

# Memory Keepers Discovery Team: Working to End American Indian Health Disparities

By Kitty Mayo

The element of fire is important to Neil Henderson, who says that keeping a gas fireplace lit at the Memory Keepers center is a way to honor his Oklahoma Choctaw heritage.

“Back home we build a fire for gatherings with the belief that virtually everything comes from the sun, so a fire is like bringing a little piece of sun to where you are so the power from it radiates into the special occasion,” said Henderson.

At the center he says the constantly burning flame serves a reminder to the team that they are serving an important role in Native American communities to reduce disparities of health.

Executive director of Memory Keepers, Henderson is a professor in the department of biobehavioral health and population sciences on the Medical School's Duluth campus.

Memory Keepers is being funded out of a state budget surplus in 2015, and is one of four programs being launched out of the University of Minnesota Medical School to study health equity in tribal and rural communities in Minnesota.

Located in downtown Duluth at 7th Avenue and First Street, the design of the space was important to Henderson and his team as plans were made for renovating an existing building to become a research center for Native Americans.

With an entryway aligned to the street and Lake Superior at a northwest angle, tuning it into

the “Four Directions”, part of tradition American Indian spiritual teachings was important.

Even though the space is intended for scientific research, developers of the program knew it was important to create a space that felt culturally comfortable as they investigate health issues that affect Native Americans disproportionately.

Keeping the open window space that allows a connection to Lake Superior is part of that thoughtful design. A conference space, lounge seating and kitchen remain in one great room so that it can still be used for large events, with a central round table in medicine wheel colors and cedar wood paneling.

Henderson says that even though the space is a “lab”, incorporating a ceremonial room with native medicines and exhaust fans that allow the ceremonial burning of sage, sweetgrass and tobacco without fire alarms going off was also key to serving Native people with respect.

“It's a space made uniquely for Native people as part of the University of Minnesota Medical School, and yet we can use these traditional medicines on special occasions,” Henderson said.

Coming from a long academic background studying diabetes and dementia in Native Americans, Henderson says that the relationship between those two conditions is complicated and central to the current research at Memory Keepers.

“We want to learn the best way

to intervene when someone is developing diabetes, doesn't yet have symptoms, and how to forestall the potential development of related dementia,” said Henderson.

Diabetes can contribute to cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's progression, and has components of social behavior such as inactivity related to obesity, and is correlated to lower educational levels and socioeconomic status.

When someone has both diabetes and dementia, Henderson says the two conditions can interact with greater risk of vascular dementia when diabetes is poorly controlled. When diabetes is not under control and blood sugars run too high, damage to the interior of blood vessel walls can result, leaving a higher risk of hemorrhagic (bleeding) stroke.

“Rates of diabetes and cognitive impairment are increasing across all populations with both on the Top 10 Killers list in the U.S., and when you look them then operating concurrently there is an even higher risk of health status and dysfunction,” Henderson said.

For American Indians diabetes and dementia is even higher than the collective population. Diabetes is three times higher than for whites, and American Indians have the second highest rate of dementia across five different population groups.

Henderson says that it's not genetics driving these alarmingly high rates of dementia and diabe-

tes, but rather life vulnerabilities.

“For American Indians as a population we are talking about toxic stress at a higher magnitude than normal that is related to life experience vulnerabilities that include higher rates of low socioeconomic status with more serious health outcomes,” Henderson said.

He points to studies of children who live in areas of poverty, compared to kids from wealthier neighborhoods. The study looked at the telomeres of the children: telomeres are the end caps on our chromosomes, like the plastic tips at the end of a shoelace they act as a way to keep things from unraveling. Shorter telomeres indicate DNA damage that can be associated with poorer health.

Stress and poor diet can shorten telomeres and result in greater rates of chronic diseases and shorter life spans. Children in the poor homes had shorter telomeres, and Henderson says that shows why financial stress can be related to poorer health.

According to Henderson, vulnerable populations such as American Indians accumulate social traumas that eventually convert to physical diseases, such as diabetes, vascular weakness, and dementia.

With the first research grant scheduled to begin in January 2019, the \$10 million grant will allow researchers to focus on dementia in American Indians in area Anishinaabe tribes, Canadian Anishinaabe, and Wisconsin Oneida.

## SHERIFF'S REPORT

Monday, November 19, 2018

- Inmate Population: 12
- 0905 Deputy responds to report of a truck on fire on Big Blaze Xing.
- 1145 Deputy serves papers at TH residence.
- 1206 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 2 near Boomers Rd. Warn for speed.
- 1502 Deputy takes report of suspicious activity on Fernberg Rd.
- 1555 LCRS responds to request for a lift assist on Hwy 2.
- 1719 Deputy makes traffic stop on 7th Ave near 13th St. Semaphore warning.
- 2009 Deputy out with party doing burn outs in SB parking lot.
- 2055 Deputy serves papers at TH residence.

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

- Inmate Population: 11
- 0201 Deputy out with occupied vehicle on side of Shoreview Rd. All ok.
- 0442 Deputy responds to report of a car vs. deer on Hwy 61. Deputy dispatched deer.
- 0521 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near Park Rd. Warn for semaphore violation.
- 0734 Deputy at THHS for the start of the school day.
- 1233 Deputy responds to report of a missing person in the Finland area. Party found safe.
- 1428 Deputy and LCRS respond to report of a vehicle in the ditch on Hwy 61. No serious injuries reported.
- 1538 Sgt. and LCRS respond to a 2 vehicle accident near Split Rock Lighthouse. One transported by ambulance to LVMH.
- 1604 Deputy responds to report of vehicle in the ditch on Hwy 61. No injuries reported. Vehicle will be towed.
- 1607 Deputies respond to medical in SB.

Wednesday, November 21, 2018

- Inmate Population: 10
- 0741 Deputy at THHS for the start of the school day.
- 1152 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61. Warn for failure to yield.
- 1223 Deputy responds to security alarm.
- 1248 Deputy responds to report of property damage in Ely.
- 1253 Deputy and LCRS responds to medical on Hwy 3. One transported by ambulance to LVMH.
- 1347 Deputy responds to report of a child custody issue.
- 1511 Deputy serves papers at TH residence.
- 1533 Deputy serves papers at TH residence.
- 1900 Deputy serves papers at TH residence.
- 2113 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near E Castle Danger Rd. Warn for speed.
- 2327 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near E Castle Danger Rd. Warn for speed and failure to wear corrective lenses.
- 2351 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near E Castle Danger Rd. Warn for speed.

Thursday, November 22, 2018

- Inmate Population: 10
- 1306 Deputy, along with SBPD, respond to report of a child found outside of business.
- 1401 Deputy responds to request to check welfare of party at residence on Hwy 61.
- 1907 Deputy responds, along with SBPD, to medical in SB.

- 1924 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near Castle Danger Rd. Warn for speed.
- 1936 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near E Castle Danger Rd. Warn for speed.
- 2035 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 2 near Cedar Rd. Warn for inoperable tail lights.
- 2039 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near Lax Lake Rd. Warn for speed.

Friday, November 23, 2018

- Inmate Population: 10
- 0133 Deputy and LCRS, along with SBPD, respond to report of a vehicle in the ditch on Lax Lake Rd. Driver gone on arrival.
- 0418 Deputy responds to report of ambulance vs. deer on Hwy 61. No injuries.
- 0457 Deputy, along with THPD, responds to security alarm at local business. All ok.
- 0544 Deputy, along with THPD, responds to security alarm at TH business. All ok.
- 1341 Deputy, along with SBPD, respond to report of a vehicle in the ditch on Forest Hwy 11. No serious injuries reported.
- 1656 Deputy responds to report of someone shooting a gun on the Valley Rd.
- 1744 Deputies and LCRS respond to report of a sauna fire in Silver Bay.
- 1827 Deputy attempts to locate subject of vehicle complaint.
- 1933 Deputy, along with THPD, responds to report of a domestic disturbance in TH.
- 2119 Deputy out with occupied vehicle on Hwy 1. Vehicle broke down, has help on the way.

Saturday, November 24, 2018

- Inmate Population: 9
- 0207 Deputy checks welfare at residence with 911 hang up. All ok.
- 0249 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61. Warn for speed.
- 0808 Deputy responds to report of trespassing on Big Rock Rd.
- 1141 Deputy responds to report of theft of firewood.
- 1157 Deputy responds to security alarm at Ely residence. All ok.
- 1330 LCRS responds to medical on 10th Ave. One brought to LVMH by ambulance.
- 1445 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61. Warn for illegal tint, loud exhaust and driver's license in possession.
- 2043 Deputy assists SBPD on traffic stop.

Sunday, November 25, 2018

- Inmate Population: 10
- 0023 Deputy assists SLC at Ely Hospital.
- 0203 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near Big Blaze Crossing. Warn for speed.
- 0322 Deputy, along with THPD, responds to medical on 1st Ave. One brought by ambulance to SLH.
- 0824 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61. Cited for speed 72/55.
- 1045 Deputy assists Ely PD with physical domestic.
- 1934 Deputy responds to report of car vs. deer on Hwy 61. Vehicle towed, deputy gave party ride.
- 2301 Deputy makes traffic stop on Hwy 61 near BB. Cited for no insurance.

## Century 21 Gilderman



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### Silver Bay & Surrounding Area

- 1848 Hwy 61, TH, MLS6076141: Lake Superior property w/cobblestone beach & frontage on Silver Creek. Kayak on Lk Superior or fish in the creek & enjoy the wildlife from the deck of this 3 BR, 2 BA home w/large lakeside deck, gas FP, new det'd 2 car garage & more. Furniture, appliances & other furnishings included. **REDUCED \$690,000**
- 54 Banks Blvd, SB, MLS6076423: 3 BR, 1 BA, det'd 1 car garage w/distant view of Lk Sup. **\$53,500**
- 7 Kent Lane, SB, MLS 6078837: Enjoy the views of Lake Superior from the livingroom, dining room, bedroom, family room, laundry room & balcony of this 3 BR, 3 BA home w/hardwood floors, 2 wood fireplaces, newer shingles, walkout basement, & 2 car garage **\$239,000**
- 22 Law Dr., SB: 2 BR, 2 BA house w/full basement, det'd 1 car garage, back to woods. **\$67,500**
- 61 Adams Blvd, SB MLS6026996 : 1.7 story, 4 BR, 2 BA house back to woods. updates incl: siding, windows, shingles, 2nd floor add'n, new garage roof, no maint. decks, hdwd floors, new Kit. countertops & backsplash, oak cabinetry, hearth stove, new carpet, & landscaping. Full basement, att'd 2 car garage, shed & lg. side yard. **\$218,900**
- 44 Aiken Cir., SB, MLS6079093: 2 BR, 1 BA house w/det'd 1 car garage on a well landscaped site. Many updates! **\$64,500**
- 45 Horn Blvd, SB MLS6076737: 2 BR, 2 BA house full basement, deck, & det'd 2 car garage in convenient location. Features: vinyl siding, newer windows, shingles, & private yard w/a glimpse of Lk Superior. New curb, gutter, sidewalk & street in '17. **REDUCED \$97,500**
- 6082 Hwy 1, SB: Custom built 3 BR, 2 BA, basement house. Lg. 2 car garage & shed on 1.44 Ac site w/good view of surrounding hills & valley. **\$147,500**
- 5150 Silver Hill Dr, Finland: 3BR home w/updates incl: remod. BA, insulation, newer windows & heating system, updated Kit, new paint & doors, & gas FP. 26'x40' garage & 22'x22' garage. 16'x20' deck. ATV & snowmobile trail access close by. **\$159,900**
- 6990 Air Base Rd, Finland MLS6030813: Listen to Tower Creek from the quiet setting of this 3 finished BR, plus a potential master BR suite, house w/ull walkout basement, deck, det'd 2 car garage & many updates including several windows, patio door, shingles, furnace, stainless appliances, remod. BA, hdwd floors & paint. **\$154,900**
- XX Burk Dr., SB MLS6031120: Wooded vacant lot w/view of Lk Sup., city water/sewer nearby. **\$18,500**
- 61XX Little Marais Road MLS #6076208: Lot B, Silver Bay, MN: 10 acre lot w/views of Lake Superior near Little Marais. reduced to **\$69,900**
- XXX Hwy 61 & Onion River Rd. MLS6005052: 18 Acr. commercial resort bldg site between Tofte & Lutsen on Onion River Rd. Great views of Lk Sup. High ground w/pwr at rd. Close to Sup. Hiking trl & rec. activities. **\$173,500**
- XX Marks Drive, SB: 5 - Large residential building sites w/city water, sewer, curb & gutter, back to woods **\$45,000 each or \$205,000 for all 5**