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Indian Newspaper Rescued by British

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Nancy's Column

By Nancy Jarvis

Great Britain has come to the aid of a 10-year-old American Indian newspaper, the Nishnawbe News, written and managed by Indian students at Northern Michigan University in Marquette.

The Onaway Trust of Leeds of West Yorkshire, England, awarded a \$1,000 grant to the newspaper, with the trust's goal being to "preserve and restore the cultural heritage of native peoples, particularly North American Indians." The trust also made a \$2,000 grant award to the paper last spring.

NMU says the grant will allow the Nishnawbe News to continue publishing this year in the face of what had been termed a "pretty bleak future." The university has made over \$3.2 million in cuts that would have been felt at the Nishnawbe News, according to Paul Suomi of the NMU News Bureau.

I think it's admirable for Great Britain to realize the importance of a newspaper that caters to Indian interests,

however, I wonder why aid wasn't forthcoming within our country. The paper does circulate in Canada, so perhaps the motherland is looking after the Indian interests there.

Published at least four times a year with a circulation somewhere around 8,000, the Nishnawbe News covers topics of interests to Indians all over the country.

Some front page items have included New Mexico datelines detailing an Apache tribe's successful battle for oil and gas rights on Indian lands, mining developments on Indian land in Wisconsin, and the local controversy over gill netting.

Aside from news, the paper carries an editorial page, features on Indian heritage, educational articles, and some backhome stuff like recipes ranging from acorn soup to various squash concoctions.

"The kids write pretty much whatever they want," Suomi says of the seven member staff. They have an advisor from the news bureau, but he primarily provides information on libel and other legal questions as opposed to dictating what the paper can or should print, Suomi said.

Ideally the newspaper should be self supporting, although many college-operated papers do rely heavily on funding from the university. An increase in the \$5 per year subscription "donation" fee and an ad rate higher than the current \$2 per column inch may help to keep the paper financially solvent. If not, the Indian community itself might support the paper other than through subscriptions and ads.

It is important for the Indian population to have a forum for speaking out in their own way on issues of importance to them. And it's important for the Indians to have exposure to the issues and opinions other Indians consider important. But also critical is support from the people that the paper serves.

As William Randolph Hearst once wrote: "We hold that no person or set of persons can properly establish a standard of expression for others."

Great Britain's trust funding has twice pulled the paper through rough times. Now it's time for the readers to do their part.