

Dear Colleague,

It was recently brought to our attention that an individual who presented as part of a panel during the 2022 Conference in Milwaukee was accused of committing racial fraud. Kay LeClaire, who went by the name of "nibiwakamigkwe," is an artist who claimed to have an Indigenous identity until it was recently challenged by an amateur genealogist. Kay served as a panelist for the conference session titled *From Cultural Appropriation to Cultural Appreciation*.

We were surprised by these allegations and write today not to continue to spin the news story, but rather to address any harm this presenter may have caused for our conference attendees and any confusion caused by this emerging information.

As a professional service organization, we understand the importance of trust in community-building. Any form of dishonesty diminishes those relationships – whether or not it was intended. While our control over content that is presented during breakout sessions at the conference and how that content is presented is somewhat limited, we accept responsibility for their impacts – good or bad. We recognize that we provided this presenter a platform on which to claim authority on a subject that they may not have actually had. We are grateful that an AMM member came forward with this news and confided in us about how the words and actions of this presenter negatively affected them.

We apologize for any negative impacts that the presence, words, or actions of this presenter at the conference may have also had on you or your conference experience.

We asked Kay LeClaire to respond to the allegations and attendee complaints, but they have not yet responded.

This is a learning moment for our organizations that will influence our approach to program planning in the future. We appreciate your grace as we process this news, and we will monitor this story as it continues to develop.

Sincerely,

The Staff and Board,
Association of Midwest Museums &
Wisconsin Federation of Museums

Sources:

- Summary of claims, Wisconsin State Journal/madison.com article "[Allegations that prominent Madison artist masqueraded as Native American spark outrage](#)"
- Summary of claims, Madison365 article "[Madison Indigenous arts leader, activist revealed as white](#)"
- Fraud Accusations, NAFPS Forum Topic "[Nibiwakamigkwe AKA Kay LeClaire AKA Kathryn Le Claire in Madison, Wisconsin](#)"