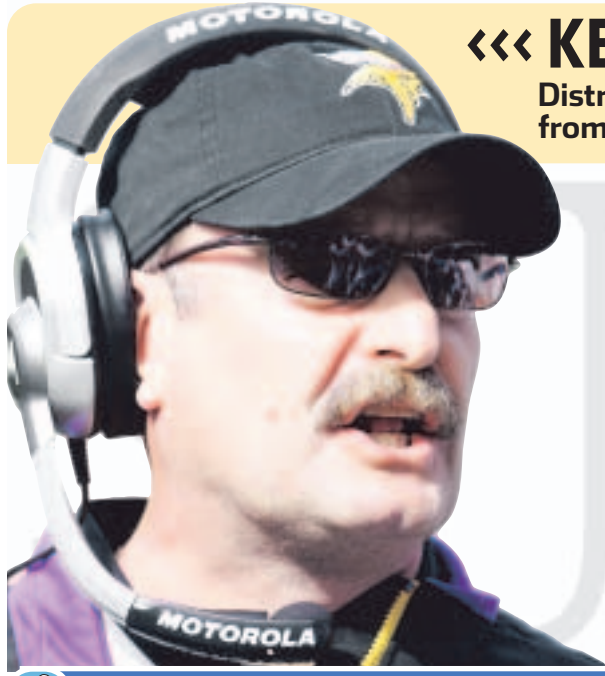


MINNESOTA-DULUTH WINS NCAA DIVISION II FOOTBALL TITLE > 13C

OKLAHOMA QB SAM BRADFORD AWARDED HEISMAN TROPHY > 13C



←←← **KEEPING ON AN EVEN KEEL**

Distractions haven't stopped coach Brad Childress from leading the Vikings closer to the playoffs > 1C

Large grocery stores return to St. Paul > **Business, 1D**

Looking for the perfect gift for music fans? Think inside the box > **Sunday Life, 1E**

St. Paul  
**PIONEER PRESS**

34 high, -3 low > See Page 16C

twincities.com

12-14-2008

\$1

**Nursing home abuses: Why?**

Unsettling reports inspire broad look for what is amiss

By **Jeremy Olson**  
jolson@pioneerpress.com

Following shocking reports of physical and sexual abuse at Minnesota nursing homes, elder advocates and nursing home providers met Friday with one question on their minds.

What are we missing here? While the abuse incidents don't reflect the compassion of most caregivers, they have state leaders re-evaluating everything from the "moral compass" of nursing assistants to the training they receive and the laws that regulate them.

At the Good Samaritan nursing home in Albert Lea, two former workers were accused of spitting at, groping and screaming at residents earlier this spring to make their jobs more fun.

NURSING HOME ABUSES, 8A >

Analysis

**Which states are the most corrupt?**

Hint: Blagojevich's Illinois doesn't even crack the top five

By **Eamon Javers and Fred Barbash**  
Politico

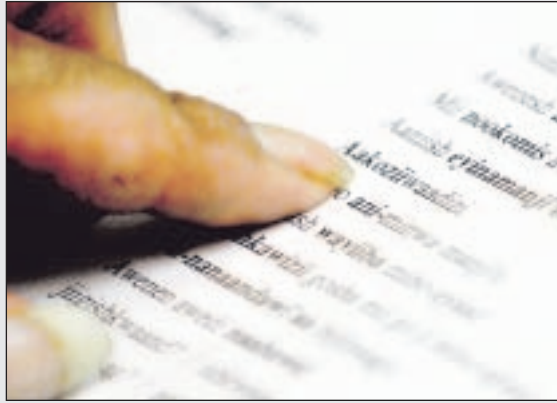
A visibly disgusted FBI special agent Robert Grant stood at a podium in Chicago during a news conference Tuesday, announcing the arrest of Gov. Rod Blagojevich and hurling his contempt at the entire political culture of the state of Illinois.

"If it is not the most corrupt state in the United States, it's certainly one hell of a competitor," Grant said, his disheveled shock of black hair giving some indication of the dramatic and stressful events of the day.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald termed the events leading up to the governor's arrest by the FBI "a corruption crime spree" and said it was "an appalling statement about what's been happening in Illinois government."

So just what is the problem with Illinois?

CORRUPT STATES, 9A >



Schools are keeping the Ojibwe language alive — and the effort shows promise for preserving a culture and helping kids academically.

Saving the words, and so much more

By **Megan Boldt**  
mboldt@pioneerpress.com

Carol Nickaboine pulls out a three-ring binder full of pictures and words, ready to teach the 4-year-olds plopped in front of her a lesson in their native language.

"What is this?" she asks, pointing to a photo of a cow.

After some prodding, she helps the children sound out the Ojibwe word "bizhiki."

"That's where we get our milk from," Nickaboine tells the children. "We get our doodooshaaboo (milk) from a bizhiki."

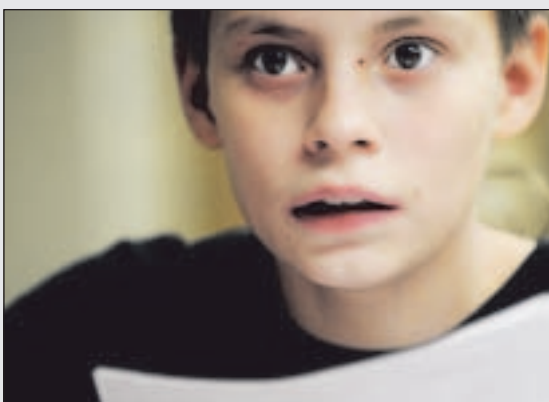
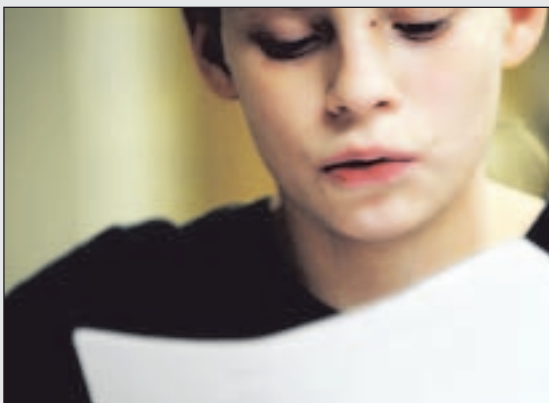
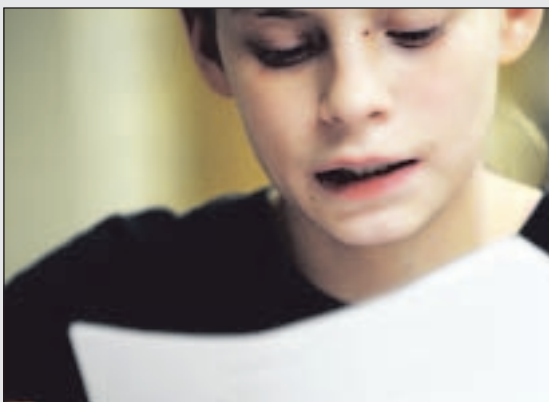
These students are in a Head Start program run by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe outside of Onamia, Minn. But lessons like Nickaboine's increasingly are being repeated across the United States and Canada from preschool to high school to adult education. The goal is to keep the Ojibwe language and culture from becoming extinct, a fate suffered by other aspects of American Indian life.

It's working. In Minnesota schools, enrollment in Ojibwe classes more than tripled from 2001 to 2007 — from 309 students to 1,150. And the benefits go beyond keeping the language alive. Immersion in Ojibwe culture has kept more high-risk students in school, strengthened their connections with their community and, in some cases, boosted their test scores.

Anton Treuer, a professor at Bemidji State University who studies the Ojibwe language and oral tradition, sees the growing interest in Ojibwe as a powerful tool.

"We are plagued by many serious problems, and I see this as one of the most promising ways to combat them," Treuer said.

SAVING THE WORDS, 8A >



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: SHERRI LAROSE-CHIGLO

**Eighth-grader Damien Boyd, 13**, takes a turn reading from a worksheet during a language lesson last month at the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe's Nay Ah Shing school near Onamia, Minn. The band also offers a language program for adults. "We've recognized that we're losing people that are fluent in the language," says Joycelyn Shingobe, the band's education commissioner.

twincities.com > To see more photos in an audio slide show, go to twincities.com.

The recount > Q&A

**Your guide to the rest of the recount**

What is known and what is yet unknowable in the Coleman-Franken race

By **Rachel E. Stassen-Berger**  
rstassen-berger@pioneerpress.com

When the results of Minnesota's U.S. Senate election on Nov. 4 were so close that the winner wasn't clear, state law clearly dictated what to do — head into an automatic hand recount of all 2.9 million ballots.

Since then, things have gotten a heck of a lot murkier and more jargon-laden. On Friday, a state canvassing board recommended counting mistakenly rejected absentee ballots that weren't included in the hand recount. This week, the board will sort through perhaps thousands of challenged ballots to add the votes on many of them back into the recount tally.

To help clear up some of the murk, here are some questions and answers about the recount:

RECOUNT GUIDE, 11A >

Page 11A: Coleman asks court to set standard on rejected ballots.

**Check fine print if you're 'porting' cell number**

Wireless carriers can make hay from transfer — if you let them

By **Debra O'Connor**  
watchdog@pioneerpress.com

A year ago, Terry and Mark Jepperson, of Hudson, Wis., were set to renew their contract with Verizon at the wireless carrier's Woodbury store.

Their sons were home from college for Thanksgiving, and it was a convenient time to take care of that task. They told the Verizon employee they were interested in a particular promotion and worked with him for about an hour to come to a decision on new phones. But when they got to the counter to pay, they found their choices weren't eligible for the special deal after all.

Irritated, they decided to look further and went with a different company,

WATCHDOG, 2A >

**Better service:** Survey suggests Twin Citians are happier this year with their cell phone service. **Page 2A.**

Check it out @twincities.com

See Minnie and Mickey Mouse skate in downtown St. Paul.

See Visanthe Shiancoe talk (for the last time?) about the locker room incident.

Come back after today's Vikings-Cardinals game for photos, analysis and comments.



CONTINUED FROM 1A

## > Saving the words

### PRESERVING LANGUAGE

During the 1930s, many children from the Mille Lacs band were sent to government boarding schools and forbidden to speak Ojibwe. Children who lived on the reservation went to nearby public schools until the 1970s, when they staged a walkout in Onamia schools.

In 1975, the band opened its own school, Nay Ah Shing. Language preservation has been a core part of the curriculum from the start. Babies as young as 6 weeks old hear Ojibwe in the day care programs. Fluent speakers teach infants through 12th-graders every day.

In 2007, the band opened two charter schools — Minisinaakwaang and Pine Grove leadership academies, which also teach Ojibwe language and culture.

At Nay Ah Shing, which has 200 students in K-12, classes include traditional Ojibwe activities such as ricing, netting, trapping and maple sugaring.

"Our tribal leaders feel it's very important to make sure our language and culture are preserved and infused into daily life," said Joycelyn Shingobe, education commissioner for the Mille Lacs band. "We've recognized that we're losing people that are fluent in the language."

Bemidji State's Treuer estimated that of the 25,000 to 60,000 Americans and Canadians who speak Ojibwe, about 90 percent are elders.

Experts say Ojibwe is difficult to learn. Many English letters and sounds don't exist, and there is a double-vowel system.

There's also a glottal stop, which is represented by an apostrophe in the written word. The sound is made from the throat, almost like a hitch in the voice.

There also is no comprehensive Ojibwe grammar book. That's a project Treuer has worked on for the past 15 years. He has been recording the voices of elders in tribes across the nation and Canada.

### PRESERVING TRADITIONS

Jack Kingbird has taught students at every level at Nay Ah Shing. He sees the most progress at younger ages, as research of language instruction has proved, because kids soak up the language like a sponge.

"Their little minds, they're anxious to learn," Kingbird said.

For adolescents in high school, Kingbird said, you have to prompt the curiosity a little more. He makes room for plenty of one-on-one time, sits down at the students' level and keeps talking with them in Ojibwe.

Nay Ah Shing Principal Eric North said the school tries to infuse Ojibwe culture in a variety of subjects.

This fall, for instance, students learned about ricing as part of their science lessons. They went out in canoes, harvested



PIONEER PRESS PHOTOS: SHERRI LAROSE-CHIGLO

**A drumming class for high-schoolers** is one of several courses that teach Ojibwe skills and traditions to students at the Mille Lacs band's Nay Ah Shing school near Onamia, Minn.

wild rice from a lake and learned how to process it. In class, they discussed how the rice grows in the lake, what kind of conditions the rice needs to grow, parts of the rice plant and how much rice to collect to make a pound of cooked rice.

"We try to weave everything together," North said. "They're just like other kids. But by coming here, they might learn some things they can't learn anywhere else."

Brandon Anthony, 16, travels 45 miles from Brainerd to go to Nay Ah Shing. The sophomore said he has stronger relationships with the teachers and likes the smaller class sizes compared with his experience in Brainerd public schools.

He also enjoys the cultural activities the school offers. Brandon is in the school's drumming class as well as the extracurricular American Indian Business Leaders and the Knowledge Bowl team, which tests students' knowledge of American Indian language and history.

"It makes school much more interesting," he said. "I look forward to it."

### 'IMMERSION IS THE BEST WAY'

Many American Indians have felt disconnected from public education.

"Sometimes they feel like they're being whitewashed," said Treuer. "They feel like they have to worship the other and forget themselves and where they came from in the process."

"When kids have an opportunity to learn about their culture and themselves, they gain this self-esteem that spreads to their academics," he said.

He said the result is that the kids stay in school and are excited about it.

Language-preservation efforts go beyond the reservations. The Mille Lacs band also funds



**Instructor Carol Nickaboine** teaches an Ojibwe language class for 4-year-olds last month at Nay Ah Shing. Lessons like Nickaboine's increasingly are being repeated across the United States and Canada from preschool to high school to adult education. The goal is to keep the Ojibwe language and culture from becoming extinct, a fate suffered by other aspects of American Indian life.

language and cultural programs in such neighboring school districts as Onamia, Isle and McGregor that serve sizable populations of American Indian students.

And in St. Paul and Minneapolis, the school districts and charter schools offer Ojibwe language programs starting at the elementary level.

St. Paul opened an elementary magnet program for American Indians in 1992 to

address dismal test scores, school attendance and graduation rates, said Kathy Denman-Wilke, the district's supervisor of American Indian education.

"We felt if we could offer a school that could also focus on their culture, they would be more interested and do better in school," she said. "And they did."

The district expanded the program to Battle Creek Junior High and Harding High

School in 1994. The schools offer Ojibwe language courses as well as classes in American Indian art, music and history.

The elementary magnet program teaches Ojibwe phrases and objects. It also has a Book of the Month program in which elders come in to read and speak to the children. There are three cultural fairs each year.

Denman-Wilke said the St. Paul district would love to offer an immersion program, in which the students are taught primarily in Ojibwe, but there aren't enough teachers fluent in the language.

"Research shows that immersion is the best way for students to learn the language," Denman-Wilke said. "And if our children are strong in their native culture and language, they tend to do better in school."

St. Paul schools received a grant to partner with the Minnesota Humanities Center to develop a K-12 curriculum for Ojibwe and Dakota and to create language-proficiency assessments for use across the state.

The district and the humanities center also are creating language kits that include games, DVDs and grammar booklets to encourage families to speak Ojibwe at home. The kits will be given to families in February. Oftentimes, Ojibwe parents don't know the language.

"I'm Ojibwe, and I don't speak the language," Denman-Wilke said. "We lost that in my family when my grandmother went to boarding school."

Ojibwe tribes also are reaching out to adults who want to learn the language. The Mille Lacs band, for instance, offers an Ojibwe Language Master/Apprentice Program for adults who want to speak the language.

Adult students and their families can attend language-

immersion camps in the summer, and community members can attend weekly language roundtables to practice the language.

"We can teach the language in the school, but when they go home, the language isn't there," Mille Lacs education commissioner Shingobe said.

### IT'S ALL ABOUT RESPECT

Kingbird teaches a drumming class for high-schoolers at Nay Ah Shing. He tells the young men that when they sit around the drums, it's all about respect. The drummers are taking on a big responsibility — they're the messengers, the vehicle for sending spiritual messages.

When he was a young man, Kingbird said, he did not want to recognize the meaning behind drumming and dismissed it as a bunch of men screaming and hollering.

"I understood what they were doing deep down inside," Kingbird said. "I just didn't want to admit it."

Kingbird grew up in Ponemah, Minn., on the Red Lake reservation, one of the most traditional American Indian communities in the state. Even in places like that, Treuer said, only about 10 percent of residents may be fluent in their native language.

Kingbird grew up speaking Ojibwe. He said many elders who are fluent were afraid to speak the language publicly because they were ridiculed.

Now, it's not taboo, and younger members are embracing the language and culture.

"It's changing," Kingbird said. "They're empowering them to come forward. The respect for elders and the culture is really strong and really coming back."

Megan Boldt can be reached at 651-228-5495.

CONTINUED FROM 1A

## > Nursing home abuses

"The Albert Lea situation is extraordinary because of the conspiracy of silence, the number of employees involved, the apparent planning or near-planning of the abusive activities, and the period of time over which the abuses occurred," said Darryl Shreve, a policy analyst for Aging Services of Minnesota, the trade group representing nonprofit nursing homes.

State investigations of nursing home complaints have increased: There have been 342 so far this year compared with 306 last year and 203 in 2005. Confirmed cases of physical, sexual or emotional abuse have held steady. Fifteen abuse cases have been substantiated so far this year, compared with 19 in all of 2007.

The complaint reports detail a wide range of cases, from a slap in one case to prolonged sexual and physical abuse by workers at nursing homes in Montevideo and Albert Lea.

Albert Lea is a case study of

what happens when workers lose all respect for residents, said Dr. Robert Kane, a long-term-care expert at the University of Minnesota.

"Right now, they see themselves as sort of semi-gardeners or groomers whose job is to water and fertilize or whatever as opposed to caring for human beings and recognizing the humanness of these people," Kane said.

Kane credited the leaders at the Albert Lea home for providing mentoring to young workers and other training in the wake of the abuse incidents.

Two workers, Brianna Broitzman, 19, and Ashton Larson, 18, were fired and face criminal charges for the alleged abuse of vulnerable adults. Four other workers, all younger than 18, have been cited for failing to report the abuse, which didn't come to light until one worker mentioned it during an exit interview.

Kane said he sees a cultural change taking place in the creation of smaller four- or eight-bed nursing homes in which residents and workers develop closer bonds. If that spirit can be fostered in larger facilities, he suspects, they will be able

to recruit more workers who care about residents.

"If you're making cookies with them," he said, "you look at them differently than if you're just wheeling them down to dinner."

Part of the problem is the rapidly changing environment of today's nursing homes. Many seniors are staying home with support services as long as possible, leaving nursing homes mostly with residents who are frail and suffering dementia.

The majority of nursing home residents abused this year had some form of dementia, according to state reports. These residents not only suffer confusion, but their loss of memory and communication skills can also make them belligerent. In a couple of instances of abuse, staff members hit residents who had hit them first.

Investigative reports of a worker hitting a resident at another Good Samaritan home in Windom showed that the worker felt justified. The worker has since been fired and charged with abuse.

"(The resident) strikes out all the time and has given me a bloody nose. I just feel like I have a right," the worker told

investigators, according to the report. "I know he's a vulnerable adult. It's hard working with someone that's continually abusive all the time."

Nursing homes must at least comply with a 2003 law to train caregivers on the challenges of caring for dementia patients, said Mark Wandersee, executive director of the Elder Care Rights Alliance. Some are going further by conforming their schedules to residents' quirky habits to make them more comfortable and less likely to lash out.

"Elder abuse is where child abuse or domestic abuse was 30 to 40 years ago," Wandersee said. "Nobody wanted to talk about it."

The encouraging sign following the Albert Lea news is the amount of discussion that has emerged. A national elder-care advocate held a forum in the southern Minnesota town Thursday night. About 50 people showed up to express concerns.

Wandersee's advocacy group was part of Friday's meeting with the leaders of Minnesota nursing home organizations. Ideas discussed included more training for law enforcement on elder abuse and lists of abuse warning signs that

could be distributed publicly.

While the abuses are inexcusable, the Albert Lea case has gained unusual attention because the workers were identified through police reports and their "prom queen" photos were published in the media, said Patti Cullen of Care Providers of Minnesota, the trade group for for-profit nursing homes in the state.

"I'm hoping it's a media frenzy that's an opportunity to change things," she said.

Part of the shock in Albert Lea has been the age of the workers. Minnesota law allows anyone 16 or older to work as nursing assistants if they complete a basic training course or agree to do so upon employment.

At least half of other states set the age limit at 18.

Cullen and others in nursing home care were resistant to raising the age limit, particularly at a time when good nursing assistants are hard to recruit and retain. Many of the best caregivers entered the profession at young ages, she said.

Aging Services of Minnesota is offering a higher-level degree program that elevates nursing assistants to health-support specialists.

Pine Technical College offers a virtual reality simulator that puts nursing assistants in real-life scenarios and challenges them to remain calm and happy while making quick decisions.

"The retaliation against a resident with dementia who lashes out is prohibited," said Shreve, of Aging Services. "How do you prevent it? Training, training, training. But if you're a female nursing assistant providing care to a male resident who suddenly and without warning grabs your breast, the instinctual response might not be the best one."

"The training needs to emphasize watching for signs of agitation, aggressiveness, combativeness, etc., and to stress that you back away from the resident while trying to calm them down."

The U's Kane said training is important. But the latest abuse cases suggest the need to change the entire environments in which caregivers work.

"These are markers," he said, "of the need for a larger revolution."

Jeremy Olson can be reached at 228-5583.