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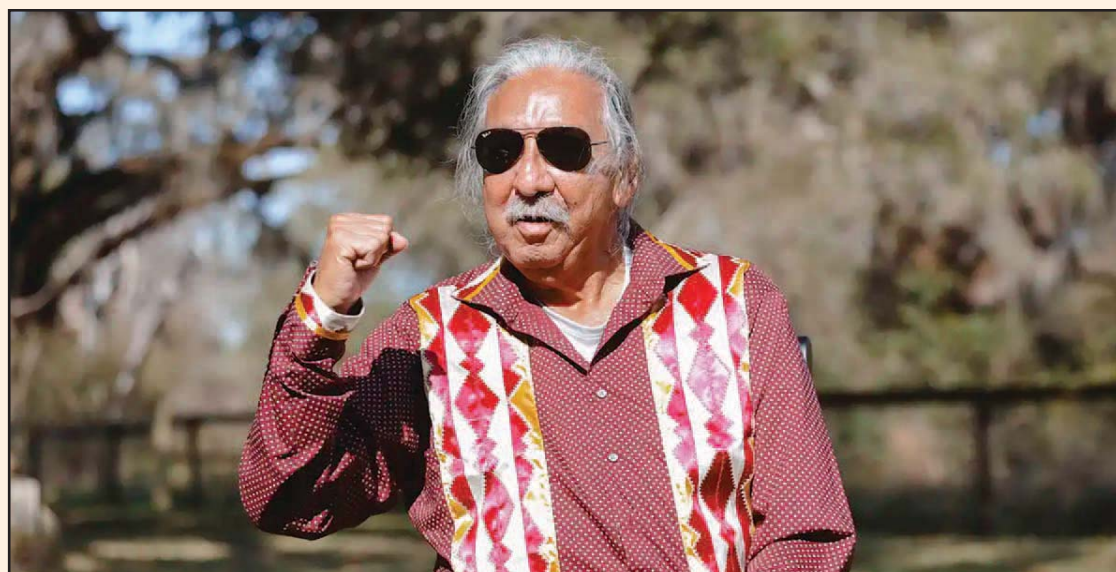
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FREE

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FREE

Peltier welcomed home after release from prison



Indigenous activist Leonard Peltier celebrates after being released from prison on Feb. 18, 2025. Former President Joe Biden commuted his life sentence in the killing of two FBI agents in 1975. (Photo by Angel White Eyes/NDN Collective.)

BY ALLISON HERRERA AND CHANDRA COLVIN/MPR NATIVE NEWS

Native American activist Leonard Peltier traveled to Belcourt, N.D., on after being released from a Florida prison on February 18. Ron Leith watched as Peltier arrived in Belcourt to the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Reservation. Leith, an Ojibwe writer and activist, said, "As many people as possible came from the reservation and made this welcoming committee."

Leith said there was a procession of cars, including the one with Peltier inside, that drove onto the reservation while the welcoming committee gathered along the sides of the road.

"From the boundary, for about a mile onto the reservation, there were cars and people and signs, and on both sides of the highway for a long time, long ways. And it was just a magnificent sight," said Leith.

Nick Tilsen, founder and CEO of the Indigenous-led organization NDN Collective, was by Peltier's side as they drove to the reservation. NDN Collective, among other partners, were significant advocates for Peltier's release. The organization also arranged Peltier's travel and housing.

Tilsen said of the welcome, "It was so beautiful. And [Peltier] looked at me and he's like, 'I did not expect any of this.'"

"Even though it was cold, he kept his window down the entire time and acknowledged and waved at every single person," said Tilsen. The temperature at the time was below zero degrees.

That evening, a crowd of Peltier's supporters and family members came together for a welcome dinner at the Sky Dancer Casino & Resort.

Leith was at the celebration and he estimated at least 300 people were in attendance, with more arriving. Though Leith said that Peltier was not in attendance. "He went home, you know. He's had quite the day."

In 1977, Peltier was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of two FBI agents. Though not a pardon, President Joe Biden granted him clemency as one of his final official acts. Peltier's sentence commutation announcement came minutes before Biden left office.

Peltier is an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band and will serve the remainder of his sentence in home confinement on his tribal homelands at Turtle Mountain.

For years, activists and supporters had been petitioning for the release of the 80-year-old, whom they say had been wrongly convicted of killing FBI agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams in 1975.

In a news release from NDN Collective, Peltier said, "Today I am finally free! They may have imprisoned me, but they never took my spirit!" In the news release, Peltier thanked his supporters all over the world who helped fight for his freedom. "I am finally going home. I look forward to seeing my friends, my family, and my community. It's a good day today."

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Trump/DOGE slash federal spending: tribes wrestle with economic impact

BY LEE EGERSTROM

All Americans were wondering as February came to a close how efforts in Washington to abolish programs, slash government work forces and hold back federal funds would affect their livelihoods and wellbeing.

No exceptions. This concern reaches from neighborhood organizations on up to city and county governments, to American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) nations and their treaty relationships with the federal government, and to every household involved with senior citizens and people with special needs.

"If you operate with grants or payments from a federal program, you are affected," said Louise Matson, executive director of the Division of Indian Work (DIW) in Minneapolis. "You don't know when or if future payments will keep your programs alive."

News about programs and federal funds that support them changed daily during the month, and sometimes by the hour. Adding to the confusion is that states - Minnesota included - have joined in court challenges to actions taken by the Trump administration and by its ex officio budget cutters, the Elon Musk self-appointed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Any quick court decision can be challenged and stalled. Trump has extensive experience with these legal maneuvers.

Media cannot guess how these battles will play out. That being the case, here are tidbits of what Minnesotans and the Native American communities are doing and dealing with.

All Minnesota lawmakers in Washington D.C. and, in response, at the State Capitol in St. Paul are facing these political uncertainty issues.

Tribal leaders from Red Lake, Leech Lake and Mille Lacs spent part of the last week of February in Washington in meetings with Minnesota Congress members and testifying at hearings.

They met with Sen. Tina Smith, a member of Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and with Fourth District Rep. Betty McCollum, a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee including its Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies that handles important funding bills for American Indians. Both are Minnesota Democrats.

Red Lake Chairman Darrell G. Seki Sr., Leech Lake Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Fineday and Mille Lacs Chief Executive Virgil Wind testified at a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior hearings. The *Red Lake News* reported that Seki and Tribal Secretary Sam Strong also met with Senator Smith on how the Trump Administration's funding freeze on tribal infrastructure projects and proposed cuts to other programs would harm the Red Lake Nation.

In a statement to *The Circle*, Indian Affairs Committee member Smith said the agenda by "unelected billionaire" Elon Musk threatens tribal sovereignty and puts Native communities and people at risk.

"He's been gutting programs people rely on to make room for their \$4 trillion plan to give tax cuts to billionaires and big corporations. I'm working with my colleagues in the Senate to fight back and use every tool we have to limit the harm to Tribal Nations and Native communities by this reckless agenda," she said

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“Take Back the Truth” website is an oily rewrite of history

BY WINONA LADUKE

It's eight years since Highway 1804 and the Missouri River were cleared of Water Protectors, yet the story continues. It's an ongoing story of the future of the water and the land, and lawyers and trials. In the past few months, we've seen renewed media on Standing Rock, outright fake newspapers and messaging that seems intended to create a new narrative prior to the jury trial in Mandan of Energy Transfer Partners v. Greenpeace.

This is apparently how it works: if you want to spin a story in North Dakota, just create a new media outlets and then a web site, where you “set the story straight”. Sort of like lying repeatedly till folks believe you.

I beg to differ with the story. I am an eyewitness to Standing Rock as a Water Protector. The Energy Transfer Partner's claims are false. To further boost its story, in early January, Energy Transfer Partners (now called Energy Transfer) set up a website called “Take Back the Truth”, with a cute little oil drop on the logo. These website claims are an oily rewrite of history, and the implications for North Dakotans and the rest of us are big.

Claim One: “The Dakota Access Pipeline does not encroach on any Tribal Lands.” That depends if you are an oil company or a Lakota. A Lakota person will tell you that the pipeline traverses Unci Maka, and that the Missouri River is the lifeblood of the people - Mni Wiconi. The Dakota Access pipeline is within the 1868 and the 1851 treaty territories, lands legally retained by the Lakota as confirmed by the US Supreme Court. The pipeline was rerouted and moved to just north of Standing Rock, so that the city of Bismarck would not bear the risk of a big oil pipeline contaminating its water supply. The residents of Bismarck have political and voting power. Now, the pipeline impacts the land, water and Lakota people.



Claim Two: “Greenpeace falsely claimed that Energy Transfer desecrated sacred and culturally important sites.” This is true! There was that big incident where the Tribal Historic Preservation Office identified sacred and cultural sites in the path of the pipeline on the former Cannonball Ranch. This occurred on the Friday of Labor Day weekend. The next day, Energy Transfer bulldozed this area. I was there in the camp that day. It bulldozed sacred sites.

Claim Three: “Neither Energy Transfer nor DAPL used extreme violence against protestors.” \$38 million is a lot of money to spend shutting down Water Protectors. North Dakota spent that to protect the interests of a private corporation, Energy Transfer Partners. Police forces used some “less than lethal” weapons, paid for by the state. Tigerswan, under contract with Energy Transfer Partners, also bought “less than lethal” weapons, releasing attack dogs on Water Protectors and injuring them.

Claim Four: “Energy Transfer Partners’ lawsuit is not about free speech.” It is! When they sue people for so-called defamation, oil and pipeline companies like Energy Transfer send a clear message: If you stand up, you will

be punished in a lawsuit. “To me, this is a freedom of speech case and freedom of association case,” attorney Sarah Vogel, former ND assistant Attorney General and Agriculture Commissioner told *the Monitor*: “As residents of a small state without a whole lot of power, we’d better be able to speak up. Who knows? I mean, this time, it’s Greenpeace, but who will it be next time?”

Claim Five: “Greenpeace orchestrated the Standing Rock protests back in 2016.” That’s not true, most of us didn’t even know they were there. They just have more money than the little guys and are easy to pick on.

Then there’s this past fall when the *North Dakota Monitor* reported some brand-new newspapers mysteriously appearing. Central North Dakota News “was postmarked from Chicago,... and distributed to residents predominantly residing in Morton County...” The paper told some pretty scary stories from eight years ago, ie: 2016: “Area schools locked down as authorities respond to pipeline protests.” It also puffed up a \$ 5 million Energy Transfer donation to the University of St. Mary back in 2016. The byline for the story tracked to a media front for a “dark money group” supported by fossil-fuel interests.

Some folks noticed. Tavi Leier, from Mandan, for instance, told the Monitor, she was concerned about a newspaper that looks legitimate but is “kind of swindling the rural people a little bit” and “putting something out there that’s not real.” Cecile Wehrman, Executive Director of the North Dakota Newspaper Association, said the publication does not meet the definition of an official newspaper in North Dakota.

Last thought: Let’s not let some Texas Oil folks make up a new story while they threaten our water and civil liberties.

Shagobay, A Great Chief of the Anishinaabe

BY WINONA LADUKE

In celebration of this America’s President’s Day, I would like to offer a story of a great chief and leader of the Anishinaabe, Shagobay, who met U.S. presidents, negotiated treaties, and kept peace. Shagobay was considered a Manidoo (a spirit), evidenced perhaps in part by his longevity. Born on the Knife River, he signed the Treaty of Prairie du Chien in 1825 when he would have been around 20 years old. He signed the 1837 treaty, was unjustly charged in “the Cornstalk War (1858)” and was active again during the Little Crow War of 1862. There’s a picture of him at a pow wow at Mille Lacs Lake in 1910 when he would have been around 97. Then in 1928, the Kanabec County Times (October 11, 1928) interviewed Shagobay. The interviewer never asked how old he was. The article, written by a female journalist, was titled “Indian Outlaw -- Unafraid and Unashamed.” At that time, he would have been 115 years old, an extraordinary age! But then, he was considered to have magical powers.

Remember who wrote history. It’s a challenge to put together the history of an Indigenous people when most of the documents were written by priests or the military. But the Anishinaabe have a strong

oral history. Mille Lacs Tribal Historian, Don Wedll, worked through a complex puzzle of oral, military and other histories to find the truth about Shagobay. One of the ways this story was linked is through the Chief’s signature, not written in Roman orthography (or the writing you see in this newspaper), but in symbols. Shagobay’s name was written with six circles on the back of a Mishibizhu, or a great horned serpent, a mythical being of the Anishinaabe.

That name itself has Dakota origin. That’s to say that the Dakota word Shakopee references the number six, often given to the sixth son of a family. Shakopee, Minnesota, is the same name, after a Dakota Chief. There were many marriages between the Dakota and the Anishinaabe over the years, and Shagobay likely descended from one of those relations, as the Dakota also lived in the Knife River area long ago. Shagobay’s name would have come from an elder of the same name, perhaps the original Shagobay, who was renowned for killing giants and protecting of his people.

He was considered to be a Manidoo because he could escape from unjust prisons and avoid conflicts. He declined the Dakota request to join in the resistance in 1862, saying the Dakota and Anishinaabe could not win a war because they did not have cannons. George Aubid, the former War Chief

of the Southwestern Anishinaabe (a title he inherited from Shagobay), told this story to many of us over the years. The Anishinaabe of that time looked at the effects a war would have on their families and on the reservation.

After a deadly measles outbreak in the 1830s, Shagobay moved with the Snake River Ojibwe Band to the south end of Mille Lacs Lake. By the 1850’s he became known as a War Chief and powerful medicine man. Oral history often clarifies written accounts. Mille Lac Band elder Sam Mitchell told Don Wedll about his neighbor Shagobay:

“He said he (Shagobay) was a Manidoo and stated that Shagobay could change himself into a large snake and crawl up a tree. Then he started telling me about how one time down by Cambridge he got into a fight with some soldiers, by a corn field and killed one of the soldiers. The soldiers arrested him, took him to Stillwater, and put him into prison. He told them that their prison could not hold him.

“Later he changed himself into a red bird and flew out the window and across the St. Croix River. Once he was across the river, he changed himself back into a man and yelled at the soldiers. He ran along the bank of the river and the soldiers shot at him. He ran so fast that the blanket he had on stuck

straight out behind him and the soldiers could not hit him. They did not try to catch him because he ran so fast,” Wedll recounts.

The brevity of this article doesn’t allow for the full story, and various written accounts differ. But the final story remains the same. Shagobay was unjustly held for what was called the “Cornstalk War” in 1857. Scholarly research finds that the Indian people were not causing “depredations,” and that the military guys who came after them were new recruits and were drinking. The initial report also fails to point out that the Indian people were hunting in their treaty territory – the 1837.

In the 1928 interview, Shagobay acknowledges that he shot the soldier and only states he did not swim across the St. Croix River but got across on a floating bridge. The courts never staged a trial for him, and the Territorial Supreme Court determined that there was no cause to prosecute any other individuals because they had done nothing wrong. Shagobay, this powerful man, survived many such challenges and kept a peace, despite the warring interests and greed which surrounded him. He was indeed a great leader.

For more info about Shagobay, visit the Giwewinong Museum in downtown Park Rapids, MN.

Future MN Native mental and physical health starts on playgrounds

BY LEE EGERSTROM

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) as started a \$6 million campaign with partners to provide facilities and conduct research on ways to improve the physical fitness and mental wellness of Minnesota's Native American youngsters. Don't expect to see a lot of lab coats, test tubes, syringes or scales. The laboratories will be the kids' playgrounds.

SMSC announced in January it is start-

ing a three-year program through its philanthropic operations and will partner with the John Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health (CIH), the national playground nonprofit group KABOOM!, and the Minnesota Vikings.

The announcement said the SMSC effort will fund a variety of projects and programs on physical fitness and wellness, commission research, raise public awareness, and support efforts to "Indigenize" athletic programs.

The effort is called the IndigeFit Kids



SMSC Vice-Chairwoman Natasha Hacker announced in January it is starting a three-year program through its philanthropic operations and will partner with the John Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health (CIH), the national playground nonprofit group KABOOM!, and the Minnesota Vikings.



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campaign. SMSC Vice-Chairwoman Natasha Hacker and Secretary/Treasurer Ashley Cornforth are co-chairs of the campaign.

Health problems are more common among Native American youth that others in the general population, Hacker explained in the program's announcement. "We believe that through a dedicated campaign, we can change this reality and close health disparities among young Native Americans in Minnesota by giving them more resources to lead active, healthy lives," she said.

Through IndigeFit Kids, SMSC will provide \$500,000 to John Hopkins' CIH to prepare at two-year study on culturally appropriate looks at physical activity and at obstacles and pathways for promoting good health among Native youth.

Dr. Melissa Walls (Couchiching First Nation and Bois Forte Ojibwe), and Dr. Donald Warne (Oglala Lakota) represented the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health and its Great Plains Hub at the announcement.

At that event at the Minneapolis American Indian Center in January,

Warne said Native groups share a value to preserve well-being for future generations. "The IndigeFit initiative aligns with these teachings and invests in our children and young people in deeply meaningful ways."

The CIH opened its regional operations at Rapid City, S.D., in October. Walls is a co-director of the center and is director of its Great Lakes Hub at Duluth.

Meanwhile, SMSC will also provide a \$1.5 million grant to the Bethesda, Md., nonprofit KABOOM! It will conduct a research project assessing the adequacy of play spaces in Minnesota's Native communities, both in reservations and in urban settings. This is considered a first-of-its-kind study.

In line with that, SMSC is committed to provide funds for building five community-designed "playspaces" in Native communities in the next three years. This will be done with KABOOM!

The Vikings football team will partner in these efforts as part of its work in promoting youth fitness and physical activity.

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MIA's Teen Perspectives art program works toward exhibit

BY EDDIE CHUCULATE

For multidisciplinary artist Graci Horne (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), 41, participating the Minneapolis Institute of Arts' (Mia) Teen Perspectives program is a way of returning the gifts she learned over a lifelong career of participating in art workshops.

The Center for Racial Health and Equity at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota has partnered with Mia since 2021 on the Teen Perspectives program, which brings together high school students and professional artists to engage in creative storytelling through art.

This year, with the fifth anniversary of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, some artists are focusing on the last five years in the Twin Cities, the Black experience, and how Minneapolis has become a global center for discussions on racial justice and equity.

The group meets for six Saturdays spanning February and March at Mia, culminating in an exhibition titled "Teen Perspectives: Minneapolis As Monument," which opens May 10 and runs through July 20 at the museum's Community Commons Gallery.

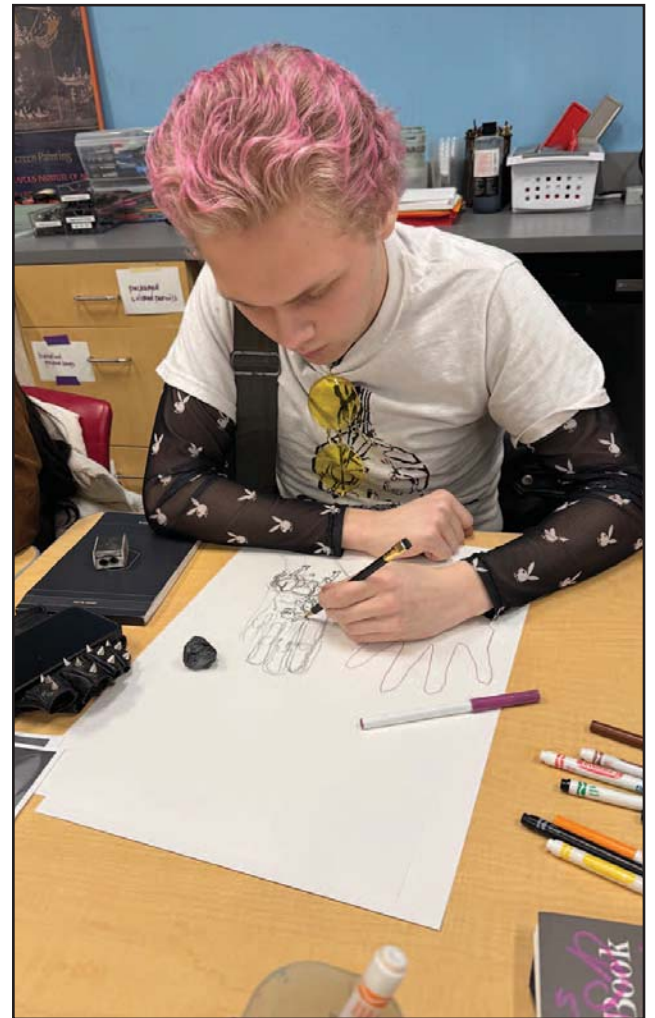
"This is how I give back to youth," said Horne, who is participating in her first Teen Perspectives program but has a long history as a teaching artist in the Education Department at the museum. "Throughout my life I acquired my skillsets through workshops. I want to teach them to work with different mediums



Graci Horne (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) leads a Teen Perspectives workshop at the Minneapolis Institute of Art last month.

and show them how to paint, draw, papier-mache."

Horne is a true example of a multidisciplinary artist. Rather than someone who just paints or sculpts, she



Artist Leo Buffalo (Red Lake Ojibwe) works on a project at the Minneapolis Institute of Art during a Teen Perspectives workshop last month.

also paper-cuts, produces papier-mache, sews, creates puppetry, writes poetry, does film and audio installations and works in textiles and fabrics.

For this 15-20 member cohort, she's leading a sewing-machine workshop, teaching students to create their own patterns and stitch balaclavas, or facemasks, which students can decorate however they wish using hot glue.

"I want them to express how they feel inside the masks we wear," said Horne, who was born in Pipestone, Minn., and lives in south Minneapolis not far from the museum. "I was never taught how to express myself; people were always just guessing, and that contributes to your mental health. I want to teach youth how to express your feelings, and state (with art) how you feel. It gives you autonomy."

Horne says she discovered that many of the teen participants had never used or even seen a sewing machine, much less created a pattern. She said she was influenced by her grandmother Grace Labelle, a boarding school survivor who sewed star-quilt toppers. But Labelle contracted tuberculosis when she was young and died before she could teach Horne her techniques.

"Those types of incidences takes away from our cultural continuity and practices," Horne said.

Even though the focus of the exhibition this year is on the Black experience, Horne said she is sticking to what she knows.

"Since I'm not Black, I made it clear I wouldn't cross boundaries. I don't have that experience, but there are other artists (workshop leaders) focusing on that."

One of the student artists in Teen Perspectives, Leo Buffalo (Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), 18, worked with Horne's husband, Juan Lucero (Isleta Pueblo), during last year's program. The senior at PiM

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(Performing Institute of Minnesota) Arts High School in Eden Prairie is working on a large-canvas acrylic painting for the upcoming May exhibition.

Buffalo said he was contacted by Mia's manager of programming, Anna Dilliard, to participate again this year. He jumped at the chance.

"You never turn down an opportunity," said Buffalo, who recently won a full-tuition scholarship to the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design, where he'll focus on painting and drawing but will be subjected to various disciplines after his arrival in August.

Buffalo, son of Kari and Walter "Wally" Buffalo, said he got his start as an artist during the pandemic as a middle-schooler, when remote learning gave him "a lot of time to think, and sit and draw."

He's related to the noted Red Lake Band artist Rabbett Strickland, who has an oil painting on display at Mia as part of its permanent collection, and a gallery in Red Lake.

Buffalo applied to Teen Perspectives last year by submitting an artists statement and a sampling of images of his work.

"It's a great program," he said. "A chance to engage the community through a teen perspective. ... We've been given money to work and buy materials -- basically anything we want, (including) workspace at Mia. It's amazing."

Buffalo said it's enjoyable to be surrounded by other Native artists and minority voices at Teen Perspectives.

"The (professional) artists who have been coming in are really high caliber," Buffalo said. "With direction from Anna, and an assistant from MCAD (the adjacent Minneapolis College of Art and Design), it's just stellar. It really allows us (students) to network with people who are in the Walker (Art Center) and Mia, just hearing what inspires their process is one of the things most valuable to young artists."



Leo Buffalo's painting, "A Boy Is His Marks," finished during the Teen Perspectives program at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts last year.

Teen Perspectives is running in conjunction with the upcoming Mia exhibition "Giants: Art from the Dean Collection of Swizz Beatz and Alicia Keys," on view from March 9 through July 13 in the Target Galleries. The exhibition explores themes of Black

identity, resilience and creativity through a wide range of media. Works by Derrick Adams, Arthur Jafa and Meleko Mokgosi -- whose largest-ever painting is included in the display -- will be shown alongside portraits by Toyin Ojih Odutola and iconic photographs by Gordon Parks.

Although that exhibition focuses on the Black experience, Mia has strong connections to the Indigenous community and three galleries dedicated to Native American art. Mia's Native American Fellowship Program was one of the first among art museums in the U.S.

The fellowship program has offered professional training to Native American students in curatorial research, exhibition development, collections care and record-keeping, community outreach and educational material development.

Past fellows include Justice Jensvold (Pejutazizi Oyate), Juan Lucero (Isleta Pueblo), Jaida Grey Eagle (Oglala Lakota), Elizabeth Day (Ojibwe), Marlena Myles (Spirit Lake Dakota & Mohegan/Muscogee) and Dakota Hoska (Oglala Lakota).

In addition to Horne, other local teaching artists in the Teen Perspectives program are Lissa Karpeh, Leslie Barlow, Kprecia Ambers and Akiko Ostlund. The students will also attend a career day led by Bobby Rogers, head of Design and Editorial at Mia.

"This program empowers students to embrace their individuality, address challenges and draw strength from community as they navigate reflection and healing," said Virajita Singh, Mia's chief diversity and inclusion officer. "Supporting teens as they collaborate with arts educators, using creative expression to explore the intersection of racism and public health in Minnesota communities is crucial to changing narratives and biases that impact the health of our communities."

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“Leonard Peltier is free! He never gave up fighting for his freedom so we never gave up fighting for him. Today our elder Leonard Peltier walks into the open arms of his people,” said Tilsen in the statement.

“Peltier’s liberation is invaluable in and of itself — yet just as his wrongful incarceration represented the oppression of Indigenous Peoples everywhere, his release today is a symbol of our collective power and inherent freedom.”

The festivities continued the next day at the Sky Dancer Casino & Resort event center on the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Reservation. NDN Collective assisted Peltier with travel and lodging arrangements and hosted the event.

The large event space was set up with a tipi in the middle. The welcome started with a song from a drum group, while Peltier was brought into the room. People spoke to the crowd, a prayer was offered, and Peltier was gifted a traditional star quilt.

Korina Barry, the action managing director of NDN Collective, helped lead the welcoming. She has also been a part of the efforts to bring Peltier home.

“Incarcerated people, too often, that reentry back into community is not supported. Often prisons just open the door, give them their bag of stuff and send them on their way. And we’re not going to let that happen to our elder,” she said.

Some relatives whom he has yet to meet were there in celebration.

Robin Clauthier said she is one of those

relatives. She grew up learning stories about him, believing in his innocence. Now, she says she looks forward to getting to know Peltier.

“I think he’s going to do good. And I feel like all of this will be, it’s worth something. It’s meaning is more than life,” Clauthier said.

Peltier spoke as well. He shared personal anecdotes of his time in prison, and the significance of the Indigenous community in their efforts leading up to his release. “I want to also mention that from the day one, from the first hour I was arrested, Indian people came to my rescue from all over the country ... and they’ve been behind me ever since,” Peltier said. “It was worth it for me to be able to sacrifice for you.”

“I want to say thank you. Thank you very, very much for showing me this. Much pride in being this important. It was surprising. It was a total shock. It was surprising to see all of you lined up there and welcoming me home.”

Peltier then spent some time greeting many of the folks in the room, shaking hands, smiling and getting acquainted with his community and family. He also signed a few autographs.

In January, over 120 tribal leaders across the U.S., including more than a dozen from Minnesota, called on Biden to grant clemency to Peltier.

“For the majority of his life, Leonard Peltier has been serving a sentence based

on a conviction that would not hold up in court today and for a crime that the government has admitted it could not prove. Mr. Peltier’s continued incarceration is a symbol to Native Americans of the systemic inequities of the criminal justice system in America,” said the letter published to NDN Collective’s website.

Attorney Kevin Sharp, who was on Peltier’s legal team for five years, echoed the need for justice, “This isn’t just about Leonard Peltier and this one case. This kind of injustice, I hate to say it, happens way too often, right?”

Not everyone supported the commutation. Former FBI Director Christopher Wray expressed criticism in a January letter to Biden, stating that granting “Peltier any relief from his conviction or sentence is wholly unjustified and would be an affront to the rule of law.”

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, said in a written statement in January, “This commutation was another unfortunate mistake by the Biden Administration, and I asked the White House not to do this.”

“More than twenty federal judges and Biden’s own FBI Director agree — Peltier’s convictions and sentence must stand.”

Peltier is a member of the grassroots Native American organization the American Indian Movement, or AIM, which was formed in Minneapolis in the late 1960s during a nationwide struggle

for civil rights.

In 1975, FBI agents were attempting to serve an arrest warrant for another individual on the Pine Ridge reservation in Oglala, S.D. They spotted and followed a pickup truck in which Peltier and a few other men were inside traveling back to their campsite where fellow AIM members were located. A shootout ensued.

Peltier and others were charged with two counts of first-degree murder of the FBI agents and aiding and abetting. With an already outstanding warrant, Peltier fled to Canada. Later, he was extradited back to the U.S. in 1976 where he faced charges of two counts of first-degree murder. The other men were tried acquitted on the grounds of self-defense.

Peltier was found guilty in 1977 and has been serving two consecutive life sentences. He has acknowledged his presence and shooting a firearm at a distance but maintains his innocence in the killing of agents Coler and Williams.

Peltier’s release marks an end to what he and others have said is his fight for justice. But through it all, Tilsen said he walked out of prison with dignity.

“He walked through the doors, and he shook the hands of all the corrections officers and the transition team over there,” Tilsen said. “All of them, you know, respected him and he respected all of them and they were all happy for him to go home.”

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Upcoming events

Pi Day 2025

Visit the Bell Museum March 12–14 and help us continue the Pi Day chain we started in 2019—let’s see if we can beat our record of 500 links!

Sensory Friendly Saturday

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Spotlight Science: Brain Power

On March 15, 10am–2pm explore the latest in brain science with hands-on activities and demonstrations around the museum, including real brains!

Learn more at bellmuseum.umn.edu/events

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



Among scary budget issues is whether Social Security, Medicaid and other health programs will be affected by proposed cuts. So far, House Republican budget plans bring conflicting reports from lawmakers and administration officials and what may or won't be included and eliminated in efforts to trim \$1.5 trillion up to \$2 trillion from federal budget outlays for the next decade.

Some GOP leaders told reporters Medicaid won't be targeted. House Speaker Mike Johnson has said he isn't sure. Fourteen Republican members of the Minnesota Legislature wrote to the state's four Republican members of Congress and asked they not support the proposed cuts advancing in a House budget bill. They warned, “There are no other sources to make up the lost federal share beyond severely impacting our seniors and those with disabilities who we serve.”

There are always members of Congress wanting to eliminate “fraud, waste and abuse” in federal spending. Those terms can be used to describe anything from building bridges, hospitals, national parks, flood control projects or health programs in another state a person doesn't use. It is especially useful to demean a program that assists targeted people.

Four convenient categories often used here and in parts of Europe include racism, bigotry, sexism and xenophobia.



Red Lake Nation Chairman Darrel G. Seki Sr., left, and Tribal Secretary Sam Strong conferred with Sen. Tina Smith about threats of federal program cutbacks to American Indian health, welfare, environment, cultural, education and Tribal sovereignty issues.

Here those categories are being given a new cover – DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion).

American Indians carry at least one of those currently popular target labels. But wealth may be an emerging category separating the masses from those in control.

Senator Smith shows this in the threat to Medicaid. More than one in five Americans – 72 million people - are low-income people or individuals with disabilities supported by the federal health program. That includes 1.3 million Minnesotans .

People in Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities will all be affected if Medicaid cuts are made to support tax cuts for the wealthy, she said.

In a conference call press conference

with Minnesota media, she explained: “It is the insurance that's so important to rural hospitals. Without Medicaid, rural hospitals in our state would basically go out of business.

“And if you care about Hennepin Healthcare, if you get your health care in Hennepin County, Hennepin Healthcare cannot exist without Medicaid.”

She was among nine U.S. senators joining a letter led by Sen. Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M. calling on Trump to “lay off” the Indian Health Service (IHS) where more than 850 employees are at risk of being fired.

The letter said the federal government has a “fundamental obligation to fulfill its treaty and trust responsibilities to

Tribal Nations – an obligation that includes providing services such as health care to Native communities.”

Moreover, the senators noted that cutting IHS services would not save taxpayers money. It would raise costs to other programs for travel, accommodations and related expenses as affected patients and families seek care away from their Tribal lands.

As the month came to a close, a new round of federal employee firings was reported at the Veterans Administration and its health facilities. If allowed to last, this will affect all Americans and their families with needs who are connected to having served the nation in the military.

It will definitely be felt within the American Indian community – long recognized as having a disproportionately high percentage of people who serve as our nation's “warriors.”

But every program and service connected to federal programs are affected, said Division of Indian Work leader Matson (White Earth Nation). She is also an officer in the Metropolitan Urban Indians Directors (MUID) organization, and all the nonprofit care, health, education and cultural groups are agonizing over the Washington chaos.

“You can't budget for the unknown,” she said. “Not one nonprofit organization has a reserve fund standing by to fill the void.”

“Taking care of my heart means that I am taking care of the young girls that will come after.” —angela

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Brynn Green competed in the 2025 MN HS Gymnastics State Meet

Brynn Green is from the Lower Sioux Indian Community in Minnesota. She is an eighth grade student at Redwood Valley Middle School. Green participated in the 2025 Minnesota High School Gymnastics State Meet.

“I was a varsity all-around gymnast my first year competing for the school team as a seventh grader and I earned an All-Conference award,” said Brynn Green. “This year I earned a trip to the Minnesota State Gymnastics Meet on the bars and beam. I also earned an All State Honorable Mention award.”

High level indigenous athletes follow their indigenous core values in practice and competition. Green said, “I always try to show respect to my teammates, competitors, coaches and judges. I have built many relationships with other gymnasts and do my best to be a good teammate. I celebrate with them after good routines and support them if things don’t go their way. I encourage my teammates to do their best in all sports.”

Most athletes that strive to meet and surpass their goals and develop new ones are guided by others to think and

move in a positive direction.

“My mentor is one of my gymnastics coaches Dean Wilson,” said Green. “He has been a part of gymnastics for more than 25 years and he pushes me to try new skills.”

“Before Brynn joined the high school program, I would go to the gym with my daughter,” said Dean Wilson, head gymnastics coach at Redwood Valley HS for the past 25 years and stepped down to be an assistant this past season. “Rachel, Brynn’s mom, would bring Brynn in to work out. I began to see what skills she was doing when was in fourth grade. I would make suggestions to help with the skills she was doing. I then started to put skills in her mind to think about. This was to help her try to grasp what she was capable of in the sport.”

Katie Wilke and Brittany McNeil were Brynn's co-head gymnastic coaches this past gymnastics season.

“From the beginning I knew there was something unique about Brynn,” said Katie Wilke who just started working at the Redwood Valley School District this past school year. “In a sport where every routine demands focus, precision, and resilience,



Brynn Green, Lower Sioux Indian Community member, competed as an eighth grader in the 2025 Minnesota High School Gymnastics State Meet.

Brynn’s ability to stay calm under pressure quickly became one of her defining qualities. I’ve watched her fall, get back up, and rise above each setback with strength.”

Brittany McNeil has coached Brynn for the past two seasons initially as an assistant and this past season as the co-head coach.

“Last year Brynn was always in the top four places for all around and everyone she went up against was a full foot or more taller than her,” said Coach McNeil. “She looked so young but worked so hard to be as good as she is. It was fun to see her up there with seniors and juniors and holding her own.”

Andy Ourada is the Redwood Valley High School Activities Director. He talked about one of the high schools up and coming athletes that recently participated on the state stage for gymnastics. He said, “Brynn has been in gymnastics for what seems like her entire life and she is very gifted. She has worked extremely hard to get to where she is by taking in multiple opportunities to train outside of her season and getting coaching that pushes her to be the best. She tumbles, jumps and flies through the air with grace and determination.”

Green started being in gymnastics at an early age. “My parents signed me

up for summer gymnastics when I was four years old,” she said. “I joined a traveling club team in the fourth through sixth grade before being able to join the school team. I compete in all four events - vault, bars, beam and floor. Bars is my favorite.”

“Competing at the state meet was a great experience,” said Green. “There were a lot of good competitors and it was fun to see new skills. Seeing other gymnasts gave me ideas for how to progress my skills next year.”

“Gymnastics has always been part of my life,” said Green. “When I competed for the club team, my family would drive me an hour each way to the gym. I’d often have to finish my homework and eat dinner in the car. But I learned how to manage my time and made a lot of friends who all love gymnastics as much as I do.”

“Even though gymnastics is an individual sport, it’s also a team sport. Being on the varsity team as a seventh grader was intimidating at first, but my teammates made me feel welcome,” added Green.

“As I get older, I want to do the same for the younger gymnasts, and I would like to coach once I graduate high school,” said Green.

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Trump threatens Kalaallit Nunaat

I checked *The Circle* website for references to “Greenland” and two article showed up.

There was a Sept. 2011 article about Thundercloud Radio, an Internet radio station that plays varied Native genres and “Native tracks from Hawaii to Greenland.”

The second article was the “Political Matters” column from Aug. 2021, about my travels to Denmark (where my son Max lives) and Poland. I mentioned that “there are Native people in Denmark: the Inuit of Greenland, which is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. These indigenous people are Kalaallit, Inughuit or Tunumiit.”

The Greenlandic Inuit comprise close to 90 percent of Greenland’s small population. They call their land Kalaallit Nunaat.

The foregoing is included here because the lunatic currently occupying the Oval Office has threatened to seize Greenland and exploit its mineral wealth. (The same nefarious intent applies to copper-nickel deposits in Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region.)

Prior to taking office in January, Trump talked about annexing Greenland. The BBC reported that then president-elect Trump “reiterated his desire for the U.S. to acquire Greenland and the Panama Canal, calling both critical to American national security.

“Asked if he would rule out using military or economic force in order to take over the autonomous Danish territory or the Canal, he responded: ‘No, I can’t assure you on either of those two. But I can say this, we need them for economic security,’ he told reporters during a wide-ranging news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

“Both Denmark and Panama have rejected any suggestion that they would give up territory.”

Again, Trump has not ruled out seizing an Indigenous territory by using military force.

My son Max, who’s lived in Copenhagen for the past six years, has mentioned that Trump’s threats of territorial expansion have sent the Danes into a tizzy.

National Public Radio reported on Danish and European concerns in this regard. In early February, NPR reporter Rob Schmitz explained that “for decades, Denmark’s been a close ally of the U.S. People here feel a sense of loyalty to the U.S. for its role in World War II and fending off the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. And in many ways, Denmark has stood by the U.S. by sending troops to U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan over the years. There’s a partnership there that’s based on history, so for President Trump to threaten to take a ter-

ritory from Denmark feels very out of place.”

To complicate matters further, Greenland will hold elections on March 11. All of the five parties competing in the elections support independence for the territory, with varied views on exactly when Greenland would sever ties with Denmark.

In early February, Reuters, reporting from Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, quoted a social media post by Prime Minister Mute Egede: “We are in the midst of a serious time. A time that we have never experienced in our country. This is not the time for internal division.” Egede’s post did not mention Trump.

Reuters noted that “a movement towards full independence from former colonial ruler Denmark has gathered momentum in recent years.

“Egede, who turns 38 on the day of the election, supports independence but has not proposed a plan to achieve this. He heads a government coalition of his own left-wing Inuit Ataqatigiit party and the social-democratic Siumut party.”

And Reuters reported two days later, on Feb. 6, that “Greenland’s ruling Siumut party plans to hold a vote on independence following [the March 11 election] ... an issue made urgent by U.S. President Donald Trump’s expressed interest in acquiring the island.”

Greenland was a Danish colony until

1953, when it gained extensive self-governing rights.

“Siumut, a partner in Greenland’s two-party government coalition, plans to invoke an article in a 2009 law that granted Greenland increased autonomy, including the right to negotiate full independence, the party’s political spokesperson Doris Jensen told Reuters ... She said Greenland needed to be independent from Denmark to be able to negotiate its future.”

Jensen told the news agency: “Until our country achieves the status of an independent state, our opportunities to officially participate in negotiations will be limited.”

And a recent public opinion poll found that 85 percent of Greenlanders are opposed to their country becoming a part of the U.S., according to Reuters.

“Invasion of Greenland” was not on my Trump 2.0 bingo card. But anything can happen these days under the MAGA regime in Washington. I’m writing on the day after Trump and J.D. Vance teamed the Ukrainian president in the Oval Office, in a shocking display of belligerence intended to humiliate Volodymyr Zelensky, who has been leading his nation’s defense of Ukraine against brutish Russian aggression, an invasion that started three years ago.

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- Use any computer, tablet, or smartphone to apply. Most **public libraries** provide computer access to apply.
- Visit **WaitlistCheck.com/Metro** to create an account and apply

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT




9-year old publishes her first book - Fishing by Torchlight

BY K.E. MACPHIE

Kiki Garcia is - in the words of her own book - ready for adventure! At only nine years old, Kiki has just published her first children's book titled, *Fishing by Torchlight*, words by Kiki Garcia and pictures by illustrator and Dakota descendant, Erin Kant Barnard.

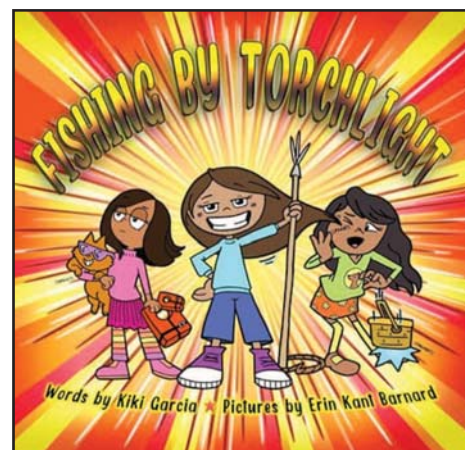
And it's not just a simple children's story, it integrates Ojibwemowin and lessons about treaty rights and spearfishing, based on personal experience from Kiki and her time spearfishing with her dad in a way that stays relevant and interesting to any kids and their families reading the book. Having a child as a children's book author offers an authentic and current perspective to a popular genre.

Dad, Tom Garcia, explained how the book came to be for such a young author, "Kiki asked to have her book published and so after discussing the process several times we started reaching out. She had a couple of rejections, and I had decided to hold off but then found myself in an email thread with Tom and Betsy [from Black Bears and Blueberries Publishing Company]. I



At only nine years old, Kiki Garcia has published her first book entitled, *Fishing by Torchlight*, with artwork by illustrator and Dakota descendant, Erin Kant Barnard.

immediately recognized their name and decided to reach out to them. They asked to meet Kiki and then we met up and they loved her and the two stories we sent. She has a handful of books. I think that are ready to be published. A couple of them are real home runs. I can't wait to see what the future has for



Fishing by Torchlight
by Kiki Garcia (Author)
Erin Kant Barnard (Illustrator)
Black Bears and Blueberries (Publisher)
January 2025
32 pages

her, I am so proud! For us being Ojibwe is about living our culture so today we tapped Ininaatig (maple). When I asked her once what was important to her about her stories she said she wanted her voice to be heard and she loves being Ojibwe."

Kiki is a member of the Mashkiizibii (Bad River Ojibwe) on the south shore of Giichihami (Lake Superior). She is a from the clan Migizii (Bald Eagle) and enjoys, not only living in her Ojibwe culture, but teaching friends and others about our culture and language.

On February 16, she held a book signing in Minneapolis. ARTrageous Adventures, a full-service art studio on the same block as Native bookstore, Birchbark Books (which is also carrying Kiki's book), hosted the signing that not only brought the author and her supportive family members, but they offered various projects and art supplies for guests to interact and contribute to work on while we interacted with the author.

Owner and founder of the studio, Amanda Vallone, welcomed guests and talked about how honored she is to support young artists with events like this, with her partnership with the neighboring Kenwood Elementary School, and other instructional and open art events at the studio and throughout the community.

The book was published by Black Bears and Blueberries Publishing, a Native-focused publishing company located on the Fond du Lac Reservation in Cloquet, MN, and owned by two prominent Native authors, Thomas Peacock (Fond du Lac Ojibwe) and Elizabeth Albert-Peacock (Red Cliff Ojibwe) who started the company to focus on authentic fiction and non-fiction stories by Native authors, primarily

for K-12 readers to get more Native stories into schools and libraries around the country. Their company is named for the title of one of Elizabeth's books about two grandparent black bears that integrates Dakota and Ojibwe animal words into the story for their grandchildren.

What Kiki has done by becoming a published author at such a young age is bringing together multiple Native organizations and artistic programs from around the state to highlight what Native industries can do together, especially to support our newest and brightest artists and storytellers in the modern mediums of today.

You can buy *Fishing by Torchlight* online at birchbarkbooks.com, on Amazon.com, or at Birchbark Books, 2115 W 21st St. Minneapolis.

Learn more about ARTrageous Adventures: artrageousadventures.com.

You can find other books published by Black Bears and Blueberries at blackbearsandblueberries.com.



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MAIC Events

See events at the Mpls American Indian Center on their updated website. MAIC events listings: Sewing Circle, Running Club, Drum and Dance, Pickup Basketball, Volleyball, Congregate Dining and more. MAIC, 1530 E Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. See more at: <https://www.maicnet.org/upcoming-events>.

Thru April 5

Smart Wars

A satirical exhibition by multimedia artist Rory Wakemup. This flip-the-script showcase asserts Native identity, resilience, and resistance while exploring culture, controversy, and coexistence with our planet. A continuation of his Divest or Die series, Wakemup's sculptures and installations use humor and subversion to tackle social, political, and climate issues. Infused with traditional methods and materials, his regalia is designed for 21st-century Indian warriors in the battle to reawaken Indigenous ancestry on Earth. NACDI, ARM gallery, 1414 East Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. For info: <https://allmyrelationsarts.org>

Thru April 11

Robert Desjarlait Exhibit

Watermark Art Center presents Robert Desjarlait's exhibit Inaaband Mitigwaki or "Woodland Vision" which depicts, documents, and defines the life of the Ojibwe people as he perceives it visually. His work engages the viewer in a visual language through which cultural diversity is the message. **Exhibit runs thru April 11.** Watermark Art Center, 505 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji, MN. For more info, see: watermarkart-center.org.

March 1

Four Sisters Farmers Market Vendor Applications Open

Are you interested in becoming a vendor at the Four Sisters Farmers Market for the 2025 season? This Indigenous-focused market provides increased access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate local foods within the American Indian Cultural Corridor, celebrating Indigenous pride, health, and well-being. The 2025 season runs from June 6 to October 31, every Thursday from 11 AM to 3 PM in the parking lot of 1414 E. Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis. We accept SNAP/EBT benefits, Market Bucks, Gus Produce Market Bucks, cash, and cards. In partnership with Hunger Solutions, we can match up to \$10 of SNAP/EBT benefits—spend \$10, and we'll give you \$20 more! Visit the market manager's table to learn more.

Vendor applications open March 1. Stay updated on our social media or visit our Four Sisters Farmers Market page for the application at: <https://nacdi.org/programs/food-sovereignty/farmers-market/>

March 13

Full Moon Ceremony

Join LERA, NACC, and Nenookaasikwe for a Full Moon Ceremony at the Little Earth Gym. Bring a long skirt, shawl, sarong, or sheet. If you are able, bring a dish to share, as well as your own plate, fork, spoon, bowl, and cup. Men of all ages are encouraged to join and learn about the duties of a fire keeper. 7:30 PM Little Earth, 2501 Cedar Ave, Little Earth Gym, Minneapolis. For info: traditionalhealing@nacc-healthcare.org

March 13

Medicine Garden Listening Session

Join us for the third in our series of listening sessions around the Four Sisters Medicine Garden. In the first two sessions, community members shared their thoughts on healing, medicine, their experiences in the neighborhood, and the role of community care in creating a healing space. We look forward to continuing this conversation together. 6:00–7:00 PM, Dakota Lodge at the Division of Indian Work, 1001 E. Lake St, Minneapolis. For info: <https://nacdi.org>

March 13

Homeless Day on the Hill

Join the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless at the State Capitol for Homeless Day on the Hill, a day of advocacy, meetings with lawmakers (scheduled by MCH), committee hearings, and powerful stories of impact. This year, we are partnering with Homes for All, a statewide coalition working to create policies and resources to prevent and end homelessness. Together, we aim to represent the full continuum of housing needs at the Capitol. 8 AM – 3 PM. MCH will attempt to schedule legislative visits based on districts. For info: <https://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org>

March 14–16

Mni Sota Akitho Festival

The Mni Sota Akitho Festival is bringing a groundbreaking cultural celebration to the Twin Cities, honoring the artistry, resilience, and cultural heritage of Indigenous communities through tattooing, music, crafts, and storytelling. Hosted by Iktomi Tattoo, an Indigenous-owned studio in South Minneapolis, this immersive event will serve as a vibrant platform for cultural expression

and unity, offering attendees the opportunity to experience Indigenous culture while supporting economic empowerment and education. Festival Highlights: Indigenous Tattooing: A Global Gathering. Vendor Marketplace and Culinary Delights, Workshops, Performances, Panels, and Cultural Connections. Admission: \$35 per day, free for children under 13. Inter-Continental, Saint Paul Riverfront, 11 E Kellogg Blvd, Saint Paul. For info, call 612-968-0558.

March 16

Talk: Mary Sully: Native Modern

Join us for a fascinating discussion on Mary Sully: Native Modern at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Explore the groundbreaking work of Mary Sully, a Native artist whose visionary designs bridge traditional Indigenous art with modernist aesthetics. 2 PM. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2400 3rd Ave S, Minneapolis. For info: <https://new.artsmia.org>

March 20

An Evening with Author Thomas Peacock

Join students and staff from American Indian OIC for a special evening with author and publisher Thomas Peacock. We will explore Peacock's recent book, *The Wolf's Trail: An Ojibwe Story*, and hear student responses to the work. Mr. Peacock will read selected excerpts and answer your questions on his career and the process of getting published. The first 30 guests will receive a free copy of a Peacock book. Thomas Peacock is the co-owner of Black Bears & Blueberries Publishing, a Minnesota company publishing books by Native authors and illustrators for all people. He has authored and co-authored numerous books and has been recognized with the Minnesota Book Award and the Multicultural Book of the Year from the American Association of Multicultural Education. Mr. Peacock holds both master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University. Free. Light bites provided. AIOIC, 1845 East Franklin Ave, Minneapolis. For info: <https://www.aioic.org>

April 8 (deadline)

LIFT – Early Career Support for Native Artists

The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation's (NACF) LIFT program provides one-year awards to emerging Native artists, offering \$15,000 grants, professional development, mentorship, and marketing support to help artists develop and realize new projects. LIFT encourages artists to uplift communities, promote social change, and

address issues like cultural sovereignty, environmental justice, and healing. This opportunity is for early-career Native artists looking to advance their practice and establish themselves in their communities. Application deadline: April 8. For info: <https://www.nativeartsandcultures.org/programs/lift>

April 16 - May 4

The Nut, The Hermit, The Crow, and The Monk

New Native Theatre will present *The Nut, The Hermit, The Crow, and The Monk* for fifteen

performances at Gremlin Theatre in Saint Paul located at Annex Building, 550 Vandalia Street, #177 from April 16 to May 4, Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 pm and Sundays at 2:00 pm. All tickets are pay-what-you-can with a suggested price of \$35. For info: <https://www.newnativetheatre.org>.

May 18

Indigenous Arts and Crafts Fair

Celebrate American Indian Month at the Indigenous Arts and Crafts Fair! Shop unique

items from local Native artists, enjoy Native performances, participate in hands-on activities, and explore delicious offerings from Indigenous food trucks. 10 AM – 2 PM. Bloomington Civic Plaza – North Entrance, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Rd., Bloomington. Interested in a no-cost booth? Apply by April 1 by scanning the QR code or visiting blm.mn/indigenous-art-fair-app. For info: mmorrisson@bloomingtonmn.gov

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On becoming a doctor in Indian Country

BY ARNE VAINIO, MD

The whole getting into medical school thing was not something I was aiming for. My parents owned the Good Luck Tavern in Sturgeon, Minnesota and my dad wasn't a good businessman. He committed suicide with a gun when I was four years old. My mom kept the tavern going for a while and the guys behind the bar were the ones who knew and took an interest in me.

In those days it was nothing for a trucker to come in and down five beers before heading out again. I remember one of them having a big wallet sticking out of his pocket with a chain attached to it. I got to sit on his lap and drive his big long truck through puddles and from then on, as a little kid, all I wanted to do was be a truck driver. But things happen and there were a double handful of people who made me feel that I could look at things differently.

When you are born you have a clear path that you are supposed to follow. Many things can pull you off that path, such as shiny things or someone you love falling off their own path. When I was young I liked Jack Daniels and fast cars as much as anyone. But I had people in my life who were teachers, both formally and informally, and I acknowledge them.

They are people who don't complete their own paths for a long time because they stop and help other people. I think I arrived at the point I am at in my life somewhat like a pinball. There were plenty of times I was headed in the wrong direction but there were people who believed in me when I needed it the most and acted like bumpers to push me back to the middle. Sometimes it was just small things but they made a big, big difference. What people do and say to each other matters.

When I applied to medical school I had short hair because I had been a paramedic/firefighter. I decided at that time to be who I was and let my hair grow in the Native tradition. My Native beliefs had always been there but that was a turning point for me as I wanted to claim who I was.

After medical school I thought I would probably apply to Hennepin for an emergency medicine residency in keeping with my paramedic training, or the family practice residency here in Duluth so I could work on a reservation somewhere. At that time the Seattle Indian Health Board had just started a residency program. They invited me to come out there and look around.

It was a bit of a scam on my part to go because I had no intention of attending their program but they had offered to fly me out there. Being from a small town in Minnesota I hadn't flown much and I wanted to have that. Also, when you are a medical student you get the farthest parking lot from the hospital and no locker to put a jacket in so you leave it in the car and put on the white coat, then run. It was 30 degrees below at the time and I had been doing that for three days when the invitation came in. It was 40 degrees above in Seattle. I talked to my attending surgeon about this opportunity and he said to go. (Attending Surgeon is a surgeon who teaches physician residents in their residency training programs.)

When I got out there a small elder who everyone referred to as Grandma Helen greeted me with a warm smile and said, "We've been waiting for you." As soon as she said that I realized the importance of what she was saying and I knew the whole scam thing was in jeopardy. I loved their mission. I stayed and toured for three days. Dr. Peter Talbot asked on the day before

we were to leave what we would like to do. I was a total hick from a small town but I always liked to read and the only thing I could think of was a book about a little girl who had breakfast in the Space Needle so I said I wanted to do that too.

There were a table full of us who met there in the morning and one of them was Karl Anquoe who was the traditional healer at the Seattle Indian Health Board. Before we even reached the elevator he took my hand softly and said, "My people say that if you say something three times it has to come true. We need you out here." When I reached for the salt shaker Karl reached out and again touched my hand and said, "We need you out here." And when we got done with breakfast we stood around taking pictures and saying goodbye and Karl came up and touched my hand again, "We need you out here."

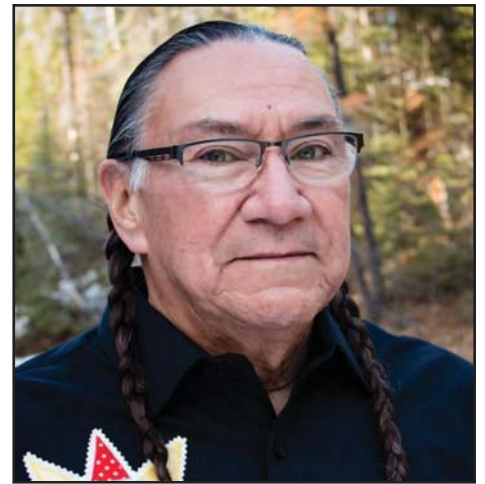
That wasn't my plan. I planned on staying in Minnesota and fixing my mom's septic system and well when it went bad. I called her and told her about this. She said we would figure something out and that I should do what I had to do. At the last minute I told them I would go there and so I ended up doing my residency in Seattle.

My graduation was a big deal because it was the first class that had ever graduated from the residency program. They had salmon cooking on cedar planks and Grandma Helen hung a carved orca around my neck which was a powerful symbol to her people. My mom, who had diabetes, couldn't make it to my graduation because she was in the Hibbing hospital. I spoke and talked about how important it was to me to take care of people who were homeless and destitute, who had illnesses that were difficult to control, and who didn't have the insurance necessary to take care of them.

In the middle of my talking about all that stuff my mother was dying and I didn't know it. I came home from the highest high to a message from my brother that she had died. There were many people who came together to help my wife and I get home and arrange an Ojibwe funeral for her, including a friend attending my graduation who hauled out his credit card to pay for plane tickets, to the doctors at the Seattle Indian Health Board pooling their money to send Karl the traditional healer to help us walk through the steps in creating that ceremony. It took a community to make that happen.

I don't do traditional medicine because the people who do are called to do that, and they do it well. Medicine the way I practice it is also a calling. There is too much paperwork and too much of a whole bunch of stuff like explaining x-rays and MRI's. But the true core of medicine is still what it's always been.

I worked with one of the traditional heal-



ers who recently died. I went to his house every Monday for the better part of the winter to learn the healing songs I wanted to know. I was always the guy who when "happy birthday" was being sung would be lip syncing in the back of the room because I'm not a singer. But I was told by this healer that these were not my songs unless I sang them.

I just sang one of them in front of 100 doctors at a meeting, unannounced, because I thought it was important for them to know that we are linked together and we are doing something bigger than we think about when we're buried in paperwork and technology. The longer I am in medicine the more I realize how much spirituality is important. I'm not talking about religion or about Ojibwe spirituality. We don't have to be the same, but we do have to respect each other's beliefs.

If I had to send a message out into the world I think it would be that our ancestors and our elders and our Creator don't want to see us fighting the way we are now. I'm not talking about fighting among Native people but the fighting that is going on worldwide. We get divided up and made to fear each other. That benefits someone but it doesn't benefit us.

There are many people who care about what happens to the planet but it's getting to be more of a crisis. Native people have always been tied to the earth and taught to respect all of nature. As people, in just a few hundred years, we have wiped out thousands and thousands of other organisms. We extract things instead of just taking what we need and we go after everything that is considered valuable.

I love living in this area. I love moving snow and I love seeing the stars at night. I also get to be a physician, being traditional. There are kind and good people all over and many of them live here in Duluth. I live a dream I never even knew I had.

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by your presence here in my space. Know that yooz are loved by me.

I don't remember the last powwow I attended, however, I do feel the connection with like-minded spirits and I miss frybread and moose meat soup (Ojibwe-Mooz nabooob). What I want is a ribbon skirt so I fit in, but saving money is seriously difficult for me. I exist below the national poverty level even after working for most of my life, starting at 13 years young.

I was not in the fields picking vegetables or fruit, no, I had a job named 'Native Heritage', a newsletter learning about writing, poetry, photography and journalism by Indigenous kids. Yet I got a small check and I was happy. Then? Here I am now. That was the mid-70's. That is also where I met a few lifetime friends. They know who they are.

Totally off-topic, I have an all-white cat named Tom Petty. He is soo soft and handsome and protects me at night from evil. Tom Tom is also huge, over 27 pounds, no kidding. Anyhoo, I didn't know just how brown I am after I petted him as a kitten. It's all good. I used to seriously wonder why pink people tanned just hard only to be

racist against those of us who are naturally beautiful?!

But I digress. I'm older and often forget the original thought. It has been an adventure. I'm just sayin'. Like having siblings coming out of the woodwork. More on that in my book. It will be fun! Scandalous!!! Yes. Watch me, now that Maw and Paw have passed I do not owe anyone in my family grace. Well, except for my Unk Vern, he is a good person, if a bit irascible.

Ayy!!! Now that I think about it, irascible is a genetic trait from where I come from. Oh! I was talking to my therapist today and I remembered that some people end up from where they were born! Case in point: Moi. I was born in the community hospital to an unwed mother. My birth certificate had no father listed, so therefore I am a virgin birth, ennit? Now bow down.

Miracles yanno? They happen. LOL! Not me, It is a miracle I survived poverty and neglect. If I had not had my maternal grandparents? Sigh. Agh. I am grateful that my family are big readers, for if not for them I may have grown up stupid and ignorant. My only child, my Sun, would ask questions and one time I responded, "Because I read".

When Sun was in prison he read and read and read. Not only fictional books but magazines and many sources of relevant information. Afterward, when we had

conversations I realized the student had become the Master. I was overwhelmed and proud of him at the same time. Blessings.

Words matter so when I write becoming so old and whiny I now get why older people are so cranky. Some of them live in a world of pain and regret. So plz be kind and if you should become older, be empathic. My therapist said this state of being is not for the weak. I agree. I'm up to 15+ surgeries now that I can recall.

Yes, I am grateful for my amenities but I did not anticipate living for so long given my former lifestyle, that I would be so decrepit and wah wah wah! Yet, here I am. The one who rock-climbed with Dragon-Lady nails and faced down a spider who dared peep me with eight eyes. I didn't know which one to look at.

Living da Nortland I also ice skated, snowmobiled (thanks to the neighbors) and later in my teens downhill skied. Plus I played 'King of the Hill' where one would climb up the snowbank and push everyone down who dared to challenge the King.

I spose I'm being all angry and resentful of what I used to be able to do. There is the story of a man from my Rez who was called "Old Wrinkled Meat" who claimed to have lived over 100+ years. His response to the question, "How have you lived so long?" "Let the women do the work".

On aging: OMG!!! How can one be aching while sleeping in a soft bed?! I've slept on floors before and woke up feeling fine. Those days are long gone and now I struggle to simply get out of bed. It ain't easy being an Old Kwe (woman).

Yes, I know I am a complainer and have shared way too much with yooz but I am human, and I'm glad I've had yooz in my life for so long. Grateful? You betcha. It has been an adventure and I know I am blessed

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