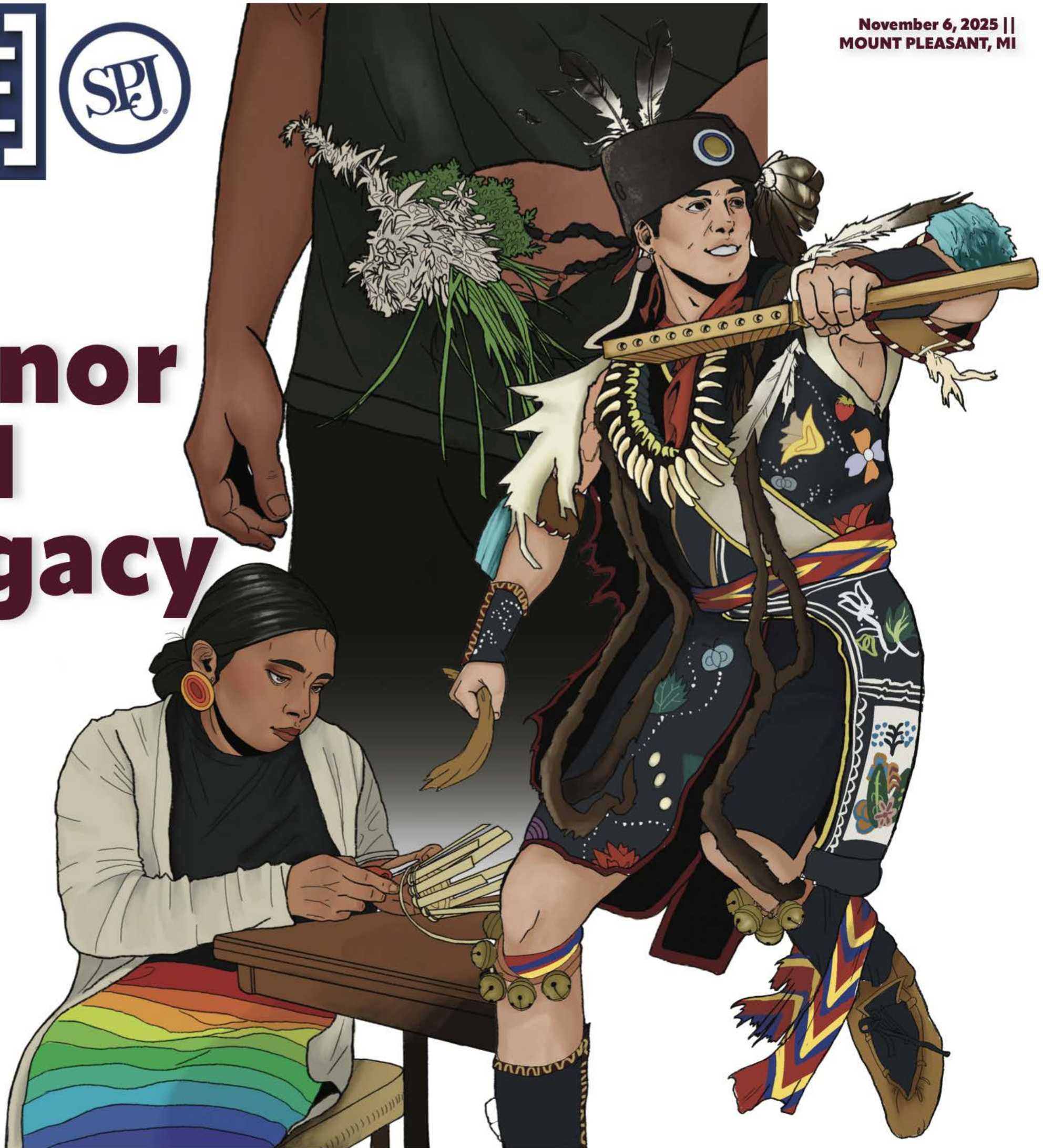




November 6, 2025 ||
MOUNT PLEASANT, MI

Honor and Legacy



A note from the editor-in-chief



By Masha Smahliuk-Bootz
Editor-in-chief

The edition you're holding in your hands, "Honor and Legacy," translates to Ojibwe as: gichi piitendaawagod, which means great value or very honorable, and maanda anishinaabemowin... maanda banggii anishinaabemowin gga nigadamawaanaanik gewe baadaasimosedji – "a little

bit of this language we will leave behind for those yet to come." This is according to Judy Webkamigad, who is a professor of Ojibwe languages at Central Michigan University.

This month, we're honoring Native American Heritage.

It was proclaimed such in 1990 and celebrates the culture, traditions, languages and history of Native American and Alaska Native communities across the United States.

In this edition *Central Michigan Life*, aims to highlight the partnership between the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and the city of Mount Pleasant, which brings economic and cultural benefits to the local community.

You can also find the results of the recent election for the 2025-2027 Tribal Council, dive into a story about Ziibiwing Center and learn about the new Ojibwe languages classes offered at CMU.

As you read through these stories, we hope you learn more about the legacy of the Native American People and honor their culture and history.

But it is important to remember that we all reside on the land of Native People in the U.S. and to honor their legacy not only in November.

Masha Smahliuk-Bootz is Central Michigan Life's 2025-2026 editor-in-chief.

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On the cover: Illustration by Nash Fulgham and Coloring by Zoey Lawrence
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NEWS

2% Grant Distributions

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe gave over \$3 million in grant distributions to the local government and public schools from its Class III gaming in spring 2024, according to the most recent information on www.sagchip.org. Some of the recipients were:

Isabella County

\$519,681.78

City of Mount Pleasant

\$462,000

Mount Pleasant Public Schools

\$282,009.43

Chippewa Hills Public Schools

\$51,437

For the full list of the grant recipients, visit <https://www.sagchip.org/news.aspx?newsid=5906>

'Making Mount Pleasant a great place'

Partnership of two nations boosts economy, culture

By Cristin Coppess
Staff writer

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe's and the city of Mount Pleasant's partnership brings both cultural and economic benefits to the local community.

Erik Rodriguez, interim public relations director for the Tribe, said one of the most common misconceptions about the Tribe's partnership with Mount Pleasant is that the cultures are vastly different.

While it is true that there are idiosyncrasies in jurisdictions and culture, Rodriguez said, they are not as pronounced as most people think.

"There's a lot of parallels in the day-to-day life," Rodriguez said. "I think there's a misconception of Native American and Indigenous people in the community. We live in houses like people in society today. We drive cars like people today. We work and go to work for organizations in Mount Pleasant and throughout Isabella County in the Great Lakes Bay region. And so it's not too different from what, you know, we experience. I think it just goes back to that governance portion of it."

The lack of understanding regarding the Tribe's identity doesn't just exist in non-natives, Rodriguez said. The history of forced assimilation has left many living members confused about their heritage. A lot of the time, he said, Tribal members have the same questions as non-natives when it comes to Native culture.

He encouraged people to confront their assumptions and ask questions when encountering uncertainty.

A Painful History

Mount Pleasant is home to a former government-run Indian Industrial Boarding School (MIIBS), where the children of the Tribe were subjected to emotional and physical abuse in the name of assimilation. The children were forcibly taken from their homes, had their hair cut against their will and often were punished for speaking their native tongue.

As a result, much of the Tribe's culture and tradition was lost, as its members feared retaliation. The generational trauma induced by the school still impacts Native individuals today.

According to the Tribe's website, after the atrocities committed in Indian Boarding Schools across the United States came to light, the MIIBS was closed in 1934. The

property was transferred to the state, until it was turned over to the city in 2011.

The city then offered the Tribe a land conveyance for part of the property, six of its buildings and the Mission Creek Cemetery, which it accepted later that year.

Years of logistical and developmental planning have enabled the property to be recognized as a historical landmark.

Rodriguez said that now, the city and the Tribe partner for the annual Honoring, Healing and Remembering Day. The healing ceremony includes a reading of the student roll call, which honors the children who perished at the boarding school.

"The City of Mount Pleasant understands and wants to educate people about the true history that we have a boarding school that was located here," Rodriguez said. "To help people better understand that, they actually partner with us to bring education and awareness to what transpired on those grounds. They didn't have to. They chose to."

The importance of spreading awareness, Rodriguez said, is critical to ensuring that the atrocities committed against Native Americans in the past are not repeated.

Tribal presence bolsters local economy

The presence of the Tribe as its own sovereign nation impacts Mount Pleasant not just culturally, but also economically.

The Tribe reached an agreement with the state of Michigan in 1994, allowing them to own and operate the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort.

Aaron Desentz, the city manager of Mount Pleasant, said a recent study showed the casino brings around one million people to the area per year. Tourism at the casino funnels into the surrounding local businesses, which bolsters the city's economy.

In addition, he said, the agreement with the state requires that the Tribe distribute 2% of its class III gaming profits from the casino's slot machines to local governments and school districts. The funds are distributed by a grant program overseen by the Tribal Council, which local institutions can apply for.

Rodriguez said the Tribe typically sees around 450 requests and is able to grant around \$3.5 million twice a year. Since 1994, the Tribe has given over \$294 million to local governments and schools.

"There's 12 recognized tribes in the state, and we're one of the few that have the opportunity to say where those dollars go," Rodriguez said. "Some tribes just write a check to local governments and tell them, 'here's 2%. You pick where this goes.' We wanted to be able to make sure that they're going for community use to maximize resources."

According to Desentz, the city received about \$1 million in total grants, marking a very generous year from the Tribe. On average, he said, the city of Mount Pleasant typically receives about \$650,000 of the 2% grants.

"That's been able to do things such as support our PEAK program, our People Empowering All Kids childcare program," Desentz said. "That has gone to infrastructure projects; maintaining our wastewater and water systems, storm sewer systems; that has gone towards supporting our public safety agencies. So, all of these funds have a significant impact."

Collaboration with CMU

Since 2002, Central Michigan University and the Tribe have collaborated to unite Tribal culture and values with university initiatives.

The Tribe allows the university to use the nickname "Chippewas" in exchange for active efforts to promote education about Indigenous culture and history.

As part of its efforts, the university has integrated Tribal culture into various campus standards, including land acknowledgments, course offerings, reduced costs for Indigenous students and integrating sacred Tribal practices into important ceremonies such as graduation.

The Tribe has blessed various athletic spaces,

gifted its official flag and sacred herbs to the Board of Trustees and brought cultural events like the annual celebrating life Pow wow to campus.

CMU President, Neil MacKinnon, has prioritized the partnership between the Tribe and the university. He said the Tribe serves as a powerful economic and philanthropic engine for the community.

"The Tribe provides tremendous financial support for local schools and nonprofits, invests in development, partners with civic groups, and actively works to strengthen Mount Pleasant and Isabella County through initiatives like the Community Relations Committee," MacKinnon said.

"CMU values our relationship with the Tribe and appreciates its support of our historical, cultural, academic and athletic programs. They are wonderful partners and neighbors."

Looking toward a better future

Both Rodriguez and Desentz said the relationship between the two governments is more than healthy, but the partnership does not come without its struggles.

With the current challenges in accessing resources and funding from the state and federal government, Rodriguez said, a lot remains uncertain. In the future, the Tribe and the city will have to face difficult decisions as they attempt to do more with less.

"There's a lot of great initiatives that continually come through the channels and the partnerships that we have, but it's going to come to a point where there's going to have to be some tough conversations that need to be had," Rodriguez said. "I think as a barrier, it's going to be

prioritizing what's important to everyone here, not just one group."

While both groups recognize the challenges ahead, there is a resilient confidence that exists in the strength of the partnership and its aptitude for effective communication.

"As is inevitable with any organization, at times you may have different viewpoints and different stances on a particular issue," Desentz said. "You just continue to work through those things. Luckily, to be very truthful, even in my short tenure of four years, when we've had, let's say, disagreements, typically it's not something that we're not able to work through. There's a great level of mutual understanding."

Working in tandem with the Tribe helps to alleviate pressures that exist as a result of government uncertainties, Rodriguez said, because the Tribe has access to resources that can ease some of the communities' burdens.

"We want to continue to partner and strengthen, collaborate to make this a destination for people to want to come to and then ultimately want to live and raise families in," Rodriguez said. "I think it's just continuing to strengthen the local governance of the shared leadership and really rely on each other to make sure that we're making Mount Pleasant a great place."

Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe elects its 2025-2027 Tribal Council

Members of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe visited their local polls or submitted their absentee ballots on Tuesday to elect candidates for the 2025-2027 Tribal Council, the governing body of the Tribe.

The election brought in a number of new members as well as incumbent members, such as Frank Cloutier, who has represented the At Large District since 2019 and served as Chief from 2015 to 2017.

"The At-Large district is an important part of our Tribal community," Cloutier wrote in the Tribal Observer in October after being elected as the only candidate for the At-Large District. "I have worked with leadership to bring equality and mutual benefit to our district."

Erik Rodriguez, public relations director for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, said that every election is unique and that voting in new members of the Tribal Council always holds some level of uncertainty for the future.

"It's just like any other kind of election when you look at it," he said. "You don't really have that master plan and direction until you have that new council elected."

The Tribe has held a biennial election to select leaders

since the creation of its constitution in 1937. The only requirements to run for the Tribal Council are that the candidate be a member of the Tribe and be over 25.

Starting in July, candidates can pick up the packets from the Tribal Clerk's office. In order to get on the final list of candidates for the primary election, a candidate must gather 20 signatures and be verified by the Tribe's caucus committee.

"I can say it ranges anywhere from usually 45 to 110 running for 12 spots on the tribal council," Rodriguez said.

In this year's primary, there were 51 candidates.

Rodriguez said the next step in the election is the swearing-in ceremony for the Tribe's Executive Council. Members of the council will nominate one another for positions: chief, sub-chief, secretary and treasurer. The Tribe's sergeant-at-arms and a tribal chaplain are also sworn in during the ceremony.

TRIBAL ELECTION RESULTS

District I

- Alice Jo Ricketts
- Lucas Sprague
- Tim J. Davis
- Ronald F. Ekdahl
- Brad Bennett
- Christina Otto
- Mary Quigno
- Jennifer (Vasquez) Wasegijig
- Craig Graveratte
- Gayle Ruhl

District II

- Shirley Houle

District III

- Frank J. Cloutier

Wii Gikendaming Anishinaabemowin

"We will know the Anishinaabe language"

By Elizabeth Sadecki
Staff reporter

Making their return after the COVID-19 pandemic, Ojibwe language classes, Ojibwe 101 and 102, cover more than just the basics. Professor Judy Webkamigad prioritizes teaching students the culture behind the words.

"If we don't have our language, we don't have our culture. And if we don't have our culture, we don't have our language," Webkamigad said.

The classes study the Anishinaabe and Anishinaabemowin, the community and language of the Ojibwe, Potawatomi and Odawa tribes. Webkamigad said she focuses on the Ojibwe language out of respect for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian tribe.

Webkamigad was approached last year while teaching at Bay Mills Community College.

"CMU really wants it," she said. "CMU is dedicated to having it. I'm grateful the president is as well."

Initially, when approached, Webkamigad was asked to simply teach the basics. But she explained that the basics aren't just counting, objects or the vowel system. She said culture is necessary to contextualize Anishinaabemowin on campus, and she considers herself lucky to teach them together.

"I'm not just gonna teach words. (the language) comes with our culture as well," she said.

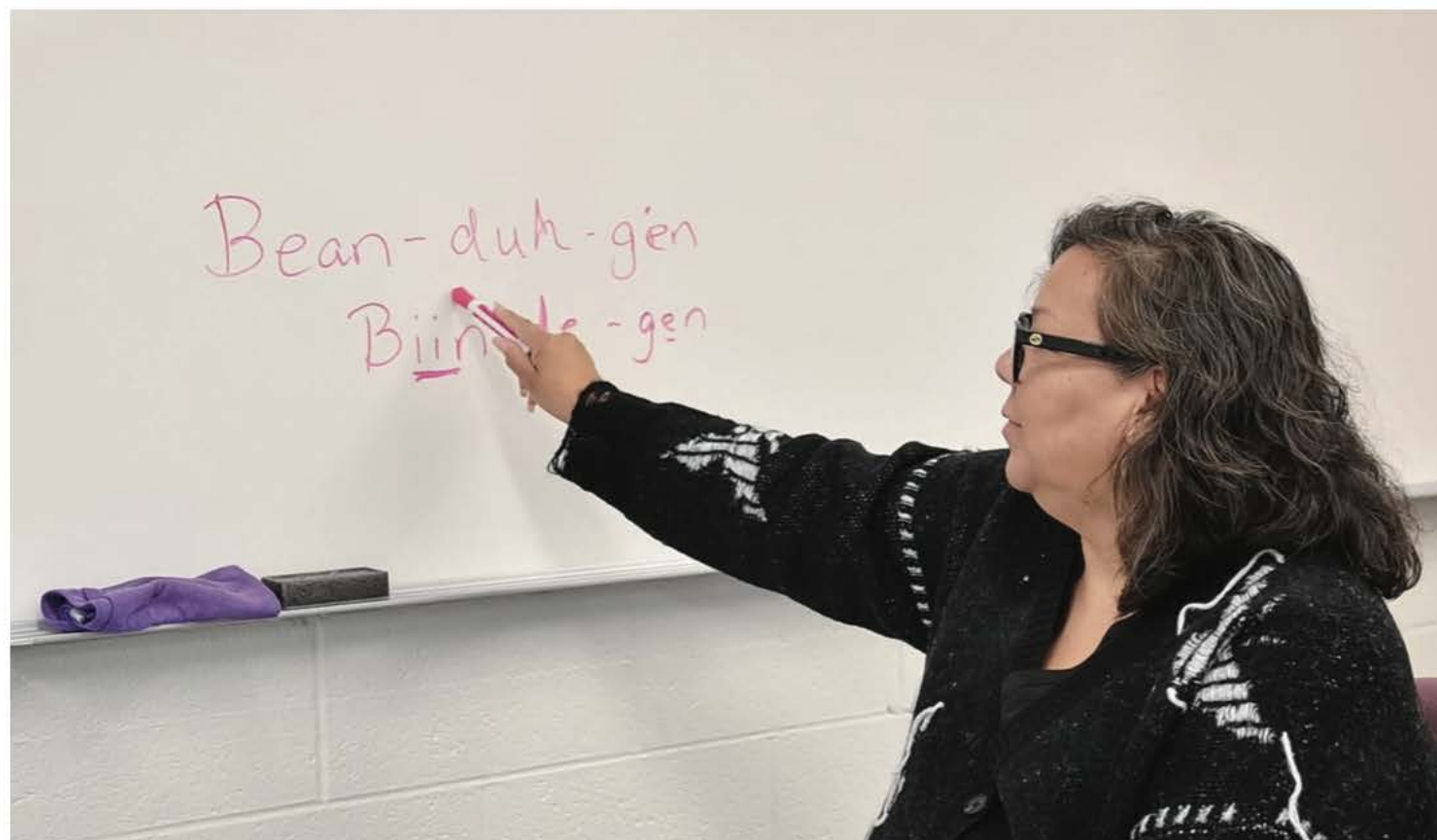
Webkamigad is an Indigenous educator with 20 years of experience. She's Bodewadmi from the Hannahville Potawatomi Tribe in the Upper Peninsula and graduated from CMU, Bay Mills Community College and the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College after studying Native American, cultural and global studies.

Initially when learning the language, Webkamigad had trouble understanding it. Her first professor told her she would know she understood the language when she started hearing it on the radio. After Webkamigad had a dream of that happening to her, something clicked.

"I knew from there that this is what I was destined to do, be a language keeper and not just keep it for me," she said. "When I came here last summer, I thought, 'This is where I belong.' So here I am."

She now passes the language on to her children and six students.

"I've been waiting for this class to come back, so I'm really excited to be learning the language with other people," student Mia Petoskey said. "I like that it's not just about learning the language, but also the culture, because it's a reconnection to the Odawa side of my



Professor Judy Webkamigad teaches her Ojibwe 101 students how to say "hello" formally in Ojibwe in Pearce Hall on Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025. **Claire Vachon | Videographer**

family. I just love being here."

In order to teach non-Anishinaabe students, Webkamigad avoids using the immersion technique she was taught. She teaches her students the language phonetically when writing, spelling out how the words sound when pronounced instead of how they are actually spelled. It helps the students be able to speak the language easily, she said.

"It's a really good entry-level class," Petoskey said. "So, going into the next level, I feel very comfortable with it. I'm not overwhelmed."

Student Britney Hill said she took the class because she enjoys learning more about Indigenous backgrounds. Another student, Amanda Scherr, enjoys connecting with the Tribe here.

"It's been really great to learn the language," Scherr said. "My mom and I are both part of the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, but we're not familiar with the language other than, like, a few words, so it's great to learn how to actually speak it and see it used. And to learn more about the kind of cultural background and teachings as well."

With learning in class comes a lot of laughter,

Webkamigad said.

"I make it fun," she said. "I don't want it to be so serious. ... They just have a good sense of humor. We joke a lot, and when we shouldn't either as well, but it's humor. Humor, laughter is medicine, and this is the medicine that I'm teaching as our language."

Webkamigad knows she's doing the right thing by passing the language on to the next generation, and feels the support of her ancestors behind her. She will teach Ojibwe 102 this spring. The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences plans to offer these courses beyond this year.

"I think CMU is on the right path of keeping whatever information we have here, stays here," Webkamigad said. "It's theirs now, not just mine. I'm here to share with them, and they can keep it for the next person to teach."

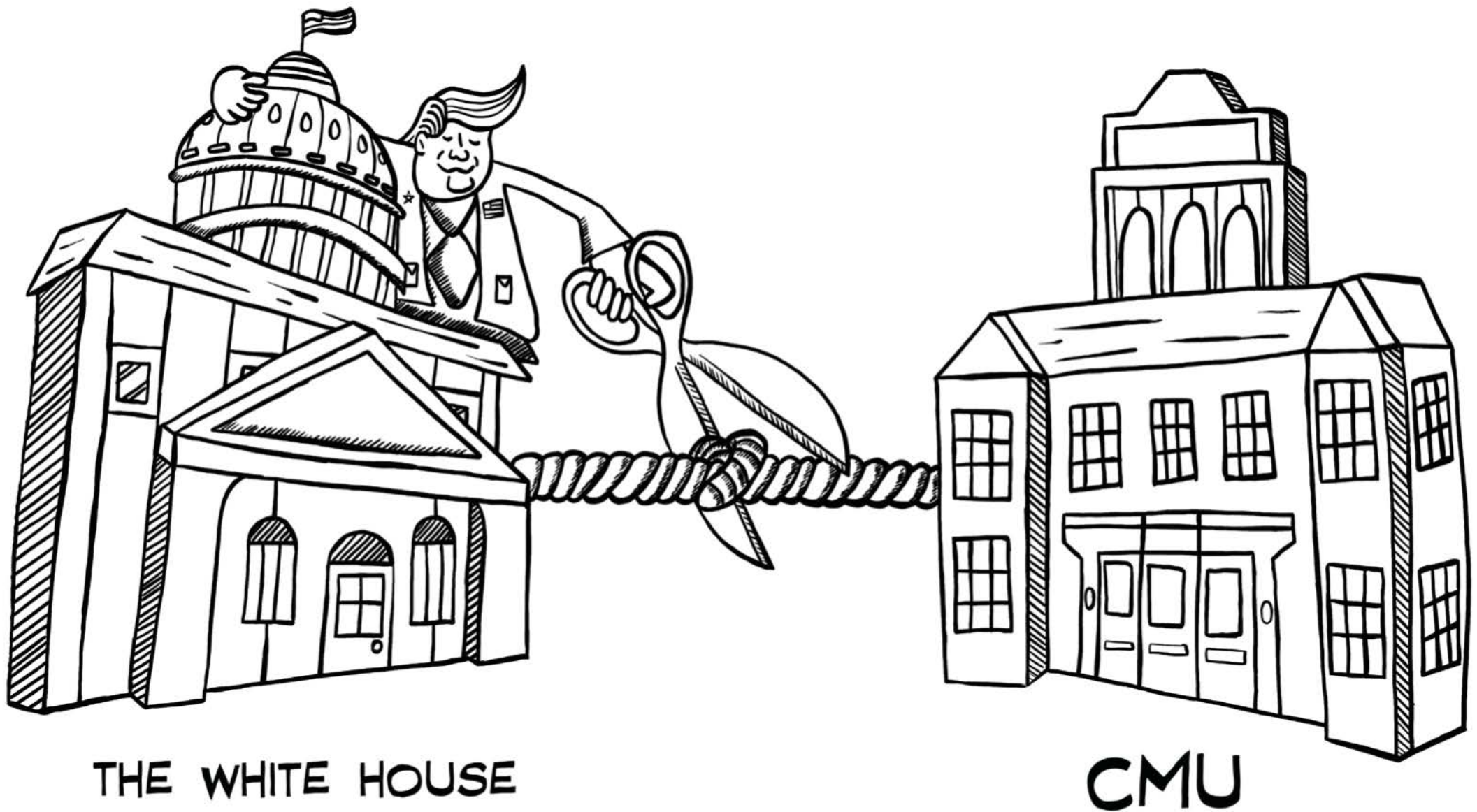
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Change and Challenges



THE WHITE HOUSE

CMU

Cuts and delays

How CMU's grants are being handled by the Trump Administration

By Blace Carpenter
Managing editor

According to university officials, CMU has roughly 200 grants, of which 135 are from the federal government. These grants help fund research and academic projects across campus. However, cuts in federal funding from the Trump Administration and the ongoing government shutdown have caused some hiccups in the university's grant system.

"Slowdowns in funding might most heavily impact the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Medicine in the short-term; however, long-term slowdowns could affect research, creative activity and scholarly work university-wide," Ari Harris, a spokesperson for CMU, said in an email.

CMU Interim Vice President of Research and Innovation, Bradley Swanson, helps academic departments apply for grants for various projects. He said that grant writing for research is planned out nearly a year in advance by faculty and that almost 85% of proposals are rejected.

"Federal grants take a long time," he said. "Nine months is not unusual from when you submit (a proposal and) when you actually hear about it."

With the government's current shutdown, Swanson said it is difficult for faculty members to plan out projects and apply for funding.

"The shutdown is delaying their review of these proposals," he said. "It's just going to add more time before they will hear back on whether they were successful or not."

Another effect of the federal government on the grant system at CMU is the cancellation of funding for already approved grants. Swanson said there are four that have been terminated:

ADVANCE

According to the National Science Foundation, ADVANCE's goal was to "broaden the implementation of evidence-based systemic change strategies that promote equity for STEM faculty in academic workplaces and the academic profession." It was terminated by the National Science Foundation.

MICHIGAN'S INCLUSIVE TRAINING, TECHNOLOGY, AND EQUITY NETWORK (MITTEN)

As part of Michigan High-Speed Internet Office's effort to expand access to broadband internet in rural Michigan, this grant aimed to educate rural citizens on digital literacy and support "the needs of covered populations for workforce development, health, civic engagement and education," according to Swanson. It was terminated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

SARS-CoV-2 epidemiology - wastewater evaluation and reporting (SEWER) network

Funded research efforts on detecting diseases such as COVID-19, influenza, RSV and norovirus through sampling wastewater. It was terminated by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity/ U.S. Department of Commerce.

Diversity Supplement

Aimed to increase a parent grant's overall impact while also "advancing the training and career development" of the recipient. It was terminated by the National Institutes of Health / U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

These terminations are not unique to CMU. Universities across the country have some level of uncertainty regarding grant funding.

Swanson said that research in higher education has allowed the United States to excel in modern science and technology.

"This basic science that we do is the foundation of so much of the advantage that America has had in technology and industry," he said. "It's incredibly important that the U.S. maintain the level of research

expenditures that we have been, if we want to remain the country where people want to come and do their graduate work."



Paige Jaczkowski | Staff designer

A beaker is having money poured into it only to have it dissolving as the funding decreases to the science programs.

Editorial: Understanding policy



Claire Vachon | Videographer

Members of The Society of Professional Journalists poses between Moore Hall and the music building on Central Michigan University's campus.

As students at Central Michigan University, public policy impacts our lives everyday — whether it's through the tuition we pay, the apartments we rent or even just the necessary needs of a college student. Decisions made by lawmakers and local officials don't just shape the future of our university; they shape our future.

CMU's Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists is more than a student organization; it's a community of young journalists learning to understand things that affect our lives. We're writers, storytellers, photographers and more importantly, we are students who believe in using journalism as a tool for accountability.

As part of a national and international organization that encourages free press and ethical reporting, CMU's SPJ chapter is committed to uncovering stories that matter most to our campus and community.

Our members come from diverse majors and backgrounds, but we share a common mission: To seek truth and report it ethically and with integrity.

This year, our focus is on the intersection of government and higher education — specifically, how policies

determined hundreds of miles away directly shape what happens here in Mount Pleasant.

These issues are deeply personal. As students, we feel the weight of these choices, and as journalists, we feel the responsibility to explain them.

According to the SPJ Code of Ethics, The Society of Professional Journalists exists to defend press freedom, promote ethical reporting and empower journalists to serve the public good.

Understanding the policies made by those in charge isn't just for those in politics; it's for anyone whose life is affected by them.

As the academic year goes on, SPJ will release a series of multimedia pieces in partnership with Central Michigan Life. We invite our readers to follow along, ask questions and join the conversation, because your voices matter.

As journalists and as students, we believe that information and awareness are key. By shedding light on how government and local policies affect our university, we hope to inspire the CMU community to stay informed.

Because at the end of the day, these stories aren't just about politics — they're about us.

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The future of financial aid

By Grace Walker
News editor

On July 4, 2025, President Donald Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which would change policies on federal financial aid given to students. A week later, Central Michigan University President Neil MacKinnon emailed all students and staff about what these changes would be.

These changes will not take effect until July of next year. They include:

- Elimination of federal Grad PLUS loans
- A \$100,000 lifetime borrowing cap on federal direct unsubsidized loans for graduate students
- A \$200,000 lifetime borrowing cap on federal direct unsubsidized loans for students in professional degree programs
- Parent PLUS loans are now capped at \$20,000 per student per year. There used to be no cap
- A \$257,000 lifetime borrowing limit on all federal student loans outside of Parent PLUS loans
- Requires institutions to allocate money to students based on their enrollment status. For example, students who are enrolled below the full-time amount will receive loan amounts based on a percentage of the full-time enrollment status
- Pell Grants will no longer be available for those receiving full scholarships

Sarah Kasabian-Larson, the director of scholarships and financial aid at CMU, said that this does not necessarily impact the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), but it will impact eligibility for federal loans. A lot of these changes, she said, were still up in the air.

Many of these changes are being discussed on the federal level about how financial aid administrators should administer laws, and what regulations still need to be placed.

"We're waiting on what it all means, and how this is going to impact us to help our students understand the impact," she said. "We have the laws ... but we don't have how we're going to make this happen or how we're going to administer that. As soon as we do, we'll be sharing that with students so they can start preparing because there are quite a bit of changes here."

Here's what it all means:

Elimination of federal Grad PLUS loans

Graduate students currently have the ability to borrow up to \$20,000 in unsubsidized loans, or loans given to students that are not based on financial need. On top of this, students could borrow a Grad PLUS loan that could cover the cost of whatever money is left if the unsubsidized loans did not cover everything. Those PLUS loans have been eliminated.

Kasabian-Larson said those who are using these federal direct loans before the policy change will not be impacted by these changes. New graduate students will be impacted.

"Now, that doesn't mean they don't have options," she said. "They can look into other options for covering further out-of-pocket costs. If the unsub loan is not enough, they can do a private loan."

Borrowing cap for students in professional degree programs and graduate students

Students in professional degree programs, or programs designed to prepare someone for a particular profession, will now have a lifetime borrowing cap of \$200,000. That cap used to be \$224,000.

Once able to borrow up to \$138,500 in federal direct unsubsidized loans, graduate students now have a lifetime borrowing cap of \$100,000.

Parent Plus Loan

Similar to the Grad PLUS loans, these are additional federal direct loans taken out to cover the cost of whatever is left. Outside of whatever financial aid their child is given, parents can borrow up to their child's cost of attendance, minus their financial aid.

There was no cap on this loan, but now, the cap will be \$20,000.

"That doesn't impact as many students because our cost of attendance is not that high, and then students are receiving other aid," Kasabian-Larson said.

Sets limits for half-time students

Half-time students were once able to utilize federal direct loans, either subsidized or unsubsidized. Now, half-time students will receive an annual limit based on the cost of attendance and other aid, Kasabian-Larson said.

Pell Grants

Kasabian-Larson said Pell Grants will not be available for those receiving a full scholarship.

"This is only really applicable to an athlete," she said. "If they're receiving a full scholarship through athletics, they could receive the Pell Grant above and beyond."

She said this is a rare case.

Jennifer Schisa, the interim director of graduate studies, said that it is hard to predict the impacts of these changes because details are still unknown. Despite this, she says some graduate programs at the university are concerned that enrollment will drop.

"Many of us at CMU are concerned about how the changes in federal policy will impact the ability of graduate students to pay for their education," she said. "Because fewer federal loans will be available to graduate students, many students will need to apply for private loans that sometimes come with higher interest rates, and some students will not be able to pay for a graduate certificate or degree."



Ben Westerhof | Staff designer

Understanding NIL

By Sydney Neal
Sports editor

When college athletes across the country gained the right to profit from their name, image and likeness in 2021, a new era in college sports began. For Central Michigan University student-athletes “NIL” is redefining what it means to wear the maroon and gold.

What is NIL?

NIL, short for Name, Image and Likeness, allows college athletes to earn money through endorsements, social media posts, public appearances, business ventures and other uses of their personal brand.

Before July 2021, National Collegiate Athletic Association rules prohibited student-athletes from making money off their athletic reputation or identity. The change came after years of debate over athlete rights, giving student-athletes control over how their name and image could be used.

Now, players can sign sponsorship deals, promote products online and partner with brands, all while maintaining their college eligibility.

How CMU is handling NIL

At Central Michigan, there is an established Name, Image and Likeness Task Force to help athletes, local businesses and boosters understand the rules and opportunities tied to NIL.

CMU’s NIL policy states that athletes can be compensated for promotional work, brand partnerships, and personal appearances, but all deals must be disclosed through the “ARMS” system (Athletic Resource Management and Software) at least seven days before they begin. The goal is to ensure that every agreement aligns with NCAA and Mid-American Conference regulations.

To support the community side of NIL, CMU also partners with Charitable Gift America to run the Chippewa NIL Fund.

According to the website, student-athletes are encouraged to donate 5% of their NIL earnings to charitable causes of their choice.

While the headlines often focus on million-dollar NIL deals at Power Five schools, mid-major programs like CMU are seeing NIL development as well.

For many Chippewas, NIL opportunities look like smaller partnerships with local companies, social media promotions or appearances at youth sports clinics.

Opportunities and Challenges

According to the NCAA website, NIL can offer many benefits including, endorsing products,



Zoey Lawrence | Senior Designer
Photo Illustration

signing sponsorship deals, engaging in commercial opportunities and monetizing their social media presence, among other avenues.

But challenges remain. Not all sports or athletes receive the same visibility, and the line between fair opportunity and competitive imbalance is still being defined. Compliance rules are complex, and athletes must take careful precautions to not jeopardize their eligibility.

CMU’s compliance office emphasizes that NIL deals cannot be used as recruiting incentives and must be fully transparent. The university’s “NIL Tip Sheet” reminds athletes that all income is taxable and that professionalism is key in every agreement.

Why It Matters for the Chippewas

For a program like CMU’s, operating in the MAC, NIL offers something new: a way to attract and retain athletes who value both opportunity and education.

It also helps bridge the gap between campus and community. By encouraging charitable giving and local partnerships, CMU’s NIL model highlights values of leadership and service alongside competition.

NIL is still evolving, but at CMU, it’s becoming more than a policy, one that lets student-athletes share their story, grow their brand and make a difference beyond the field.

Name, Image and Likeness isn’t just changing the economics of college sports, it’s reshaping how athletes define themselves. At Central Michigan, it’s about empowerment, education and community connection.

And as NIL continues to evolve nationwide, CMU’s approach shows that even in Mount Pleasant, the playing field of opportunity is wide open.

Central Michigan Life wins Pacemaker

Central Michigan Life was named a 2025 Associated Collegiate Press Pacemaker winner, a prestigious award that recognizes journalism excellence. This is the newspaper's 17th editorial Pacemaker.

This year, ACP recognized three editions: "Burning the bottom line," "Holy Cow! That's a lot of methane" and "Final round". These editions earned the title of one of the best newspapers in the nation for CM Life.

CM Life is grateful to its former director of student media Regan Foster and former editor-in-chief Lauren Rice, who led the team to this achievement.

In addition, Ella Miller, photo editor, earned first place for a

photo slideshow "Shepherd Maple Syrup Festival." Miller shot one of the photos from a helicopter.

CM Life has been a Pacemaker finalist 22 times. In total, CM Life now has 20 Pacemakers, including one for its online news site and two for its business team.



Ella Miller
1st Place in Photo Slideshow



Mark Hoover
5th in Sports Feature Photo



**Zoey Lawrence, Ben Westerhof,
Paige Jaczkowskiski**
Honorable Mention in Newspaper/
Newsmagazine
Page/Spread



Masha Smahliuk-Bootz
Honorable Mention in Column writing



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Perez: 'This land holds the blood memory of our ancestors'

By Kasey Perez

Director of the Office of Indigenous Affairs and the Student Transition Enrichment Program

Bozho (hello), Happy Native American Heritage Month! November has been recognized as Native American Heritage Month in the United States since 1990.

Although the 574 federally recognized sovereign tribal nations in America have long celebrated their heritage, it's refreshing to have communities, universities, schools, cities, etc., recognize and learn throughout the month of November about our rich culture.

When it was signed by President George H.W. Bush into law, designating November as NAHM, there was recognition that Native American people were the original people who inhabited this land. We know we have grown this

land, stewarded this land, protected this land. November is a start for everyone else to learn this piece of history and present-day knowledge.

This land holds the blood memory of our ancestors.

Native American Heritage Month (NAHM) gives indigenous people space to bring their art forms forward, space to share who they are and where they've come from.

It's been amazing to see so many wonderful native authors, singers, actors, educators, rappers, researchers and more on CMU's campus. When students attend these events, they are introduced to something they may not have had on their radar beforehand, which can lead them to exploring more about the culture and themselves at the same time.

I feel such a sense of pride when I see the campus community attend NAHM events

and learn about indigenous cultures; the representation taking place matters.

I believe November is just a first step into society learning more about our culture. Learning should take place no matter what time of year; but for us to take back November, the same month that gets recognized as when colonization began with Thanksgiving, that's powerful.

This month for NAHM at CMU, the Office of Indigenous Affairs will host several events for the campus community, including bringing New York Times Bestselling author Angeline Boulley to campus on Nov. 18, having fun with Shi Shi Be (Bodewadmi language bingo) on Nov. 12 and several opportunities to learn about art, food and traditional games throughout.

We look forward to welcoming you and hope you join us this November!

NATIVE AMERICAN

Heritage Month Events

Friday, Nov. 7

- 12:30 pm - Psychological Safety
 - Park Library 413D
- 4pm - Makizinataadiwin (Moccasin Games)
 - CSID, Bovee UC 108

Tuesday, Nov. 11

- 7 pm - Braiding Sweetgrass: Panel Discussion
 - EHS, French Auditorium

Wednesday, Nov. 12

- 6 pm - Shi Shi Be: Bodewadmi Bingo
 - Grawn Hall 100

Tuesday, Nov. 18

- 7 pm - Keynote Speaker: Angeline Boulley
 - Pearce Hall 127

Wednesday, Nov. 19

- 3:30 pm - MMIR Movement Awareness
 - CSID, Bovee UC 108

Friday, Nov. 21

- 6 pm - Reality of Being Indigenous
 - Bovee UC Auditorium 302

Tuesday, Nov. 25

- 4 pm - Two-Spirit Talking Circle
 - CSID, Bovee UC 108

Monday, Dec. 1

- 2 pm - Zhizhobii'an (Paint It)
 - CSID, Bovee UC 108

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Ziibiwing Center connects generations through culture, history

By **Alexandrea Ladiski**
Staff reporter

Tucked along East Broadway Road in Mount Pleasant, the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways stands as what curator and director William Johnson said is a “distinctive treasure.”

Created by the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, the center serves as both a museum and cultural archive, one that Johnson said was built to offer “an enriched, diversified and culturally relevant educational experience” for tribal citizens and the broader community alike.

“Our mission promotes the belief that the diversity and spirit of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe should be recognized, communicated, perpetuated and supported,” Johnson said. “That’s almost verbatim from our mission statement.”

The faculty, staff and community members work daily to preserve Tribal stories, traditions and artifacts. From

archival research to exhibit design, Johnson said the work at Ziibiwing is constant and deeply collaborative.

“Research happens every single day at the Ziibiwing Center on a multitude of projects and topics specific to telling the history and understanding more about our culture,” he said. “The Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School Committee is entrenched in enormous work on behalf of the Tribe, and we have to make sure the information is accurate and presented in a manner that is enlightening and educational.”

Exhibit ideas come directly from the community, rather than through traditional curatorial decisions according said Johnson. He said the center has “thrown the curatorial view out the window” to ensure that the museum truly reflects the people it represents.

Instead of curators dictating what stories are told, the center invites Tribal members to share what they want to see preserved and presented.

That collaborative process, he said, keeps the museum



Alivia Cranick | Staff Photographer

A wigwam is on display at the Ziibiwing Center on Monday, Oct. 27, 2025.

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rooted in the voices of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. Community members contribute ideas, objects and stories that shape educational exhibits for both Tribal citizens and visitors from around the world.

For Johnson, this approach puts cultural ownership where it belongs,— in the hands of the community itself.

Among countless artifacts, one that stands out to Johnson is a miniature canoe carved by Chief David Shopenagon, and donated by a community member. Another, he said, carried a particularly emotional weight: “Boontak! (Stop It),” an exhibit centered on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement.

“That was our exhibit that we just dismantled, and that actual exhibit carries a lot of weight within our Tribal community because of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement that is now encompassing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples,” Johnson said.

He said that it’s a cultural movement gaining traction, across the United States and Canada.

“Being able to have special efforts that are geared towards raising more awareness is very special to Ziibiwing, and to me in particular,” he said.

While the center’s work is extensive, Johnson said the main challenge is finding the time to do it all. Between overseeing federal grants, preservation projects and cultural initiatives such as the Native American Graves

Protection and Repatriation Act, the team’s schedule is full.

Still, he said the goal remains clear: to present the history and heritage of the Anishinaabe. “The Ziibiwing Center of Anishinaabe Culture and Lifeways is designed to present beauty and decency on behalf of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan,” Johnson said. “We have an amazingly robust culture, and I hope that when folks come and visit us, they understand more about our Tribe and our Tribal citizens and our ways of life.”

As one of only two tribally owned museums in Michigan, and recognized as the Midwest’s premier American Indian museum, Ziibiwing offers visitors a rare chance to connect with the First Peoples of the Great Lakes, he said.

Johnson said the Ziibiwing Center is created to share the story of Anishinaabe culture on behalf of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. He said part of his role is ensuring that the center continues to present that history “with no discrimination.”

“I would just encourage those that have never visited the Ziibiwing Center to come and visit the premier, the Midwest premiere, American Indian Museum,” he said. “It’s my job to make sure that we share who we are and where we come from with the people of the world.”



Alivia Cranick| Staff Photographer

Posters and wooden artifacts are displayed at the Ziibiwing Center on Monday, Oct. 27, 2025.

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'On the pitch'

By Sydney Neal
Sports editor

When John Schaefer first watched a rugby match in 2010, he wasn't expecting it to change his life.

He was captivated by the energy, the flow of play and the camaraderie. Fifteen years later, that same passion drives him as the head coach of Central Michigan University's club men's rugby team — the CMU Exiles.

Building a program and a culture

Now in his fourth season coaching the Exiles, Schaefer emphasizes patience, effort and teamwork as his players navigate a sport that can be as confusing as it is demanding.

"When you're first starting out, it's a large beast to try and get your head wrapped around," Schaefer said. "It took me two or three years to really figure it out. I tell my guys all the time — if you want to get good at it, you've got to put in the time."

That mentality has helped CMU's club rugby program grow both competitively and culturally. Though the team's numbers are smaller than they once were, Schaefer said the talent level is higher than ever.

"When I was a player, we had size and numbers," he said. "But the team I'm coaching now, they run a better offense, better defense, their small skills are better. They're just a very, very good team."

The Exiles' recent record backs that up. Over the past two years, Schaefer said the only team that's beaten them is Grand Valley State University — one of the top Division II programs in the country.

Brotherhood beyond the game

For Schaefer, rugby is more than a sport — it's a community. The social traditions that define the rugby world are a cornerstone of the team's identity.

"Rugby has a large social aspect built into the culture," he said. "After every game, both teams get together, specifically at The Cabin, for food, drinks and conversation. It's a chance to hang out and clear the air. What happens on the field stays on the field."

The postgame tradition, Schaefer said, is about more than celebration. It's about connection, a shared respect that transcends competition. Many of his players forge lifelong friendships through these interactions, just as he did more than a decade ago.

"I've got friends I started playing with in 2010 that I still see three or four times a year," he said. "You build friendships that last for life."

Learning, losing and moving forward

When the Exiles lose, Schaefer doesn't focus on the scoreboard. His approach focuses on resilience and growth, he said.

"The only score that matters is the next one," he tells his team. "You're not going to win every game. You're not going to do everything perfectly. The important thing is that the mistakes you made one week don't carry over to the next."

That short-term memory mindset, he said, helps his players bounce back stronger each time.

Team chemistry plays a crucial role in the Exiles' success. From Friday night dinners to film sessions, the players create their own culture of accountability and friendship.

"One of my favorites that I've done is, we had a rainy day last fall, and we took some of those bigger tackle pads, and we had a relay race from one sideline to the other and back, tackling the pad and sliding as far as you could on the wet ground," he said. "And that was a blast. All the boys loved it. It was a great time."

Schaefer steps in when needed but trusts his team to lead from within.

"I think it's important to let the boys develop that themselves," Schaefer said. "It's a disservice if I come in and do everything. There was a guy I played with when I was in college, and he described it as 'Rugby's just a blue collar fraternity.' By the time most of them are sophomores, they're living with other rugby players."

A coach's reward

Coaching, for Schaefer, isn't about winning titles, he said. It's about watching young men grow, both on and off the field.

"It's been really rewarding to see how fast they develop with a little guidance," he said. "Rugby teaches you who you are as a person. You learn resilience, you learn teamwork, and you learn to rely on people around you."

That message is what he hopes to pass on to anyone thinking about joining the sport.

"Just do it," Schaefer said. "It doesn't matter your body type or background ... there's a position for everyone. Rugby is the greatest sport on earth. You'll find out who you are, and you'll build friendships that last a lifetime."



Jasmine Brookins | Staff photographer

The Central Michigan University club men's rugby team prepares for the end of the season with a media day for the fall team at the Rugby Field on Wednesday, Oct. 29, 2025. Photo Illustration.

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