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COLORADO 150TH

Native Americans grapple with historic legacy

Museum of Boulder art exhibit highlights local Indigenous artists

By Olivia Doak
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As an Oglala Lakota citizen with Cheyenne ancestry, the idea of celebrating the 150th year of Colorado's statehood is complicated for Richard Williams.

"When we look back on those 150 years, it hasn't been pretty for us," Williams said. "In fact, it's very difficult to find anything to celebrate."

Williams is the president of People of the Sacred Land, a non-profit working to uncover American Indian history in Colorado. The organization published the

Truth, Restoration and Education Commission reports, or TREC reports, two years ago that highlight and quantify the losses Colorado's Native tribes have incurred, including valuing the taken land at \$1.17 trillion.

An exhibit at the Museum of Boulder, open through July 5, highlights key findings from the TREC reports and pairs them with artwork by local Native American artists addressing the personal impact of that history as the state marks 150 years.

"We're all Indigenous, and I think that Indigenous voices are really important to highlight, especially in terms of the history

of where we're at and the history of Colorado," exhibit artist Sage Deal said, who is a member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe in Nevada. "I think my pieces fit in there because I'm Indigenous and the act of creating art is an act of protest because we weren't always allowed to do that."

Deal, a University of Colorado Denver art student from Colorado Springs, has two oil paintings in the Museum of Boulder exhibit. One is a narrative painting about colonialism, and the other is a portrayal of skin flushing, a condition where Deal lacks temperature regulation and breaks out

NATIVE ART » PAGE 5



MATTHEW JONAS — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A clothing piece entitled "The Woman" by Raelene Whiteshield is on display at the Colorado's People of the Sacred Land exhibit at the Museum of Boulder on Monday.

Pridefest

CITY WAVES ITS COLORS



JOEL SOLIS — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

AT TOP: Luke Finney, left, watches Daphne Baumgartner cheer during the Rocky Mountain Equality's Boulder PrideFest at the Boulder Main Library parking lot on Sunday. BOTTOM LEFT: Ivy Shen, left, and Ivy Conrad perform in a strut contest. BOTTOM RIGHT: Drag Performer Ryan Stone dances. Residents from Boulder County gathered to celebrate the local LGBTQ+ community.

UNITY OF BOULDER

Spiritual Center opts to stay put, abandon sale

By James Burky
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After exploring a potential sale, a longtime Boulder spiritual center that embraces aspects of various religions and connectedness is staying in its building.

Leaders from Unity of Boulder Spiritual Center were exploring selling its home of nearly 40 years at 2855 Folsom St. In-person attendance at its services has struggled since the COVID-19 pandemic, which leaders said forced them to consider how to best keep Unity going. That included considering selling its roughly 8.7-acre parcel and finding a smaller building.

But Syntysche Groverland, the daughter and successor of Unity's retiring longtime pastor Jack Groverland, told the Daily Camera on Friday that leadership has opted to stay put for now.

The potential redevelopment into a 21-unit housing site went in front of the Planning Board on May 5. After that public hearing, Groverland said, Unity opted to stay because "we just don't really feel like we could find another place as beautiful as our property."

The Boulder City Council is scheduled to have the housing project on its call-up/check-in list for its June 18 meeting — which usually means the City Council

UNITY » PAGE 4

Editor's Note

Inside today

Beginning today, the Daily Camera will publish Q&As with Boulder-area candidates on this month's primary ballot.

SEE THE FIRST SET OF THOSE Q&AS ON PAGES C4-6.



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Native art

FROM PAGE 1

into a red rash.

“I think the way that colonialism has impacted individuals is so vast and also continuing,” Deal said. “But it’s also cool to be in a place where we can think about it critically and think about the way that history has affected us now.”

\$1.17 trillion in land value

The TREC reports include a historic economic loss assessment that articulates economic losses from land dispossession and colonial settlement for nine Native nations in Colorado: Southern Ute Indian Tribes, Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe, the Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray, Northern and Southern Arapaho, Northern and Southern Cheyenne, Shoshone and the Kiowa-Apache.

The value of the land taken from those Native nations is valued at approximately \$1.17 trillion in 2021 market value, according to the report, and the mineral extraction from that land is worth more than \$546.6 billion in 2018 dollars. The loss of Indigenous life is approximated at 710 people, but the report notes that this number may be underestimated due to data limitations. The reports also analyzed the value and impact of water rights that were taken, agricultural loss and the extermination of buffalo.

“Our people are still living in poverty, and we’ve never really truly recovered from the genocide that basically almost wiped us out,” Williams said.

Artist Raelene Whiteshield, a Northglenn resident who is half Kiowa and a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, made clothing for the Museum of Boulder art exhibit. A woman’s dress, which she created, has to do with the Sand Creek Massacre, of which Whiteshield is a direct descendant. The Sand Creek Massacre happened on Nov. 29, 1864, when the U.S. Army attacked a camp of mostly women, children and elders on Big Sandy Creek in southeastern Colorado, committing atrocities and murdering more than 230 people.

A second outfit honors the Cheyenne origin story that they come from the buffalo, and a third addresses the harm done by boarding schools. Whiteshield said her parents went to boarding school, as did her grandma and grandpa. Her grandparents wouldn’t teach their tribal language to their kids, she said, because they didn’t want their kids to be punished in boarding school for it.

Native American boarding schools were established across the country from the 1800s to the 1960s to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children into white American culture, where children suffered physical, sexual, cultural and spiritual abuse and neglect. More than 3,000 Native American children died in the custody of the U.S. government while being forced to attend these boarding schools, according to an investigation by the Washington Post.

“We’re still feeling those negative effects, especially with losing our languages, our way of life and our traditions, because they were basically beaten out of us,” Whiteshield said.

Her clothing in the exhibit also represents Native resiliency, she said, as they reclaim their traditions and languages. Native Americans are often forgotten about in history books, Whiteshield said, and she wants people to remember that the land that they’re on had people living there before Colorado became Colorado.

“As much as they tried to destroy us, we’re still here,” Whiteshield said.

The art exhibit, called Colorado’s People of the Sacred Land, is on display at the Museum of Boulder,



PHOTOS BY MATTHEW JONAS — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An exhibit at the Museum of Boulder, open through July 5, highlights key findings from the TREC reports and pairs them with artwork by local Native artists addressing the personal impact of that history as the state marks 150 years.



An art piece entitled “Vest,” left, by Raelene Whiteshield and “Unveiling Narratives,” right, by Halcyon Levi are on display at Colorado’s People of the Sacred Land exhibit at the Museum of Boulder through July 5.

2205 Broadway, through July 5. The exhibit was developed in partnership with an undergraduate class at the University of Colorado Boulder, co-developed by professor Michela Ardizzone and Museum of Boulder Education Director Emily Zinn. CU Boulder students worked directly with local Native American artists, the TREC reports and with the museum to co-curate the exhibit.

Ardizzone said she hopes the exhibit helps people learn more about Native American communities in Colorado and encourages a deeper understanding of their histories and experiences. She also hopes the students gained communication, collaboration, time management and project development skills, also giving them firsthand experience with community-engaged work.

“As Colorado marks 150 years of statehood, I think it is especially important to remember and recognize Native history because Indigenous history is central to the history of the state,” Ardizzone said. “Without that recognition, we continue the same pattern of leaving out the foundational role Indigenous communities have played — and continue to play — in Colorado. This matters not only for Indigenous communities, but for everyone living here, because this is shared history. A fuller and more honest understanding of Colorado’s past has to include Indigenous history at the center.”

A restoration plan

Williams doesn’t want Colorado residents to give up their home or their land, but he does want them to acknowledge the history and take steps to make things right.

“Let’s put some plans together for the next 50 years that’s going to change this dynamic, that’s going to create an opportunity, a real opportunity, a Marshall plan,” Williams said, referencing the large U.S. foreign aid plan in 1948 to help rebuild Western Europe after World War II. “A restoration plan for the people whose homeland it is. That’s what I want people to start thinking about. How do you do this? How can you do this? Is there a way this can happen? And there is.”

The TREC reports outline several recommendations for action. It calls on Colorado State University to return the remaining 19,000 acres of the original 84,000-acre land grant to the tribal nations from which it was taken. It calls on the state to restore tribes’ hunting and fishing rights, grant compensation, mandate a fee of .01% on all future real estate deals to support Native restoration and construct an American Indian

Cultural History Center in partnership with Denver.

Denver City Council member Stacie Gilmore read the reports and took action on them, Williams said, helping to secure funding for an embassy. Williams is meeting with the city to help develop a vision for the embassy and the role it would play.

“I hope that (the embassy) is an opportunity for Native nations who are displaced to have a place to come back to and begin developing relationships and opportunities back in their homeland,” Williams said.

Williams said he has not heard from CSU or the state of Colorado regarding the other recommendations. The Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, when asked about the report’s recommendations, said the state “is committed to maintaining strong government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations while serving American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities across the state.”

“To support this continued commitment, the state recently published a Tribal and AI/AN Affairs Roadmap which includes recommendations meant to strengthen state-Tribal government to government relationships while increasing engagement with AI/AN communities,” Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs staff wrote in a statement. “This roadmap was developed through Tribal consultations as well as listening sessions with AI/AN communities across the state.”

When asked about the report’s recommendation that CSU return some of its land, Associate Vice President for Communications Tiana Kennedy said CSU is “focused on building relationships with tribal nations, partnering with tribal leadership, developing and supporting programs and initiatives and addressing university Native American issues.” She highlighted the university’s offering of in-state tuition to qualified out-of-state Native American students, on campus resources for Native American students, administrative outreach with Tribal communities and a Native American Advisory Council to the president.

Under state law, the Colorado State Land Board manages CSU lands, Kennedy told the Daily Camera. Some of the lands granted to CSU generate income, and a CSU policy ensures that a portion of that revenue is used for the benefit of Native American students, faculty and staff.

For 160 years, American Indian people have suffered, Williams said, and part of it has been the failure to deal with the issues of conquest and taking land without providing

any meaningful way for the people to have a place in America, their original home. There aren’t any American Indian reservations on the Front Range or on the Eastern plains of Colorado, Williams said, because they were all forcibly removed without any opportunity to return.

While the report does call on CSU to return some of its land, it does not call on CU to return any of its 43,000 acres of native land granted to it through the act that made Colorado a state. But Williams does want to see more educational opportunities and resources for Native students.

“Our people have struggled significantly with education issues, and it would be wonderful if we had educational opportunities where the tuition is waived, and room and board are provided,” Williams said.

Deal recommends that people donate to organizations that support Native Americans, get in touch with their local representatives and to be invested in Native American politics.

“But also listening to Indigenous voices and making sure marginalized voices are heard is the first step to getting anything done,” Deal said.

For more information, visit museumofboulder.org/exhibit/colorados-people-of-the-sacred-land.

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