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Native Americans forced to prove citizenship



Faron Houle, a citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, speaks about applying for a tribal identification card at a pop-up event in Minneapolis. (Photo by Stewart Huntington / AP.)

BY ASSOCIATE PRESS

When U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement flooded Minneapolis, Shane Mantz dug his Choctaw Nation citizenship card out of a box on his dresser and slid it into his wallet.

Some strangers mistake the pest-control company manager for Latino, he said, and he fears getting caught up in ICE raids.

Like Mantz, many Native Americans are carrying tribal documents proving their U.S. citizenship in case they are stopped or questioned by federal immigration agents. This is why dozens of the 575 federally recognized Native nations are making it easier to get tribal IDs. They're waiving fees, lowering the age of eligibility — ranging from 5 to 18 nationwide — and printing the cards faster.

It's the first time tribal IDs have been widely used as proof of U.S. citizenship and protection against federal law enforcement, said David Wilkins, an expert on Native politics and governance at the University of Richmond.

"I don't think there's anything historically comparable," Wilkins said. "I find it terribly frustrating and disheartening."

As Native Americans around the country rush to secure documents proving their right to live in the United States, many see a bitter irony.

"As the first people of this land, there's no reason why Native Americans should have their citizenship questioned," said Jacqueline De León,

a senior staff attorney with the nonprofit Native American Rights Fund and member of Isleta Pueblo.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security didn't respond to more than four requests for comment.

Native identity in a new age of fear

Since the mid- to late 1800s, the U.S. government has kept detailed genealogical records to estimate Native Americans' fraction of "Indian blood" and determine their eligibility for health care, housing, education and other services owed under federal legal responsibilities. Those records were also used to aid federal assimilation efforts and chip away at tribal sovereignty, communal lands and identity.

Beginning in the late 1960s, many tribal nations began issuing their own forms of identification. In the last two decades, tribal photo ID cards have become commonplace and can be used to vote in tribal elections, to prove U.S. work eligibility and for domestic air travel.

About 70 percent of Native Americans today live in urban areas, including tens of thousands in the Twin Cities, one of the largest urban Native populations in the country.

There, in early January, a top ICE official announced the "largest immigration operation ever."

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Warning: more big changes are coming to Medicaid

BY LEE EGERSTROM

Staying healthy is already more costly and will become more difficult for many Minnesotans, including Native Americans, from changes in the federal Medicaid program. But it is important to know not all changes will affect American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Cuts to subsidies approved by Congress last year have already raised costs. Changes for enrollment and eligibility are scheduled to start in October for immigrants. New and more frequent information reporting requirements for Medicaid recipients go into effect in January 2027 for adults ages 21 to 64 who don't have dependent children or disabilities, and who are not American Indian or Native Alaskans.

More frequent and complex reporting paperwork requirements will add burdens for enrollees and their caregivers.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services stresses that Minnesotans, including Natives, should monitor its websites for information (mn.gov/dhs/federalchanges). An accompanying graphic chart has links to websites with information and services available within Minnesota's 87 counties, tribal entities and by other service providers.

Caregivers, friends and loved ones for people needing Medicaid coverage should keep informed of the unfolding changes and requirements, the department warns.

This is no small matter. Department of Human Services researchers earlier forecast that as many as 140,000 Minnesotans are at risk of losing Medicaid, or Medical Assistance in Minnesota as the program is called here. One in five Minnesotans is covered by the program.

New enrollment and reporting requirements come after costs for health insurance have

already doubled for some of the people assisted by the Minneapolis Indian Health Board, said Cassandra "Cassie" Holmes, a community health worker.

She is among a group of "navigators" at MIHB who assist people with finding, enrolling and maintaining their health coverage. (See MNsure assister directory.)

Premium costs for private health insurance sold through MNsure and other state marketplaces rose after Congress and the Trump administration cut federal assistance and ended special COVID pandemic aide this past July.

New changes going into effect in this October will mostly impact immigrants, said Dr. Nathan Chomilo, the medical director at the Minnesota Department of Human Services. But he and Takayla Lightfield, the Tribal Policy Consultant for MDHS, said sweeping changes coming in January next year can have major impacts on the state's Indigenous people.

Medicaid will shorten retroactive coverage for people who have a medical emergency and then enroll for coverage.

Since 1972 Medicaid has allowed people with a health crisis to enroll and be given coverage for three months of past medical costs. Retroactive coverage will be limited next year to one month for adults 21 to 64 without dependent children or disabilities, or two months for everyone else, including children, parents, pregnant people, people with disabilities and people 65 and older.

Chomilo and Lightfield said everyone eligible to enroll in Medicaid should do so now before having medical emergency to avoid encountering medical bills they cannot pay.

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Minnesota in Winter: don't underestimate Minnesotans

BY WINONA LADUKE

Napoleon LaDuke was my great uncle. I've always had a liking for that name. My great uncle was a brown man from the Northwoods who was in World War I and came back "shell shocked." He wasn't even a citizen of the US at the time but, nevertheless -- like many Native people -- went across the big water to combat fascism and more. Today, he is buried in a pauper's grave at the former Fergus Falls Mental Hospital.

History teaches us if we pay attention. Napoleon Bonaparte, my great uncle's namesake, was a megalomaniac who wanted to be Emperor of the World. He did his best but met his match in Russia in winter.

In June of 1812, Napoleon's forces entering Russia exceeded 450,000 men, over 150,000 horses, approximately 25,000 wagons, and nearly 1,400 artillery pieces. More were added, then more, and it got colder and colder. They didn't understand where they were, nor did they understand that trying to take a country like Russia in winter, if you were, from well, the south of France, wasn't a sound idea. The surviving forces dwindled to 120,000 men (excluding early deserters), signifying a staggering loss of approximately 380,000 lives (dead or missing/prisoner) throughout the campaign, half from diseases.

Sort of like Minnesota in the Winter. The Trump Administration and Kristi Noem are dead set on forcing Minnesota to her knees. But, as wind chills drop well below zero, and the ICE troops amassed from various warmer locales face the rambunctious home team, things are more complicated. (The big right wing rally leader of the dud demonstration, Jake Lang, is from Florida.) That's just an example.

The word is out that ICE agents don't know how to walk on ice and don't really like Minnesota. To address that, Trump wants to import some "paratroopers" from Alaska. According to news reports, at the time of this writing, 1500 soldiers are on standby from the Army's 11th Airborne Division, which specializes in cold weather operations.

If Trump deploys active-duty military forces domestically for law enforcement or to suppress unrest, he would likely be acting under the authority of the Insurrection Act. That hasn't been used for a hundred years or so. Regardless, as the brutal operation "Metro Surge" expands with 2000 ICE agents on the ground, child kidnappings and tear gas, this is a daunting challenge for us all- constitutionally and to our spirits.



Politics and Churches

To be clear, Minnesota with 130,000 estimated "undocumented workers" is not even in the top ten of undocumented workers states. Blue states like Florida (1.2 million) and Texas (1.9 million) and of course California with 3 million are home to many more. The assault on Minnesota is political. And tragic.

There's also a complex background which has made Minnesota home to a very multinational refugee population. Consider that many of the "new Americans" were brought in by the Lutheran and Catholic Church agencies. Take Lutheran Social Services, now Global Refuge. The church-based organization has helped almost a half a million refugees to relocate- many political refugees from American wars, like the Hmong, Eastern Europeans and the Somalis.

From the Global Refuge website, "We have spent decades nurturing community-based initiatives to support refugees, and we lead the field in refugee resettlement because of the incredible support we receive from our community partners..." The fact is that those refugees need Lutherans to stand up, not stand back.

Minnesotans are Social

Trump faces a challenge of home team spirit. That's evident in the Minneapolis Resistance. Here's part of the problem: After killing lots of Dakotas and Ojibwes, Minnesota's immigrants (many illegal) were plucky northern people, who it seems stood for good, except for when it came to the Indians. Minnesota has a long and proud history of social justice movements, which deserve credit for creating the Minnesota Spirit we know today.

From the Nonpartisan League to the

MacDonald sisters, George Floyd and the Line 3 resistance, Minnesotans stand up for what's right. Remember, many of the first immigrants, came from Scandinavia, and countries with free healthcare, education, and other goodness. And they are used to the cold.

Immigrants came to the north country with collective ideas. Cooperatives were the norm. CENEX, SAMPO, and even Land of Lakes are all cooperatives. Minnesotans also appreciated collective organizing, especially on the Iron Range, where strikes led by Finnish and Slovenian miners in 1907 and 1916 sought better conditions. To the west, the Non-Partisan League and Socialists were the government of North Dakota at the early part of the last century, leaving behind state owned banks, grain elevators and more.

And we are a sentimental bunch. Take Eugene Debs, Indiana State Representative, a socialist and five-time candidate for US President. There's a town near Bemidji named after him, Debs. People who live in the far north are used to cooperation. This is about looking out for everyone, it's a northern thing -- that's how we survive, we take care of each other. That's a lesson from the cold.

A little local history: Meridel LeSueur, the prairie poet, spoke for farmers, women and workers. Born Meridel Wharton, she assumed the name of her mother's second husband, Arthur Le Sueur, the former socialist mayor of Minot, North Dakota. Her best-known works include the 1932 essay "Women on the Breadlines" and the novel *The Girl*. Her stepfather Arthur Le Suer, after leaving his mayoral post, became the leader of North Dakota's Nonpartisan League. Her great grandchildren are active

today in the legal defense community, the Tilson Family.

The MacDonald sisters were four Catholic nuns—Brigid, Jane, Rita, and Kate—from an Irish farm family. They joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in the 1940s and '50s, and "did not lead lives revolving around rosaries," but the teachings of Jesus. They dedicated their lives to peace, becoming prominent figures in anti-war protests particularly at the Honeywell Corporation. Sister Kate died in 2023, at 101. They are some of the founders of the social justice and peace movements of Minnesota.

In 1968, the American Indian Movement was born in Minneapolis, brought about by the dire conditions and repression facing many Indigenous people who had been forced to the Twin Cities by the theft of our lands and territories. Police brutality, including a practice of throwing Indian men into the back of police cruisers was met with opposition by founders like Pat Ballenger, Dennis Banks, and Clyde Bellecourt -- Anishinaabeg from the White Earth and Leech Lake reservations. The American Indian Movement grew nationally and remains both an advocacy organization with many established institutions, including the Heart of the Earth School, Little Earth Housing, American Indian Opportunities and Industrialization Center (one of the largest Indian job training programs in the country), and Indian Legal Rights Centers.

The Honeywell Project, formed in the late 1960s to the 1990s, focused on peace through corporate accountability. Honeywell, Minnesota's largest military contractor, made cluster bombs and more, which maimed innocent Vietnamese people. Marv Davidoff, project founder, was a friend of mine and an inspiration, the "Peace Guru." Every week, there was a vigil outside of Honeywell offices, and on the bridge. On October 24, 1983, 574 people were arrested, including Erica Bouza, the wife of then-Minneapolis Police Chief Anthony Bouza.

Honeywell officially stopped manufacturing cluster munitions and other banned weapons like anti-personnel landmines and chemical/biological weapons, stating it as a policy in their official defense fact sheets. But its former defense division (now Alliant Techsystems, ATK) is still doing rotten things.

The Willmar 8 were eight female employees of the Citizens National Bank in Willmar who went on strike on December 16, 1977, over charges of sex discrimination. The tellers and bookkeepers were repeatedly asked to train junior male employees who would then be hired over their heads. Although their actions did result in a National Labor

Relations Board decision in their favor, only three of the women returned to the bank.

The General Assembly to Stop the Powerline (GASP) was a coalition of farmers who did not want a big 400KW line to cross their land in central Minnesota. The farmers began their opposition to the line by appearing at governmental hearings and in court proceedings. When those methods proved unsuccessful, farmers moved to more confrontational methods. Although the farmers did not ultimately win, they fought for a long time. Once the towers and lines were installed, they became targets of vandalism. At least 9,500 insulators were shot out. Vandals found that they could cause towers to fall to the ground by cutting tower legs. From August 1978 through August 1983, sixteen towers were toppled.

The Northern Sun Alliance was a coalition of anti-nuclear groups active from 1977 to 1989. Their efforts were largely focused on the Prairie Island Nuclear Plant, located on the Prairie Island Dakota reservation. Proposals for more on-site storage of nuclear waste in the Mississippi River flood plain were met with tribal opposition and community opposition to what was then Northern States Power, now XCEL Energy. As a result of this struggle, XCEL is mandated by the state of Minnesota to fund renewable energy projects in their territory.

Minnesotans do not approve of police brutality. That's clear. The killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, witnessed by three more police officers, was filmed. The Minneapolis Uprising began on May 26, 2020, and the rage continued for several weeks. In response, Governor Walz activated the Minnesota National Guard, the largest deployment of the state's forces since World War II.

And Line 3. Minnesota's last occupation by a paid military was during the construction of Enbridge's Line 3. The state deployed about \$8.5 million worth of police financed by the foreign corporation Enbridge. Despite massive opposition to the pipeline (70,000 people testifying against Line 3, and 4,000 in favor), the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission gave approval, and then Enbridge gave lots of money – almost \$3 million to the Minnesota DNR for enforcement, and a lot to local police forces in Cass County, Hubbard, and more.

Minnesota arrested over a thousand people; most of those cases were dismissed. Tragically, the pipeline went in, but alliances were born, and institutions like the Giiwedinong Museum, dedicated to the story of the Water Protector Movement and Anishinaabe history remain. The museum is in the former Carnegie Library-turned Enbridge office in downtown Park Rapids, Minnesota.

Of the 1,000 Line 3 arrests, the last

legal case just had a hearing in Minnesota this January. To put it simply, Minnesota is indeed used to conflict and standing up for values.

In the Deep North

Here in the Deep North, towns like Park Rapids and Moorhead have had robust turn out for No Kings Day, and to support all the neighbors. Lyn Pinnick from Moorhead is a veteran of the Line 3 Battle. And, since 2016, has been working with Indivisible, organizing her neighbors and more. Hundreds of people are turning out, thousands, in these small northern towns, and on the bridges over the Red River. That's the work of a lot of community people, meetings with coffee and lemon bars, and support systems for neighbors. Then there's recovering Republicans like Scott Erlenborn from the Park Rapids area who posts on Facebook. "I am the person that has been protesting with the upside-down flag for the last two weeks at the highway 71 and 34 intersection. I am not immature, confused or caught up emotionally in some false narrative from the liberal media. I know world history. I understand the grave danger this nation is in at this present moment with this president."

Tribal governments are speaking out about ICE, from the Oglala Lakota who had four of their tribal members kidnapped by ICE, and were faced with demands by Kristi Noem, the former well hated governor of South Dakota, to

turn over access to the reservation to ICE. Farron Jackson, Leech Lake Tribal Chairman, and Red Lake have taken strong stands, and most recently, Mille Lacs band stopped allowing ICE to stay at their hotels in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

There's a lot of things that the new Wanna be Emperor doesn't know about my territory. For Trump and Noem, this may be their Russian Winter. We will see and, and like Napoleons crusade, it is certainly cruel. My great uncle Napoleen LaDuke rests under a blanket of snow but reminds me always of the price of empire and the value of knowing history. And, in the meantime, I want to thank all those courageous and principled Minnesotans who sing, sled, and stand for our neighbors and our territory. Continue. History is being made.

For more info on the Global Refuge, see: <https://www.globalrefuge.org/who-we-are/where-we-work/fargo-welcome-center/>

For information on Indivisible, see: <https://indivisible.org>

Information on the Giiwedinong Museum is at: <https://giiwedinong.org>

Space Fest: A Love Letter to Earth

February 13–15

Join us for our annual cosmic celebration! We'll take a look at what makes Earth "just right," how we learn about it from space, and what we can do to be good stewards of our special planet.

Plan your visit: z.umn.edu/visit-bell-museum

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



EPA wants to eliminate one of the few ways tribes protect their water

BY MIACEL SPOTTED ELK/GRIST

In January, the Environmental Protection Agency announced a proposal to revise the Clean Water Act, specifically a section of the law that regulates water quality and limits states' and tribes' authority over federal projects, as well as how tribes can gain the authority to conduct those reviews. Experts say the move would dissolve one of the few tools tribes have to enforce treaty rights and hamper their ability to protect tribal citizens.

"What the Trump administration is proposing to modify here is a really important tool for states and tribes, because it gets at their ability to put conditions on or, in extreme cases, block projects that are either proposed by the federal government or under the jurisdiction of the federal government," said Miles Johnson, legal director at Columbia Riverkeeper, an organization that works on issues affecting the Columbia River.

Developers seeking to build dams, mines, data centers, or pipelines must navigate a permitting process to do so. One requirement in the process is obtain-



A Native American views their tribal waterways. (Photo by Ross D. Franklin/AP.)

What do federal Medicaid changes mean for me and my relatives?

ing certification from a tribe or state confirming that the project meets federal water quality standards. Currently, tribes and states conduct holistic reviews of projects, known as "activity as a whole", evaluating all potential impacts on water quality, including spill risks, threats to cultural resources, and impacts on wildlife. This approach was established under the Biden administration in 2023.

However, the newly proposed rule would limit reviews to "discharge only," where both states and tribes are able to review projects solely based on how much pollution they would release, narrowing the scope of oversight.

The proposed rule also changes how tribes can gain regulatory authority to assess water quality under the Treatment in a Similar Manner as a State program, or TAS. Under that program, tribes are able to act as regulators, one of the few tools available to them, and directly set conditions to limit factors that would pollute waters near tribal lands. To date, only 84 tribal nations have received TAS status, allowing them to review federal projects. Currently, Section 401 of the Clean Water Act allows tribes that can demonstrate the capacity and resources the ability to review water quality standards, expanding regulatory powers beyond tribes with larger resources. The proposed change would shrink those powers, allowing only TAS tribes to perform evaluations through a separate, more rigorous authorization program.

"Treaty rights are one of the strongest mechanisms to enforce against the federal government, against the state, against third-party actors, and in litigation," said Heather Tanana, a law professor at the University of Denver. "It takes years, it takes money, it's complicated to do, and so you want these other mechanisms."

A reversion to pre-2023 rules, Tanana said, would put higher demands on tribes

to show larger-scale capacity, often in the form of dedicated water departments.

"There's such a wide variance in tribes of what resources are available to them. Do they have other sources of revenue, right? How many staff do they have? Do they have their own environmental departments? Is it one person, or is it 10?" said Tanana.

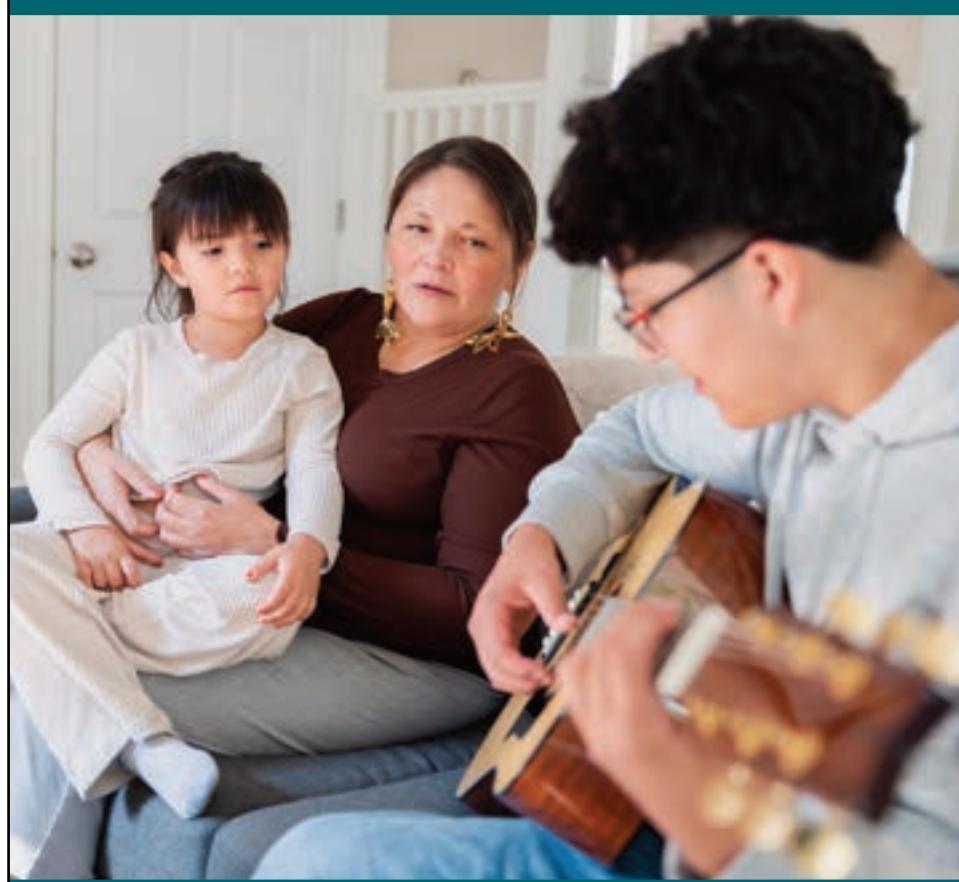
During the Biden administration, tribes advocated for a baseline rule allowing all tribes some input in federal projects while seeking TAS status, but industry pushback during the comment period and a Trump win during the general election in 2024 led to its withdrawal from the EPA in December.

Patrick Hunter, a senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, noted that of 7,500 projects submitted during the Biden administration, fewer than 1 percent were denied. Most were approved with conditions such as mitigation measures and sediment traps to prevent water pollution during construction. Tanana said tribal review outcomes were similar.

The EPA's 2025 report on tribal consultations highlighted widespread opposition to changes. "The clear feedback from the tribes was, 'Don't change it,'" said Tanana. "'You're going to make it harder for us to exercise our sovereignty to protect our waters and protect our community.'"

A 30-day public comment period on the proposed rule is currently underway. The rule is expected to face litigation after finalization.

"Tribes have an obligation to care for the rivers and waterways that have sustained their communities since before the existence of the United States and are weighing every option to protect their way of life," said Gussie Lord, head of tribal partnerships at Earthjustice.



Learn the Facts
mn.gov/dhs/federalchanges



POW WOW GROUNDS AND NACDI BECOMES HUB OF RESISTANCE IN MPLS

MINNEAPOLIS — A Minneapolis Native-led arts gallery, coffee shop, and community hub is coordinating donations to support local residents and activists responding to recent federal immigration enforcement raids in the Minneapolis community along the Franklin Corridor where many Native people live.

The coffeehouse and the adjacent gallery have transformed into a place where neighbors can come together for meals, warmth, and the distribution of essential food and supplies, serving residents shaken by fear and uncertainty after the fatal shooting of Renée Good and Alex Pretti by a federal immigration

officer in Minneapolis in January this year.

All My Relations Arts Gallery and the adjacent Pow Wow Grounds coffee space at 1414 E. Franklin Ave. are collecting weather and protective gear, first-aid supplies, legal observer vests, gas masks with P100 filters, gas cards (in \$20 denominations) and cash for community use. Drop-offs are being accepted at that location.

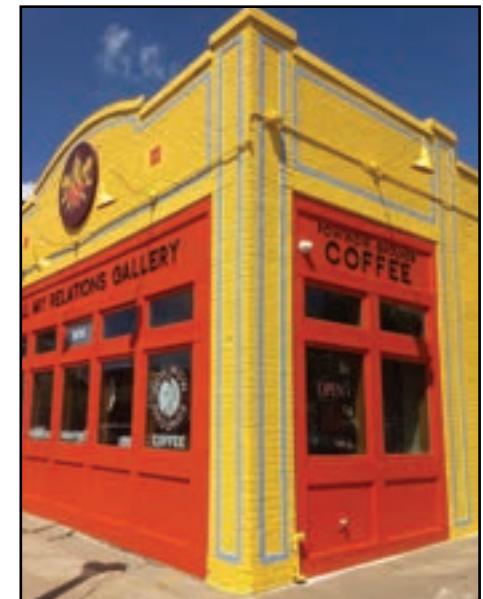
As of Jan. 27, general donations — including food, household goods and other supplies — are being accepted at the Division of Indian Work, 1001 E. Lake Street, with drop-offs between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and pickup available from noon to 3 p.m.

Organizers thanked volunteers, donors and community members for their sup-

port during “this turbulent time,” saying the gallery has acted as a gathering place for observers and organizers, including the Indigenous Protector Movement. The next art exhibition has been postponed, but officials said art will continue to be part of community efforts.

Resource hubs such as standwithminnesota.com and Native-led organizations like the Minnesota Urban Indian Directors network offer additional mutual aid and support opportunities across the state.

The Circle newspaper will also drop off the paper at Pow Wow Grounds only, as many businesses and organizations are closed. All other drop off sites will no longer have any paper delivered to them for the time being.



RED LAKE BARS ICE FROM ITS TRIBAL LANDS

RED LAKE, Minn. — Leaders of the Red Lake Nation have unanimously approved a resolution barring U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other federal immigration agents from entering tribal lands without a federal judge-signed court order.

The Jan. 13 resolution, passed 10-0 by the tribal council, also requires agents to present the court order to the tribe's public safety director and be accompanied by a tribal public safety officer while on the Red Lake reservation, about 30 miles north of Bemidji. The measure includes a ban on ICE fishing on parts of Lower and Upper Red Lake within reservation boundaries.

Council members cited concerns about ICE activity in Minnesota, including stops and arrests of Native Americans in the northwest part of the state, as prompting the action. There have been no reported ICE operations on the Red Lake Reservation.

The resolution follows broader tensions over federal immigration enforcement after a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed a Minneapolis woman during ICE operations earlier this month. Tribal legal officials said copies of the resolution will be posted at Red Lake Nation properties, including the tribal embassy and an apartment complex in south Minneapolis.

STATE CANNOT PROSECUTE TRIBAL CITIZEN FOR CANNABIS ON TRIBAL LANDS SAYS JUDGE

MINNEAPOLIS — A Minnesota appeals court has ruled that the state cannot prosecute a tribal citizen for a cannabis offense that occurred on tribal land, saying state authorities lack jurisdiction in such cases.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals overturned a lower court decision and dismissed a first-degree cannabis possession charge against Todd Jeremy Thompson,

an enrolled member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe. Thompson had been charged after state agents seized about 7.5 pounds of cannabis during a 2023 raid on his tobacco shop located on the White Earth Reservation.

In its ruling, the court said Minnesota's cannabis possession laws are civil and regulatory in nature rather than criminal. As a result, the state cannot enforce them against tribal citizens on reservation land under Public Law 280, a federal statute that grants states limited criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country but restricts civil authority.

The decision noted that Minnesota's legalization of cannabis and its authorization of tribal-state compacts further supports tribal authority to regulate cannabis on reservation land. The court said enforcement in this case falls under tribal, not state, jurisdiction.

Supporters of the ruling said it affirms tribal sovereignty and clarifies enforcement boundaries following Minnesota's cannabis law changes. The state has not said whether it will appeal.

FEDS WANT MN COUNTIES TO GIVE ICE ACCESS TO JAILS

MINNEAPOLIS — Federal immigration officials are in talks with county sheriffs in Minnesota about agreements that could give U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement greater access to local jails, part of broader efforts to expand cooperation amid ongoing controversy over enforcement actions in the state.

The Minnesota Sheriffs' Association has been leading discussions with the Trump administration's border czar, Tom Homan, on possible contracts that would allow counties to house ICE detainees past their scheduled release times in return for federal compensation. The arrangements, including so-called Basic Ordering Agreements, would legally enable jails to detain people for up to 48 hours so ICE can assume custody —

something sheriffs cannot do now under state law without a judicial warrant.

Homan cited “unprecedented cooperation” from counties as part of his announcement that about 700 ICE and Customs and Border Protection officers would be withdrawn from Minnesota after months of enforcement activity. Local officials had resisted full cooperation, arguing ICE detainees aren't legally binding and county holds beyond release violate state law.

Hennepin County Sheriff Dawanna Witt, whose office operates the state's largest jail, said her agency is discussing limited cooperation but will not pursue agreements that would hold detainees beyond their release. She reiterated that warrants would be required for any extended custody.

Critics, including the Minnesota Attorney General, say such agreements risk unconstitutional detention without probable cause and could deter immigrant communities from reporting crime. Legal debates over the proposals' compliance with state and constitutional law continue amid heightened scrutiny of immigration enforcement in the Twin Cities.

THE IMPORTANT OF GATHERING EVIDENCE AND WITNESSING

WASHINGTON — Democratic state attorneys general are stressing the growing legal importance of citizen-generated evidence, including cellphone video and photographs, in challenging U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement actions amid expanded federal enforcement efforts.

Attorneys general say bystander

footage has increasingly contradicted official federal accounts and played a critical role in lawsuits alleging constitutional and civil rights violations. The issue has gained urgency during the Trump administration's “Operation Metro Surge” and related enforcement activity in Minnesota and other states.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison is among those citing video evidence as central to legal challenges and public scrutiny. In Minneapolis, cellphone footage recorded by witnesses captured the fatal shooting of Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse, during an ICE operation. The video shows Pretti filming agents before officers tackled him, beat him and shot him after seizing his firearm. Pretti, who was licensed to carry a gun, never drew it, contradicting claims by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem that he attacked agents.

“There are a whole lot more stories,” Ellison said, pointing to recordings from cellphones and dashboard cameras that he says show increasingly forceful tactics by some of the more than 3,000 federal immigration agents operating in Minnesota.

In response, Minnesota has launched an online tip portal allowing residents to submit video and photographic evidence of alleged federal misconduct. The move followed the U.S. Department of Justice's refusal to share evidence in Good's death with county prosecutors or the attorney general's office.

Similar citizen-evidence portals or federal accountability commissions have been established in Colorado, Illinois and Oregon.

Take *The Circle's* short survey to help shape the future of the newspaper:

<https://tinyurl.com/circle2026survey>

ICE isn't just tracking your phone, its tracking way more

BY SHUBHANJANA DAS/
SAHAN JOURNAL

ICE isn't just tracking your phone. The surveillance technology goes further than that.

The advanced surveillance tools allow ICE agents to scan people's faces to determine their citizenship, access highly sensitive personal data and monitor entire neighborhoods all at once.

By now, the videos of immigration agents holding up their phones to people's faces or scanning license plates are everywhere. While the exact reasons may seem murky, experts say one thing is clear: The ongoing federal crackdown is being powered by a vast surveillance network that has spread far beyond immigrant communities.

Surveillance technology experts and digital rights advocates told *Sahan Journal* that they are alarmed about the ability of more than 3,000 Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Patrol agents in Minnesota to surveil, monitor, and collect data on-the-go during field operations – from facial recognition technology to 'stingrays' that collect information from phones by impersonating cell phone towers.

Experts say these tools not only help agents in what the Trump administration calls the largest immigration crackdown in U.S. history identify specific targets to detain, but also allow them to monitor entire neighborhoods at once, sweeping citizens and non-citizens alike into a broad surveillance dragnet.

Faced with grassroots resistance in Minnesota and widespread accusations that federal agents are acting lawlessly, officials say some agents are being withdrawn. But Cooper Quintin, senior technologist at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said that the existence of such troubled agencies with advanced surveillance tools "should be concerning to everyone."

Using surveillance technology to determine potential detainees

Some recent examples show how much information immigration officials in the field have at their disposal.

On Jan. 14, immigration officials scanned the license plate of a gray sedan with their phones; a federal database told them not only who it belonged to, but that the owner did not have legal status in the country. Agents started a traffic stop. The driver, Alfredo Alejandro Aljorna, fled, and a chase ensued. It ended in the North Minneapolis house where Julio Cesar Sosa Celis lived, and where he was shot in the leg by immigration officials.



An immigration agent holds up his phone to a journalist in Minneapolis on Jan. 6, 2026. (Photo by Chris Juhn / Sahan Journal.)

Weeks earlier, on Nov. 26, federal agents showed up outside Jeffrey Suazo's home in St. Paul. Initially, his family says, they were looking for someone else. They encountered Suazo outside, followed him inside the house, and — to his family's surprise — appeared to know his name and who else was inside, including a child. "Jeffrey, come out, we're gonna get you one way or another," his family members recalled agents calling out to him.

Quintin said that ICE can synthesize a vast array of data to determine its targets. The information includes government databases such as tax and immigration records, and data collected through airport security screenings, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) facial scans, and interactions with customs at borders. It also buys data from commercial and media databases and private-sector data, including location data collected from mobile phone advertising, license plate reader systems that track vehicle movements, and large aggregated databases run by companies such as LexisNexis and TLO XP. These private databases compile and link multiple types of personal information, such as vehicle records, home addresses, and other identifying data, into detailed individual profiles.

It also has access to a database of health and auto insurance claims and is using it to locate people targeted for deportation, 404 Media reported. The database contains personal data including names, home addresses, phone numbers, tax identification numbers, and license plate information.

On the streets, ICE and CBP have access to Mobile Fortify, an app that

scans people's faces to determine their citizenship in a matter of seconds. "For years, ICE has had mechanisms by which they are able to, either by using facial recognition technology or fingerprints, do a quick scan of individuals in the street to determine whether or not they are already within the Department of Homeland Security System, and whether or not they are arrestable," said Amy Fischer, director of refugee and migrant rights at Amnesty International USA.

In the video, Customs and Border Patrol agents appear to be using that technology on Minneapolis resident Nimco Omar. They can be seen scanning her face after she refused to show identification, saying she is a U.S. citizen. An agent held up his phone to her face, and moments later, they walked away, probably because they determined her citizenship.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement has no real reason to be collecting biographic information of U.S. citizens, Fischer said. "It is beyond the mission of what they do," she said. "There is no transparency about what exactly they're doing with this information, if they're putting it in a database, and what they're doing with the database."

Many immigrants are already under some type of electronic surveillance — like ankle monitors, special cellphones and watches — as part of their immigration processes. ICE says these Alternatives to Detention (ATD) "ensure compliance with release conditions and provide important case management services for non-detained aliens."

That was the case with Liberian immigrant Gibson Garrison, who

was arrested at his home after immigration officials battered down his door. Garrison had had a check-in with his ICE supervisor two weeks prior to his arrest, and had an ankle monitor on for about two years.

Immigrants like Garrison often live in close-knit communities, and that means monitoring one individual can inadvertently expose others around them to surveillance. "It basically gives ICE an eye into their home and to their apartment, and into their community," Fischer said. As global technological capability expands, so does ICE's surveillance dragnet.

"We have an administration that is fully embracing it, and expanding its use to this point where we're really seeing how dangerous and how scary this can be in real life," Fischer said.

The far-reaching tech

Surveillance technology that once was deployed by the U.S. in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and used along the U.S. border have now been redirected domestically, according to experts. And as sophisticated as it is, it is not error free.

Earlier this month, 404 Media reported that ICE is using an app called ELITE (Enhanced Leads Identification & Targeting for Enforcement) that populates the map — it could be a block, a neighborhood, or an entire city — with potential deportation targets, and brings up a dossier on each person. It provides a confidence score on a person's current address.

Another tool, Weblock, has the locations of millions of phones because of advertising data generated from apps. Weblock is able to surveil the locations of millions of people's phones, and ICE is able to get that data without a warrant, Quintin said.

Federal agents also use stingray tracking devices, known as cell-site simulators, which mimic cell towers to force nearby phones to connect, allowing agents to locate a target's device. In the process, the technology also captures data from bystanders' phones.

A 2022 report by Georgetown University found that in 2022:

- ICE had scanned the driver's license photos of 1 in 3 adults.
- ICE had access to the driver's license data of 3 in 4 adults.
- ICE was tracking the movements of drivers in cities home to 3 in 4 adults.
- ICE could locate 3 in 4 adults through their utility records.
- ICE built its surveillance dragnet by tapping data from private companies and state and local bureaucracies.
- ICE spent approximately \$2.8 billion between 2008 and 2021 on new surveillance, data collection and data-sharing programs.

Yet, it is likely that there still is much

more technology that remains largely hidden. Last year, ICE paid \$30 million to Palantir to build ImmigrationOS, a surveillance system that streamlines the identification and deportation of immigrants.

Because much of this data is collected without a warrant, there is little to no oversight or accountability. "We've built this horrifying Orwellian surveillance industry over the last 10 to 20 years, and now ICE is buying access to all of it," Quintin said. And it's not error free.

Chris Weiland, the chair of Restore the 4th Minnesota, which fights surveillance that infringes Fourth Amendment rights, said that "mistakes in the system will compound with the lack of care" by federal agents. Given that these tools often claim complete accuracy, agents are prone to believe them rather than a potential target for deportation who presents actual documents.

Plus, Fischer said, facial recognition technology itself is also inherently racist, not accurately reading faces of certain races or ethnicities. "When you try and automate these types of decisions, often times they replicate racist and prejudicial patterns," Fischer said. That's because the technology is based on racial inequities baked into our society.

Invasive surveillance technologies like these violate Fourth Amendment rights, Fischer and Weiland said. The Fourth Amendment protects individuals against unreasonable searches and seizures by the

government, ensuring the right to privacy.

Community organizers feel it firsthand

CNN reported that DHS asked federal agents temporarily assigned to the city to "capture all images, license plates, identifications, and general information on hotels, agitators, protestors, etc., so we can capture it all in one consolidated form."

Multiple community organizers said they have felt the impact of that surveillance and monitoring first hand.

Photographer and *Sahan Journal* freelancer Chris Juhn was following a few SUVs with tinted windows when one of the cars stopped ahead of him, and an ICE agent stepped out, clicked his photos and left. "I'm from the press," Juhn said, holding up his press ID. "I don't care," the agent said before walking back to the car.

Weiland theorized that they could be building a database of people they might target, or could simply be trying to intimidate them.

Miguel Brito, community organizer at West Side Community Organization, was responding to an ICE alert when he saw agents taking photos of him in his car. A few days later, his family saw "suspicious vehicles" which he described as SUVs with tinted windows (which are often used by ICE agents), parked outside their house. "They're intimidating folks, you know, they're trying to intimidate our neighbors."

Mary Anne Ligeralde Quiroz, the co-

founder of Indigenous Roots Cultural Center, has been actively responding to ICE alerts and raids. She said that following the ICE raid at Centromex Supercards in St. Paul last December, she was being followed by what looked like federal agents. "I was super paranoid those two days. I was contemplating getting a hotel room with the kids," she said, so as to not lead agents to her home. "I think after that, I was just like, okay, yep, we're just all getting surveilled." Quiroz said she has had patrollers step back from observing ICE after they were photographed by agents.

"I've been told, 'We have your face now,'" said Miguel Hernandez, a member of Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Committee (MIRAC). Hernandez said the organization operates under the assumption that ICE is always listening, and that federal agents have infiltrated their Signal chats. "There's only a certain amount of exposure that I can accept until it becomes dangerous and worrisome for my health," he said. "Just simple mistakes now will have a lot more worse consequences if I've become a target of federal officers."

"To me, it signals the fact that this was never about legality. This is never about keeping people safe," Hernandez said. "It's such a systemic machine of oppression, that now you are in the trenches with your community, and now you will also be oppressed with them."

Community organizers said that even

though they were aware of the risks of surveillance, their concerns have grown as federal agents have flooded the Twin Cities. Quiroz said community networks are resisting by expanding the number of people who might deliver food to a family or change cars if they are giving someone a ride to work. They have also been doing their own form of facial recognition, taking pictures of agents and circulating amongst local social media channels.

Tech and surveillance experts emphasize that everyone, no matter their immigration status, should take basic precautions to limit surveillance of their personal information.

In a consumer alert, Attorney General Keith Ellison urged Minnesotans to take steps such as disabling location services on phones, disabling biometric authentication such as FaceID or TouchID, regularly updating software, and using secure communication tools with end-to-end encryption to protect themselves from DHS surveillance.

Although the surveillance can seem pervasive, such steps make it harder to access individual data, Fischer and Quintin said. "They want people to live in fear," Fischer said. "They want people to feel like there's nothing they can do. But that's how they win."

Reprinted: <https://sahanjournal.com>

Dyani White Hawk

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Minneapolis, MN

Masked, heavily armed agents traveling in convoys of unmarked SUVs became commonplace in some neighborhoods. By the end of January, more than 3,400 people had been arrested, according to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. At least 2,000 ICE officers and 1,000 Border Patrol officers were on the ground.

Representatives from at least 10 tribes traveled hundreds of miles to Minneapolis — the birthplace of the American Indian Movement — to accept ID applications from members there. Among them were the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Ojibwe of Wisconsin, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of South Dakota and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa of North Dakota.

Turtle Mountain citizen Faron Houle renewed his tribal ID card and got his young adult son's and his daughter's first ones.

"You just get nervous," Houle said. "I think (ICE agents are) more or less racial profiling people, including me."

Events in downtown coffee shops, hotel ballrooms, and at the Minneapolis American Indian Center helped urban tribal citizens connect and share resources, said Christine Yellow Bird, who directs the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nation's satellite office in Fargo, North Dakota.

Yellow Bird made four trips to Minneapolis in recent weeks, putting nearly 2,000 miles on her 2017 Chevy

Tahoe to help citizens in the Twin Cities who can't make the long journey to their reservation.

Yellow Bird said she always keeps her tribal ID with her.

"I'm proud of who I am," she said. "I never thought I would have to carry it for my own safety."

Some Native Americans say ICE is harassing them

Last year, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren said that several tribal citizens reported being stopped and detained by ICE officers in Arizona and New Mexico. He and other tribal leaders have advised citizens to carry tribal IDs with them at all times.

Last November, Elaine Miles, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon and an actress known for her roles in "Northern Exposure" and "The Last of Us," said she was stopped by ICE officers in Washington state who told her that her tribal ID looked fake.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe has banned ICE from its reservation in southwestern South Dakota and northwestern Nebraska, one of the largest in the country.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota said a member was detained in Minnesota in late January. And Peter Yazzie, who is Navajo, said he was arrested and held by U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement in Phoenix for several hours last week.

Yazzie, a construction worker from nearby Chinle, Arizona, said he was sitting in his car at a gas station preparing for a day of work when he saw ICE officers arrest some Latino men. The officers soon turned their attention to Yazzie, pushed him to the ground, and searched his vehicle, he said.

He said he told them where to find his driver's license, birth certificate, and a federal Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood. Yazzie said the car he was in is registered to his mother. Officers said the names didn't match, he said, and he was arrested, taken to a nearby detention center and held for about four hours.

"It's an ugly feeling. It makes you feel less human. To know that people see your features and think so little of you," he said.

DHS did not respond to questions about the arrest.

Mantz, the Choctaw Nation citizen, said he runs pest-control operations in Minneapolis neighborhoods where ICE agents are active and he won't leave home without his tribal identification documents.

Securing them for his children is now a priority.

"It gives me some peace of mind. But at the same time, why do we have to carry these documents?" Mantz said. "Who are you to ask us to prove who we are?"

Know Your Rights

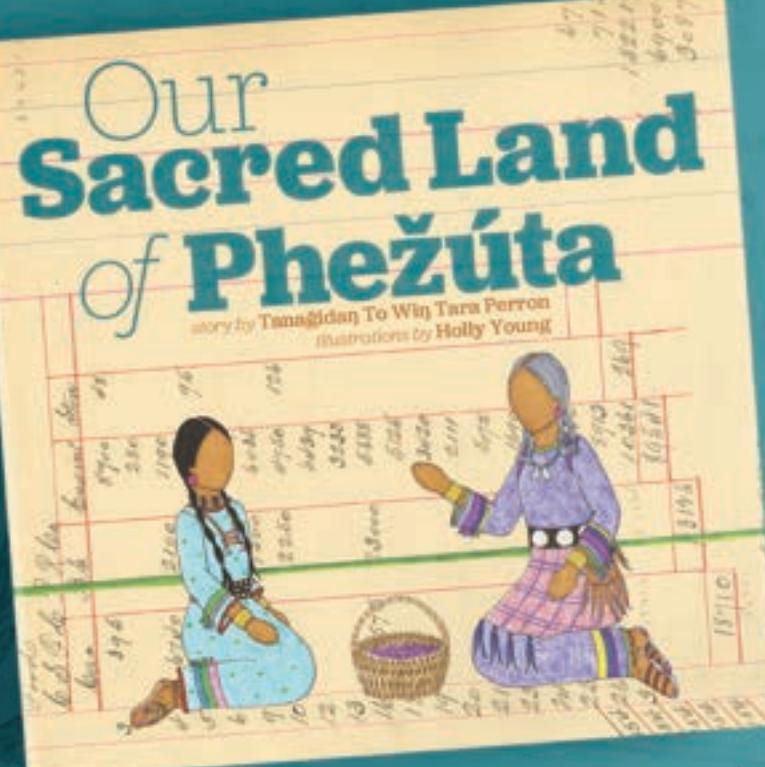
Everyone in the U.S., regardless of immigration status, holds certain constitutional rights. These include:

- The right to remain silent. You are not required to answer questions about your immigration status, origin, or entry into the U.S.. You can clearly state your desire to remain silent and request to speak with a lawyer.
- The right to refuse searches. Generally, ICE officers need your consent or a judicial warrant to search you, your property, or your vehicle. You can explicitly state that you do not consent to a search.
- The right to not open your door to your home. ICE cannot enter private areas of your home without a valid judicial search or arrest warrant. An administrative warrant from ICE is not sufficient for forced entry.
- The right to not sign documents without legal counsel. Signing papers could potentially waive your rights or lead to deportation.
- The right to contact a lawyer and your consulate if detained. While the government isn't mandated to provide a lawyer for immigration proceedings, you can ask for resources for free or low-cost legal help.

- Native American Rights Fund



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New reporting requirements are expected to become a burden for many. What are now annual renewal requirements will become necessary every six months in 2027 for adults, again ages 21 to 64 who don't have dependent children or disabilities and who are not American Indian. The department warns people affected by these changes can lose their Medicaid insurance by not reporting even though they may qualify.

Adults ages 21 to 64 without children or disabilities, and who are not American Indian, will have work reporting responsibilities next year as well, and that also may prove difficult for many Minnesotans, Chomilo and Lightfield said.

More than 225,000 adults in Minnesota, ages 21 to 64, will need to show they are working, are in school, in a work program, doing community service, or eligible for an exemption from the requirements to qualify. Again, this requirement does not apply to American Indians.

This can become difficult for people in some jobs who are paid in cash or tips, or though other systems that don't provide pay stubs.

Medical Assistance – or Medicaid – enrollees in Minnesota, their caregivers, friends and loved ones looking out for enrollees, should try to keep current about changes through the federal and Department of Human Services websites.

MDHS encourages people to keep current contact information, such as addresses, up to date so they don't miss information and materials. They should watch for DHS mail envelopes marked by a big blue circle for materials about renewing. They and their caregivers should monitor department websites for changes and information.

This is where the navigator system in Minnesota is especially important to help people under stress or in ill health keep current with insurance renewals and information.

Navigators Holmes, Viviana Rodriguez and Val LaFave at the Minneapolis Indian Health Board told The Circle that they assist at least a thousand people a year in getting started and maintaining enrollment. They also conduct information meetings primarily in the Twin Cities area. Holmes had worked with 13 people the day before a media interview.

The navigators operate information booths at public events, including powwows. Most of the people they consult with and help are residents of Hennepin, Ramsey and surrounding metro area counties.

Tribal health offices have navigators as well. Enrolled tribal members do have some special protections and benefits, and navigators can help people understand their options.

Navigators can be found though the

MNsure Assister Directory link in the accompanying chart (<http://www.mnssure.org/help/find-assister/find-assisstr.jsp>).

Linking up navigators with Medicaid enrollees, and with the caregivers and family members trying to assist the enrollees, can sometimes become complex.

Laurelle Myhra, PhD, a licensed marriage and family therapist and director of the Mino Bimaadiziwin Wellness Clinic that is also in the American Indian Cultural Corridor area in Minneapolis, said complexities with Minnesota's Native American population can also hinder enrollments.

What many people don't understand, she said, is that a majority of Native Americans now live in urban areas and not on reservations where they might have access to free tribal healthcare.

"Additionally, it's important to follow lineage or descendants rather than enrollment based off percentages of blood tied to one tribe," she said. That is the current tribal enrollment process. It overlooks "there are people who are 100 percent Native American but from multiple tribes and thus they and their descendants might not be eligible based off tribal enrollment with their tribes."

Myhra said the state is working to increase the number of health workers to help relatives reestablish care with trusted health care providers for their loved ones. There are people who haven't had their disabilities documented for coverage enrollment "due to historical trauma and related fears of the healthcare system," she said.



Above: Navigators at the Indian Health Board of Minneapolis help the eligible and their caregivers get squared away with Medical Assistance Minnesota, or Medicaid. From left to right. Cora Raskovich, Val LaFave, Cassie Holmes and Viviana Rodriguez. (Photos courtesy of Indian Health Board.)

Below: Cora Raskovich, left, and Viviana Rodriguez from the Indian Health Board of Minneapolis hold informational meetings for metro areas people wanting help getting enrolled in the federal Medicaid system.



This is no small matter. Department of Human Services researchers earlier forecast that as many as 140,000 Minnesotans are at risk of losing Medicaid, or Medical Assistance in Minnesota as the program is called here. One in five Minnesotans is covered by the program.

New enrollment and reporting requirements come after costs for health insurance have already doubled for some of the people assisted by the Minneapolis Indian Health Board, said Cassandra "Cassie" Holmes, a community health worker. She is among a group of "navigators" at MIHB who assist people with finding, enrolling and maintaining their health coverage. (See MNsure assister directory.)

Premium costs for private health insurance sold through MNsure and other state marketplaces rose after Congress and the Trump administration cut federal assistance and ended special COVID pandemic aide this past July.

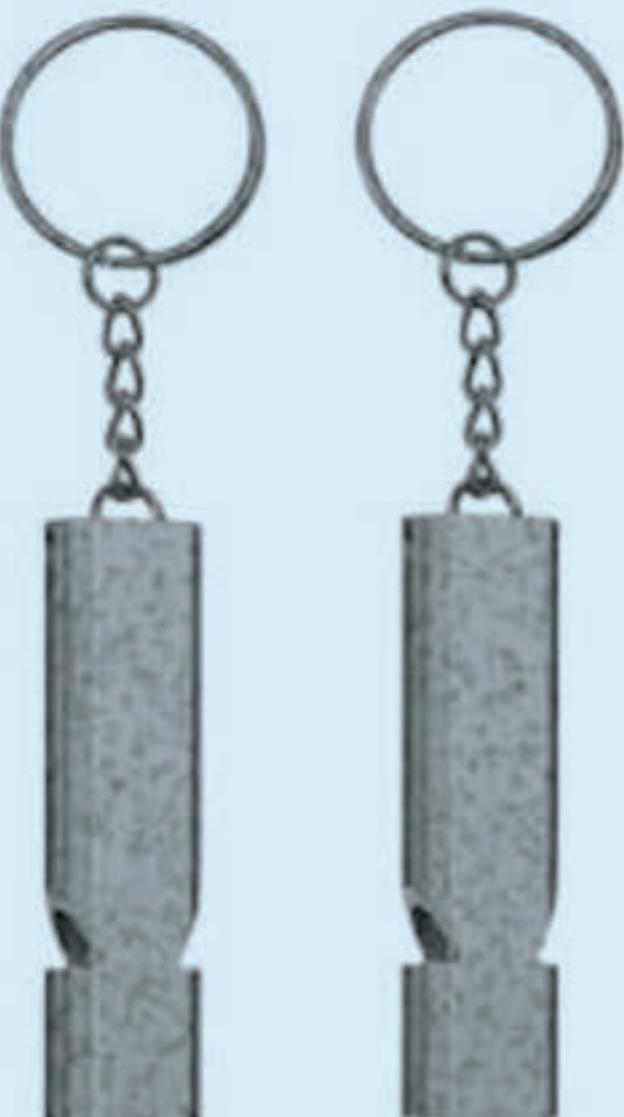
New changes going into effect in this October will mostly impact immigrants, said Dr. Nathan Chomilo, the medical director at the Minnesota Department of Human Services. But he and Takayla Lightfield, the Tribal Policy Consultant for MDHS, said sweeping changes coming in January next year can have major impacts on the state's Indigenous people.

Staying healthy is already more costly and will become more difficult for many Minnesotans, including Native Americans, from changes in the federal Medicaid program. But it is important to know not all changes will affect American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Cuts to subsidies approved by Congress last year have already raised costs. Changes for enrollment and eligibility are scheduled to start in October for immigrants. New and more frequent information reporting requirements for Medicaid recipients go into effect in January 2027 for adults ages 21 to 64 who don't have dependent children or disabilities, and who are not American Indian or Native Alaskans. More frequent and complex reporting paperwork requirements will add burdens for enrollees and their caregivers.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services stresses that Minnesotans, including Natives, should monitor its websites for information (mn.gov/dhs/federalchanges). An accompanying graphic chart has links to websites with information and services available within Minnesota's 87 counties, tribal entities and by other service providers. Caregivers, friends and loved ones for people needing Medicaid coverage should keep informed of the unfolding changes and requirements, the department warns.

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If a responder is abducted

MONARCA RAPID RESPONSE LINE:

(612) 441-2881

If someone is abducted for
immigration related reasons

MONARCA NON-EMERGENCY LEGAL QUESTIONS:

(651)-372-8642

To contact for general immigration
related legal questions/support

CAIR MN LEGAL SUPPORT:

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support families facing ICE contact or
detention

TO LOCATE A DETAINED LOVED ONE:



This is shared information, not legal advice.

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

editor@ajwnews.com

It's murder in Minneapolis

I stopped by the Pow Wow Grounds coffee shop on Sunday afternoon, January 25. It was the day after Border Patrol agents gunned down Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse at the VA hospital in Minneapolis. Pretti was pumped full of US government bullets on Nicollet Avenue just off 26th Street.

The ICE invasion, the federal immigration enforcement initiative dubbed "Operation Metro Surge," has gone from bad to worse. As The Circle reported in the January issue, the recent carnage started Jan. 7, when an ICE agent named Jonathan Ross fatally shot Renee Good, also 37 and the mother of three children. That murder took place on Portland Avenue near 34th Street. After shooting Good three times as she tried to maneuver her car away from ICE agents, Ross spat out, "Fucking bitch." The Department of Justice quickly announced that it would not open a civil rights investigation into the Good killing.

The influx of federal agents, some 3,000 heavily armed thugs, into Minnesota has targeted immigrants, primarily Latinos, East Africans and Southeast Asians. However, anyone is liable to be assaulted ICE and Border Patrol agents on the prowl in their rented SUVs, including Native residents.

Outside of Pow Wow Grounds there's a tall pile of firewood and volunteers tending a fire. The door to the shop is locked, as is the case at many local restaurants and shops, and a young woman opens it for me. Then I'm greeted by old friend Crow Bellecourt. He's the director of the Indigenous Protector Movement (indigenousprotectormovement.com), which works in concert with other groups, including Many Shields and the Little Protectors, on community safety.

The group's website explains that "community safety is not just a value, it's a sovereign responsibility. 'Protector' is in our name because we believe in the inherent right of Indigenous people to defend our lands, our communities, and our relatives when systems fail to do so." As of this writing, the "systems" have failed in a remarkable way.

I asked Crow, son of the late AIM leaders Clyde and Peggy Bellecourt, about the abduction by ICE of four homeless Native men in mid-January. One man was released from detention but there is no information about the fate of the other three, according to press reports.

As we talked, volunteers prepared snack bags that were piled high on a table. All My Relations Gallery, a large room adjoining the coffee shop, has become a depot for varied supplies during the crisis. Crow, who worked for several years at Homeward Bound Native Homeless Shelter, introduced me to Vin

Dion, who sang the AIM Song at an anti-ICE rally at Target Center after the massive downtown march on Jan. 23. The basketball arena, home to the Minnesota Timberwolves, was packed to the rafters for the event.

And Bob Rice, the proprietor of Pow Wow Grounds, also was at the table eating a bowl of soup. Bob has been providing soup and coffee for the volunteers. Asked about Indians being set upon by ICE agents, he mentioned that Crow's sister and Vin's wife, Rachel Dionne-Thunder, a leader of the Indigenous Protector Movement, recently had been in her car and was hemmed in by ICE agents about a block from the coffee shop. She alerted people who came running to her aid and the goons retreated. In numerous cases, ICE agents have backed off when confronted by angry local residents.

The crazy cases of ICE hunting down American Indians, whose families have lived on this land since before there was a USA, caught the attention of the New York Times, which ran a feature story on Jan. 28.

"Federal agents have stopped, detained or violently confronted dozens of American citizens in Minneapolis in recent weeks under suspicion of being undocumented immigrants or for protesting the government's crackdown. But the detention of Sophie Watso stands out," the Times reported

Watso, a 30-year-old Mdewakanton Dakota artist living in Minneapolis, was tracking ICE agents when her 2011 white Ford Ranger was boxed in by the feds. As we've seen in numerous videos on social media, the agents broke out the driver- and passenger-side windows on her truck, dragged her out, knocked her to the ground and applied zip-ties to her wrists.

And the Times story mentioned the "distinguishing irony" in Watso's ordeal: the agents transported her to the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building, headquarters of the immigration operation and the detention lockup, which sits above Bdóte, the site where hundreds of Dakota were interned in a US government concentration camp, 1862-63.

As Watso was being driven to the Whipple Building, she sang a "Native song of hope and healing," as per the Times story. "I knew where I was going my ancestors were there. I wanted them to hear me."

During this time of dirty and criminal repression by the US government, the Native community in Minneapolis has risen to the challenge. According to Crow Bellecourt, his group's efforts are part of "being good relatives."

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Jingle dress dancers hold healing ceremonies at memorial sites

BY LEAH LEMM/MPR NEWS

Jingle dress dancers gathered on February 1 to hold healing ceremonies at the locations where Renee Macklin Good and Alex Pretti were shot and killed by federal immigration agents while observing their operations.

Hundreds of people attended the ceremony in south Minneapolis, many in ribbon skirts and regalia.

Star Downwind was a lead organizer of the ceremony.

"The dress came to our people when there was a time of sickness. And so that's what we do. We show up when there's people suffering," Downwind said.

The jingle dress and the dance have provided healing for Native communities for over a hundred years in Minnesota.

A week after George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis in 2020, Downwind organized a jingle dress ceremony at the memorial site. Downwind said a friend called her recently, asking if she could do it again — now for Good and Pretti.

"It's just a part of the responsibility of being a jingle dancer — is to go to where people are suffering or people are sick and they need healing to bring it," Downwind said.

A prayer marked the start of the ceremony. Then the jingle dress dancers moved in rhythm, in a clockwise circle around the drum. The crowd surrounded them.

It had snowed earlier, so there was a layer of white covering Good's memorial. Two men had shoveled the street to make space for the dancers.

Caley Coyne was one of the jingle dress dancers at the ceremony. Usually, Coyne dances the fancy shawl but brings out the jingle dress only "when it is very needed."

"To bring healing to a community that's obviously already very hurt, just to try and uplift and heal and protect all of those around us," Coyne said.

Downwind said several community members were involved in organizing the ceremony, including Nicole Matthews, the CEO of the Minnesota Indigenous Women's Sexual Assault Coalition.

When she heard about the Good's death, Matthews says she was scared and angry.

"We're seeing it in broad daylight. All of it happening, unfolding right in front of us."

The ceremony comes at a time when federal immigration operations are still in progress. Yet Matthews says intentional prayer and being with one



another is her "armor."

"I believe our medicines and our prayers are our greatest strength, and that gives me courage to be here," Matthews said. "When we come together in prayer and in solidarity with each other, we're protected."

Reporter Melissa Olson contributed to this report.

Jingle dress dancers convened at the memorial sites of Alex Pretti and Renee Good to offer healing to the community on Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026, in Minneapolis. (All photos by Jaida Grey Eagle for MPR News.)



Stories for Indigenous Resilience raises funds for community

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JENN HALL

Mni Giizhik Theatre Ensemble, in partnership with the Guthrie's Native Advisory Council, held "Stories for Indigenous Resilience" on Wednesday, February 4. The evening of stories, poetry, music, and more was organized to raise funds for mutual aid for the Native community. Proceeds from the show will go to NATIFs and Pow Wow Grounds to support their community outreach work amidst the ongoing occupation of federal agents in Minnesota.

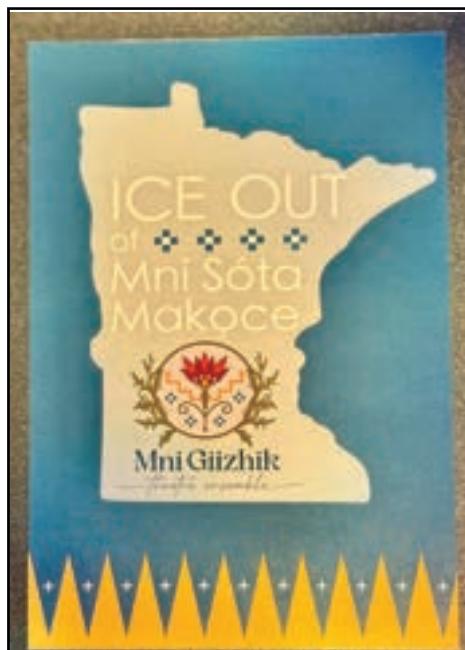
Pages could be written about the powerful medicine these artists shared with a full house, but there's too much news for that. I'll just say that the belly laughs, heartfelt songs, poems, and stories, vulnerability, and hope that the artists shared with us were a balm to my soul and I left the theatre feeling lighter than I had in weeks.

The theatre ensemble raffled off a few donated prizes later in the evening. Congratulations to the winners! After the show I popped down to the gift shop. Now, I'm a sucker for a good iron-on patch, and Adrienne Zimiga-January's "You Are On Native Land" design definitely lifted some zhooniyaa from my wallet. You can still find the full collect

ion in the Guthrie's gift shop. Proceeds from those sales will benefit the Healing Through Arts program at the Women of Nations - Eagle's Nest Shelter in Saint Paul. Get you some good swag for your snag ahead of Valentine's Day, it's for a good cause!

Our community is truly resilient, talented, and I'm deeply grateful to the organizers and artists involved in the evening. Artists in attendance included:

- Oyate Singers and Mni Giizhik Theatre Ensemble
- Oogie Push
- Silvestrey P'Orantes
- Sam Aros-Mitchell
- Wakaya Wells
- Fern Renville
- Charli Fool Bear
- Silvestrey P'Orantes
- Kyle Hill StandingCloud
- Deanna StandingCloud
- Adrienne Zimiga-January
- Oyate Singers
- Jingle Dancer Lakota Baker






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Immigrant Defense Network goes statewide with observer training

BY NICOLAS SCIBELLI/SAHAN JOURNAL

The Immigrant Defense Network is expanding its training efforts to 30 cities across the Midwest, activating more residents to document federal immigration activity.

With the wind whipping outside, driving wind chills down to minus 20, First Unitarian Universalist Church in Rochester, Minn. was full of people looking to help their neighbors.

Nearly 100 people came out in January for the Immigrant Defense Network's (IDN) constitutional observer training to document federal immigration enforcement activity in Minnesota. As thousands of Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) agents have flooded the Twin Cities, these observers have been a constant presence on the streets, recording federal agents and alerting the community of their actions.

The training program in Rochester was part of the IDN's Brave of Us Tour, a 30-city campaign to expand the organization's reach across the Midwest. According to the IDN's network manager, Edwin Torres Desantiago, the need to expand the network's training efforts was apparent.

"We knew with that amount of agents in our communities, we needed to quickly mobilize every corner of our state," he said.

The IDN was founded as a network of immigrant, labor, legal, faith, and community organizations in Minnesota last year in the aftermath of Donald Trump's election. It has since expanded to more than 110 organizations and has a statewide reach.

Torres Desantiago said constitutional observers have been the backbone of the network's ability to respond to immigration enforcement activities. At its core, the observer program is designed to uphold constitutional protections.

"They [constitutional observers] are the ones keeping watch," Torres Desantiago said. "They're the ones that are making sure our constitution is upheld, and when those rights get violated, we work with legal partners to bring a remedy through the court system."

For many, documenting federal agents provides an outlet to resist federal operations in the state. Rochester resident Macaila Eick said that with thousands of federal agents currently in Minnesota, she had to do something.

"I love history, I've read a lot of World War II history," Eick said. "I always ask myself what would I have done? Ten, 20, 30 years from now, when people ask me 'what did you do during this time,' I want

to be able to answer that question and be proud about it."

Special education paraprofessional Jennifer Meyer was at the Rochester session to support her students. She said some hadn't been coming to school out of fear of encountering federal agents.

"They need to be in school, and they need to have that safe space," Meyer said. "When they feel they can't even come here because they fear they may get pulled over, detained, I can't sit here and do nothing."

Meyer said that coming to the training provided reassurance in an inherently scary time.

"I'm afraid, I'm scared, but it gave me a way to move forward," she said. "It gave me a way to protect my kids, so if the fight comes to my school, I know what I'm doing."

According to Torres Desantiago, without these observers on the streets, some of ICE's most flagrant violations would never have come to light.

"That viral photo of the 5-year-old who was detained a couple days ago, the killing of Renee Good — they would not have come out if not for people who had been out to observe and document what's happening," he said.

As immigration enforcement agents have inundated the Twin Cities, communities outside the metro area also are taking note. Torres Desantiago said the IDN has received an influx of requests from cities across Minnesota for training should similar enforcement come to their doorsteps.

"Right now, the community is telling us, 'please, we want to be trained on how to respond for our neighbors,'" he said.

Expanding the effort

Prior to the event in Rochester, the IDN had already held training sessions in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Mankato, and Duluth. It also visited Fargo, North Dakota, with stops across the Midwest planned in the coming months.

Organizing director at the IDN Yeng Her said that as the geography of the tour changes, the strategy needs to as well.

"One of the biggest goals for us is to connect with the local organizations and communities," Her said. "Our main purpose is, we want to connect it with the local, but also ensure that the communities know of these local resources. We introduce them so they [organizations] can say 'hey, we're here, and this is how we can support you.'"

She said the IDN is making it a point to travel to counties that have signed agreements for their local law enforcement to cooperate on immigration enforcement with federal authorities. Her said that any trainings held in these counties need to be tailored to the local context to account for this cooperation.



Edwin Torres Desantiago speaks at the Immigrant Defense Network's constitutional observer training to document federal immigration enforcement activity in Minnesota. (Photo by Marissa Ding.)

"Those take on a different approach to how we're going to come in and provide information, but also the specific organizations we work with," Her said. "For those we plan it very strategically in terms of what we can do, and most importantly, our messaging there."

Her said that it is particularly important to partner with organizations that understand the nuances in communities that have clear pro- and anti-ICE factions.

"When we pick organizations to support us, we find those who have done the work there, who are local there and understand their community and that division," they said.

For now, ICE and other immigration enforcement activities have been focused primarily on the Twin Cities, though other communities such as St. Cloud have seen agents in their streets as well. With so many immigration agents now in the state, no community can be completely sure they won't be present on their own streets, Torres Desantiago said, and the IDN's training program has expanded to reflect that.

"We've been doing trainings for over a year but not to this scale," he said. "We knew once it was nearly 3,000 agents, with that kind of human capital, they can go anywhere."

Despite the announcement in early February that some federal agents would be leaving Minnesota, Her said the Brave of Us Tour would continue as planned.

Know your rights

The foundation of every constitutional observer training is equipping participants to know their rights when documenting actions by federal immigration agencies.

Among other things, the training teaches best documentation practices, how to report that information to the appropriate channels, and how to identify judicial warrants, which long-established

legal precedent says are required to enter private property, despite the federal government's claims to the contrary.

Torres Desantiago said that the IDN's constitutional observer trainings can equip communities with the skills they need to utilize existing response networks more effectively.

"We don't tell people how to run their chats," he said. "But if you're going to see a federal enforcement, what are the ways actually helpful [to document it] so you don't continue to create fear or unintended misinformation?"

At its crux, Torres Desantiago said the constitutional observer aims to teach participants to share useful information.

"We teach you how to share good information, verified information, so you can continue to protect your neighbors," he said.

"I can't sit here and do nothing"

Every community member in attendance had their reasons for attending the training.

One woman who spoke up during the training wanted to take the lessons learned from the training back to her community group in Winona. Another man said his career in criminal justice motivated him to speak up about the violation of people's civil rights.

Rebecca Gardner lives in the Twin Cities, and had already attended one of the IDN trainings held there. She said that with the situation changing so quickly however, it was important to stay up to date on what's happening.

"A lot has changed in the two weeks since my first training, and I did in fact learn a lot here tonight," Gardner said.

For Torres Desantiago, the Brave of Us Tour is a source of inspiration. Seeing other people willing to fight back against federal operations in Minnesota provides much needed support during a stressful time.

"Honestly, it's what keeps me going," Torres Desantiago said. "From a human level seeing this amount of violence, this amount of despair, the amount of families that have cried on my shoulder; it takes a toll on the mental health of anyone. Places like this are a place I feel a little bit renewed in my energy."

Torres Desantiago said that like many others, he is afraid during this time. He believes how you respond to that fear is what matters, however.

"I feel recharged seeing so many neighbors step up to say 'I am afraid too, but I'm choosing to be brave,'" Torres Desantiago said. "Right now people are choosing to be brave and not succumb to fear. Right now, people are choosing love for their neighbors."

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Know Your Rights if You are Approached by ICE

NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE, REMEMBER:

You have the right to remain silent
Do not lie to ICE
Do not physically resist or obstruct
Carry your Tribal or state issued ID
Tip: Some state-issued IDs are not enough to prove you are a U.S. Citizen. Keep reading for what to know about IDs if you are being detained.

APPROACHED BY ICE AT HOME:

Do not open the door unless ICE presents a valid judicial warrant signed by a judge. Most ICE warrants are administrative and do not allow them to enter your home without permission.

A valid judicial warrant: 1. Names a person in your residence and/or what specific areas are to be searched at your residence and 2. Is signed by a judge (must be a judge that is not an immigration judge)

An administrative warrant is: signed by an ICE officer

(If you need help determining what is a valid judicial warrant you can review this resource:

<https://www.nilc.org/resources/know-your-rights-warrants/>

Ask ICE to slide the warrant under the door for you to review. Do not open the door to receive the warrant.

If an ICE agent enters your home without your permission or a valid judicial warrant, do not physically resist as that could subject you to potential criminal charges. But make it clear that you did not provide consent.

If ICE begins to search your home, make it clear that you do not consent to the search.

You do have a right to remain silent or state clearly: "I am exercising my right to remain silent."

If you do not remain silent, do not lie to ICE agents as that may impact you in the future.

Record the interaction if it is safe to do so or ask someone else to record it. If you record, do not interfere with the ICE operation.

IN YOUR CAR:

There are many reports of ICE stopping cars or ICE approaching people in their cars.

Things to keep in mind: 1. You have the right to remain silent, 2. Never lie to an ICE agent, 3. You can ask if you are being detained, if not, ask if you are free to go. If you are free to go, calmly drive away.

ICE agents sometimes stop cars or approach cars based on a person's perceived ethnicity.

In many states, you must pull over if you are stopped by any type of law enforcement officer, even if you do not think you did anything wrong.

Because ICE agents sometimes use unmarked cars or wear plain clothes or clothes that say "POLICE," you may not know they are ICE when they approach you.

You can ask the individual who they are and for their identification.

You are only required to roll down your window if an officer asks you to. If you are asked to, roll down your window to allow for clear communication.

Be aware that there are many instances of ICE agents opening car doors or breaking windows.

If an ICE agent asks for your ID, and you are the DRIVER, you are required to show your driver's license.

If an ICE agent asks for your ID and you are a PASSENGER, you do not have to show your ID or provide any personal information. However, ICE may still detain you, so it may be safest to show your identification or proof of citizenship.

If an ICE agent asks you to get out of the car, before you get out, you should ask for a reason why you were stopped and ask the ICE agent to identify themselves.

Remember, ICE generally cannot search your car or your person without a valid judicial warrant. If ICE searches your car without a warrant, say: "I not consent to a search."

There are also many reports of ICE detaining people who are following them, recording them, and monitoring their activity. Remember, it is not illegal to follow or film an ICE agent, but if you do so, you should do so from a safe distance and avoid physically obstructing ICE operations.

AT WORK:

ICE can enter the public space of any workplace without any type of warrant.

Public spaces can include an office lobby, a supermarket, retail store, or dining area of a restaurant.

ICE cannot legally enter the private spaces like employee-only areas unless they have the permission of your employer or a judicial warrant.

If approached, do not panic. Stay calm and avoid running or making sudden movements.

If you are asked about another person's identification or for information pertaining to another person's whereabouts, you do not have to answer those questions.

Ask if you are free to leave. If yes, calmly walk away. If you are not free to leave, ask if you are being detained. If you are being detained, you must show a form of identification.

Keep reading for what to know if you are being detained.

If it is safe to do so, record the interaction or ask someone else to record it. Do not interfere with the operation

IN PUBLIC:

ICE can enter public spaces without any type of warrant.

Public spaces include an office lobby, a supermarket, retail store or dining area of a restaurant.

If approached, do not panic. Stay calm and avoid running or making sudden movements.

Ask if you are free to leave. If yes, calmly

walk away. If you are not free to leave, ask if you are being detained. If you are being detained, you must show a form of identification.

Keep reading for what to know if you are being detained.

If it is safe to do so, record the interaction or ask someone else to record it. Do not physically resist or obstruct the operation.

YOU ARE A MINOR:

Minors have the same protections as adults. You have the right to remain silent and not answer questions about:

Your immigration status

Where you were born

Your parents' immigration status

Your address

Say: "I choose to remain silent. I want to speak to a lawyer."

Minors are not legally required to carry identification unless operating a vehicle. Carrying a copy of your Tribal ID, passport, birth certificate, or legal residency document should be done only if necessary and with safeguards (e.g., in a sealed envelope labeled "Confidential: Legal Documents – Access Only by Guardian").

If you and/or your parent are detained, you have the right to be near and in-touch with your parent.

DETAINED BY ICE, STAY CALM:

You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to consult with a lawyer. Say: "I wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer."

Tell ICE if you have medical issues or need to arrange for childcare.

Request an interpreter for any conversation with ICE if ICE does not speak your language.

If you are a U.S. Citizen, say: "I am a U.S. Citizen" and ask why you are being detained. ICE does not have jurisdiction to arrest U.S. Citizens for immigration violations.

If you are being detained, you must show a form of identification.

Use your non-expired state-issued ID or Tribal ID to show your United States citizenship.

Tip: Not all states require proof of citizenship to obtain a state issued ID. In some states a state-issued ID may not be enough to prove that you are a U.S. citizen. Double check your state's requirements, and it may be helpful to also carry your Tribal ID or keep a picture of your birth certificate or passport on your phone.

If an ICE agent does not accept your Tribal ID, request to speak with their supervisor. Not all ICE agents are aware that a Tribal ID is a legal form of identification in the United States.

Do not say anything, sign anything, or make any decisions without consulting a lawyer.

You have the right to make phone calls to family, friends, or a lawyer. You can request a list of free or low-cost legal service

providers to seek representation

You can receive visitors including family, friends, and lawyers, depending on specific detention facility rules.

Native Americans who believe ICE violated their rights, contact the Native American Rights Fund at (303)447-8760 or rfa@narf.org.

If arrested by police (not ICE), you have the right to a government-appointed lawyer for criminal proceedings.

YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE AT RISK:

It may be helpful to create a safety plan. A safety plan should include:

Identifying your emergency contacts and memorizing their phone numbers.

Providing your child's school or day care with an emergency contact to pick up your child.

Keeping your important papers, like birth certificates, medical records, children's medical records, in a safe place and telling a loved one where you put those papers. (It may be helpful to keep a copy/photo of your birth certificate or proof of citizenship with you.)

Written authorization for an emergency contact to make medical and legal decisions for your child.

Information about ICE's online detainee locator: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/search>

Sample safety plan: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a74cf7ef14aa1564b6a098b/t/67afb8e2d2d64e12cb6d09e5/1739569447250/Emergency+Plan_ENGLISH.pdf

WHEN YOU'RE RELEASED:

Write down what happened to you or ask someone to write it down for you. Include details like names and badge numbers of the ICE agents and anything that was said or done during the encounter.

Discuss your encounter with an attorney.

Native Americans who believe ICE violated their rights, contact the Native American Rights Fund at (303)447-8760 or rfa@narf.org.

This fact sheet is designed to help Native-serving nonprofits prepare to protect their clients and prevent unlawful detentions as well as violations of their and their clients' Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable search and seizure. Complied by NARF.

Sources:

- <https://www.nilc.org/resources/know-your-rights-what-to-do-if-arrested-detained-immigration>
- https://denver.prelive.opencities.com/files/assets/public/v1/human-rights-and-community-partnerships/divisions/immigrant-and-refugee-affairs/documents/doira-docs/c4a_kyr_resource_document_denver_english.pdf
- <https://immigrantjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KYR-Encounter-ICE-Nov.-2024-English.pdf>
- <https://www.rmian.org/know-your-rights>

MIWRC and other organizations help with warmth and food

BY THE CIRCLE

As winter temperatures plunge in Minneapolis, the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center in south Minneapolis (MIWRC) continues to operate an Indigenous-led warming center that provides food, shelter and critical services to people facing homelessness and housing instability. The center has become a steady refuge during subzero conditions, offering not only warmth and meals, but connection and support during an increasingly uncertain winter season.

To meet rising demand, the MIWRC has partnered with local organizations, including Nenookaasi Ozhige and Avivo Village in the North Loop. Through these partnerships, the warming center has effectively doubled its overnight capacity by adding 20 overflow beds. When the center reaches capacity, staff coordinate transportation to Avivo Village to ensure no one is turned away in dangerous conditions.

Inside the MIWRC facility, volunteers guide guests through a simple check-in process before directing them to a large

communal room where tables are arranged for meals. Hot breakfasts are prepared daily, with food served to ensure people begin the day nourished and warm. In extreme cold, the center provides up to 20 overnight beds, offering a safe place to sleep when temperatures become life-threatening.

The warming center first opened last winter in response to dangerous weather conditions and the lack of accessible emergency shelter options for Indigenous people and others experiencing homelessness. Since then, it has become a consistent presence in the community, relying heavily on volunteers who assist with cooking, cleaning, serving meals and providing general support to guests. Volunteers also help create a welcoming atmosphere, encouraging conversation and offering companionship to individuals who are often isolated.

In addition to overnight shelter during severe cold, the resource center expanded its services after receiving \$100,000 in emergency funding from the city of Minneapolis. That funding allowed the organization to continue weekly "Resource Connect" days every Tuesday, even after the coldest months passed. On

those days, the center operates during daytime hours, providing breakfast and lunch along with access to housing assistance and support services.

A mobile medical unit is also available during Resource Connect days, offering basic health screenings, exams and referrals. With the expanded services, the center has seen turnout grow significantly, sometimes serving up to 200 people in a single day. Staff and volunteers say the high demand reflects a broader crisis of housing instability in the region.

According to research by the Wilder Foundation, Native Americans experience homelessness at higher rates than other racial groups in Minnesota. In 2023, nearly half of Native Americans experiencing homelessness statewide were living in Hennepin County. Leaders at the resource center say those numbers highlight the need for culturally responsive services that address both immediate survival needs and long-term stability. While the center prioritizes Indigenous community members, its services are open to anyone in need.

Despite the success of the program, funding remains a significant concern. The original city grant was projected to

cover one year of operations, a timeline that has now passed. The resource center has applied for additional grants, but leaders say long-term sustainability will likely require new funding sources to maintain staffing levels and services.

Safety concerns have also grown in recent weeks due to increased immigration enforcement activity in Minneapolis, including reports of detentions involving Indigenous community members. In response, the resource center has taken steps to protect guests and staff, including legal rights training and posting signage designating the facility as private property.

Leaders say the continued operation of the warming center is made possible through strong community partnerships, volunteer dedication and a shared commitment to collective care. As winter conditions persist, the center remains open through the weekend, continuing its role as a critical lifeline for people seeking warmth, safety and support.

For more information about the MIWRC, see: <https://www.miwrc.org>.

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