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### Expanding Sustainability Perspectives with Poster Art and Dakota Language

Communications and Marketing

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# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS

## Expanding sustainability perspectives with poster art and Dakota language

(October 25, 2024) During her time at UMN Morris, Paisley Sierra '24 worked to grow sustainability efforts, including serving as the student coordinator for the Morris [Intercultural Sustainability Leaders](#) (ISLe) program. Sierra's voice was sought across the region – she was the invited student speaker at Second Nature's Midwest Gathering at the College of Menominee Nation in 2023.

Sierra graduated from UMN Morris with degrees in environmental studies and Native American and Indigenous studies. Sierra is a descendant of the Oglala Lakota Nation.

While at Morris, Sierra sought to create more connections between Indigenous language, ideas, and sustainability. She was also inspired by the [Backyard Phenology Project](#) at University of Minnesota. Sierra grew interested in how Native languages reflected deep connections to the land across the months of the year, unlike the Roman calendar.

So, she started an ambitious poster project, which involved working with [Holly Young](#), a Dakota artist, to create posters for each month of the year in Dakota. Sierra also worked with [Šišókaduta](#) (Joe Bendickson), who teaches Dakota at the UMN Twin Cities, on the descriptions and language. UMN Twin Cities has an online Dakota Language program available to all UMN campuses and UMN Morris has an Anishinaabe/Ojibwe language program.



Sierra explains, “This project aims to promote indigeneity (Indigenous identity), sustainability, and community. My initial vision was to create signage around campus that 1) prompts reflection on the land, the seasons, and the cyclical processes of nature, and 2) raises awareness and provides representation for the people and languages that have long been part of this region. In an era where many of us work primarily in offices or on computers, students often overlook the natural world beyond our

academic environment. We tend to measure time in terms of 'semesters,' 'months,' and 'school years,' rather than through the lens of the natural world's cycles. This project's purpose is to foster a dialogue within our campus community about the environment, as well as Lakota, Dakota, and Ojibwe languages and cultures. It aims to enhance our campus environment and create a supportive space for Indigenous students."

The project was supported by [Dr. Michelle Montgomery](#), External Indigenous Advisor for the ISLe program, "I am excited to support projects like this that amplify Native voices. For many years I have worked with partners to develop an ongoing [Indigenous Speaker Series](#), which is a platform for promoting place-based Indigenous knowledges, Indigenized research, and future generations. This project aligns with those goals. Paisley's project adds an important voice to UMN Morris campus life."

Paisley Sierra's posters can be found in Briggs Library at UMN Morris.

More information about the project can be accessed in Briggs Digital well [here](#).