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A Rainbow Treehopper

Does Minnesota adequately protect water from nitrate pollution? Judge orders agencies to find out

Brown: Sulfate debate yields hard truths and hope for Iron Range jobs

California's farmland program offers water-saving lessons for the Mountain West, experts say

The plan dividing California—turning the Mojave Desert into a green hydrogen giant

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Facing Defunding, Indigenous Cultural Workers Say They Cannot Be Suppressed



This dazzling little creature is a rainbow Treehopper (family Membracidae)

Appearance: With iridescent rainbow hues across its body and striking red legs, this treehopper stands out like a living jewel. Its horn-like extensions even hold shimmering droplets of water, making it look otherworldly.

Defense Strategy: Treehoppers use their bizarre shapes to mimic thorns, seeds, or even fungi, fooling predators into thinking they're just part of the plant.

Habitat: Found mostly in tropical and subtropical regions, treehoppers live on leaves and stems, where they feed on plant sap.

Behavior: They communicate through vibrations sent along the plant stems, a hidden language inaudible to humans.

Fun Fact: Despite their alien-like appearance, treehoppers are harmless to humans and play a role in plant ecosystems. [#WildLife](#) [#Insects](#) [#MacroPhotography](#)

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**Does Minnesota adequately protect water from nitrate pollution?  
Judge orders agencies to find out**

[https://www.startribune.com/does-minnesota-adequately-protect-water-from-nitrate-pollution-judge-orders-agencies-to-find-out/601470364?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=north\\_report&utm\\_term=Duluth?utm\\_source=gift\\_email](https://www.startribune.com/does-minnesota-adequately-protect-water-from-nitrate-pollution-judge-orders-agencies-to-find-out/601470364?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=north_report&utm_term=Duluth?utm_source=gift_email)

**[Brown: Sulfate debate yields hard truths and hope for Iron Range jobs](#)**

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**California's farmland program offers water-saving lessons for the Mountain West, experts say**

"A new approach to addressing water scarcity is underway — one that turns farmland into projects that benefit both people and the environment. Researchers say parched Mountain West states could learn from it. California's [Multibenefit Land Repurposing Program](#) helps farmers transition irrigated land into new uses, such as wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge areas, or even solar farms. The idea is to save water while strengthening rural communities. This offers a more sustainable path forward than simply leaving fields unplanted, which is a common "business-as-usual" strategy, said Gopal Penny, a researcher with the Environmental Defense Fund who co-authored a [study](#) about California's new approach in the journal *Frontiers*. ..."

[Read more from KNPR.](#)

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"We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet, and never before have we had the power to do something about that.

"Surely we all have a responsibility to care for our Blue Planet. The future of humanity and indeed, all life on earth, now depends on us."

David Attenborough. British broadcaster, biologist, natural historian and writer.

The plan dividing California—turning the Mojave Desert into a green hydrogen giant with groundwater and thousands of solar panels

“The Mojave Desert already has renewable aircraft of the future. RIC Energy and the American company Cadiz Inc. have signed an agreement to build a self-sufficient green hydrogen production plant. The goal is to generate up to 50 tons of hydrogen per day. This is expected to be the largest green hydrogen facility in California, United States. This translates into a project of immense scale. Cadiz Inc. will provide land and 600 cubic meters of water to RIC Energy for the creation of green hydrogen. To achieve this, they will use solar energy to supply hydrogen to markets beyond Southern California. The goal is to deliver this energy in the form of fuel for trucks and cars, and ultimately, generate zero-emission electricity. Continuing along these lines, plans call for a self-sufficient, integrated, off-grid green hydrogen production facility utilizing photovoltaic (PV) energy for its supply on up to 1,200 acres of Cadiz Ranch. ... ” [Read more from Pedirayudas.com.](#)

Dwindling water adds pressure for including tribal voices in future Colorado River water plans

“Tribes are seeking to flex whatever legal muscle they have to secure Colorado River water protections, just as forecasts show the resource to continue to disappear in the foreseeable future. The tribes are hoping to gain whatever leverage they can as policymakers negotiate new water plans. More than 30 tribes and seven states utilize water from the Colorado River, which has been experiencing record low water levels from a decades-long drought. Stakeholders are having to rethink their water use and flex their legal claims to the resource as existing water use plans are set to expire. In one case, the Colorado River Indian Tribes are pursuing their own declaration, giving the river the same rights as a person. Tribal advocates say it could better protect the important lifeline that carves through several tribal lands in the arid Southwest. ... ” [Read more from Indianz.](#)

Efforts underway to return greenback cutthroat trout to headwaters of Colorado Rivers

“13 years ago, Colorado’s state fish could only be found in a single stream in the entire state. Today, a coalition of agencies and experts are working to change that. The Poudre Headwaters Project is a 10 to 12-year effort led by Rocky Mountain National Park and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, among other organizations, to restore the greenback cutthroat trout to its native waters — about 40 miles of streams in parts of Rocky Mountain National Park and the Arapaho National Forest. “When it’s all said and done, it’ll be the largest native trout restoration in Colorado,” said Chris Clatterbuck, the natural resource program manager for Rocky Mountain National Park. ... ” [Read more from Ski Hi News.](#)

We take clouds for granted

Gavin Pretor-Pinney writes, “I love the way clouds billow above your head, drift lazily across blue skies and cast fleeting shadows on the ground below. These ever-shifting sculptures of vapor and light are among nature’s least appreciated marvels. That’s why 20 years ago, I started the Cloud Appreciation Society, to remind people to look up. Now climate science is catching up, revealing that clouds aren’t just poetic; they’re pivotal in helping to regulate Earth’s temperature. And their influence on the climate is evolving in ways we’re only beginning to understand. How exactly cloud cover will shift in a warming world is anyone’s guess; it’s one of the largest

sources of uncertainty in climate science. But it should also be everyone's concern. What happens to our clouds as the planet warms is so important that we need a renaissance in the study of clouds. ... ” [Continue reading from the New York Times](#).

Orange rivers signal toxic shift in Arctic wilderness



Photo of the Salmon River by Taylor Rhoades

“In Alaska’s Brooks Range, rivers once clear enough to drink now run orange and hazy with toxic metals. As warming thaws formerly frozen ground, it sets off a chemical chain reaction that is poisoning fish and wreaking havoc on ecosystems. As the planet warms, a layer of permafrost — permanently frozen Arctic soil that locked away minerals for millennia — is beginning to thaw. Water and oxygen creep into the newly exposed soil, triggering the breakdown of sulfide-rich rocks, and creating sulfuric acid that leaches naturally occurring metals like iron, cadmium, and aluminum from rocks into the river. Often times, geochemical reactions like these are triggered by mining operations. But that is not the case this time. “This is what acid mine drainage looks like,” said Tim Lyons, a biogeochemist at the University of California, Riverside. “But here, there’s no mine. The permafrost is thawing and changing the chemistry of the landscape.” ... ” [Continue reading from UC Riverside](#).

26th Annual Pahrump Social Powwow When: Nov. 21-23
Where: Petrack Park, 150 NV-160, Pahrump Cost: Free

Geared for both Native Americans and non-natives, the [Pahrump Social Powwow](#) features three days of dancing and drumming by the [Western Shoshone and Paiute tribes](#). Once called Pahrump’s largest cultural event, it brings Native American tribes together to preserve their cultural heritage. In addition to drummers and dancers in elaborate Native American regalia, the event will feature musicians and craftspeople from tribes throughout the West. Visitors to the powwow experience colorful tribal dances as well as an intertribal dance. You’ll even get to try Native American food.

POPULAR MECHANICS

Archaeologists Found a Smoking Gun Behind the End of the Maya Kingdom's Reign Tim Newcomb Mon, September 8, 2025



The Maya Kingdom Collapsed Due to Burning Events jopstock - Getty Images
Here's what you'll learn when you read this story:

- The discovery of an early ninth century burning event marks a turning point in Maya rule, archeologists say.
- The find is a rare archaeological pinpointing of a historic turning point.
- Burning Maya artifacts, some a century old at the time, was likely a well-attended public event.

Archaeologists discovered clues to a fire in Guatemala from between 733 and 881 AD that they say represents a key turning point in [Maya](#) rule—a very public turning point.

The discovery at the Maya site of Ucanal in Guatemala “marked a public dismantling of an old regime”—a rather pivotal moment in the collapse of rulers and key point in political power that isn’t often shown so clearly from an [archeological](#) find, the authors write in a study [published](#) in the journal *Antiquity*.

The event in question occurred at the capital of the K’anwitznal kingdom near a burial site. The bodies and their ornaments—items include a jewel-adorned stone mask, fragments of a

greenstone diadem, and jade ornaments—were moved from a [tomb](#) to a public burning site, where fire engulfed some of the centuries-old items for all to see.

“This event marked a moment of change in the [kingdom](#) and in the lowlands,” the authors write. “Rather than examine this fire-burning event as a bookend to Maya history, we view it as a pivot point around which the K’anwitznal polity reinvented itself and the city of Ucanal went on to a flourishing of activities.”

The new [leadership](#) regime welcomed a non-royal leader called Papmalil, and there is little in the written record indicating how he came to power. “Papmalil’s rule was not only seminal because of his possible foreign origins—perhaps breaking the succession of ruling dynasts at the site—but also because his rule shifted political dynamics in the southern Maya lowlands.”

The study’s authors, led by Christina Halperin at the University of Montreal, state that Papmalil appears to have ushered in an era of prosperity. Substantial construction occurred in both the civic-ceremonial core and outer residential zones of the city following the power shift.

That new era may have had a dramatic beginning.

The team discovered the fire event during 2022 excavations in the construction fill of a temple-pyramid situated in a public plaza, and the evidence shows that there was no effort to protect the [burial](#) deposit. The team believes that at least four adults were part of the burn remains, and that the fire reached a temperature of over 800°C. Included with the bodies were 1,470 fragments of greenstone pendants, beads, plaques, and mosaics, along with large blades—all representing a “single burning event.” The quantity and quality of the burnt and broken ornaments indicate they came from a royal tomb, likely belonging to multiple individuals.

The team said evidence indicates that the [human bone](#) and ornaments had once been part of the contents of a Late Classic royal tomb, and the deposit was part of a fire-entering rite that “marked the symbolic and literal destruction of an earlier K’anwitznal dynastic line.”

The authors state that the event “appears to have been an act of desecration: it was dumped at the edge of a crude [wall](#) used as a construction pen and no effort was made to protect the fragmented bones and ornaments from the tomb blocks deposited on top of them as construction fill.” It all likely made for a “dramatic public affair” meant to be charged with emotion. “It could dramatically mark,” they wrote, “the dismantling of an ancient regime.”

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Time Inc **[RFK Jr. Releases HHS Report on Children's Health](#)**

The first MAHA report, released in May and titled “Make Our Children Healthy Again,” mentioned ultra-processed foods more than 40 times, blaming them for negative health outcomes in children. The just-released follow-up action plan, which outlines the Trump Administration’s strategy for fixing the problems identified by the first report, mentions ultra-processed foods only once, pledging that government agencies would continue to try to develop a definition for them.

## Facing Defunding, Indigenous Cultural Workers Say They Cannot Be Suppressed

The proposed elimination of the National Endowment for the Humanities threatens Indigenous libraries and arts programs. By [Marianne Dhenin](#),



Jonathan Baca of Northern Colorado, center, dancing with other Native Americans during the 43rd Paumanauke Pow Wow at Tanner Park in Copiague, New York, on August 9, 2025.

J. Conrad Williams, Jr. / Newsday RM via Getty Images

*Truthout is an indispensable resource for activists, movement leaders and workers everywhere. Please make this work possible with a [quick donation](#).*

The Trump administration's efforts to reshape federal cultural institutions as part of a broader attack on what the president [characterizes as "woke"](#) or diversity, equity, and inclusion policies have left many Indigenous arts and culture institutions in a challenging position, according to leaders at those institutions as well as culture workers and advocates who spoke to *Truthout*.

Institutions offering Indigenous arts and culture programming, as well as those centering the histories and culture of other communities of color, are at disproportionate risk of being defunded and further marginalized under the administration's policies. Faced with sweeping cuts to federal agencies that have historically supported cultural programming nationwide, these institutions are dipping into reserves, building new partnerships, turning to their communities for donations, and receiving added support from philanthropic organizations.

"At one level or another, we're all impacted by this," Estevan Rael-Galvez, executive director of [Native Bound Unbound](#), told *Truthout* of his organization's work and others in the field. Native Bound Unbound is a digital humanities project archiving histories of Indigenous slavery in the Western Hemisphere. Still, Rael-Galvez told *Truthout*, the Trump administration's attack on cultural heritage programs "puts all the more fire in my belly to work towards recovering these histories."

### Uncompromised, uncompromising news

The Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums (ATALM) called the proposed elimination of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum

and Library Services (IMLS) a [threat to the future](#) of Indigenous archives, libraries, museums, cultural centers, historic preservation offices, and language programs in the U.S. in April 2025.

Donald Trump ordered the elimination of IMLS's non-statutory functions and the reduction of its statutory functions and personnel to the furthest extent possible under the law in a [March 2025 executive order](#) on "The Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy." The following month, the so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" [terminated tens of millions in grant funding](#) from NEH, which provides funding to thousands of groups nationwide, including museums, historic sites, archives, and libraries.

At the time, NEH said it was "[repurposing its funding allocations](#) in a new direction in furtherance of the President's agenda." Shortly after, the agency clarified that it would not support projects promoting what it called "[extreme ideologies](#) based upon race or gender." When NEH announced a new funding round in August 2025, ATALM noted that seemingly none of the grantees' projects "[incorporates a Native perspective](#) or benefits Native communities." Instead, [the new grant awards](#) mostly fund projects dedicated to former presidents and statesmen, as well as the nation's founding documents.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) also [terminated grants en masse](#) in May 2025, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) announced in August 2025 that it would [cease operations](#) after House Republicans voted to strip \$1.1 billion in funding from the 57-year-old corporation over two years. [Lawsuits have since resulted in the return](#) of some terminated grant funding.

Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra, a Minnesota-based Indigenous artist and cultural extension officer for the [Maya Lenca Nation](#), has seen the effects of lost funding up close. Layoffs at the Science Museum of Minnesota in St. Paul, [due to state and federal budget cuts](#), have left the future of Indigenous programming at the institution uncertain, including an intertribal roundtable that Crisanta de Ybarra co-chairs.

An event in California at which Crisanta de Ybarra was scheduled to present earlier this year was postponed indefinitely after federal funding was withdrawn. "That would have been a really important opportunity for especially Latin American Indigenous refugee communities to get together and talk about the nuances of rematriation," she told *Truthout*. Rematriation refers to the restoration of relationships between Indigenous peoples and their lands and cultural artifacts, including the return of objects and collections.

"Without being able to transmit our traditional knowledge and oral histories ... it feels like we're at the end of a long genocide."

"Without being able to transmit our traditional knowledge and oral histories, unfortunately, it feels like we're at the end of a long genocide, where we still have such a valuable treasure of rich cultural heritage, but we're not able to get together and share it with the next generation," Crisanta de Ybarra told *Truthout*.

Elsewhere, funding cuts have disrupted [Indigenous language preservation programs](#), the nation's only [Hopi-language radio channel](#), [Native American boarding school research projects](#), and a



nationwide network that sought to advance cultural equity by strengthening folklife infrastructure nationwide.

That network, called the [National Folklife Network](#), was launched with a renewable [two-year NEA grant of \\$1 million](#) in 2021 by the [Southwest Folklife Alliance](#), in collaboration with the Alliance for California Traditional Arts and the First Peoples Fund. The alliance is a non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Arizona that researches folklore and offers cultural programming in the Greater Southwest and the U.S.-Mexico Border Corridor.

Maribel Alvarez, the network's director and a professor at the University of Arizona, told *Truthout* that her organization anticipated the grant would be renewed again this October. Instead, without explanation, NEA chose not to renew the program.

Alvarez told *Truthout* that losses like these are about much more than funding. "The money is important because the money makes things happen in communities, but I think the intention is the emptying out and weakening of the space of civil society," she said. "People are not going to stop singing traditional songs because they don't get a grant. However, the possibility of me encountering that tradition bearer in a public square where they're presenting their work and that becoming a bridge for me to know my Indigenous neighbor, that's a thing you can curtail ... The target is not the art form itself. The target is the people who produce it."

Funding cuts are one of the most obvious ways that the Trump administration's policies are disrupting Indigenous cultural production and heritage preservation. But there are others, too: Crackdowns on freedom of expression and immigration, as well as the Trump administration's dehumanizing rhetoric about the nation's communities of color, also contribute to the issue.

"I have been frozen in my work because I am afraid to bring people together. I don't want to put anyone in harm's way," Crisanta de Ybarra, whose performances often gather communities of Indigenous peoples of Latin America who live in diaspora in the U.S. and could be vulnerable to the Trump administration's increased anti-immigrant actions, told *Truthout*. "I'm afraid to do a performance with an audience ... because I don't want the event itself to be flagged."

"I'm afraid to do a performance with an audience ... because I don't want the event itself to be flagged."

The suppression of Indigenous cultural institutions and practices also threatens to worsen community health, according to organizers who spoke to *Truthout*. "A lot of the reason why these services and programs are so valuable for our community is because, during colonization, our people were not allowed to speak their language. They were not allowed to do their prayers or dances. They were not allowed to worship in the ways that they wanted," Almalía Berríos-Payton, marketing and public relations officer at [Native Americans for Community Action](#) (NACA), told *Truthout*. "Cultural well-being is just as important as mental, spiritual and emotional well-being."

Allie Redhorse Young, founder of [Protect the Sacred](#), echoed Berríos-Payton. Protect the Sacred's Connecting the Rainbow program pairs young people living in the Navajo Nation with local elders to learn storytelling and arts traditions in an effort to address disproportionately high

suicide rates among Indigenous youth. “Cultural revitalization and reconnection to culture is a solution to that [and] a protective factor,” Young told *Truthout*. “It reconnects youth to their culture, helps them through this cultural or identity crisis that they’re facing, and helps them feel that they’re connected to a community.”

Indigenous cultural institutions nationwide are committed to resisting this escalating suppression. ATALM launched a survey earlier this year, aiming to quantify the impacts of the loss or reduction of federal funding on tribal cultural institutions and develop solutions. Now, the association is working with the progressive legal organization Democracy Forward to protect IMLS grants for tribal libraries and museums. It is [currently soliciting declarations](#) from individuals who depend on services made possible by those grants as part of that effort.

Additionally, ATALM [recently appointed](#) the first-ever director of the Tribal Library Council as part of its commitment to supporting and advancing the work of tribal libraries nationwide. That hiring was made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation, one example of [philanthropic organizations bolstering](#) cultural institutions that the Trump administration’s rollbacks have threatened.

Berríos-Payton told *Truthout* that NACA accepts in-kind donations and has pursued new partnerships to grow its reach as threats to federal funding for non-profit organizations have increased. Similarly, for Rael-Galvez of Native Bound Unbound, “It’s always about building partnerships, ensuring people know about the project [and] that we have continuous engagement from various partners.”

He told *Truthout* that “grounding [the work] in the community and in people who continue to care about telling these stories, whether it’s family members or an institution,” has given him hope that Indigenous cultural programming and heritage preservation efforts will weather the current administration’s attacks.

Alvarez echoes that cautious optimism. “I think we’ll be surprised, and the nonprofit sector will demonstrate a resiliency that comes from models of cooperation, solidarity, and innovation that are not limited to the 501(c)(3) model.”

“The services have not gone away,” Berríos-Payton emphasized to *Truthout*. “Everyone who works in services that are at risk is doing everything they can to be creative and find ways to continue.”

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS ANNUAL MEETING & MUSEUMEXPO

The AAM Annual Meeting first started in 1906 in New York with under 200 museum professionals and has grown to over 5,000 attendees, becoming the largest museum conference in the United States.

The AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo is the largest museum conference in the world. It is the only event of its scope and scale that brings together museums of all types and sizes—from art and history museums to zoos and botanic gardens—to share ideas

and make transformational connections. It's a place where all museum professionals learn from one another, create partnerships, and leave inspired to make an impact on their museums, communities, and the world.

Session Tracks

The 2026 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo conference programming will be divided into five dynamic tracks:

Museum Essentials and Evolving Practices

New: Core skills and strategies for every area of museum work

This track covers the foundational functions and emerging practices that sustain museum impact. Sessions will share tools, strategies, and peer-driven insights to support professional growth, strengthen operations, and enhance effectiveness across the field.

Museums as Timekeepers

Explore practical strategies for conservation and long-term collections care, governance and institutional planning, and designing programs and partnerships that endure.

Museums as Chroniclers

Sessions will explore strategies for documenting the present, engaging communities in real time, and shaping the historical record with transparency and integrity.

Museums as Time Travelers

This track focuses on how museums transport audiences across eras through immersive storytelling, technology, and design.

Museums as Seers

This track looks at how museums prepare for what's ahead by spotting trends, fostering innovation, and preparing institutions for a resilient future.

The Call for Proposals Closes September 26

SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL

Take the stage at the 2026 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo in Philadelphia, May 20-23. The AAM 2026 call for proposals is open for a couple more weeks.

Submit your best proposal by learning more about the 2026 theme, The Museum Odyssey, as well as the five session tracks, session formats, and tips for how to craft a great proposal.

