

Dear Chair Ecklund and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to hear about my experience at Zani Otunwe, and for the work you are doing for people in Minnesota. My name is Jacopo Bernier. I am a descendent of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and the Red River Métis. I live in Hugo with my family. I am 13 years old and an 8th grader at New Heights School in Stillwater.

I had the privilege of working with Waziyatawin and others working on Makoce Ikikcupi in November, 2020. I went with my dad, who is a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. His class was working with and learning from Waziyatawin, and I was able to go with him twice. I worked to help dig holes for a fence and plant trees. While I was there I saw Dakota Earth Lodges partially built, because construction had to stop. I was impressed to learn about how these homes can be built using sustainable materials which is how Dakota people used to build their homes.

While I am very honored to have experienced that, I wish that Dakota people were able to build Earth Lodges in their traditional ways. I enjoyed the experience, and am still sad because there are not many opportunities to experience traditional Dakota or Ojibwe practices. This was a great hands on experience that I wish I learned in school.

I am asking you to please support and pass the cultural practices act so Native youth like me can learn more about how to live in a good way with the land. Our environment depends on us to return to these sustainable ways that our ancestors used.

Chi Miigwech, Maarsii. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,
Jacopo "Jack" Bernier
3/18/21

8991 130th St. N
Hugo, MN 55038