors, but was turned down because “my actual domestic assault had not been within the last couple of days,” she said. She eventually found a place at a shared house.

“I brought that also into my experience as a consultant,” Jasch said, referring to domestic violence leading to homelessness. “It was important to me that that got brought to the table, and added to the list, but it was very new to be bringing that to [state agencies] and for them to be working on it as it relates to this plan.”

As a justice consultant, she specifically wanted to collaborate with the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services to create action steps. She also worked with the state department of administration.

One of the action steps resulting from working together is a Domestic Violence Housing First program that will be implemented through the Department of Human Services, which is trauma-informed and survivor-centered housing assistance that focuses on rapidly housing domestic violence survivors, then providing ongoing support services.

Her experience as a Native woman also shaped her approach, Jasch said.

In Minnesota, Native Americans are 28 times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Latino whites, according to the plan. Several of the plan’s action steps highlight increasing funding opportunities and expanding relationships with tribal nations and urban tribal communities.

“I felt like this process, first of all, gave power to the consultants but then in turn, we were able to encourage these large agencies, but also the individual employees working at these agencies, to see the importance of power-sharing and community,” said Michael Giovanis, one of the justice consultants who contributed to the report.

ALL MY RELATIONS ARTS PRESENTS

Okizi (To Heal)

On view February 1 - April 13, 2024



Keith Braveheart, “Buffalo Nation: Creating Community”



Stina Folkebrant, “Mygration” series

Okizi (To Heal), is a partner exhibition with the American Swedish Institute (ASI) in response to the traveling exhibition, *Arctic Highways: Unbound Indigenous People*. A common theme of these dual exhibitions is the healing impacts of cultural revitalization. *Okizi* highlights 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.

AMRA will host Sami artists, Tomas Colbengtsson and Stina Folkebrandt’s *Mygration* collaborative works alongside invited and juried American Indian artists Keith Braveheart, Karen Goulet, Courtney Leonard, and others.

Opening Reception: February 1, 6 - 8 pm

ASI First Look Reception: February 2, 6 - 9 pm

Artist Workshop: February 13



Native groups team with the U to stop commercial tobacco smoking

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Native people wanting to shake loose from commercial tobacco addiction now have a new tool to help them through the modern technology of text messaging.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the Indian Health Service (IHS) announced late last year they have started a free text messaging program called SmokefreeNATIVE. It was specifically designed to help American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) quit commercial tobacco while still honoring the cultural importance of their traditional tobacco.

This program can be accessed on the Internet by SmokefreeNATIVE or by texting NATIVE to 47848.

It should have a “down home” feel for many Minnesota Indigenous people. The announcement of the program said the St. Paul-based American Indian Cancer Foundation (AICAF) worked with the University of Minnesota School of Public Health to support NCI and IHS in developing the program.

The Foundation said it was an effort “to create a culturally aligned digital resource to improve access to evidence-based smoking cessation support for AI/ANs.” It also teams with actions federal agencies are taking as part of the White House Cancer Moonshot effort.

The SmokefreeNATIVE program is designed for people ready to quit smoking commercial tobacco and are willing to set a quit smoking target date. The texting program then offers six to eight weeks of texting materials with smoking cessation themes and content on Native cultural experiences, worldviews and traditions, the announcement said.

The AICAF statement thanked organizations “that have played a pivotal role in achieving this significant milestone, making the journey to quit commercial tobacco more accessible to our relatives across Indian Country.”

It comes after health officials have documented substantial evidence that smoking related health problems are greatest among Indigenous people.

Alberta Becenti, a Dine from New Mexico who works as a public health advisor and disease prevention expert with IHS in Washington, D.C., said in a Dec. 14 statement:

“People who smoke cigarettes are at risk for many adverse health effects, including cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, and poor reproductive health outcomes. On average, American Indians and Alaska Native people have the highest prevalence of cigarette smoking compared to all other racial and ethnic

groups in the United States.”

As a result, she said, “Heart disease, cancer and stroke are leading causes of death in these communities.”

Health officials across the nation observe the higher use of commercial tobacco products by Indigenous Americans, and it was carefully documented in a 2017 National Health Interview Survey. Results of that survey found nearly one in five adult Americans still use commercial tobacco products, but nearly 30 percent of AI/AN adults do.

The findings of survey results were published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the NIC’s National Cancer Institute in 2018. They found 47.4 million U.S. adults (and estimated 19.3 percent) were daily users of tobacco products.

For ethnic groups, however, the researchers found AI/AN adults had the highest daily use of tobacco, at 29.8 percent. Cigarettes accounted for 20.6 percent of the usage.

Two other findings from the survey also have implications for the Indigenous communities in and around Minnesota.

The second highest ethnic group of users (27.4 percent) was a category called Mixed Race, Non-Hispanic that likely include a sizeable number of Native relatives, especially in urban areas. And, the highest percent of tobacco users measured by Census regional areas was found in the Midwest region (23.5 percent), not in the South and regions where most commercial tobacco is grown and where prices for tobacco products are the lowest in the U.S.

The national AICAF foundation has several programs, including a Scared Breath campaign, to help people and their loved ones cope with tobacco-related cancer and in finding appropriate care and treatment.

In support of these efforts, it also has events in different locations that include the annual Powwow for Hope, set for May 4 this year in St. Paul; and another Roc Your Mocs round dance and powwow in Chicago.

For more information on the new program and for other helpful information, see: The American Indian Cancer Foundation at www.aicaf.org; SmokefreeNATIVE at Indian Health Service at <https://www.ihs.gov>; and the White House Cancer Moonshot at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cancer-moonshot>.

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MnDOT drivers keep Indigenous languages alive one snowplow at a time

BY GRACIE STOCKTON/MPR

You may have heard of Betty Whiteout, Ctrl Salt Delete, Sleetwood Mac or Plowy McPlowface – past winners of the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s Name a Snowplow Contest. And while the now-annual event garners thousands of punny monikers, some plow drivers are hoping it’s an opportunity to keep Indigenous languages alive, one truck at a time.

The contest was born in December 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. It became wildly popular – 24,000 entries strong – as a much-needed moment of levity for Minnesotans during a dark, isolated time. Anne Meyer, who works for MnDOT, said the idea came from Scotland, where people have been naming snowplows for years.

MnDOT now has 24 named plows on the road, and while the contest is fun for everyone, it’s also a chance to build cultural awareness.

Christopher Chee, a member of the Diné Nation, works for MnDOT out of Redwood Falls in southwest Minnesota. He lives in the Lower Sioux Indian community where his wife is from, plowing in the winter and doing road maintenance in the summer.

In his previous job as roads director for the Lower Sioux Community, he worked with the city of Redwood Falls, Redwood County, the tribal council and MnDOT to become the first tribal nation in the state to have dual-language road signs welcoming people in Dakota and English. The signs went up in 2016.

During last year’s Name a Snowplow Contest, he wanted to build on his work. He encouraged friends to send in Native language names, and he submitted one in Dakota.

“I amna’ means ‘snowstorm’ or ‘blizzard,’” Chee said. “And being a snowplow driver, we’re out there in the blizzards, in the snowstorms keeping the roads open, rescuing people if we have to, making way for troopers and paramedics.”

I amna made it to the second to last round of the contest but didn’t make the final cut. One of his supervisors noticed Chee’s disappointment, and promised to see what he could do.

Sure enough, two weeks later, Chee walked into the breakroom and saw an I amna vinyl sticker on the table. Now Chee and his truck partner of three years, Jovi Lund – who is a tribal member of the Lower Sioux Indian Community – drive their plow with pride.

Mike Connor is another driver who helped push for a plow with an Indigenous



MnDOT truck partners Christopher Chee and Jovi Lund stand with the snowplow "I amna" they helped to name. (Photo courtesy of MnDOT.)

name: Giiwedini, Ojibwe for “the North Wind.”

“Naming this plow helps with building cultural awareness between the state and tribal entities,” said Connor, a member of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and a MnDOT driver. “It’s important to show the traditions and language.”

Connor said the state and tribal governments have had a formal relationship, but

dubbing the plow with an Indigenous name was a sign of goodwill.

“There’s a lot of policies and procedures between tribes and MnDOT, and it is encouraging to see the engagement with the tribes,” he said.

A second plow in northeast Minnesota bears the name Goonodaabaan. It’s a combination of the Ojibwe words “goon” and “odaabaan,” which translate to “snow,” and “sleigh” or “sled.”

MnDOT staff selected a few dozen names from the more than 7,000 entries for the public to vote on, which was held in January, Meyer said.

Chee hopes more tribal nations and ethnic groups from around the state will submit names in languages other than English this year. He hopes for at least one truck with an Indigenous name on each of Minnesota’s 11 tribal nations.

“Have another up by Red Lake, have another around Shakopee, have another one at Treasure Island, Upper Sioux, and from there, White Earth,” he said.

Chee said he’s happy that many Indigenous communities are investing in teaching young people their native languages. And, he said, something as simple as a dual language road sign or a name on a snowplow can help with that mission.

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Panel moderator Leya Hale asked how their grandfathers' legacy in cultural revitalization and community building impacted them as young people. Shalese said, "His legacy in cultural revitalization and community building has greatly impacted Sky and I in our college career choices of law and American Indian students and business and American Indian studies. Both of us have future goals of working in Indian Country which is a large part from being mentored by our grandpa."

“My grandpa taught us the importance of learning the culture, spending time with elders and being a good advocate. I believe my grandpa recognized the privilege he had from his hockey career success and he put that to good use by advocating for others in Indian country who could not. He always invited Sky and I along to different cultural and political events. I served on the National Coalition Against Racism in Sports and Media with him,” added Shalese.



Grandchildren of Henry Boucha speak on the panel after the screening. L to R: Gaabi Boucha, Sky Boucha and Shalese Snowden. (Photo by Alyssa Daken/Cities PBS.)

Gaabi Boucha attends Northern State University and is on the NCAA DII football team. He is a former standout athlete at Warroad HS. He talked about the documentary honoring his grandfather. He said: "It was a lot of fun to see the finished documentary and how amazing of a job TPT did. The documentary captures a lot of great memories from my senior year of high school and those scenes will always be something I can look back on to remember the time my grandpa and I spent together. I looked up to my grandpa so much and I think the documentary did a great job of showcasing that."

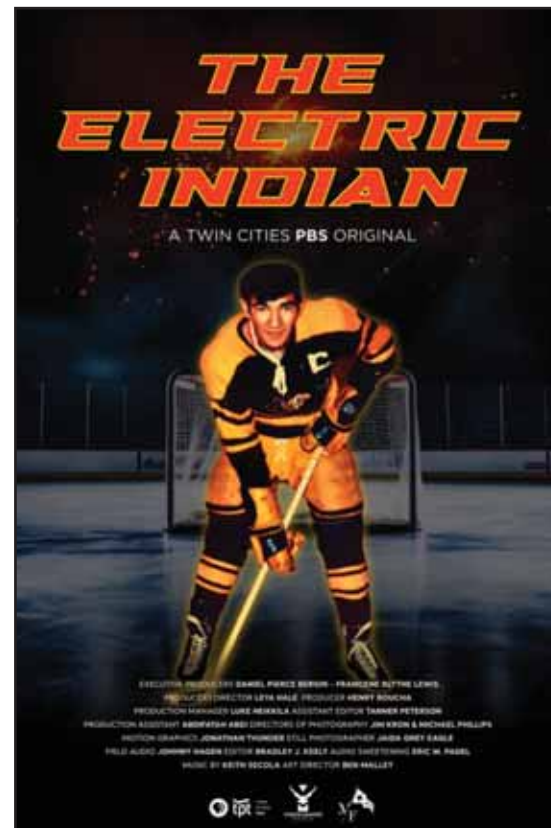
"This documentary was very special to me and my family. I know my

grandpa would have been very pleased with the community turnout for the documentary and the other ways the community honored him at Hockey Day Minnesota.”

“The Electric Indian” is a co-production of Twin Cities PBS and Vision Maker Media, with funding provided by the Minnesota Legacy Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund and Manitou Foundation. Event Sponsors included Marvin and the Warroad Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“The Electric Indian” will be aired statewide on March 26 on TPT.

See the documentary trailer at:
<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-electric-indian-preview-rxqz3m>.



"The Electric Indian" is a new documentary about the life of Native American hockey player Henry Boucha. Created by award-winning filmmaker Leya Hale, the documentary follows the life of Warroad hockey legend Henry Boucha who was involved in the production until his death in September 2023.



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Aitken a team first thinker as MSU-Moorhead Women's Rugby Coach

Athena Aitken (Leech Lake Ojibwe and Hocak) has been the coach for Minnesota State University-Moorhead (MSUM) Women's Rugby Club since 2012. The team has been competing in the Small College division for schools with female enrollment under 3500.

Athena Aitken will be inducted into the coach category in the 2024 class of the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame.

The team made the regional playoffs ten seasons, with four of those contin-

uing to national competition appearances including being National Champions in 2015.

Aitken has come full circle as an alum of MSUM with an Anthropology degree in 2012, being a player on the women's rugby team and eventually being the head coach of the program.

"In 2021 I was selected to be the coach of the Minnesota All-Star team competing in the Collegiate Rugby Championship in New Orleans, Louisiana," said Aitken.



"I believe everything has its place and there is a place for everything," said Aitken. "As in nature, nothing is useless and nothing is above anything else; everything has its part to play to make the system work."

"In a team sport like rugby, the team must come first. Players may be different in athletic ability and innate decision-making, but when everyone is learning a brand new sport, there can be no one player that is placed above the team as a whole. Everyone must respect each other's role on the team and the part it plays to make the team successful," she added.

Women's rugby is one of 17 club sports at MSUM. According to the website, club sports are open to undergraduate and graduate students. Funding comes from student activities fees that are included in tuition fees but fundraising is only one of the challenges of the team.

"One of the challenges of being the coach of a collegiate club is the nature of the position itself; very few universities offer rugby as a varsity sport," said Aitken. "In light of this, I am technically a volunteer coach and do not receive any compensation. Club budgets can vary from year to year and from different student-led administrators."

"Securing funding to cover registration costs and travel expenses is always the top priority. Competitor teams come and go and the schedule changes every season, leading to uncertainty about projected travel expenses. Nearly all of my players past and present held employment as well as a full time class schedule while dedicating their valuable spare time to learning a sport they had not heard of until they reached college," she added.

"I want every dollar to stay within the club so everyone who wants to play can play without worrying about the costs associated with the season," said Aitken.

Elite coaches and athletes have mentors that guide them on their path in and out of the athletic arena. Oftentimes family members serve the mentor title. Her father, Larry Aitken, established Leech Lake Tribal College and was a professor in Ojibwe Studies in a number of higher education institutions for three decades. Larry Aitken was an inspiring and aspiring leader among many others as well as with his family.

"My first and biggest inspiration has always been my father, Larry," said Aitken. "He taught me that being a successful multi-sport athlete is possible and something to strive towards. He was my number one fan and showed me how to perform under pressure, to approach each new challenge with a clear mind and a singular focus. He also showed me how to have confidence in my actions and inspire confidence in my teammates."

"During practices I am so grateful to have people who know the drills, have the skills, and can showcase the technical aspects of positions they've played," said Aitken. "On game day they take care of the little things when I am focused on preparing the team for the 80 minutes ahead. They help foster the positive team culture in so many ways: lending an ear to a shy player, motivating the team during a conditioning session, and sometimes acting as a translator between coach and player."

"Being recent graduates they eventually depart, but the team is improved and their strategies live on in the freshman class," she said.



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POLITICAL MATTERS: Native Issues in the Halls of Government – by Mordecai Specktor

editor@ajwnews.com

Mille Lacs Band vs. Tamarack nickel mine

I've written a bit about the Talon Metals Corp. scheme to mine nickel in Aitkin County. The company calls it the Tamarack Nickel Project, which has a "land package" of around 31,000 acres. In June 2023, Talon submitted an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). In its Dec. 2023 newsletter, Talon noted that the DNR and "local Tribal governments are currently undergoing a meticulous review and comment period."

Rio Tinto, a global mining firm with a checkered reputation, has a stake in the mine project, which is being sold to the public as a vital component of the transition to renewable resources – in particular, supplying nickel for electric vehicle (EV) batteries. Tesla, the electric car company, has committed to buying nickel from the proposed underground Talon mine.

The profile of opposition to the Tamarack mine was raised in January with the publication in the *Star Tribune* of an opinion article penned by Melanie Benjamin, chief executive and chairwoman of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

In her piece, Benjamin mentioned that the mining issue "hits particularly close to home as the proposed Tamarack Mine, a nickel mine brought forward by Talon Metals, is located within 1.3 miles of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community. Nickel mines have a consistent track record of pollution, both during and after operation. Abandoned hard rock mines have contributed to the contamination of an estimated 40% of the country's rivers and 50% of its lakes. The proposed Tamarack nickel mine is a threat to the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe – to our people, to other Indigenous groups, our land and to the broader Minnesota population and our state's natural resources and watersheds.

"Talon Metals is positioning its nickel mine as an urgent solution to electric vehicle production demand. The Mille Lacs Band supports the transition to a green economy. However, we believe a green economy can be advanced without relying on practices that threaten Indigenous people and resources."

In response to the Tamarack nickel mine proposal, the Mille Lacs Band has launched Water Over Nickel (waterovernickel.com), which Benjamin said is an initiative "to ensure our voices and our concerns about the impact of nickel mining on native communities will be heard and acknowledged." Among the Mille Lacs Band's partners in Water Over Nickel are Earthjustice and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.

In concluding her article, Benjamin warned that Talon Metals has not produced "any science or data" to substantiate claims that nickel mining can be done safely: "Yet we continue to see Talon aggressively expanding its mining exploration activities beyond its original plans and the area outlined in the permit it has submitted" to the DNR. "Their actions mirror what we've seen before: entering with a modest proposal that rapidly swells in size and scope, leaving damage in its wake."

Benjamin encouraged Minnesotans "to remain cautious and skeptical" about the Talon mining scheme, participate in the upcoming public comment period and engage with Water Over Nickel.

Native actors in the news

I imagine that readers of *The Circle* were joyful seeing Lily Gladstone (Piegan Blackfeet and Nez Perce) recently win the Golden Globe best actress award for her role in "Killers of the Flower Moon." I recently watched the film directed by Martin Scorsese, which is now streaming on Apple TV+. Gladstone's portrayal of Mollie Burkhart, a member of the Osage tribe who is married to Ernest Burkhart (Leonardo DiCaprio), is powerful and excruciating. And now she's nominated for a best actress Oscar. The Academy Awards ceremony will be broadcast on March 10.

I've mentioned in recent columns that Native arts and culture has been enjoying a moment of exposure in the larger zeitgeist, with major cultural institutions hosting exhibitions, plays, etc. And there are Indians on TV, in shows like "Reservation Dogs." On the television front, I want to mention the fourth season of "True Detective," which is rolling out on HBO/Max. The current season, which is subtitled "Night Country," is set in fictional Ennis, Alaska, and features Jodie Foster as Liz Danvers, a detective investigating some bizarre killings. As the show points out, in Ennis there is a permeable barrier between this world and the world of the spirits. The show, with a large cast of Native Alaskans, also features Isabella Star LaBlanc (Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota), who attended St. Paul Academy. As a child actor, she performed at the local SteppingStone Theatre, and later at Jungle Theater in Minneapolis. In "True Detective: Night Country," LaBlanc stands out in the role of Leah Danvers, the daughter of Foster's character.

I'm looking forward to the upcoming episodes.



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Henry Greencrow, Billy Blackwell, and Carl Decora (from left) on AIR. Photo by Earl Seubert. From "Indians AIR Their Interests," *Minneapolis Tribune*, July 4, 1971.

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Reading Partners is a national education nonprofit that mobilizes communities to provide students with proven, reading support they need to read at grade level. We work 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@readingpartners.org or lara.posner@readingpartners.org.

Call for Native Artists

Native American artists, performers, and culture bearers looking 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. For info, see: <https://crazy-horsememorial.org/the-museums/cultural-programs-opportunities> or call 605-673-4681, ext. 286.

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. Free. MIA, 2400 3rd Ave S, Minneapolis. For more info, see: <https://new.artsimia.org/exhibition/the-lyrical-artwork-of-jim-denomie>.

Thru April 13
Okizi (To Heal)

Okizi (To Heal) is a partner exhibition with the American Swedish Institute and All My Relations Gallery in response to the traveling exhibition, Arctic Highways: Unbound Indigenous People. A common theme of these exhibitions 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 highlights 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. For info, contact Angela Two Stars at: atwostars@nacdi.org.
•February 13: Artist Workshop

Thru May 27
Reimagining Native/
American Art

What happens when Native American and American art is seen together, rather than in separate places? What stories and connections emerge from this new way of being together? These are some of the questions that guided a collaboratively reimagined suite of galleries. This Indigenous-led, consensus-based curatorial experiment is based on Dakota philosophies and ways of being. It includes thematic installations that center "place", honor the

living land, explore the power of relationality and ends with a reflection, inviting visitors to join us in imagining the future we wish to have. Galleries 301-304. Free For info, see: <https://new.artsimia.org/exhibition/reimagining-native-american-art>.

Thru May 26
Moments of Memory Exhibit

Plein air painting is the art of capturing outdoor scenes from life. Named from the French for "open air," this form of painting from life moves artists out of the studio to study real landscapes, focusing on how light and shadow interact with things in particular places. The result is a snapshot of a moment in time, one that might be remembered, but never repeated. Bell Museum, 2088 Larapenteur Ave W, St Paul. For info, see: <https://www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/moments-of-memory-minnesota-landscapes-painted-from-life>.

Thru Oct 2025
Reframing Our Stories

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. 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 May 10
Wobliheca - The Energy to
Create Exhibit

Hail stones, elk teeth, morning stars, rolling hills, and geometric elements associated with Lakota imagery are featured in Tosa Two Heart's exhibit Wobliheca - The Energy to Create. Through her work, she shares her pride for her Lakota heritage in ways that promote cultural awareness. In addition to exhibiting at Watermark, she will teach a fashion art workshop that will meet for four sessions in March. A reception will be held from 2 to 4pm on **March 2**. Watermark Art Center, 505 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji. For info, see: [WatermarkArtCenter.org](https://www.watermarkartcenter.org).

Feb 10
Tashia Hart & Staci Drouillard

AICHO's Indigenous Writer Series features authors Tashia Hart and Staci L. Drouillard who both write about Indigenous women's experiences: exploring themes around love, relationships, and traditional foods and medicine. Hart and Drouillard will each talk about their books, read an excerpt of their books, participate in a Q&A segment, and sign books. Event is free and open to the public. 2-4pm. Dr. Robert Powless Cultural Center, 212 West 2nd St, Duluth. For info, see: <https://www.aicho.org/indigenous-writer-series.html>.

Feb 12
Food Funders: Indigenous
Food Systems Community

Through a series of in-person and virtual gatherings throughout the upcoming year, Community of Practice participants will share their experiences in strengthening Indigenous communities and Indigenous projects and explore opportunities to create more just and sustainable food systems. The Community of Practice is open to grantmakers, lenders, and investors who are committed to Indigenous communities and Native food systems. For info, see: <https://www.agandfoodfunders.org/featured-work/indian-country-food-and-ag-philanthropy/2024ifscop>. Or contact Richard Elm-Hill at relmhill@firstnations.org.

Feb 14
MMIWR Relatives March

Missing & Murdered Indigenous Relatives March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Boys, Men, Two Spirit, and LGBTQI+ Relatives! Speakers, lunch, informational tables and more! Please WEAR RED! Bring Banners, Posters, Staffs, Drums, Rattles. Everyone is welcome. 11am to 2pm. Speakers begin at 11AM. March begins at noon, snow or shine. East Phillips Community and Cultural Center, 2307 17th Ave S, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://www.facebook.com/events/302347079461028>

Feb 17
Community Connections
/Green Zone Summit

Join the City of Minneapolis and

over 150 organizations to connect, share resources and work for environmental justice. This year's free event will have workshops, music and dance, fun activities for kids, jobs and internships, an expo and a community dialogue on youth and safety. Lunch included. 9am - 4pm. Minneapolis Convention Center, Hall E, 1301 2nd Ave S, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/cc>.

Feb 20
Native American Boarding
School Survivor Healing Circle

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition extends an invitation to all Indian Boarding School survivors (attendees/alumni) to join us for a Survivor Healing Circle - a supportive and empowering space for those who have experienced the trauma associated with Indian Boarding Schools to connect with each other. Facilitated by Nelda Goodman and Sandy White Hawk. 6-8pm. Location TBD. Contact ebeck@nabshc.org or 612-500-5842 for info.

Feb 22
AIFEP Workshop

Learn about Tiwahe's American Indian Family Empowerment Program grant opportunity and how to submit a successful application. Apply for funding for projects in economic independence, culture, health and wellness, or education. Limited to 50 spots. MN History Center, 345 W Kellogg Blvd, St Paul. To register, email: tony@tiwahefoundation.org. For info, see: <https://tiwahefoundation.org/aifep>.

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Feb 23 (deadline)

American Indian Food Sovereignty Grants

American Indian Food Sovereignty grants will coordinate delivery of culturally appropriate American Indian food security. DHS is seeking to coordinate providers and deliver culturally and developmentally appropriate programming to improve access, equity to food security programs within Tribal and American Indian communities. For info, see: <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/grants-rfps/open-rfps>.

Feb 23

Three Dog Night

Legendary band, Three Dog Night, now in its 5th decade, claims some of the most astonishing statistics in popular music. Boasting chart and sales records that remain virtually unmatched in popular music, Three Dog Night had 21 consecutive Top 40 hits in all genres (pop, rock and country). Star price: \$60. Select price: \$30. For info, see: <https://www.starcasino.com/mah-nomen/entertainment-calendar>.

Feb 23

Lakota Nation vs. United States

Lakota Nation vs. United States chronicles the Lakota Indians' century-long quest to reclaim the Black Hills, sacred land that was stolen in violation of treaty agreements. A searing, timely portrait of resistance, the film explores the ways America has ignored its debt to indigenous communities, and ponders what might be done today to repair the wrongs of the past. 7 - 10pm. Free popcorn and soda provided. Rated PG-13. East Side Freedom Library, 1105 Greenbrier St, Saint Paul. For info, see: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lakota-nation-vs-united-states-free-screening-tickets-796280766207>

Feb 23 (deadline)

Sponsorships for family well-being events

The Minnesota Department of Human Services is sponsoring a limited number of events in April to celebrate and promote family well-being and Child Abuse Prevention Month. Community-based organizations and Tribal Nations are eligible to apply for sponsorships that can be used for a variety of activities and materials to increase access to resources, build connections and promote family and community well-being. Sponsorships between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per agency are available for at least 20 agencies. Organizations that engage Black, Indigenous and communities of color and other underserved communities are encouraged to apply and will be prioritized for sponsorships. Sponsorship requests are due by Feb. 23. For info, see: <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/whats-new>.

Feb 24

Brulé

Brulé is best known for thrilling audiences with a mergence of cultural rock and theatrical instrumentations. Now in their 26th season, their national performances carry the same contagious excitement as Trans Siberian Orchestra, Celtic Thunder, and Riverdance—but with the emotional impact of the American Indian culture. Brulé has released 23 titles in as many years and has been named “Group of the Year” five times by the Native American Music Awards, earning

seven NAMMYS since 2002. Paired with the stunning choreography of one of the top Native American dance troupes, their authenticity brings a multi-dimensional art form to this cultural rock opera. 2pm. Advance price: Adult/Senior \$39, Student \$11. At the door: Adult/Senior \$44, Student \$16. Reif Performing Arts Center, 720 NW Conifer Dr, Grand Rapids, MN. For info, see: <https://www.reifcenter.org>.

Feb 24

Aadizookaan Winter Storytelling

AICHO will host its annual Aadizookaan Winter Storytelling event with traditional Ojibwe creation stories told by Michael Migizi Sullivan, Ph.D. (Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibw) at 6pm. Stories will be told in Ojibwe and translated into English. Mike will tell stories of Wenaboohoo, a historical and spiritual icon of the Anishinaabeg. Free and open to the public. AICHO and the storytellers have requested attendees to refrain from recording the event due to the spirituality of the gathering. AICHO's Dr. Robert Powless Cultural Center, 212 W. 2nd St, Duluth.

Feb 29

Do not Forget Us Fundraiser

Poets and musicians will hold an annual benefit in words and music for the victims of the wars on the earth, headlined by Spoken Word artist from Michigan Jamie Andress (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe). Andress was inspired a decade ago by Detroit rapper Eminem and specializes in long multi-factor rhyme performances of his generously open-hearted poems. Participants include: Jamie Andress (Animikii) Anishinabe Spoken Word artist from Michigan. James Armstrong, Tim Frantzich, Sarina Partridge, Robert Robinson, Pierre Fulford, Alicia Tovpeko, and more. 7pm at the American Swedish Institute, 2600 Park Ave, Minneapolis. For info, see: <https://asimn.org/event/do-not-forget-us-poets-writers-musicians-against-the-war-s-on-the-earth>.

Feb 29 – Mar 1

Dakota & Ojibwe Languages Symposium

The Minnesota Indian Affairs Council's Language Revitalization Working Group, partnering with the Minnesota Humanities Center, is hosting the 3rd annual Dakota & Ojibwe Languages Symposium! The goal is to bring people working in Dakota and Ojibwe language revitalization together. We will use this time to celebrate successes, highlight the current state of the field, shape future language revitalization efforts, and elevate the visibility of Indigenous languages throughout the state of Minnesota. By bringing people together, we hope this symposium serves as an opportunity for individuals to network with other Dakota and Ojibwe language professionals. The symposium will be held in-person and virtually for participants. Breakfast and lunch are included for those attending in person. Participants are responsible for booking their own overnight accommodations if needed and can call Treasure Island Resort at 1-888-867-7829. CEU's will be available for educators attending the symposium. For info or to register, see: <https://www.mnhum.org/event/dakota-ojibwe-symposium-presenter-application-or-email:registrations@mnhum.org>.

March 2, 3, 7, 8, 9

Bear Grease

Featuring an all-Indigenous cast, this hilarious twist on the 1978 classic, Grease, reimagines the beloved musical as culturally relevant with Indigenous humor and pride. Bear Grease is the brainchild of Crystle Lightning (Cree) and MC RedCloud (Huichol), a husband-and-wife hip-hop duo who go by the name LightningCloud. Pay-what-you-can with a suggested price of \$35. Gremlin Theatre, Annex Building, 550 Vandalia St, #177, St Paul. For info, see: www.newnativetheatre.org.

- March 2: 7:30pm
- March 3: 2:00pm
- March 7: 7:30pm
- March 8: 7:30pm
- March 9: 2pm & 7:30pm

March 13

DIW Prenatal Group

Are you pregnant? Build community, get support and learn together. Prenatl group starts March 13. Wednesdays from 4:30 to 7:30pm. Division of Indian Work, 1001 Lake St, Minneapolis. For info and to register, call Amy at 612-644-9726 or amyarndtbuzzard@yahoo.com.

March 15

IHB Women's Health Day

The Indian Health Board is holding Women's Health Day. Mammograms start at age 40 and should be done annually. Pap-tests start at age 21 and should be done every 3 to 5 years. Appointments available to pre-existing IHB patients. To schedule an appointment call Vicky at 612-721-9853. IHB, 1315 E 24th St, Mpls.



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Did I ever really thank you for that?

BY ARNE VAINIO, MD

How long have I known you? Since I started at the clinic over seventeen years ago. From the first day you were a resource and you took on tasks for me that weren't really even your responsibility. Insurance companies expect a doctor to stay on hold while they preauthorize a medicine and this long process tethered to a phone is a very poor use of a doctor's time. You did that first one for me and we slid into a pattern of me always hoping you would make that call and fill out the form and of you always doing just that.

Did I ever really thank you for that? Your voice was always cheerful and you always asked and truly cared about how my day was going.

When did we become friends? That evolved over time. We work in a small enough setting that we get to know each other. Trust is a strong basis for friendship and there was never any reason to question that trust. With trust comes respect and with respect comes understanding and with understanding comes friendship.

Some lives seem easier than others. The reasons are not always clear and often have to do with simply where you were lucky enough to be born or with superficial and shallow things society makes us believe are all-important.

Some lives are hard. How do we choose the path we will follow when we come to this earth? Is it chosen before we are even born? If so, how do we make the best of that choice? Maybe it's by taking each day one at a time and hoping this day will be better than the day before.

And the day before that. You told me that being an only child was a blessing when you were young. That blessing turned into a curse when your mother was diagnosed with cancer and you had to carry that burden alone. In addition to your own health concerns you had to go to her chemotherapy treatments, wait for her to get out of surgery, and go to her doctor visits to make sure she understood everything. I could hear that in your voice and see it in your eyes and yet, you continued to fill out forms without complaining.

Did I ever hear you complain? We're all human. You knew I would listen and I was glad to take that on. Mostly, I listened. You already knew what you needed to do. Taking care of others made your own concerns take a back seat. We talked about this many times and those others always rose above looking out for yourself.

When did things get so complicated? Diabetes has a way of involving everything and your kidneys couldn't handle the high blood pressures and when your kidneys failed, your blood pressure became unman-

ageable. Recurrent infections almost made you lose your foot and our relationship changed when I was following you in the hospital. Your potassium levels fluctuated wildly and either too high or too low could throw your heart out of rhythm at any time with fatal consequences.

Money was short and you ran out of heating fuel in the middle of winter. I expect those were some bad days. You didn't tell me about that until after it was passed. A desperate someone looking for something to sell kicked your door in when you weren't home and made your crumbling house lose some of that precious heat. Visiting your mother in the nursing home must have been warm. Your old television couldn't have brought much money. Your car got repossessed.

Your death came as a total shock to me. In retrospect, it shouldn't have been a surprise, but you were a survivor and any given day of yours would have been too much for one of those given an easy life to bear.

The church was big and empty and it was easy to find a parking spot in the snowy lot. There was no waiting in line to get in. The stained glass windows made your casket look small. I found out during your funeral that you bought that casket in advance and had the burial preparations arranged in advance. You even had your headstone taken care of in advance. Kevin was touched and honored to learn you wanted him to sing at your funeral. He smiled when he learned you already had the songs picked out.

He sang them beautifully and the hurt and the love in his voice echoed in the high arched ceilings of the church. There were less than ten of us who worked closely enough with you to be given time off work and it was all too evident that we were your family. Mary Jo was sitting next to me and as Kevin sang Amazing Grace, she slid her arm into mine and we leaned against each other. The last time I sat in this church, Mary Jo was at the front and we were burying her husband. That was the same week my brother Kelly died.

The priest asked us to kneel several times. Some people didn't and I didn't know for

sure if I was supposed to or not. I knelt. For you, I could be catholic. The priest chanted and sang and swung a lantern back and forth and went around you and the smoke from the lantern bathed your casket and he made sure it didn't miss any part of it. It was a beautiful ceremony and he quoted scripture I had never heard before and he talked about resurrection and the promise of everlasting life. Your mother was bent and broken as her wheelchair was pushed down the aisle behind your casket. Kevin sang your final song and his voice filled the church as we walked behind your mother.

The reception line was short. There was no meal provided by the community and no milling around of long lost friends. Your mother's wheelchair was parked just shy of the exit door and the few people there paid their respects to her. I knelt in front of her and held her hand. Her eyes were tired and old and her hair was just barely growing back from her chemotherapy. Her nurse respectfully stood back and your mother was truly alone.

I'm not sure she recognized me in her grief. "It's Dr. Vainio," I said softly. She started to cry silently and her shoulders shook as she squeezed my hand. She didn't say anything and I didn't say anything either. I felt we both understood holding hands was enough and anything I could possibly say would only compound her tragedy.

The cold winter sun couldn't quite warm me on the drive back to the clinic.

My pager went off and the afternoon clinic was started. My first patient was a little boy in foster care. He was off to kind of a rough start. I opened the door and he looked up and smiled at me.

Maybe we can do something different this time. If you taught me anything, it's to take this one day at a time. I closed the door and I smiled back at him. I knew this was going to be a lot of work and that we were in it for the long haul. I also knew I had my entire work family at the clinic beside me. You made me remember just what we mean to each other.

Did I ever really thank you for that?

Are you pregnant?


Build community, get support and learn together.

Prenatal group starting March 13th
Wed nights, 4:30 - 7:30 pm
Division of Indian Work
1001 Lake St, Mpls 55407

Info and registration

Amy, 612-644-9726
amyarndtbuzzard@yahoo.com





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Boozhoo Cousins! Last month I choked on a small fistful of M&Ms. I thought that was IT for me but I have thus far survived the assassination attempt. THEY could not get me to shut up, but if I had Godiva chocolate/toffee truffle? I'm done. Seems like a fabulous way to go.

Centuries ago I was a Disco Kwe. I'm feeling more comfortable with sharing my very shredded life with so many things that I have in common with yooz. My thought is that yooz, all of ya have some funny, goofy, odd and traumatic events in yooz lives and I want to listen to you, and share my stories, too.

We Shinobs have so much to talk about. "Shinoberry" LOL! I just made a new word for the pretendians who claim indigenous Anishinabe DNA. I'm still disgusted by the "Insta-Indians" oozing out of putrid lies they propagated until per cap or "Indian Benefits". Hah!

Am I bitter?! I consciously try to attain a Ducks Back but it is and will always be bile when I get out of my fugue and face the truths, which always depress me and then the cycle begins all over again. Hello anxiety. Ya, I'm still in therapy and talking to someone who has probably heard it all, is safe, and for me, refreshing.

I'm about to give unsolicited advice to Yooz, my beloved ones. We Indigenous family across the Milky Way have been violated by those who worship money. Make of this what you will. If anyone who has privilege thinks they are not racist, look again. My advice for my Indigenous relatives is to find a therapist you feel safe with, listened to, and like. I now feel free to be me.

My own journey to self-healing seems distant and difficult but I know I am going to do just that. I may go outside again without being hauled out on a gurney, who knows? Life is strange. It is tough!!!

Now that I brought it up, I made dental and optical appointments to assuage some of the physical aspects of becoming a better me, so to speak. I'm embarrassed now when I moan and groan about my back, that I've had two spinal surgeries and it was not the experience, it is the recovery time for me.

I just wanna dance again so...ya! I lost two inches a few years ago, from my tallest height of 5'6 to 5'4 is very crushing to moi, who has always wished she was taller, and now suffers from Osteoporosis and is shrinking as she writes. From now on the bread, peanut butter and honey will have to live on the kitchen counter.

Anyhoo, I have a dentist appointment this coming day. TBT – I'm rather nervous because I have always wanted to die with my own teeth (story another time).

I got my only pair of stretchy jeans on to exit the premises and a clean T-shirt (why do they call them pairs when the object is clearly one piece, like glasses) to wear in public. And I even have a brassiere to cuddle my kittens. It has been oddly warmish here in Rezberry, so no blizzard storms as yet.

Makes me wonder because the last time Rezberry and surrounding areas

had a drought and then a flood was in 2012. I have yet untold stories about that time. When I engage in conversation with any Nort'Lander I immediately go full southern Canadian – so I just nod my head and say, "Yah" while looking down at the ice and snow, wanting to say, "Well, g'wan den!" Surely their countries of origin accept them back in, ennit???

I hope to get new eyes soon, too. I do rant and rail against the woes of my life and then...? I didn't even pick up my celly and ask for an appointment. I have cataracts, not just cats. The optometrist (aka torture master) said I am a good patient for cataract surgery so here's the info. I take responsibility for my choices.

Covid-19 hit about then and you know, and all of a sudden the USA is out of toilet paper and hand sanitizer. I was asked by the Rez dental office to take a picture of my tooth damage. Up until that request I did not know what an amazing contortionist I was despite being an old Mindimooye.

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AIFEP Workshop

Date: February 22nd
Location: MN History Center

Register: tony@tiwahefoundation.org

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