

Dr. Treuer shares knowledge of Native American culture at Mayville State

November 28, 2015

MAYVILLE, ND - In the spirit of Native American History Month, cultural awareness, and our own beautiful state's history, Dr. Anton Treuer of Bemidji State University, international speaker and author of 14 books, visited Mayville State University. His visit was successful beyond the expectations of Mayville State organizers. More than 250 students, faculty, staff, and members of the surrounding communities attended various sessions on Nov. 9 and 10. In the limited time available, Dr. Treuer was able to just scratch the surface of Ojibwe cultures, traditions, history, and language in his presentations.



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Anton Treuer addressed a large crowd of MSU students, faculty, staff, and community members in a session held in the MSU Campus Center Luckasen Room on the afternoon of Nov. 9.

Together, the audiences learned about the structure of the Ojibwe language, which can grow and change with the times. For example, tribal leaders create new words by piecing together existing terms that make up the meaning for pants (a new concept for the Ojibwe at one time), computer, etc. The spoken word is rooted deeply in Native tradition. Like many Native cultures, they are working to revitalize their language to ensure its availability for future generations to speak and to read.

The sessions with Dr. Treuer provided a safe place to ask the hard questions and spark conversation - especially during the session entitled "Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians but Were Afraid to Ask" (also the title of his book). People are often afraid of offending others, so they miss out on opportunities to learn and understand other cultures and ways of living.

Nearly 75 students, faculty, and staff from the MSU Division of Education and Psychology participated in various sessions involving the historical treatment of Native Americans on these soils of the Red River Valley. This included their assimilation processes, boarding schools, views of education, and cultural awareness in the classroom.

Treuer explained that there are 10,000 years of Native history in the Americas prior to Columbus's first landing. This was a time when more than two million Taino Indians lived on a small island in the Dominican

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Republic (now known as Haiti). Through 1970, this Native population dropped more than 90%.

He also told of the war across southern Minnesota. The Dakota - U.S. War of 1862 took place between the U.S. military and immigrant settlers and Dakota Indians. Stories like these have often been left out of history books, but they are now starting to come more to the forefront in the education system.

Cultural literature, movies, presentations by experts, and open respectful conversations work together to offer windows to the cultures, histories, and traditions that may be different from what people know. They also offer mirrors through which individuals can more self-aware, see others who are alike, and learn more about roles in the journey through education, acceptance, and sometimes apologies. Books related to these topics, including a handful by Dr. Treuer, can be found at Mayville State University's Byrnes-Quanbeck Library.