



Culture Fest Connects Community, Culture, and Healing at Turtle Mountain College

By Dawn Dionne
TMC Press Relations

TURTLE MOUNTAIN - Culture Fest kicked off to a strong and meaningful start on April 8, 2026, at Turtle Mountain College, as Dr. Dan encouraged the audience to sit close and fully experience the day's events. The gathering reflected a soft, educational tone rooted in community, culture, and shared learning.

The event began with JT Shining-Oneside providing a beautiful entry with prayer, setting a respectful and reflective atmosphere. The audience was further honored with a song by the Siipiising Drum Group, grounding the day in cultural tradition and unity.

Dr. Wanda Parisien offered a warm welcome, sharing Turtle Mountain College's mission and connecting it to student enrollment and college life. Reflecting on her first year as president, Dr. Parisien spoke about the 43 years she has dedicated to the organization and how excited she remains as graduation approaches on May 15. She expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to serve her community in such an important way.

Dr. Parisien also encouraged attendees to explore the history displayed throughout the walls of TMC, a project led by Les LaFountain in recent years. She invited guests to visit the local bookstore featuring handmade jewelry by local artists and to take time to view the artwork displayed across campus. She concluded by thanking the audience for their dedication to Turtle Mountain College and for maintaining strong connections that allow collaboration to flourish.

Before introducing Alex Morin, Turtle Mountain College's Curator/Archivist, Dr. Dan then shared personal insights from the book *Who Am I*, written by Les LaFountain, Oris Richard, and Scott Belgarde and the importance it has on discovering our culture and understanding who we are through books, art and preserving our stories through artifacts.

Morin began by reflecting on how he entered the field of archives. Nearly three years ago, while attending classes at Turtle Mountain College, he sought advice from instructor Les LaFountain about finding work on campus. At the time, Morin was discovering Turtle Mountain history in his coursework, and LaFountain shared the need for support in the archives department. Approximately ten years had passed since someone had filled the role of curating and preserving the history and culture of the Turtle Mountains.

Morin candidly shared that he initially lacked interest in the position but quickly discovered a passion for the work. Shortly after he began, a team from the Smithsonian traveled from Washington, D.C., to Turtle Mountain College to provide training and guidance, helping him develop his expertise. In closing, Morin shared his excitement that UND is working with all Tribal Colleges on gaming funding to support continued archival and cultural preservation work in Indian Country.

Dr. Dan continued by sharing inspiring words about local leaders, including Carol Ann Davis, Carty Monette, and others whose contributions continue to strengthen the Turtle Mountain community. He noted that Turtle Mountain holds one of the largest numbers of tribal mem-

bers with doctoral degrees, highlighting a powerful commitment to education and leadership.

Among those recognized was Dr. Ramona Klein, honored in the Hall of Fame. Dr. Klein holds a doctorate in education with a focus on educational leadership and has dedicated her career to tribal education and advocacy. She later connected with her mentee, Ruben Flores, and together they created a documentary discussing boarding school survivors, preserving stories that must be remembered. Dr. Klein acknowledged the support of her husband, who often assists her in presentations, helping share these experiences with audiences across the nation.

During the event, the audience was asked if anyone had personally attended boarding school. No hands were raised. However, when asked if they knew someone who had attended, many hands went up. The quiet response reflected the deep and widespread impact of boarding schools within families and communities. Audience members shared stories of relatives who experienced loneliness, abuse, disrespect, hunger, and cultural loss. The room sat in quiet understanding as each experience was acknowledged.

Dr. Klein shared her own journey, explaining her initial hesitation when author Denise Lajimodiere approached her to contribute oral stories reflecting the history of boarding school. She questioned whether she should share such traumatic experiences and attach her name to them. Initially declining out of shame and humiliation, she later found the courage to call back and agree, a moment she described as healing and empowering.

She recalled leaving Belcourt

at just seven years old on a big green bus bound for boarding school in Fort Totten, North Dakota. Dr. Klein described the losses and suffering she endured, including traumatic daily routines. She contrasted these experiences with bath time at home in Belcourt, where she shared one bath with siblings, youngest to oldest.

Using props, she walked the audience through her memories, holding a medium-sized green bus symbolizing her journey. She also shared a conversation with a fellow survivor who later joined the military and described boot camp as easier than boarding school, prompting audible reactions from the audience.

Despite hardship, Dr. Klein highlighted moments of kindness. Her first-grade teacher, Thelma Dags, gave her crackers with peanut butter, a cherished memory. She later gifted her a game of jacks, the first present she had ever received. Dr. Klein also earned a dollar helping her teacher and proudly purchased small gifts for her family.

She demonstrated how she once used an old green military blanket to create static electricity for fun, recalling being scolded for laughing. Through years of abuse and humiliation, she repeated a phrase that carried her forward: "You will not get the best of me." For decades, she did not cry, holding strength as a survival tool.

Her storytelling reached all ages, especially younger audience members, through visual props and demonstrations. She described using oversized hands during testimony to Congress to represent how overwhelming and frightening nights at boarding school felt. She also shared a later moment of healing while watching an animated movie



Dr. Wanda Parisien



Dr. Dan Henry

with children, realizing she had missed simple childhood experiences. Today, she finds comfort in her colorful blanket, symbolizing hope and healing.

After her presentation, Dr. Dan connected her resilience to the Seven Teachings: courage, honesty, humility, wisdom, love, respect, and truth. The moment resonated deeply with those in attendance.

Dr. Klein's presentation was more than storytelling—it was a powerful act of reclaiming voice, honoring survival, and fostering healing. Her courage opened space for reflection and understanding, leaving the audience inspired.

JT Shining-Oneside later presented on Ojibwe Teachings, sharing stories of culture, spiritual names, and her personal journey. She spoke about how she implements these teachings with her students, emphasizing inclusion, respect, and community connection. Through clapping and shared participation, she demonstrated traditional communication and connection practices.

Ashley Morin and Ruben

Flores presented on Mexican culture, providing food and a detailed presentation addressing questions, bias, and traditions. They prepared fresh tamales as part of their demonstration, creating an engaging cultural learning experience.

The final presentation featured Eastern Indian Culture by Ananth Ramasari Chandra and Ishan Shah. They shared traditions, foods, and cultural experiences with the Culture Fest audience. Their presentation included sweet desserts and cultural dishes, adding to the educational experience. Both presenters were recognized for their work building connections with students and providing innovative educational opportunities unique to Turtle Mountain College.

Culture Fest concluded as a meaningful day of shared stories, education, and cultural exchange. The event highlighted the importance of honoring history, celebrating diversity, and strengthening community connections—values that continue to guide Turtle Mountain College.

DATEBOOK cont.
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Forks
By Dr. Steve Hoffbeck

April 22, 2026 – World War I transformed airplanes from a novelty into a deadly weapon. Pilots served as aerial scouts at first and then challenged enemy planes in airborne combat, in "dogfights" between fighter planes; and later in bombing runs against cities and troop positions.

On this date in 1919, the city of Grand Forks hosted an air show featuring the most deadly planes from the recently concluded war in Europe. Direct from France came the Spad fighter; from England came S.E. 5s; from America, the colorfully painted Curtis, and rounding out the show, captured German Fokker fighters with huge black Iron Cross markings.

The U.S. government had authorized this "Flying Circus" nationwide tour of planes piloted by American and British pilots in order to sell Victory Liberty Bonds even though the war had ended in November 1918.

The scene on a cloudy April morning was an improvised airfield at J.D. Bacon's expansive farm, the Lilac Hedge Farm. Mr. Bacon's son, Jerry Myron Bacon, had served as a pilot in the war.

The planes arrived in crates on fourteen railway cars in the morning's earliest light. Mechanics scurried to assemble the planes, and pilots scrambled to get airborne for practice flights in the forenoon.

Children and adults alike thrilled to see mechanics wind the propellers; to hear the engines as they "began their thundering whirr" and to witness the fighter pilots ascend gracefully toward the clouds to swoop through the skies above Grand Forks.

Viewers marveled as the pilots put each aircraft through its repertoire of acrobatics. As a Grand Forks Herald reporter wrote, there were "tail spins, nose dives, the 'Immelman' [a loop and half-roll], drops, circles, loop the loops and almost every conceivable" maneuver, that a "high-powered war machine of the air" was "capable of producing." And that was just the morning practices.

The real show began at 1:30, and the first flights featured simulated dogfights with ace pilots

showing the spins and counter-moves of war. One pilot took the first aerial photographs of Grand Forks, while another scattered Victory Bond leaflets on homes and neighborhoods.

Alas, April showers put a damper on the flights and the show's director had to call off the show, much to the disappointment of the citizens. The Flying Circus packed up and hauled the fighters and fighter pilots to the next stop, at Fargo.

Yet, on that April day in 1919, the technology of modern war came to Grand Forks without the agonies of that world war. The pilots flew without the spray of bullets; and the spectators watched in safety on the grounds of J.D. Bacon's farm.

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Vanities
By Steve Stark

April 23, 2026 – North Dakota was poised to play a game of chance and change on this date in 1977. "Bingo – It's legal in North Dakota" read the lead sentence of *The Forum* in Fargo. As Saturday began at the stroke of Midnight, legal charity gambling began for the first time in North Dakota's history.

Gambling was certainly not new to the history of government. In 1775, America's earliest days, there was a lottery that raised money for the colonial army. Two hundred and two years later, gambling as revenue came to North Dakota.

North Dakotans in favor of the legislation argued that gambling could serve as a new method to increase voluntary taxation as other states had found in the 1960s and 1970s.

The inauguration had not come without controversy or concessions. The new gaming laws were limited to "public spirited organizations" that included civic, religious, educational and fraternal groups. These entities could now conduct games of chance that included raffles, tip jars, punchboards and the aforementioned bingo. No cards or video gaming machines were included. The generated net proceeds for each new enterprise were to be designated for "public-spirited, charitable causes."

The launch of gambling was not without its opposition – even from the highest office in the state. Governor Art Link, no supporter of the bill, had allowed it to become law without his signature. Link announced the day before his decision to let the bill slide into law.

With that news, a mass of would-be licensees headed to Bismarck the Friday before the law would take effect. Elks, Eagles and Moose stampeded to the attorney general's office at the Capitol. Fifty eager organizations were granted licenses that day. The first went to Minot VFW Post 753.

Flooded with gaming license applicants, assistant attorney general Dale Sandstrom's office worked extended hours. The newspaper reported that "from then on, Sandstrom was a man on the run." One of his secretaries reported, "I think the phone's grown into his ear today." Sandstrom said his office had relied on the governor's word and was therefore legally secure in issuing the licenses the day before the law took effect.

In the years since, the state's gaming has had successes and taken hits. But nothing can quite compare to the excitement at its introduction in 1977.

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Settling The West
By Dr. Carole Butcher

April 24, 2026 – In the early 1800s, the government had to figure out what to do with people already claiming land in the West. On this date in 1820, Congress passed the Land Act, allowing settlers to purchase the land they had claimed. They could buy 160 acres at \$1.25 per acre. The Land Act made it possible for people of modest means to purchase land and settle down. It also marked the beginning of an organized effort to settle the West.

It was a good deal for speculators too – those with plenty of money could buy low-cost land and resell it at higher prices. But it was not good for Native Americans. The Act increased the confiscation of their land and raised the chances of conflict between the original inhabitants

and the European-American newcomers.

The Homestead Act of 1862 is perhaps the best-known government effort to promote western settlement. The Act allowed any citizen or intended citizen who had never taken up arms against the U.S. government to claim 160 acres of land. Original filers who lived on the land for five years and improved it could claim the property for a small filing fee. The Homestead Act spurred westward expansion and helped settle the Great Plains.

But when those settlers arrived, they found that some adventurous souls had already set up housekeeping thanks to the Land Act of 1820.

Also, in 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act. It gave each state a minimum of 90,000 acres of land to sell. The money was used to establish colleges focused on engineering, agriculture, and military science. North Dakota Agricultural College, now North Dakota State University, was established in Fargo as the state's land-grant college.

Other land acts followed. The Timber Culture Act of 1874 encouraged homesteading and tree planting. Homesteaders who occupied their land for three years, with at least one acre devoted to trees, were eligible to receive a land patent. Civil War veterans could also claim 160 acres.

The United States began as a country perched on the Atlantic seaboard. But by 1840, forty percent of the population lived in the trans-Appalachian West. The land acts passed by the federal government helped drive that continued westward movement.

"*Dakota Datebook*" is a radio series from *Prairie Public* in partnership with the *State Historical Society of North Dakota* and with funding from the *North Dakota Humanities Council*. See all the *Dakota Datebooks* at prairiepublic.org, subscribe to the "*Dakota Datebook*" podcast, or buy the *Dakota Datebook* book at shop-prairiepublic.org.



**Turtle Mountain
Band of Chippewa Indians**
P. O. Box 900 - Belcourt, ND 58316

Request for Proposals (RFP) For Professional Services Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Project Management and Environmental Brownfields Tribal Response Programs are hereby soliciting Qualifications, Experience and Bids from qualified consultant ("Consultant") firms to provide remediation and disposal services in relation to the Azure's Store Underground Storage Tank Removal. The project is being funded under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) grants and all Tribal and Federal laws, standards and requirements must be met. Must include 3% TERO Fee to bid of \$10,000.00 or more, also include 1% EPA Fee. Selection criteria will include appropriate certification and experience, cost estimates, timeline commitments and anything that is beneficial to the Tribe. Preference will be given to qualified Indian Owned Firms. Sealed written proposal(s) and bids in response to this RFP must be received or postmarked by **May 30th, 2026**. Proposals received after this date will not be considered. Proposals can be hand delivered, courier service, or by mail. No email or faxed bids will be accepted. Please deliver two [2] copies of this proposal to:

Allan Malaterre
Director, Turtle Mountain Property and Supply
P.O. Box 900
4180 Highway 281
Belcourt, ND 58316
701 477- 2635
allan.malaterre@tmbci.org

Project Contact: Questions about the project and requests for copies of the RFP, maps and relevant documents; or to schedule a site tour should be directed to the Project Contact:

Philip Lenoir
Brownfields Tribal Response Program Coordinator,
TMBCI-EPA
PO Box 900
1308 Ogema Road (Transportation building)
Belcourt, ND 58316
(701 477-8339 work
xavierp72@outlook.com

A pre-bid submittal meeting is scheduled **May 20th, 2026 at 10:00 am** at the Tribal Transportation Building, 1308 Ogema Road, Belcourt, ND. Site visits will follow the meeting. Further information on this meeting and site visits may be obtained by contacting Mr. Philip Lenoir, whose contact information is listed above.

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians reserves the right to reject any or all proposals/bids and to waive irregularities and informalities.