

Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth  
**Annual Minnesota Indian Health Service Trip**  
Locations: Leech Lake, Bois Forte, and Minneapolis  
March 13 – March 18, 2022



**Leech Lake (Bemidji):** Jeya Anandakumar, Annie Dionne, Constance Fontanet, Kaia Ordal, Helen Thomason

**Bois Forte:** Trevor Canty, Jewelia Durant, Kenneth Greco II, Phuong Pham, Akane Shu

**Minneapolis:** Rebekah Davis, Ian Lichtenstein, Jeffrey Nicol, Ishani Patel, Thomas Skipper, Kaavya Venkat

**Faculty Advisors:**

Shawn O’Leary, Director of the Office for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement  
Seelai Karzai, Coordinator of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement

*The trip was made possible by funding through the Geisel School of Medicine’s Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement*

## **Introduction**

This year, 9 first-year Geisel students and 7 TDI students embarked on a journey to Minnesoota for spring break. We spent time in Minneapolis with the urban Indian Community and visited the Leech Lake and Bois Forte reservations across northern Minnesota. The trip gave us a glimpse into Indian history, culture, and health and we would love to share our stories with the larger Dartmouth community.

## **Trip Goals**

- To listen, observe, and begin to understand the health care and social issues facing Native communities through direct personal interactions.
- To provide meaningful community service, developed in collaboration with community leaders.
- To share what we learn by raising awareness of these issues among our colleagues and peers at Dartmouth.

## **Curriculum**

The curriculum included the following Pre-Trip sessions:

- “Cultural Awareness in Native American Communities” by Shawn O’Leary, Director of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement
- “American Indian Spirituality and Traditional Healing Birthing Practices of the Anishinabe” by Dorene Day, Midwife and Fourth Degree Midewiwin
- Team Leech Lake presented on the Federally funded Indian Health Services
- Team Minneapolis presented resources and opportunities found in the Urban Indian Community.
- Team Bois Forte presented the history and culture and its impact on the health of the Bois Forte Community

Post-Trip, we had a structured group reflection, a community wide presentation and wrote up our personal reflections and trip report.

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**Team Leech Lake (Bemidji):** Jeya Anandakumar, Annie Dionne, Constance Fontanet, Kaia Ordal, Helen Thomason

## **Monday, March 14, 2022**

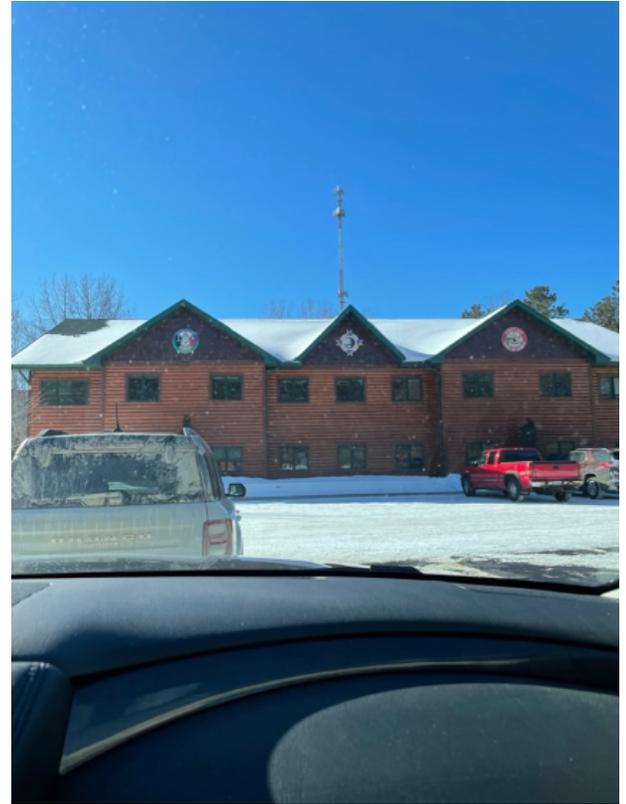
### Meet and Greet with the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe

On the first day, our team went to the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe office and met Billie Jo. At this meeting, we learned about the Tribal nation education systems and the new programs/changes that are being implemented. Billie also talked about curriculum review, student achievement, language revitalization, and teacher training. We also learned about the unique challenges that are faced by the tribal schools such as the fragmented education system

and stigma. In addition, we also discussed the history of educational institutions and boarding schools that were established to eliminate traditional Native American culture and replace it with mainstream American culture and their impact today.



Outside the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Office



### Community Dinner at Green Mill Restaurant

In the evening, we met with Shawn, his family, our host Cassie and her family, and Vince Rock. We had the opportunity to learn about some of the health care gaps that exist in the area from Cassie and Vince. Cassie works as a pediatrician in Bemidji and Vince is the Director of Nursing at the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Both of them described difficulties caring for patients due to limited social resources and provider shortages that were only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Tuesday, March 15, 2022**

#### Hands-On Activity at the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School

On Tuesday we visited the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School school where we presented to students on health careers and answered general questions about healthcare. We split up into three groups and presented to 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. There were about 20 kids per grade. In preparation for the visit, we worked with the school counselor, Jay Malchow, to plan a lesson that would best serve the students. We started by writing different health careers on the white board and asked students to describe any careers they recognized. We emphasized that there are many different health careers available in various settings, requiring different skill sets and education. Then we passed around a few different health measurement tools, such as blood pressure cuffs, tuning forks, ocular flashlights, and stethoscopes. We demonstrated how to use each tool, emphasizing the functional uses of each and how they are indicative of someone's health. We

then used the rest of the time to let the students try out the tools and ask any questions they had. At the end of the day, Jay gave us a tour of the school and we saw some of the ways the school included traditional Native teachings in their curriculum, such as their school drum and woodworking class. It was a privilege to meet with these students and I hope we as students, and Geisel as an institution, can further support Native students interested in medicine.



### Cass Lake IHS

During the afternoon, we visited the Cass Lake Indian Health Service (IHS) Hospital, which is owned and operated by the federal government. Natascha, a social worker, first gave us a tour of the facility. We learned that the hospital has largely moved away from inpatient services and primarily provides emergency and outpatient care. They have several ambulatory clinics that offer Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Laboratory, Radiology, Physical Therapy, Audiology, Podiatry, and Optometry services. We met Andrew Lankowicz, the hospital's Chief Executive Officer, and learned about his career path and why he chose to work at Cass Lake IHS. After the tour, we talked with a nurse about increasing rates of domestic violence among patients. She shared with us ways to recognize signs of domestic abuse and how best to open conversations about this with patients. In addition, we heard from a panel of 12 health care workers, including a physician, pharmacist, nurse, physical therapist, dentist, dental hygienist, social worker, and lab technician. Several of them are Commissioned Corps officers in the U.S. Public Health Service. It was interesting to learn how federal facilities allow for unique collaboration among different health care professionals. In particular, this collaboration allowed them to successfully roll out COVID-19 vaccination clinics to attain high vaccination rates among their patient population.



Kaia, Helen, Jeya, Constance, and Annie at Main Entrance of Cass Lake IHS

**Wednesday, March 16, 2022**

### Diabetes Clinic

One of us (Constance) spent time shadowing a nurse who grew up in Leech Lake and now works at the Diabetes clinic. Many patients with diabetes in the area have limited access to transportation, which has resulted in a home care program for diabetes. Many of the patients were being followed up on for wounds care related to diabetes complications and medication management. This experience showcased how difficult it can be for a patient to control their diabetes. However, home care programs allow for long-term follow-up that improves medication adherence, quality of care, and ultimately long-term health outcomes.

### MCH Clinic

A few of us spent time at the Maternal Child Health (MCH) clinic. We had the opportunity to shadow a nurse practitioner and sit in on several health visits. Transportation is a barrier for patients in the area and often leads to missed appointments. Several themes emerged during our visits, including the need for diabetes care, smoking cessation, alcohol use disorder treatment, and mental health care.

I (Jeya) spent the day shadowing a nurse who visited several patients in the Leech Lake community. This nurse specifically visited several geriatric patients who had a lack of access to transportation. In addition, a couple of these patients were bed-bound and had some form of mobility issues. This experience showed me the importance of being able to offer in-home care in providing the needed health services, especially for the elderly. While shadowing I observed the nurse taking vitals of the patients and providing them with advice that involved life-style changes. This experience taught me the importance of considering the patients' emotional and physical barriers, especially ones that come with aging.



MCH Clinic Main Entrance

Ball Club Clinic- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe I (Helen) spent the afternoon with a nurse practitioner and diabetes counselor at the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Ball Club Clinic in Deer River, MN, about 45 minutes outside of Bemidji. While there, I was able to appreciate differences between tribally-run clinics and IHS-run clinics. For example, the diabetes counselor was able to provide continuous glucose monitors for his patients because the tribal council approved a specific grant for this need after the Tribal Community Health Clinics conducted a trial study with their patients and noticed a significant health benefit when they used the CGMs. The diabetes counselor and nurse practitioner both echoed that they have been able to successfully advocate for their patients at a tribal-level to get resources like these CGMs or COVID vaccines. Some common needs that they expressed concern about for their patients include uncontrolled diabetes, obesity, unwanted teen pregnancy, domestic violence, and mental health. Please see the attached flier for an example of outreach campaigns the tribally-run clinics have implemented!

## Clinics on the Rez!

We have clinics located:

-Ball Club (218) 246-2394

-Inger (218) 659-2764

-Onigum (218) 547-0521

-Bena (218) 665-5303

-Bemidji (218) 333-8144

-Wadiswan The Nest (218) 335-8315

-Diabetes Center (218) 335-4511

Please feel free to contact one of the outlined clinics, hours may vary.



Inger Clinic.



NATIVE YOUTH CRISIS LINE  
SUICIDE PREVENTION

**1-877-209-1266**

**www.save.org**

**Phone: 218-335-8315**

**Fax: 218-335-4578**

NATIVE YOUTH CRISIS LINE  
SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Teen Clinic 12-19 yrs of age!

### Wadiswan "Nest"



**Health Division: (218) 335-4587**  
**Nest: (218) 335-8315**

## Services provided:

### -Sports physicals

Immunizations, health history, vision screening, blood pressure, height/weight, possible labs, and seen by a health care provider.



-Pregnancy tests- patient education, referrals, and more.

-Birth control- patient education on birth control options and education on abstinence.

-Sexual transmitted infections (STI/STD) testing and counseling.

-Pap smears-patient education on cervical screening and STI information.

**-All information is confidential!**

## Teen Health:

Yearly physical exams.

Dental exams every 6 months.

Physical activity-Walking 30mins a day, can help decrease the risk of diabetes!

Nutrition-Eat more fruits and vegetables and grains.



Get your immunizations! Even flu shots, helps you stay healthy.

### Live it!

Is a program developed in Minneapolis from the Division of

Indian Work. It is on Teen Pregnancy Prevention Youth Curriculum. The Health Division is going to be implementing this program at the ALC in Cass Lake. There are 11 lessons that take an holistic approach to teen health with a pre and post test.

-1 discusses the "Talking Circle" were we bring in an elder and learn what the circle means.

-2 we go over the "Stages of Life" from infant to elders.

-3 we discuss "Anatomy & puberty" at this lesson we break into two groups boys/girls.

-4 is "The Whole me" were we discuss spirit, body, mind, and heart.

-5 "Healthy relationships" the group identifies aspects of a relationships.

-6 "Stress" how to handle stress and healthy ways to relieve stress.

-7 "Decision-Making" healthy methods and aspects related to sexual activity.

-8 "Communication" learn ways to communicate, how to be assertive (Strong) vs. passive (shy) and aggressive (bossy).

-9 "Cost-of-living" learn how much it cost to raise a family.

-10 "The Risk Factors" learn how to identify at-risk behaviors and learn ways to avoid those behaviors.

-11 "Wrap-up" were we tie everything together.

If you are interested in this program, please feel free to contact the Health Division at (218) 335-4500 and ask for the Nursing department.

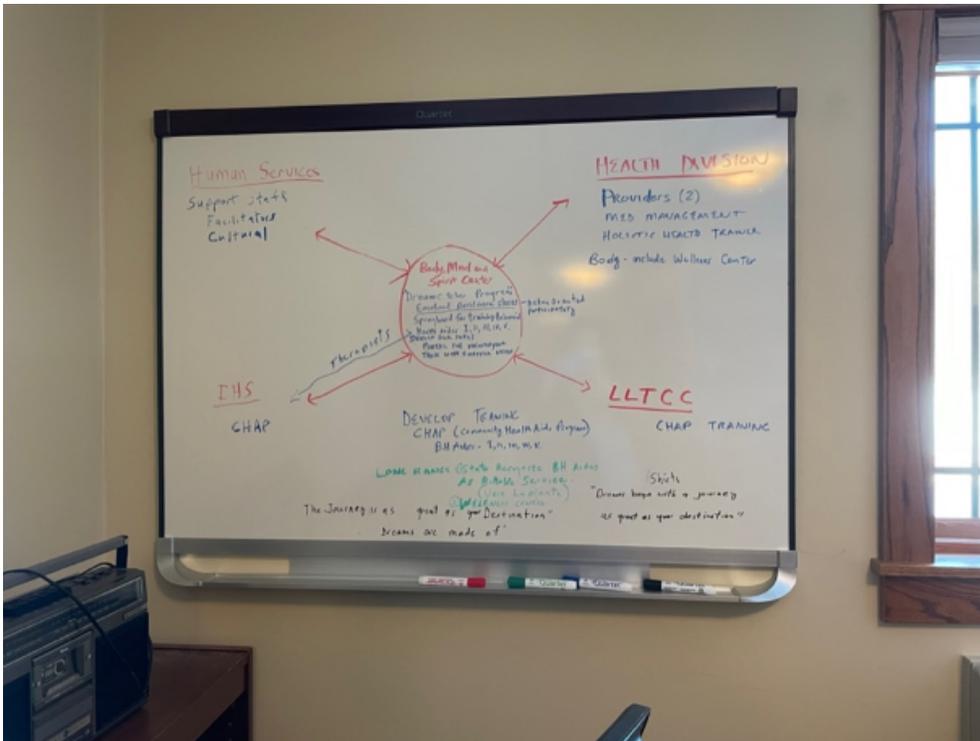
NATIVE YOUTH CRISIS LINE  
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**www. SAVE.org**



Poster at Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Health Division



Vision Board for a Future Body, Mind & Spirit Center



Visiting the Leech Lake Band Office in Bemidji to express our gratitude



View of Lake Bemidji

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**Team Bois Forte:** Trevor Canty, Jewelia Durant, Kenneth Greco II, Phuong Pham, Akane Shu

**Monday, March 14th, 2022**

We had an early morning after a long car ride on Sunday night to Bois Forte. From the Oveson Pelican Lake Resort that offered us a beautiful view of Pelican Lake, we drove around thirty minutes to the Nett Lake clinic for a day of clinical shadowing.

First, we met with Pam Parson to get trained in HIPAA compliance, and while HIPAA is something most of us were intimately familiar with as medical students and public health students, we did learn something new: HIPAA was actually signed into law as recently as 1996! Private health information is definitely not something to take for granted. We also importantly learned that the Nett Lake Clinic is funded by Indian Health Services (IHS), which is an integral part of understanding the administration of health care on any Native American reservation.

Next, we rotated around the clinic, shadowing various areas. We spoke with the dentist on site largely about how the clinic was funded and operated, as well as why he chose to work at Nett Lake. Beyond conversation, we were able to see several different dental procedures, including a root canal—things many of us may not see firsthand again, as none of us are aspiring dentists.

We also got to shadow in the pharmacy. The clinic is small, and having the pharmacy on site is quite useful for patients and providers alike. It was edifying to see how orders were received in the system and the different steps it took to get a prescription from the order to the patient's hands.

We went to the C-store for lunch, which is a gas station with some food options. We even got to eat in the conference room as honorary employees for the day!

Though we learned a lot about lab tests in our Hematology and Infectious Disease courses, most of us had not spent any appreciable amount of time in a lab—that is, until Bois Forte! Many of us witnessed our first real CBC after spending a large amount of time analyzing hemoglobin levels and neutrophil counts in practice questions at school.

Finally, we were able to shadow a family medicine physician, Dr. Shanna Vidor, in two visits. These were extremely rewarding experiences, not only in clinical reasoning and application of what we had been learning in the classroom, but also in human connection. Different social cues are used in Native American culture, as a general rule, such as avoiding eye contact being a sign of respect rather than one of disinterest. This was something we had read about previously as a group in the book *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear* by Dr. Lori Arviso Alvord, and despite Dr. Alvord being a member of the Navajo nation, we heard the same sentiment echoed by the Dr. Vidor at Nett Lake. Clearly, not all social cues are shared by the different Native American

tribes, but it was useful to come away from that encounter with a practical piece of knowledge for our future medical practice.

After the day at clinic ended, we went back to Pelican Lake to rest and recover.

## **Tuesday, March 15th, 2022**

On Tuesday morning we first headed to the Tribal Government Center where we were first greeted by Tribal Chairwoman, Cathay Chavers. The building was beautifully decorated with art from Tribal members that conveyed stories of Bois Forte's history and rich spiritual connection. Throughout our tour of the building, it was evident that there was a lot of exciting growth happening within the Bois Forte community, and that they were making room for new employees within nearly every department working within the Tribal Government Center.

After the tour, we sat in the event room, which, at that moment, was in the process of being prepared for the coming weekend's Powwow (which we are still sad we could not be there for!). In the event room we were joined by other tribal council members, including David Morrison Sr., Travis Morrison, Robbie Goggleye and Shane Drift where we discussed important topics such as the changing social environment on the reservation. Council members shared that house parties and social drinking are becoming far less commonplace compared to when they were younger, which they felt to be a positive shift in social dynamics of the younger generation.

We also heard about the really exciting opportunities that sports have been able to provide for kids on the reservation. Travis and Robbie shared their stories as coaches for the local youth basketball team, explaining that basketball served as a lot more than just a game for many of the kids on the reservation. Being a part of the basketball team required students to keep grades up and challenged the players to find the discipline and balance to work hard both in the classroom and on the court. The team also served as a safety net for some students with challenging home lives, and gave an opportunity to find role models within the community to help guide them, such as their coaches, Robbie and Travis.

Towards the end of our conversations, we were so kindly gifted our first bag of Bois Forte wild rice! As a side note- I have to say that after coming home and making this rice... I've realized that nothing I can purchase in the grocery stores around here will ever compare, and I will need to find a way to stock up on Bois Forte wild rice (hopefully financial aid will support me in this endeavor).

After saying goodbye to the Tribal Council, we then headed to meet Shawn, his father and his cousin Woody for lunch.



Following lunch we headed to a tour of the Bois Forte Cultural Museum. Within the cultural museum, we began our tour at the migration map exhibit where we were told the stories of how and why the Bois Forte people made their way to Minnesota/Great Lakes Region from the east coast. In front of the migration map was also a canoe with sticks where we learned about the technical aspects/specifics of the wild rice harvesting process.

We also saw exhibits that showed early housing, boarding school impacts, traditional games and dress, as well as an exhibit dedicated to Bois Forte veterans. The cultural museum was really helpful to gain important historical context into Bois Forte and Ojibwe culture.

To wrap up our evening, we met Shawn and his cousin for dinner, where many of us got to try Walleye for the first time!

### **Wednesday, March 16th, 2022**

On Wednesday afternoon, we drove to Nett Lake and met with four employees from the Healing with Wellness-Substance Use Program. We were warmly welcomed by a hand-cooked

meal and bright smiles from the staff members. During our conversation, we learned about the factors that contribute to the increased risk of addiction among Native Americans including historical trauma, poverty, high levels of unemployment, and low levels of attained education. Moreover, we learned that cultural identity and spirituality are important factors for Native Americans seeking help for substance abuse, and these individuals may experience better outcomes when traditional healing approaches (such as powwows and drum circles) are incorporated into treatment programs. In particular, Cathy, the spiritual counselor, shared with us first-hand knowledge of the teaching values of the Ojibwe that were passed down from her elders and how she uses these teachings to develop a meaningful relationship with her patients. Before we departed, the staff members gave us shirts, cups, organic teas, wild rice, and notebooks. Their kindness will be remembered by us for years to come.

### **Thursday, March 17th, 2022**

On our last day of the trip, we started our day off with a visit to the food distribution program in Bois Forte, where Wendy Zika gave the team a tour of the facility. The program provides USDA Foods to help residents on Indian Reservations maintain a nutritionally balanced diet, given the challenges in accessing grocery in rural MN. Even after spending a week in northern MN, we felt the impact of lack of access to healthy food options, having to drive half an hour each way to the closest grocery store stocking up potato soups, so we could see how residents on the reservation, many of whom do not own a vehicle and often have to carpool and plan for grocery trips, could benefit from the program.

We were pleasantly surprised by the food distribution program, which offers as many as 100 products, many of which are low in sodium, fat, and sugar. Participants can choose several items from each category in the food catalog, including fresh and canned fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and other kitchen essentials. Those from income eligible households residing on a reservation, including both Indians with one member of Federally Recognized Tribe, as well as non-Indian households residing on a reservation, are eligible to participate.

We got to spend some time with the staff, who shared personal journeys that led to their roles on the reservation. We learned through these personal stories the aftermath of the boarding school era, when Native American children were adopted by non-Native families away from the reservation, and some eventually found their way back to the reservation to reconnect with their language, faith, and culture.

Next, we visited the Behavioral Health unit of the Human and Health Services, where Melissa Wright, the director of the program, talked with us about her role and responsibilities, the operation, challenges and needs of the program. Like every health program on the reservation, the mental health care team in Bois Forte faces the challenge of provider shortage, particularly highlighted by cultural challenges that need to be overcome serving the tribal community, where practitioners need to be especially culturally competent about the generational and historical traumas faced by Native American communities. We learned about how the staff

strive to meet the needs of the community, aiming to destigmatize mental healthcare and change the community's, especially elders', perceptions of mental health.

To wrap up our trip, we visited the Nett Lake Food Shelf. Similar to the tour at the Food Distribution Program, the director of the Food Shelf, Danielle Porter, kindly gave us a tour and an overview of its operation, and we were able to stay for a while and help with loading and assembling food shelves before driving back to Minneapolis, where we reconvened with the other two teams to share what we learned from our time in Bois Forte.



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**Team Minneapolis:** Rebekah Davis, Ian Litchenstein, Jeffrey Nicol, Ishani Patel, Thomas Skipper, Kaavya Venkat

### **Monday 03/14**

#### *Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center*

We started off our trip by visiting the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center. This was the perfect first stop as we were fortunate enough to talk to Marisa Miakonda Cummings and receive a detailed presentation about the Ojibwe tribe, American colonization and long lasting effects, and her family history in the Midwest. Marisa was a great resource as she was able to give insight regarding other Native organizations we should learn more about during our time in Minneapolis. Her impact on Native urban health is driven by root-causes of disparities, and she is able to maintain a culturally sensitive approach to the work and services provided.



The Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC) is a non-profit social and mental health services organization dedicated to Native women and their families. MIWRC offers a wide range of programs aimed at educating and empowering Native women and their families, as well as informing and assisting those who work in the community. Programs are designed to address issues that have a significant impact on well-being. Support includes family services, affordable housing, chemical dependency, mental health care, cultural resilience and healing, and other family and community issues.

*Richard Wright (Indian Health Board of Minneapolis)*

Our next stop was to the Indian Health Board (IHB) of Minneapolis where we met Richard Wright. Richard Wright is an Ojibwe elder in residence at the IHB. He did a blessing for our group and talked to us about substance use issues within the Native community. He emphasized IHB's mission to serve as a healing center for the community and how he has brought awareness and guidance regarding alcohol/substance use. Richard took us down memory lane and shared meaningful stories about his childhood and upbringing, and we were able to ask him questions about his experience and goals with restoring Native American health and wellbeing.



### *George Floyd Square*

We then decided to make a stop at the [George Floyd Square](#) to see the memorial in the area. This area is very meaningful to Minneapolis as it sparked larger conversations and movements for Black Lives Matter (BLM). This square exists to preserve stories of resistance, racial injustice while curating spaces for all people to grieve, pay respect, and be a voice for justice. The vision was to bring community development in Minneapolis and inspire people to pursue racial justice around the world. It was a moving experience that emphasizes current struggles of people of color in our divided country. As future healthcare professionals, we must remember that it is our responsibility to provide culturally sensitive care that extends beyond superficial diversity and inclusion efforts. Understanding the root causes of injustice and making room for equity can pave the way for a future of sustainable solutions and improved well-being for marginalized communities.



### *Minneapolis Central Library*

As our final stop for the day, we decided to explore the city, and we were able to check out the [Minneapolis Central Library](#)! It was a lot of fun to see how Minneapolis upholds libraries as they are fundamental gateways in society to knowledge and culture. The library consisted of five floors, each following a different theme ranging from art, history, and music. This is definitely a place to check out!



## Tuesday 03/15

### *Native American Community Clinic*

We started our second full day in Minneapolis in the heart of the Indian Corridor at the Native American Community Clinic (NACC). The talented President Dr. Antony Stately met us and generously gave us a comprehensive tour of the facility. We met physicians and nurses and administrative staff, most of whom were native, and discussed what makes NACC special and central to the community. They are deeply committed to incorporating traditional practices, spirituality, and healing to provide holistic care for the native families they serve. A recurring theme on the trip was that engaging with Native American culture and spirituality is a crucial remedy for physical, mental, and behavioral health. For example, NACC had traditional tobacco, sage, and sweetgrass stations to help with smudging. They also responded to a community need and created a comfortable space for individuals recovering from substance abuse to work, hang out, and bring their families.



### *All My Relations Gallery*

We walked across the street to All My Relations Art Gallery, housed in the same building as Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) and Pow Wow Grounds restaurant. We were lucky to talk with curators and local artist Angela Two Stars, who currently has a sculpture on display in the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. While discussing the history of the gallery, we heard about the featured artist Steven Premo, a native artist with mixed media work ranging from photography to paintings to traditional native beadwork. The gallery has helped kickstart the creative careers of many local and native artists including Angela Two Stars herself.

### *Native American Community Development Institute*

Within the gallery, we next met with Mr. Robert Lilligren, the CEO of NACDI and former Minneapolis City Council Member. He is a member of the White Earth band of Ojibwe, was elected in 2001 to be the first native Council Member, and represented a crucial perspective from which to learn about the history and vision of NACDI. He espoused the pragmatic approach of NACDI in driving community development through native business ownership, voting campaigns, and census advocacy.



### *Indian Health Board*

Our final stop of the day was the Indian Health Board (IHB) of Minneapolis, a community clinic providing high-quality medical, dental, and counseling services for the native community. Dr. Angie Erdrich, a long-time friend of the program and facilitator of many of our trip activities, works as a physician at the IHB and showed us around the clinic. After our tour, we helped assemble “Snag Bags” with Delilah Robb, Health Program Supervisor and community educator at the IHB. Snag Bags are full of condoms, lube, and literature, and are designed to promote sexual health and safe sex for native youth in the community. We also helped assemble literature packets with facts about disparities in cancer outcomes among natives. The final conversation of the day was with Dr. Andre Peri, a clinical psychologist. We talked with him about behavioral health, providing mental health care for natives, and working at the IHB as a non-native provider.



**Wednesday 03/16**

*American Indian Cancer Foundation*

We visited the American Indian Cancer Foundation on Wednesday morning to hear a presentation by Wyatt Pickner: a speaker some might recognize from Dartmouth's MLK Health Equity Celebration. Our discussion centered around the various health disparities that Native Americans face when it comes to cancer. Native American incidences of lung cancer are disproportionately high when compared to non-hispanic whites. We discussed the role that tobacco plays in lung cancer risk, and why this is often an important discussion between providers and patients given the sacredness of tobacco in Native ceremonies and culture. Wyatt explained that Native tobacco contains considerably less carcinogens than commercial tobacco, but Native Americans were forbidden to smoke their own tobacco for decades leading to addiction and negative health outcomes. The American Indian Cancer Foundation seeks to mitigate some of the disproportionate burden of cancer on the Native community primarily through community research, outreach, and education. They develop and distribute infographics with pertinent information on risk factors, screening, and food as medicine.



*Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC)*

After going through a lovely presentation with Wyatt at the American Indian Cancer Foundation, we drove over to Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community around noon to learn more about the culture and history of Native American people. We started our time there with a tour. We met with the medical director and a public health personnel who took us on a 2 hour long tour to see the different facilities they have for the people there. They told us about how they started with just a small community clinic and now have grown to include services such as health coaching, mammograms, urgent care, physical therapy, acupuncture, medical massages, blood glucose and blood pressure checks, immunizations, nutrition education, tobacco cessation and weight-loss support, dental hygiene and oral cancer screening, orthodontics, prescriptions and annual eye exams. They have a collection of clinics and providers, such as Integrative Health, Mystic Clinic, Shakopee Dakota Medical Clinic, Shakopee Dakota Dental Clinic, the SMSC Vision Clinic, the SMSC



Pharmacy, the SMSC Mobile Unit, and visiting specialists. After visiting all of the clinics and meeting several specialists, we were taken to a local shop to try meals made from Wild rice.



Following our short break, we met with Will Crawford who is a Dakota Language Instructor. He gave us a presentation about the Dakota language and even taught us how to say a few things as well. For example, cin means to want and wacin means I want. After our short lesson, we played fun games to help us practice what we had learned. Moving forward with our day, Will took us to his classroom where he sang us a traditional Native American song. One of the students set the beat with the drums and two other students used a tambourine and shaker to support the tune. As Will continued to sing, a few of the students played some traditional Native American games as well.



After learning a bit about their language and culture, Will took us to the Shakopee Museum where we learned about Native American history. What started out as a cheerful journey through the museum ended up as a saddening experience as we learned about the different treaties that were signed, stripping away their land. Hearing about their stories as they assimilated into the modern community taught us a lot about how privileged we are. Our pain did not compare to that the Natives had gone through. As we continued to walk through the museum, we got to

crawl into Tipis, look at tribal beadwork, and feel the different furs that they used for clothing and their homes. Overall this experience was one of our favorites on this trip. Being able to experience their lives before the foreigners came to America and then transition over the years to how they live now, barely able to practice their culture and with only a few members who can even speak their native tongue, it was truly impactful.



### *Minnehaha Falls*

With an hour to spare, we decided to travel down to Minnehaha Falls where we walked around the waterfall, admiring its beauty. We got to reflect on everything we had learned and really open up to one another about how we felt after hearing about their history. Some of the students also climbed the falls to a hidden ice cave and then facetimed the rest of the group so that we all could experience how beautiful the place truly was.



**Thursday 03/17**

*Minneapolis Sculpture Garden*

We started out our last day at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, where we got to enjoy local Minneapolis artist works. We paid special attention to Okciyapi, which means “help each other”, in Dakota. The sculpture is a reflection of how Native language is connected with the identity of the tribe. The artist Angela Two Stars, who we were lucky enough to meet earlier in our trip, told us about the controversy surrounding the site of the sculpture. The Gallows sculpture, which represented the murder of 38 Dakota men in 1892, was removed from the garden due to advocacy from the community. Angela is the first Native artist to have work featured in the Walker Art Center and it was inspiring to hear her process of creating the art.



*Pow-wow Grounds*

For lunch, we headed back to Pow-wow Grounds to finally try the famous Indian Tacos we had been hearing about all week. Local chef Bob Rice did not disappoint with his massive Fry Bread shell, filled with meat, sour cream, cheese, and vegetables.

*Birch Bark Books*

We then visited [Birch Bark Books](#), a Native-owned independent bookstore. The store was founded by famed author Louise Erdich, part of the Anishinaabe tribe, whose books feature Native characters and settings. She recently released a novel, *The Sentence*, that takes place at the bookstore and features many of the community members we were able to meet!



### *Virtual Reality Spirit Walk*

Toward the end of the afternoon, we met up with Angie Erdich, who joined us on a [Virtual Reality Dakota Spirit Walk](#). We used an app to interact with the environment and learn about the spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous Peoples who previously inhabited the land. Angie knew the artist who created the activity, Marlena Myles, and we were able to Facetime with her while on the walk.



### *Owamni*

We were extremely excited to go to [Owamni](#), an upscale, Native-owned restaurant that serves variations on traditional Dakota cuisine, made from ingredients purchased from Indigenous sellers. The other two groups joined us for dinner and it was fascinating to hear about their experiences with other tribes. Some of us ventured out of our comfort zone and tried dried crickets!



After our week getting to know the Minneapolis Indigenous community, it was hard to say goodbye. However, we learned so much from the tribal advocacy leaders we met with and were inspired by their commitment to serving their community. As future healthcare providers, hearing about the experiences of people historically ignored by the medical community was thought-provoking and will leave an impression on us all.

