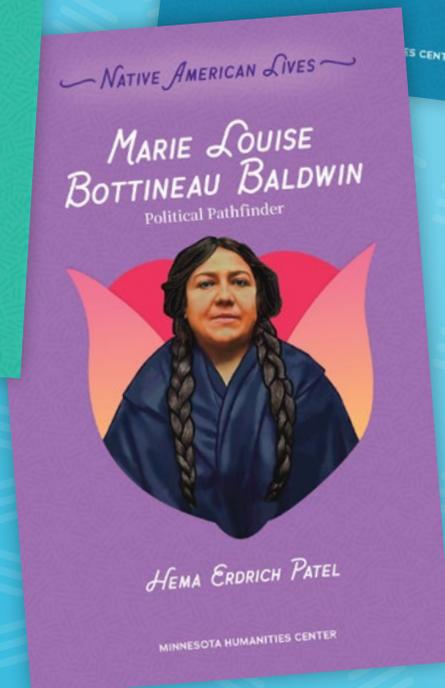
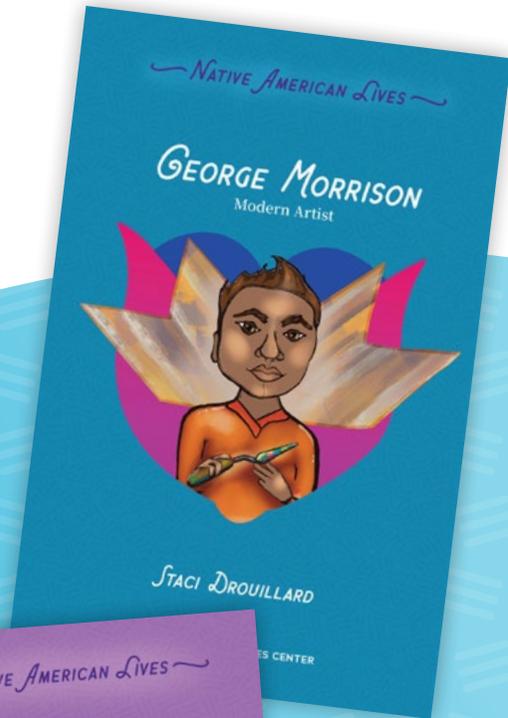


Teaching the Native American Lives Series



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SHAKOPEE MDEWAKANTON
SIOUX COMMUNITY



UNDERSTAND
NATIVE
MINNESOTA



CLEAN
WATER
LAND &
LEGACY
AMENDMENT

This guide was developed by the Minnesota Humanities Center, with generous support from the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community (SMSC) through its Understand Native Minnesota campaign, and is also funded in part by the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund that was created with the vote of the people of Minnesota in November 4, 2008.



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Teaching the Native American Lives Series

Each biography in the *Native American Lives Series* highlights individual resilience and creativity, as well as the challenges Native people have faced. The courage of such leaders continues to shape Native nations today. These stories invite students to see how individual lives reflect larger histories of Native survival, sovereignty, and cultural contributions. Together, the biographies show that Native nations are not only part of the past, but are sovereign, living communities whose leaders continue to shape American life.

Guiding Principles

When teaching these biographies, keep the following principles at the center:

- **Present Native people as whole human beings** — leaders, artists, athletes, family members, and community builders.
- **Connect personal stories to collective histories** — each life reflects the survival, cultural continuity, and knowledge systems of Native nations.
- **Highlight enduring sovereignty** — these biographies are part of the ongoing story of sovereign Native nations and their role in shaping the Americas today.
- **Create space for reflection and dialogue** that acknowledges challenges such as assimilation and racism, while also highlighting strength, resilience, and persistence.



Approaches to Teaching Through Inquiry

The *Native American Lives Series* is well suited to inquiry-based instruction. The following practices can help educators design meaningful, student-centered learning experiences:

Begin with Primary Sources

Spark curiosity and deeper questioning by introducing photographs, maps, oral histories, or artifacts before reading the biography.

Develop Compelling and Supporting Questions

Frame each biography around a big question (e.g. How do individuals contribute to the strength of their communities?) and use supporting questions to guide exploration. Use the Big Ideas identified for each biography to frame your questions.

Situate Stories in Historical Contexts

Connect each biography to local, state, or national histories so students see both continuity and change.

Integrate Multiple Perspectives

Pair each biography with other Native voices, community stories, or tribal nation resources to highlight diverse experiences.

Facilitate Reflection and Dialogue

Create respectful classroom conversations that help students process complex topics and connect them to their own lives.

Conclude with Informed Action

Encourage students to demonstrate learning through civic or creative action, such as exhibits, reflections, or peer teaching.



Extended Learning Resources and Support

The end of each book includes:

Historical Context

Background on the Dakota and Ojibwe peoples, emphasizing their deep connections to Minnesota.

Chronological Framework

A detailed timeline of Native American history spanning from 900 CE through the 20th century.

Reference & Classroom Supports

A glossary of key terms, background information, and teaching suggestions, along with additional resources to deepen understanding of Dakota and Ojibwe history and culture.

Student Learning Extensions

Activities that build on the book's themes, offering opportunities for writing, discussion, and visual projects.

Creator Profiles

Biographical notes on the authors, illustrators, and series editors, all of whom have strong ties to Indigenous communities and storytelling.

Explore more:

Access additional resources, professional development opportunities, and updates about future titles at the *Native American Lives* series webpage

mnhum.org/program/native-american-lives-series





Minnesota Academic Standards Connections

The *Native American Lives Series* connects to many areas of Minnesota's academic standards. Below are examples of Social Studies and English Language Arts anchor standards that align with the series. These titles can also be used to support learning in art, science, and other subjects. We encourage teachers to explore multiple content areas and make connections that fit their classroom.

For complete standards language and grade-level benchmarks, visit the Minnesota Department of Education: education.mn.gov/imde/dse/stds/.



English Language Arts Standards (2020 MN Standards)

Because ELA standards emphasize skills rather than specific content, the *Native American Lives Series* can be connected to nearly any standard within a unit of instruction. The anchor standards below provide especially strong opportunities for connection.

Reading 3 Read and comprehend texts highlighting historical and contemporary Dakota and Anishinaabe perspectives.

Reading 4 Read critically to comprehend, interpret and analyze themes and central ideas.

Reading 6 Analyze how fact, fiction, time, and author perspective influence meaning and style, including Dakota and Anishinaabe voices.

Writing 2 Write routinely for various purposes and disciplines, representing one's own personal perspective, identity and voice.

Writing 7 Engage in inquiry-based learning and research processes.

Listening, Speaking, Viewing and Exchanging Ideas 1 Exchange ideas through discussion and collaboration as listener, speaker, and participant, including diverse perspectives such as Dakota and Anishinaabe voices.



Social Studies (2021 MN Standards)

Specific titles that connect particularly well have been listed after each standard.

CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNMENT

- 3. Rights and Responsibilities** Explain and evaluate rights and responsibilities in democracy. *Baldwin*
- 5. Public Policy** Examine how institutions shape policy and how people and communities take action to influence and solve public problems. *Baldwin, Day*
- 6. Tribal Nations** Evaluate the unique political status and governance of Tribal Nations. *Baldwin, Day, Morrison*

GEOGRAPHY

- 14. Places and Regions** Describe places and regions, explaining how they are influenced by power structures. *Baldwin, Day*
- 16. Human-Environment Interaction** Evaluate the relationship between humans and the environment, including climate change. *Day*
- 17. Culture** Investigate how sense of place is impacted by different cultural perspectives. *Day, Morrison*

HISTORY

- 18. Context, Change, and Continuity** Ask questions about how things change and what stays the same in history. *Baldwin, Day, Morrison*
- 22. Connecting Past and Present** Use history to understand the roots of current issues and design responses. *Baldwin, Day, Morrison*

ETHNIC STUDIES

- 23. Identity** Analyze how power and language shape social identities. *Baldwin, Day, Morrison*
- 24. Resistance** Describe how people fought for freedom and dignity. *Baldwin, Day, Morrison*
- 25. Ways of Knowing and Methodologies** Use Indigenous studies approaches to understand and challenge injustice. *Baldwin, Day, Morrison*



Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin: Political Pathfinder

Author: Hema Erdrich Patel

Illustrator: Tashia Hart

Recommended Use:

Grades 4–8; adaptable as
read-aloud for 1–3

Overview

This book tells the story of Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin (1863–1952), a Métis and Ojibwe woman who became a trailblazer in law,

government, and Native rights. Métis refers to the Red River culture group and nation composed of people of both Indigenous and European ancestry. Born near Pembina, North Dakota, she clerked in her father's law office and fought alongside him for Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa land claims. Baldwin went on to serve nearly three decades at the Office of Indian Affairs, boldly asserting her identity by wearing traditional Ojibwe clothing in her official White House portrait. In 1914, she graduated with highest honors from Washington College of Law, becoming the first Native American woman and woman of color to earn a law degree there. Active in the Society of American Indians, she marched in the 1913 Woman's Suffrage Parade and mentored Native youth—using her career to challenge stereotypes and advance Native sovereignty.



Student Learning Goals

- Analyze how Baldwin's Métis and Ojibwe identity shaped her life and advocacy.
- Understand how Native women used education and legal tools to fight for sovereignty and representation.
- Recognize the intersections of race, gender, and power in early twentieth-century politics.
- Examine how Native leaders worked within federal systems to resist assimilation and promote reform.

Big Ideas to Explore with Students

Native Women’s Leadership – Baldwin’s career highlights the ways in which Native women’s leadership and political influence have shaped U.S. law and policy.

Law and Sovereignty – Her advocacy for Turtle Mountain land claims shows how Native people used legal systems as tools of resistance.

Identity and Representation – Baldwin publicly embraced her Métis and Ojibwe identity in an era that demanded assimilation, modeling cultural pride and self-determination.

Education as Empowerment – Her law degree challenged societal limits.

Advocacy from Within – Through her federal service, Baldwin worked to reform institutions from the inside, paving the way for future Indigenous leaders.



Geographic Context

Baldwin was born near Pembina, North Dakota—a border region where Ojibwe, Dakota, and Métis communities maintained deep ties to land, trade, and kinship despite U.S. expansion. The Red River homeland was a cultural crossroads linking Indigenous nations and French settlers, shaping Baldwin’s blended heritage and political worldview. Her journey from Pembina to Washington, D.C., reflects a larger Native geography of movement, negotiation, and adaptation amid federal encroachment.

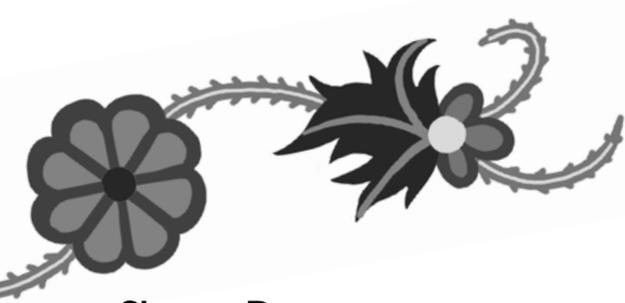
Political Context

Baldwin’s life unfolded during an era of federal assimilation policy and growing Native activism. Working within the Office of Indian Affairs, she navigated systems designed to dismantle sovereignty while advocating for Indigenous recognition, reform, and representation. Her participation in the Society of American Indians and the 1913 Woman’s Suffrage Parade linked her to broader struggles for justice—demonstrating how Native women used professional and political spaces to assert visibility, citizenship, and cultural pride. Her achievements laid groundwork for later movements for Native self-determination and legal advocacy.

Historical Context

From the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Native nations faced land loss, allotment, and cultural suppression under assimilationist federal policies. Amid these forces, leaders like Baldwin redefined resistance—working from within institutions to transform them. Her life bridges major historical shifts: the aftermath of treaty violations, the emergence of Native-led reform movements, and the rise of woman’s suffrage. Baldwin’s story demonstrates how Indigenous women used education, law, and visibility to challenge injustice and open pathways for future generations of Native advocates.





Sharon Day: Water Walker

Author: Pauline Danforth

Illustrator: Tashia Hart

Recommended Use: Grades 4–8;
adaptable as read-aloud for 1–3



Overview

This book tells the story of Sharon Day, an Ojibwe woman from the Bois Forte Reservation whose leadership in health, environmental justice, and cultural renewal has inspired communities across generations. Guided by her grandmother and Ojibwe traditions, and her identity as two-spirit, Day grounded her activism in spirituality and storytelling. She founded the Indigenous People’s Task Force, developed programs promoting Native youth leadership and health equity, and became a leader of Water Walks as ceremony that honor water as a sacred relative. Her story shows how cultural values can guide leadership and inspire environmental and social change.

Student Learning Goals

- Understand how Ojibwe language, spirituality, and traditions shape cultural survival.
- Examine the impacts of foster care, relocation, and assimilation on Day’s and other Native families and communities.
- Recognize the interconnectedness of environmental protection, spirituality, and justice.
- Recognize the leadership of Indigenous women across generations.



Big Ideas to Explore with Students

Native Survival – Ojibwe traditions sustained Day through hardship and became the foundation of her leadership.

Family and Intergenerational Teaching – Day’s approach as an elder providing guidance and teachings to foster resilience and purpose.

Spirituality and Water – Day’s incorporation of ceremonies and Ojibwe teachings affirm water as sacred and central to ecological responsibility.

Activism and Leadership – Day’s story illustrates how cultural values can shape health, environmental, and social change.

Legacy – Day’s practice of storytelling, ceremony, and community action ensure cultural knowledge is passed to future generations.

Geographic Context

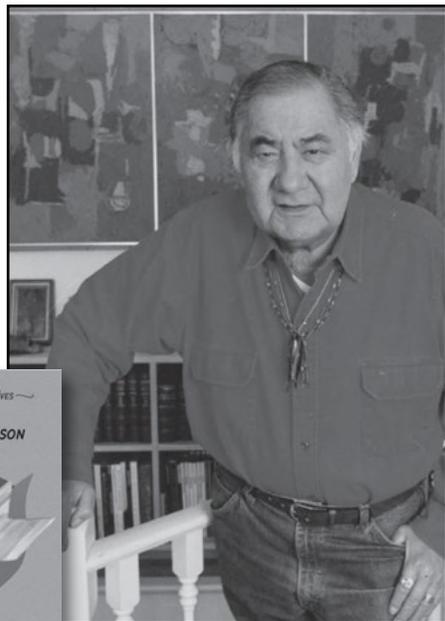
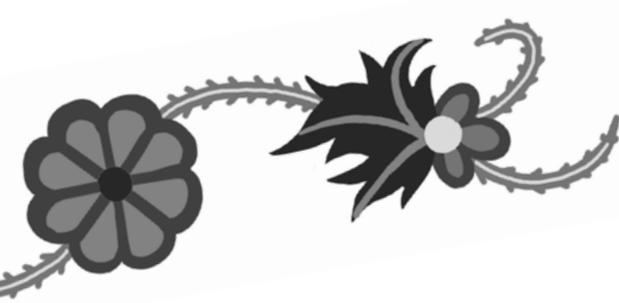
Sharon Day’s roots trace to the Bois Forte Reservation in northern Minnesota, a region defined by forests, lakes, and waterways that connect the broader Anishinaabe homelands across the Great Lakes. The land and water of this territory shaped her worldview and spiritual foundation, grounding her activism in the Ojibwe principles of balance and respect for all living beings. Through Water Walks as ceremony that often span hundreds of miles across rivers and lakes, Day transforms geography into a living expression of cultural responsibility and ecological care.

Political Context

Day’s leadership emerged within the context of twentieth-century federal policies that disrupted Native families through foster care, relocation, and assimilation programs. Her response centers Indigenous sovereignty, cultural healing, and self-determination. Through the Indigenous People’s Task Force and the Water Walk movement, Day exemplifies how Native women lead political and spiritual renewal grounded in traditional knowledge. Her advocacy for clean water, public health, and Native youth empowerment reflects a broader Indigenous movement for rights, healing, and environmental justice that continues to challenge colonial systems of power.

Historical Context

The history surrounding Day’s life reflects generations of Native endurance through government policies aimed at erasing Indigenous identity—from boarding schools and child removal to environmental exploitation. Communities like Bois Forte sustained language, ceremony, and traditional ecological knowledge that now guide cultural resurgence. Day’s work continues this legacy of survival and renewal. By merging ancestral teachings with contemporary activism, she bridges generations of trauma and resilience, reminding us that caring for water, land, and one another is both a sacred obligation and a powerful act of resistance.

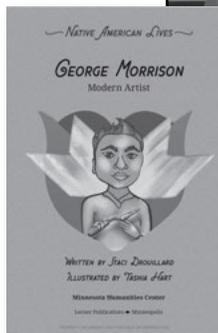


George Morrison: Modern Artist

Author: Staci Drouillard

Illustrator: Tashia Hart

Recommended Use: Grades
4–8; adaptable as read-aloud
for 1–3



Overview

This book tells the story of George Morrison, an Ojibwe artist who was a member of the

Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Born in Nishk-wa-kwan-sing (Chippewa City, MN), Morrison became one of the most celebrated American modern artists of the twentieth century. From his childhood on the North Shore of Lake Superior to his studies in New York and Paris, Morrison mastered Cubism, Expressionism, and Abstract art. His signature driftwood collages and horizon-inspired paintings fused modernist techniques with Ojibwe worldviews. Despite facing racism, poverty, and health challenges, Morrison built an international career grounded in creativity, identity, and community—leaving a lasting legacy as an artist, teacher, and cultural leader.

Student Learning Goals

- Analyze how Morrison's Ojibwe worldview shaped his art and identity.
- Examine how art can express belonging, memory, and sovereignty.
- Recognize Morrison's contributions to modern and contemporary American art.

Big Ideas to Explore with Students

Expansion of American Art—Morrison expanded what American art might include, blending modernism with Ojibwe worldview and reshaping how Native artists are seen in the broader art world.

Survival and Identity — His work reflects how Native peoples sustained culture, memory, and identity despite displacement and assimilation pressures.

Ojibwe Ways of Knowing — Morrison’s art expresses Ojibwe teachings about the interconnectedness of all beings and relationships with land and water.

Legacy and Mentorship — As a teacher and mentor, Morrison inspired future generations of Native artists.

Connection to Place — Lake Superior and Ojibwe homelands shaped his artistic vision and lifelong sense of belonging.

Geographic Context

Morrison was born in Nishk-wa-kwan-sing (Chippewa City) near Grand Marais, Minnesota, a historically significant Ojibwe village along the North Shore of Gichi-Gami (Lake Superior). The horizon line of Gichi-Gami, which appears throughout his paintings and wood collages, symbolizes his enduring connection to Ojibwe homelands and his understanding of art as a bridge between land, spirit, and identity.

Political Context

During Morrison’s lifetime, U.S. federal policies of assimilation, termination, and relocation sought to suppress Indigenous sovereignty and erase Native identities. As an Ojibwe artist educated in Euro-American institutions, Morrison navigated an art world that often excluded Native perspectives or confined them to narrow definitions of what they referred to as simply “folk art.” His success as a modernist artist—and his insistence on remaining grounded in Ojibwe worldview—became a powerful act of artistic sovereignty and cultural resistance.

Historical Context

From the loss of Ojibwe lands through nineteenth-century treaties to the pressures of twentieth-century assimilation, Morrison’s life reflects Native endurance, creativity, and renewal. His journey from a small Lake Superior community to international acclaim illustrates how Indigenous artists transformed histories of erasure into acts of cultural affirmation. Through his abstract art style, Morrison redefined what it means to be both Ojibwe and modern, merging art, identity, and memory into a legacy that continues to inspire generations.





Building Background Knowledge

Use these resources to build your own understanding and to give students richer, more accurate perspectives when teaching the *Native American Lives Series*. While these resources are not comprehensive or limited to Dakota and Ojibwe sources, they're meant to spark ideas and share examples that can help you begin exploring how to teach Native lives in broader, more inclusive ways.

Overall Background Educator Resources

Smithsonian Native Knowledge 360° – Comprehensive background materials and inquiry lessons from Native perspectives.

<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/lessons-resources/search-resources>

PBS Molly of Denali – A children's program and resources that highlight Native voices, stories, and cultures in engaging ways for younger learners.

https://static.pbslearningmedia.org/media/media_files/b362cb0f-09f9-4666-a290-705c826f6a52/da18c97e-700f-445e-96e4-ecaa58001261.pdf

Brenda Child - *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900–1940* (1998)

Minnesota Department of Education – “American Indian Literature Resources” – A starting point for educators to incorporate American Indian literature, with a focus on Anishinaabe and Dakota, into their classes.

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dsel/indian/teach/>

Minnesota Department of Education – “Essential Understandings About Native Arts in Minnesota.”

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/stds/Arts/>

Understand Native Minnesota – Publications to Support Teaching of Native Content – Produced by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, this guide provides K-12 educators in Minnesota with reliable and culturally respectful teaching resources aligned with Minnesota's K-12 academic standards.

<https://www.understandnativemn.org/publications/>



Enhancing Background Knowledge on Each Book

These resources are illustrative rather than exhaustive and are not confined to Dakota and Ojibwe sources. They are offered to encourage broader thinking and provide starting points for teaching about Native lives.



Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin

Women & the American Story – New York Historical, “Life Story: Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin (1863-1952)”

<https://wams.nyhistory.org/modernizing-america/womens-suffrage/life-story-marie-louise-bottineau-baldwin/>

Minnesota Historical Society, “Votes for Women’ Education: Marie Bottineau Baldwin”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK6YnyMTRig>



Sharon Day

TheBody.com, “Sharon Day on Caring for Ojibwe People with HIV Since the 1980s”

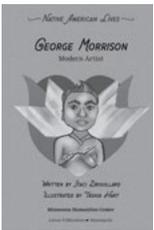
<https://www.thebody.com/article/sharon-day-ojibwe-people-hiv-1980s>

Spirit Aligned Leadership, “Sharon Day Interview”

<https://spiritaligned.org/cultural-atlas-circle-2/sharon-day-asabiikone-zaagaiganiing-2/>

Twin Cities PBS, “Mississippi Water Walkers, Sharon Day”

<https://www.tpt.org/common-ground/video/common-ground-521-mississippi-water-walkers-sharon-day/>



George Morrison

Twin Cities PBS, “Art and Life of George Morrison: A ‘Beyond The Book’ Special”

<https://www.pbs.org/show/art-and-life-george-morrison-beyond-book-special/>

Minnesota Historical Society, “Elizabeth Erickson interview of George Morrison, March 8, 1987.”

Muscarella Museum of Art, “Turning the Feather Around: The Life and Work of George Morrison”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G5h3Ltah0A

National Park Service, “Ojibwe Place Names of the Grand Portage Traditional Territory”

<https://www.nps.gov/grpo/learn/historyculture/north-shore-place-names.htm>



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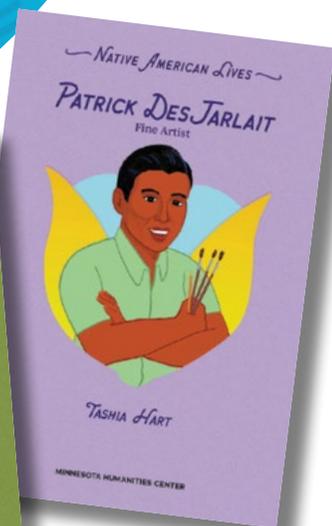
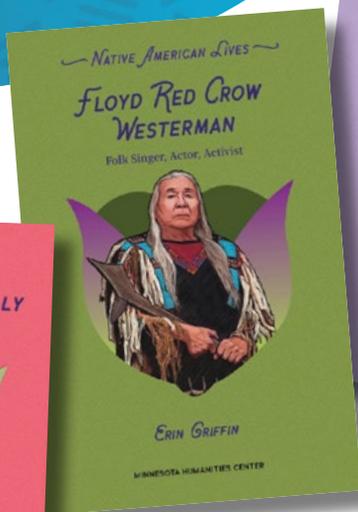
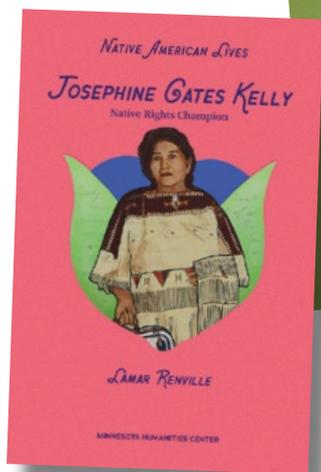
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Coming August, 2026:
new powerful stories you
won't want to miss!



Explore More

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mnhum.org/program/native-american-lives-series



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