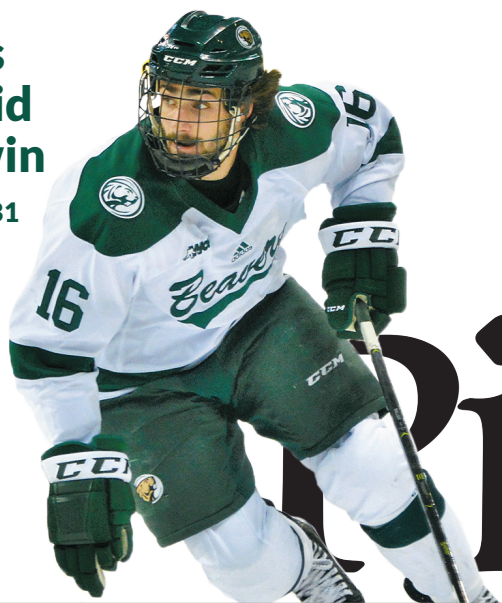


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Sports, Page B1

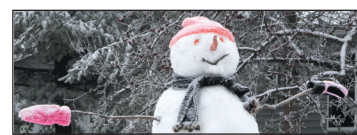


Sunday

November 25, 2018

The Bemidji Pioneer

Today's forecast



High 15° Low 4°
Weather, Page A2



The spirit of LANGUAGE

Red Lake educators envision a K-12 language immersion track

Above: From left: Celia Defoe, Braxton Zamora, Sophia Charwood and Marcell Lussier pass around a tobacco tie in class on Tuesday morning at Red Lake Elementary School. **Right:** Anna "Swan" Sherwood talks to Red Lake first-graders about a tobacco tie on Wednesday morning.

Photos by
Jillian Gandsey /
Bemidji Pioneer



By Joe Bowen
jbowen@bemidjipioneer.com
Red Lake

A cluster of first-graders watched as Anna "Swan" Sherwood held up a yellow tobacco tie.

"Have you ever seen a little yellow bird? A little ozaawaa?" asked Sherwood, an Ojibwe speaking and culture co-teacher at Red Lake Elementary. "There's a little yellow bird, it's called a finch."

Students passed the tie to one another, careful to use manaa'ijiwiwin — "respect" — as they handled it.

"We're using our manaa'ijiwiwin to help

remember the special spirit of our language ... it's here to help us," Sherwood said. "Boys and girls, did you know that?"

LANGUAGE: Page A7

A shelter in need of community support

Crisis shelter hopes to showcase operation at work during open house

By Matthew Liedke
mliedke@bemidjipioneer.com

BEMIDJI — Evergreen Youth and Family Services is opening its doors this week to showcase to the public what it does to help the people in the community.

The Evergreen crisis shelter

on Mississippi Avenue will hold an open house, providing an opportunity to see the operation at work.

Dan McKeon, Evergreen executive director, said the event is part of the nonprofit's outreach effort to garner community support. The push comes after Evergreen was not awarded one of its key operating grants at the federal level.

SHELTER: Page A7



IF YOU GO

What: Evergreen Youth and Family Services Open House
When: 2 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 29
Where: 2 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 29

'Everyone's daughter'

15 years later, the memory of Dru Sjodin lives on

By April Baumgarten
Forum News Service

GRAND FORKS — Dru Sjodin was a woman who could easily represent someone in anyone's life — a daughter, a sister, a best friend, the girl next door.

It's one of the reasons her abduction on Nov. 22, 2003, from a mall parking lot in Grand Forks has resonated so strongly with those who heard her story, said East Grand Forks Police



Sjodin

Chief Michael Hedlund.

"You can picture her as someone in your life," he said.

The University of North Dakota student from Pequot Lakes, Minn., a small town of 2,100 about 200 miles southeast of Grand Forks, was taken in a public setting while leaving the Columbia Mall. During a phone

SJODIN: Page A6



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Jillian Gandsey / Bemidji Pioneer

Red Lake first-graders pass around an "Iron Man" doll and introduce themselves in Ojibwe on Wednesday at Red Lake Elementary School.

LANGUAGE

From Page A1

Did you know that our language has its own spirit just like we have our own spirit?"

Down the hall, teacher Linda Perkins interspersed the occasional Ojibwemowin phrase into her second grade math lessons. Later, she helped students there practice counting to 100 in the language.

Sherwood and Perkins' instruction is part of an expanding language program at Red Lake School District, where all but three of the 1,500-plus students there are identified as American Indian, according to the Minnesota Department of Education.

One cohort each of kindergarteners, first graders, and second graders — 50-something students in all — receive regular education in math, reading, and more with a distinct emphasis on Ojibwe language and culture. It aspires to be an immersion program, but, for now, students and teachers in those groups switch between English and Ojibwemowin as necessary. Sherwood said she hopes to reach a 50/50 mix.

School district leaders want to extend into older grades year-by-year and, ultimately, establish a full-fledged K-12 language immersion track — all Ojibwemowin all the time for one section of students in each grade.

"Kind of like a school within a school," said Giniwgiizhig, a Red Lake School District principal who heads the program. "The goal is full immersion with a licensed, fluent speaker."

But that's easier said than done: a program as large and intensive as the one district staff envision would need 13 licensed teachers who are fluent in Ojibwemowin — one per grade — and the district doesn't have any staff who fit that bill, currently.

Virginia Spears, a fluent elder, helps in the district's kindergarten cohort, and Rose DeBungie, another fluent elder, floats between the other two. Sherwood, a licensed teacher who's an ardent student of the language but isn't fluent, splits her time between the first- and second-grade cohorts.

'Waasabiik Ojibwemotaadiwin'

The school district's program is a landing spot for young students in Waasabiik Ojibwemotaadiwin, a full-on immersion program run by Red Lake Nation that's named after Anna Gibbs, an elder there who was a champion of the Ojibwe language.

A cohort each of three- and four-year olds in that program learn from a pair of teachers and at least one elder. Nathaniel Taylor, a coordinator there, said it's more like a family effort than a school.

Each cohort has a maximum of 12 students. They're presumably on track for the school district program when they're old enough.

And that's the tentative longer-term goal: a collaborative pre-k through 12th grade immersion program where students learn from tribal staff until they're old enough to head to the school district.

But they both face the same obstacle: who can actually staff their

program?

"The number one challenge is finding teachers," Taylor said. "The ones that have their degrees, they usually aren't too fluent in the language, and the ones who are fluent speakers don't have degrees."

Teaching students — or even immersing them in — Ojibwemowin has manifold benefits, Giniwgiizhig said: it can buttress their emotional self-worth and intellectual dexterity, and it's important to have their school reflect who they are, culturally. A school in San Francisco, he said, without splashes of Chinese culture might make students there not feel valued because the school would not reflect who they are. (A large chunk of that city's population is of Chinese descent.) Beyond that, Giniwgiizhig said, pouring traditional language and culture into a student's life can leave less room for influences like gangs.

"America is a great big melting pot of cultures. But Red Lake is unique in the sense that it was never really part of the country," Taylor said. "It was always our home, and why not hold on to who we are?"

And, Taylor said, he and others owe it to their ancestors who helped traditional language and culture endure hardships like the boarding school era.

"There's not a safe haven to where the language exists because it was kind of basically ripped out of our hands, in a sense," Taylor said. "How do you keep it going? How do you teach your children that so they don't have that empty void in them when they do their soul searching?"

STATE BRIEFS

St. Paul schools close after phone threat

ST. PAUL — The South St. Paul school district called off classes Nov. 21 after someone called police to warn that a shooting was planned at a district elementary school.

In a phone call to

police around 4:30 a.m. Wednesday, a man said there would be a school shooting later in the day.

Around 9 a.m., police located the caller, who was in "an apparent mental health crisis," South St. Paul Police Chief Bill Messerich said in a news release.

"A subsequent interview with this individual revealed that while they believe the threat to be credible, there is no articulable information to support this belief."

The man was taken to a hospital for a mental health evaluation.

St. Paul Pioneer Press

SHELTER

From Page A1

"We're mostly grant funded, with 65 to 70 percent of the revenue coming from federal and state grants. One of those grants we've always received is the Basic Center grant, it's one of the biggest sources for our shelter," McKeon said. "This year, we lost that grant, and we have this collision happening with Beltrami County having this huge need and we're losing this grant that helps us meet that need."

About half of the youth that come to the shelter are referred by law enforcement, according to shelter program director Gary Russell.

"It happens when they intervene in unsafe situations," he said. "They can also be referred by social workers, those are what we call CHIPS investigations, or, child in need of protection services. Those are a lot of cases of abuse and neglect. If you look beyond that, there's usually substance abuse problems, too."

When children do arrive, they're given a full health check, with an assessment for trauma, histories of abuse and suicidal ideation. Russell also said an estimated 79 percent of the youth face some sort of depression.

The shelter serves children ages 9-17 and is the only shelter of its kind in a 15-county region.

"It's a pretty unique service to have in this rural area like ours," McKeon said. "Beltrami County has a rising rate

of out-of-home placements, and a lot of those kids land at our shelter. It's one of the go to places for the county to bring kids if they have nowhere else to go."

Because there are always trained staff at the shelter, housing a child per night costs more than \$200, Russell said. In 2017, Russell said there were nearly 300 children who stayed at the shelter, with some repeat stays.

"The total number of stays was at 361 and the average is six to seven nights per stay," Russell said. "We have eight rooms, and often there are two children to a room. However, in some cases, just for safety, we just have one child to a room. It's a situation where we're 'full before we're full.'"

Russell said the shelter does have success, and is able to reunite 96 percent of children with their families. The percent not reunited often require more care, such as an inpatient facility, Russell said.

With just over a month to go, Russell said the shelter is on track to match its 2017 numbers of youth served.

To continue serving the area youth, McKeon said it's integral for Evergreen to reach out for support from the community now.

"We didn't get the grant awarded this year, which basically extends into 2019, but we can reapply next summer and they'll announce the awarding at the end of September," McKeon said. "So, we're kind of staring down this stretch, where we have

to shift the way we keep ourselves financially viable. But, if the shelter isn't there, our county's out-of-home placement issue will get worse."

One person who knows firsthand the importance the shelter is Jessica Santala, a BSU professor who at one point stayed at the Evergreen facility in her youth.

"These guys are the people that saved me and gave me the space I needed," Santala said. "It was a place where I didn't have to worry about adult things."

When children do stay at the shelter, Russell said the staff work to ensure they're in a comfortable setting.

"We have group meetings with them in the afternoon and we provide family style, sit-down meals which can create a healthy environment," Russell said. "The kids do have chores here and we work with them to have them re-enrolled at school. We also like to get the kids out of the shelter and take them to different places like the state park."

The shelter is one of the programs at the 622 Mississippi Ave. NW location, with the other centered on parent or guardian coaching. Evergreen's other location is at 610 Patriot Drive NW, and offers services such as youth and family counseling and independent living skills training.

For more information, visit <https://www.evergreenyfs.org/> or call the business office at (218) 441-4560. Thursday's event runs from 2 to 7 p.m.



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