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Meet Tara Houska, a self-described shy, bookish kid from the tiny border town of Ranier, Minnesota, who grew up to be one of the most prolific Ojibwe activists and lawyers of the 21st century.

by Steve Marsh October 18, 2020 For pics: https://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/tara-houska/ *Tara Houska on the bank of the water she's fighting to protect.*

A group of kids pull smallmouth bass out of the river behind Native American lawyer and activist Tara Houska as she answers my questions. I'm sitting with her and her partner, journalist Simon Moya-Smith, at a swimming hole on the Fish Hook River near Park Rapids. In the middle of a sentence about fighting Enbridge's massive Line 3 pipeline project—it's less than a mile upstream—she pulls off her fringed red leather moccasins to dip her toes in the water. Since 2018, she's been living with a group of water protectors on 70 acres of land nearby. It's a resistance camp called the Giniw Collective, after the Ojibwe word for "the golden eagle." As we talked, she recognized that such a playful wilderness setting alone might demonstrate a different side of her than most media outlets see by default.

"People think I'm so angry when I'm being interviewed," she laughs.

Houska grew up in Ranier, where Rainy Lake spills into the Rainy River right across the border from Ontario's legal reserve of the Couchiching First Nation people. She graduated from Falls High and learned the Anishinaabe language at the University of Minnesota before earning her law degree there. She moved to Washington, D.C., and worked for a private firm, where she was able to represent tribes all over the country—and, she says, "learned the importance of being the only Native in the room."

That's right around the time she met Winona LaDuke, eventually going on to work for LaDuke's environmental advocacy group, Honor the Earth. Houska was an Honor the Earth lawyer when she participated in the protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock in 2015. She was among the thousands to be shot with rubber bullets and bitten by attack dogs before ultimately being removed from the land.

Last year, Houska left Honor the Earth so she could focus full time on the Giniw Collective and fighting Line 3. "I'm coming from a real small-town world," she says, "but I'm not quite from the res; I'm from a border town, and it's reflected in what my life has turned into." Houska speaks the language of what it's like to be an Indigenous person in the 21st century: She's part of a Sundance lodge and is studying to become a medicine person while at the same time teaching others how to fight the multinational energy companies and multibillion-dollar NFL franchises that are exploiting her people.

This summer, Washington, D.C.'s NFL team finally dropped the racial slur that was its team name, *and* a federal judge ordered the Dakota Access Pipeline to cease operations. Does this feel like a breakthrough?

I think that the Dakota Access Pipeline situation is a long-standing court process that was winding its way through, even as our camps burned and our people were dispersed. Obviously, the [oil] company is going to fight being decommissioned, but I think that's a little bit different.

The other issue is so tightly tied to what this pandemic and what the George Floyd murder have done to the country.

Where were you when you found out about Floyd?
I was up north on Cass Lake. I keep a cabin when it's really cold at camp—somewhere to warm up. We had just got done sugaring, tapping trees up in Cass, and it was super fulfilling. Then this horrible thing happens. We all obviously felt very pulled to go and be helpful however we could be. A lot of us have done different mutual aid work through the years. It's not just about resisting pipelines or mining; it's about creating a whole system of sustainability. So we went down there for that—*do you want us to march here? Do you want us to stand here? Do you want us to sit in the street and hold space and get shot up by cops? OK, if that's what you want us to do. We're here to follow Black leadership*.

I understand your deference to Black leadership in Minneapolis. But Indigenous people are afflicted with a lot of the same systematically racist realities. Has this conversation broadened to include Natives?
I definitely have a pretty strong stance on what Indigenous and Black solidarity could look like. I think that there's a lot of growing that has to happen on both sides. I think that there is still anti-Blackness in Indigenous communities, and I think there's still a lot of unsurety and siloing in Black communities when it comes to Indigenous people. But when I went to D.C. for the first time and started working on mascots, Dick Gregory was there. Black folks were like, "These are my brothers. These are my sisters. This is a civil rights issue." Those connections are there, and I do think our liberation is tied together.

How old were you when you became woke?
You mean you're not woke when you come out of a town of 199 people?

Ha.
I was a voracious reader. I was homies with all the librarians in town. I used to bike 11 miles to go get books. After graduating, I thought, "I'm going to get out of my town and be the first in my family to go to college and it's going to be crazy." And it was—there were more people on the sidewalk at the U than in my entire hometown. And after undergrad, I took a year off. My partner at the time was like, "You could go to law school." I'd never even seen *Law & Order*. But I like to read, and the law has history and stuff in it.

How did you go from lawyer to activist?
I was activated by the Baby Veronica case—a Supreme Court case where this wealthy couple fought this Native American man for his child that they tried to illegally adopt. This white couple went on *Dr. Phil*, telling their sad story about how their daughter had been stolen from them, even though the Native was trying to fight for his own kid. What really resonated with me was seeing that they were actually winning the narrative by using the media. And then just being in D.C. and seeing the Redskins for the first time. I knew about their name, but I wasn't super involved in that world.

You're not a Vikings fan?
Oh, I'm a huge Vikings fan! Huge. But that fall, I was a first-year associate at a firm. First time seeing the banners and the jerseys. I remember being in a Subway by the law office—the

employees had little Redskins logos on because Subway is the Redskins' "official restaurant." If I were a little kid in this situation, I would feel so disrespected and ashamed. I felt ashamed growing up poor in a mostly white town. I can't imagine what it would feel like growing up in a mostly white town and to have that in your face.

So, what did you do?
I opened a Twitter account and got connected to other Native people, and then we loosely formed this organization called Not Your Mascots. But the first time I was called an activist was before that. *The Washington Post* was getting opinions of Native Americans that live in D.C. They asked me, "Do you think this is offensive?" I was like, "Hell yeah, that's offensive." Then in the paper, they wrote, "Native American activist Tara Houska." I literally hadn't ever been to a protest. Now, I started thinking about going to a protest.

It's depressingly comical that it took decades of work to right such an obvious wrong.
Sixty years. First of all, we're not giving any credit to the Washington Football Team. Dan Snyder was the one saying "NEVER" in all caps seven years ago—suing Native American people for trying to take away his trademark. That guy deserves no thank-you whatsoever. They never wanted to do this. Do you think the team's corporate sponsors got a letter one day and were like, "Oh, that is the right thing to do. We should do that." No. It took millions of people marching in the streets and cities burning and multiple murders of Black men for the conversation of race to finally permeate into corporate sponsorship levels.

Giniw Collective is a resistance camp. What's that?
It's a space that I've helped to create with my friends and comrades and fellow resisters. We grow food, we harvest traditionally, we work and live together. We've hosted a number of training camps where people can come learn about media and art or direct-action tactics or political advocacy or treaty training so that they can be fully equipped to understand not only what Line 3 is but what this is all about. Because it's not just about Line 3; it's not just about tar sands—it's about changing your value system away from an extractive economy into an economy of caring for each other.

Who owns the land?
It's a collective. We have 70 acres held by a separate entity. The way that we operate is the way that a lodge operates—which is you're all sitting equally together in community, and that's a good way to be. Nobody should ever be higher than anybody else.

Post–George Floyd, do you think your fight against the Line 3 pipeline will resonate as a social justice issue?
That's, like, a thing all over Indian Country, right? "Why pipelines?" I mean, there's just so many of them, right? At least to me, I see pipelines as an extractive ideology and the rape of our planet, the rape of our Mother. The idea of expanding their capacity is really not about energy security here; it's about expanding their networks to the rest of the world. And it has so many other pieces to it—an influx of workers to build this temporary thing, bringing in drugs and sex trafficking and all these societal ills to a population that's already been through so much.

For years, epidemiologists warned that we weren't prepared for a pandemic. We ignored their warnings. The same thing is happening with climate change.

I think generally in the world, Indigenous people tend to be very tightly tied to the land. So Indigenous peoples will be the first and worst hit by climate change. You've seen the Amazon on fire, Australia on fire. The entire western half of the country is regularly on fire now. I think that the politicization of the environment is criminal. Water is not political. The clouds are not political. Nature is not political.

The virus is nature.
Nature doesn't decide to only smash the Republicans or the Democrats. And it's something that should have never been politicized, and I think it was a culmination of different actors that made that happen, including Exxon—people that were directly benefiting from its destruction. I think that the "climate hoax" has been deeply embedded into societal fabric.

But because nature is nonpolitical, that also means that people who work with nature are seeing these things. That includes trappers. That includes farmers. They can see that the lakes are warming up. They can see the zebra mussels exploding in the population. They can see that the sturgeon have left. I actually don't see the changes that need to happen happening fast enough to save humankind.

The way that I see the world as an Ojibwe person is that we've been wiped out before. We are deeply, deeply out of balance, and even if we are past the point of no return, we still have to keep fighting for a good world in the time that we have.

Editor's Note: A week after this interview, a U.S. court of appeals reopened the Dakota Access Pipeline while leaving the lower court's order for a new environmental impact study to stand. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

If you have time, google Tara Houska…..so many more important words. sdc

Native ecological traditions. via BAMPFA

A Tik Tok Video Brings Arapaho Man Fame and Fortune

Nathan Apodaca, AKA Doggface42, is a part Mexican, part Northern Arapaho man whose video recently blew up Tik Tok and showed the kindness that people have in their hearts.

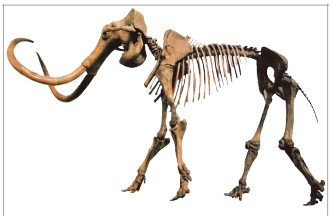
What is he famous for?
Apodaca created a Tik Tok video of himself oh-so-casually gliding down a highway on his skateboard while drinking a bottle of Ocean Spray Cran-Raspberry juice…with Fleetwood Mac's Dreams song in the background.
Pretty random! But a heartwarming story to say the least…
Read More - google nathan apodaca
Best Fleetwood Mac Dreams TikTok videos, thanks to Nathan ...

Today's selection -- from *Wyoming: A History of the American West* by Sam Lightner Jr. American lions and saber-toothed cats once roamed North America, along with giant bison, mammoths, beavers and sloths. Then came the Clovis people, considered to be the ancestors of most of the indigenous cultures of the Americas:

"Clovis people … were a new type of predator in North America, [and] the indigenous animals hadn't developed a defense for their hunting techniques. But it was not just hunting that made this a stressful time for the megafauna of North America. Not only was

there a new predator that used his brain and tools more than teeth or claws, but the environment the animals were adapted to was quickly changing. It was the end of the last major ice age; the climate was getting warmer. What would have been considered heat waves at the time, entire months without a day below freezing, were becoming more common. Streams were carrying more water, and in some cases, overflowing their banks and creating giant lakes. The Great Lakes are examples of this that are still with us. Ocean levels were also rising, cutting off the migration of animals across Beringia. The change in temperature and precipitation patterns meant changes in the flora those animals lived on. In short, the megafauna of the ice age had to adapt in many ways, and many of these species were not able to do so.

"By studying modern elephants, a very close relative to the mammoth, biologists have identified specific problems for the mammoths and they're associated with the hunting of the giant pachyderms. Columbian mammoths lived a long time, but a female only produced a few young in her life. As each animal needed hundreds of pounds of food per day, mammoths tended to roam in fairly small, isolated herds. A hunting party could wipe out an entire herd in a kill site like Colby. Even if not all of the animals in a given herd were killed, a loss of a few more than the herd was adapted to handle could have devastating consequences. By killing just a few members of the herd every year, a so-called 'genomic meltdown' is set in motion. Each surviving animal has fewer mating choices and is forced into inbreeding. The immune system of their offspring is often compromised, leaving weak animals vulnerable to disease. It has been estimated that if hunters killed just 3 percent of the mammoth population each year, the entire North American herd would have been extinct in a couple centuries.



Mammuthus primigenius **"Hebior Mammoth specimen" bearing tool/ butcher marks, cast skeleton produced and dtributed by Triebold Paleontology Incorporated**

"Of course this new predator was hunting more than just mammoths, and those other species would have needed to adapt or go extinct as well. Giant ground sloths and cumbersome bison would have been easy prey for Clovis people when they couldn't find a mammoth. Horses, who had been migrating back and forth between Asia and North America, were elusive but still made it onto the Clovis' menu. Short-faced bears and dire wolves no longer had herds of mammoths as a choice of prey, so they focused on giant beavers and bison antiquus. It was an adapt-or-die-out time, with predators pushing dozens of species to extinction. Around ten thousand years ago, the last of the North American horses died. The giant bison soon followed, as did the beaver, sloth, and numerous other species.

"As the numbers of prey animals died off, the predators who had adapted to hunting those animals found it harder to get enough food. Soon the American lion and sabertoothed cat were starved into extinction. Smaller wolves and smaller bears needed fewer calories than dire wolves and short-faced bears, and thus were at an advantage. The camel went extinct in the New World, leaving the smaller alpaca and llama as descendants. Small bison, perhaps more adept at running from atlatl-using humans, managed to survive, as did the pronghorn, but the North American cheetah did not. Most scientists now believe that the introduction of one super predator had brought about an entirely new ecosystem of smaller animals to North America."

Author: Sam Lightner Jr. Published March 2020 pls 26-17

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Shoppers at Dublin Grocery Store Glimpse Viking History Beneath Their Feet
*(**great** adaptation and exhibit idea)*

A new Lidl boasts plexiglass windows that reveal archaeological wonders, including an 11th-century house and 18th-century staircase

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/dublin-grocery-store-shoppers-glimpse-viking-history-beneath-their-feet-180976150/?utm_source=smithsoniandaily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20201028-daily-responsive&spMailingID=43785556&spUserID=OTYyNTc5MzkyMTQyS0&spJobID=1862341999&spReportId=MTg2MjM0MTk5OQS2

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For when you are shut in
Explore all 62 National Parks in the USA with the National Parks Bucket Journal!
https://mybucketjournals.com/national-park

[Captivating new TED video shows how planting a trillion trees would help reverse climate change]

Trees are one of the most effective ways to fight back against climate change. Like all plants, trees consume atmospheric carbon through photosynthesis then store it in their wood tissue and in the surrounding soil.

They work as an organic vacuum to remove the billions of pounds of carbon dioxide that humans have dumped into the atmosphere over the past century. So, if trees are going to be part of the war on climate change, what strategies should we use to make the best use of their amazing ability to repair the Earth? How can we be sure that after planting these trees they are protected and don't become another ecological victim of human greed?

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Extraordinary technique. "
https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10224176906278436&set=a.4876866247570

15th Century Japanese Technique ...
mymodernmet.com

UC Berkeley is Disavowing its Eugenic Research Fund after Bioethicist and Other Faculty Call it Out

“Regardless of what was done with the money, it was just wrong for us to take it in the first place. It’s antithetical to everything that the school stands for.”

Jenn Woods

This is Chanie Wenjack. 52 years ago today he died, froze to death along railroad tracks trying to walk home after escaping from the residential school that stole him and hundreds of thousands of indigenous children from their families.

He was 12. 

He was just trying to get home.

His story and every child's story deserve to be heard. This was not just a mistake in our distant history. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996.

Reconciliation must be our priority.

Please remember Chanie today and all the children who never made it home.

Sharon A. Habighurst

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They say that a sitting red bird is a guardian angel. I think this image is a sign telling America, that everything is going to be ok!