

THE TACKLE BOX

March 2026

What's in a name? Redrafting DEIJB as Fisheries Community Advocacy and Sustainability



This print from Lindsey Holcomb's Ink Blocks series features overlapping rectangles with pine-needle-like embellishments .

Both AFS Parent Society and North Central Division (NCD) have chosen to rename/name the committees responsible for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) to FishCAST. The NCD FishCAST committee was created to foster inclusivity, community building, and sustainability, while using a name that avoids stigmatized terms like diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). For reasons like these, NCD chose the root words Fisheries Community Advocacy and Sustainability Team for their FishCAST acronym.

In addition to the factors considered by NCD, the Parent Society renamed the DEI committee to Fish Cultural Advocacy and Sustainability Team to focus on improving relationships with Indigenous people and tribal nations. Indigenous communities have needs that stand outside the framework of most diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as their needs are unique. Indigenous people are fighting for self-determination, sovereignty and self-governance



The overlapping slashes of pink, rust, and gray seen in this Lindsey Holcomb painting were inspired by the Cascade mountains.

Awareness Month & Days

- [Bisexual+ Health Awareness Month](#)
- [Women's History Month](#)
- [National Multiple Sclerosis Awareness & Education Month](#)
- [Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month](#)
- [Gender Equality Month](#)
- [Greek American Heritage Month](#)
- [Irish American Heritage Month](#)
- [National Colon Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- [National Kidney Month - Kidney Equity for All](#)
- [International Women's Day - March 8](#)
- [Equal Pay Day - March 26](#)
- [National LGBTQ Health Awareness Week - March 16 - 20](#)
- [World Down Syndrome Day - March 21](#)
- [International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade - March 25](#)
- [International Transgender Day of Visibility - March 31](#)

in their own lands, which is distinct from the battle for diversity and inclusion that other minority groups face.

In 2025, MIAFS DEIJB Committee sent a survey out to the MIAFS membership and received 52 responses. From those results, we found 68% of respondents supported a name change, while those that indicated they were from marginalized groups had even stronger support (78%). Among those in favor of a change, most (59%) preferred “Fisheries Community Advocacy and Sustainability Team” over “Fish Cultural Advocacy and Sustainability Team.” While some respondents believed a new name might make it easier for federal employees to engage, others felt it could signal disingenuous motives or a narrowed focus on Tribal inclusion. Concerns about terminology included “fish culture” having a specific professional meaning and “culture” feeling inclusive to some but alienating to others. When asked if a name change would improve engagement with Michigan tribes, over a third (38%) responded positively overall (rising to 50% among tribal members or employees) though many felt a name change alone wouldn’t significantly impact engagement. Most respondents (78%) said a name change would not affect their ability or desire to engage with the committee. Broad themes emphasized the importance of continued discussion with tribal communities, skepticism about the effectiveness of a name change, and mixed opinions on the proposed names. Details from this survey will be provided in a presentation at the annual meeting during the regular sessions.

Action:

The official name of the MIAFS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging (DEIJB) Committee has been changed to the MIAFS Fisheries Community Advocacy and Sustainability Team (FishCAST). The mission statement and vision statement will be updated to reflect that change, though all other parts of the mission, vision, and general functionality of the committee will remain unchanged.



Surya Bonaly: The Woman Behind the Backflip

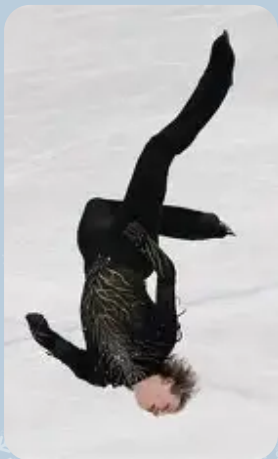
If you have been paying any attention to the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan, there is one name you may have become familiar with: Ilia Malinin, the back-flipping figure skater. It makes sense — the talent and the force necessary to pull off the stunt is simply unfathomable, but then you might remember that this move is not new. In fact, this backwards flip through the air was once landed on a single blade.

Surya Bonaly was not the first athlete to complete a backflip on the ice, but she was the first to successfully land it on one foot at the Olympics in 1998. The French figure skater was known for her powerful tricks and tumbling abilities that she would bring to her routines. Her talent led to many gold medals and championships in Europe and France, but she was unable to cinch the gold standing on a national stage, despite

having more technically difficult routines than her opponents. As the second Black female figure skater to make a national competition, Bonaly was subjected to many microaggressions and blatant racism in the sport. Judges would deduct points because they claimed that her features like her short stature and muscular legs prevented her from mastering the artistry necessary for gold. After receiving her third Olympic silver medal, Bonaly saw the writing on the wall.

The year was 1998 and Surya Bonaly was competing in her final run at the Winter Olympics in Nagano after suffering an injury. She knew she wasn’t likely to win a medal, so she made the decision to shoot for infamy over gold. During her final routine, Bonaly landed the banned backflip on a single skate without so much as a wobble.

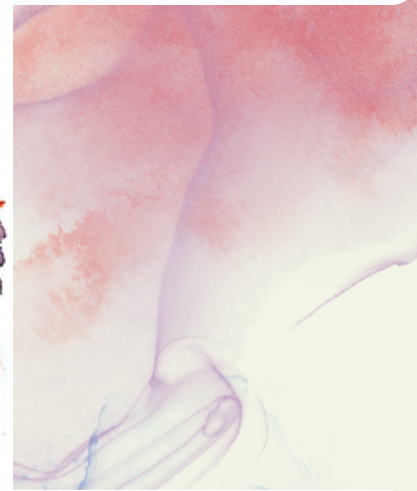
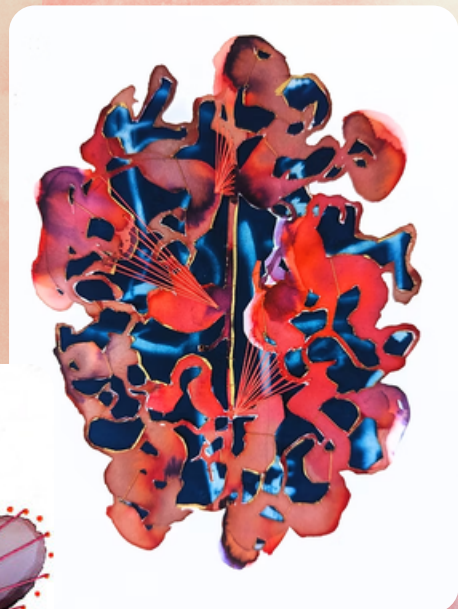
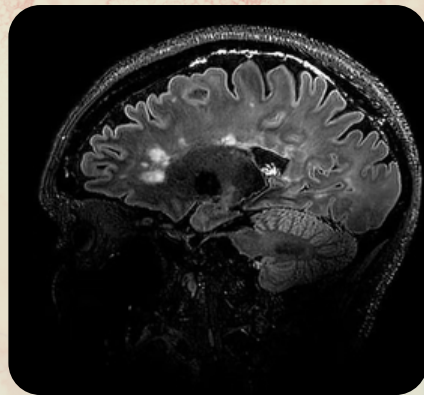
Now, almost 30 years later, the backflip ban has been overturned and athletes like Ilia Malinin have certainly benefited from its wow factor. For Surya Bonaly, however, the move was a statement. After being denied her gold medal for 16 years, she forced the world to recognize her talent and athleticism. She accomplished a move that no one else dared to try.



Top: Surya Bonaly in a sequined costume with performance makeup on; Bottom left: Ilia Malinin performing a backflip during the 2026 Winter Olympics; Bottom right: Surya Bonaly performing a backflip during the 1998 Winter Olympics

Featured Artist: Lindsey Holcomb & the Colors of MS Initiative

Lindsey Holcomb is a Japanese-American multi-disciplinary artist. A talented writer, speaker, and ink artist who uses her skill to provide comfort and fascination to what can be a disquieting circumstance. In 2017, Lindsey was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS), a disease that can result in permanent nerve damage and has no cure. Upon her diagnosis, Lindsey made a decision: it was time to let go of the actions and thoughts that no longer served her, and it was time to create a legacy of work that could possibly help others in her same situation. That is what led Lindsey to create the Colors of MS Initiative. This art movement is meant to empower others with MS to find wonder and beauty in their own minds. Over 300 people with MS have sent Lindsey the MRI scans of their brains that were used for their diagnosis. Using the MRI for inspiration, Lindsey creates an abstract visualization with ink and thread. The remarkably personal pieces are meant to symbolize the unseen resiliency within each mind and the complexity of living with this disease.



“Seeing the lesions that my eye would normally dart away from, I found myself looking closer at my pain because in the pain is beauty too; represented in the gold-colored ink, the abstract depiction of light. Having this piece in my home is a daily reminder to seek the light even when everything seems dark, that despite MS there is beauty inside of me.”

-Alison

A Legacy of Service and Solidarity



A young Private Albert Cashier sits in his Union uniform

We would like to share the story of Albert Cashier, a veteran who not only fought in some of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, but also escaped Confederate capture by overpowering his guard and faced sniper fire to secure a fallen American flag. These feats seem even more extraordinary considering that during his service—and, in fact, for most of his life—he successfully concealed that he had been assigned female at birth. Born Jennie Hodgers, Albert immigrated from Ireland to the United States as a small child.

Though the reasons for his transition are unknown, Albert lived as a man prior to his enlistment in the 95th Illinois Infantry Regiment of the United States Army. Albert was not the only person assigned female at birth to fight in the Civil War; historians have identified more than 400 women who concealed their gender to fight for both the Union and Confederate armies. Some enlisted for the pay—the \$13 per month a soldier received was often more than double what women were permitted to earn at the time—while others, like Albert, served out of patriotism.

After his service, Albert lived a quiet bachelor's life in Saunemin, Illinois, working as a farmhand, street lamplighter, and general handyman.

Records show that he voted in elections, held a bank account, and claimed a military pension—all rights denied to women at the time.

Eventually, Albert moved to a veterans' home for men, where he lived comfortably for several years and received visits from fellow Civil War veterans. He was afforded this comfort because medical professionals in his community chose to honor his gender identity. Unfortunately, when he was later transferred to an asylum due to worsening dementia, that respect was withdrawn. Albert's assigned gender was discovered, and he was made to live his final years as a woman, being forced to wear dresses and use his birth name.

While the way Albert was forced to live during the final years of his life is undeniably tragic, he did not face these struggles without allies. His comrades made numerous attempts to have him transferred back to the veterans' home and to allow him to live openly in accordance with his gender identity. After his assigned sex was revealed, Albert was investigated for fraud by the veterans' pension board; however, in recognition of his service to the United States, the board continued to pay his pension for the remainder of his life. Upon his death, his comrades claimed his body and ensured he was treated with dignity and respect. Albert was buried with full military honors, laid to rest in his Union uniform beneath a headstone inscribed: "Albert D. J. Cashier, Co. G, 95 Ill. Inf."

Albert's story reminds us that transgender people have long served and sacrificed for the United States out of patriotism and a desire to protect the values upon which the nation was founded. It is powerful that, despite

living in a time where it was essentially illegal to be transgender, the veterans' pension board ultimately recognized Albert's service and honored his contributions. Albert and numerous other trans individuals have fought to defend our country and the principles it stands for, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Trans people deserve the same rights that cisgender individuals enjoy, that is they have the right to express their identity the way they choose. Although we recognize International Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31, our commitment to supporting transgender family members, friends, and coworkers must extend beyond a single day. The trans community needs our support now more than ever as they face ongoing legislative and social challenges for choosing to express their identity.

Resources:

- [What trans soldier Albert Cashier can teach Trump about patriotism | The Guardian](#)
- [From Jenny to Albert: The Fascinating Story of Civil War's Trans Soldier | Medium](#)



A portrait of Albert Cashier taken in 1913

Ally Corner: Book Recommendation – 57 Bus

This was the first book I decided to pick up in 2026 and it's the kind of challenge I had hoped to start my year with. The format itself is incredible – short chapters, yet has a way to explain complicated concepts in a non-complicated way.

The book is based on a true story of a crime that occurs between two teenagers in Oakland, California that met on a bus ride. Richard, a Black teen, grew up in an economically challenged area of Oakland and attended a large public school. Sasha, a white, agender teenager, had a middle-class upbringing and attended a small private school. Their lives overlap for 8 minutes when Richard sets Sasha's skirt on fire and is subsequently charged with two hate crimes and faces life in prison. The case gained national attention and thrust these two young people into a spotlight of complicated intersections of race, gender, and socio-economic status

I went into the book blind, not knowing what it was about, yet fully expected to form somewhat of an opinion. And truthfully I only got more confused about what is right and wrong especially within context of what both of these teenagers have gone through and the challenges they have faced in their short lives. However, I think those are the most powerful pieces of literature – that both help you learn and challenge how you think. I highly recommend reading this book as a way to learn more about gender concepts, race, and the flaws within our justice system.



MI AFS Diversity Award Recipients

For their commitment to fostering an inclusive culture and strengthening belonging within the fields of fisheries and aquatic sciences six individuals were honored with diversity related awards at the 2026 annual MI Chapter meeting. Kathleen Quebedeaux, Maggie Haite and Taylor Skiles received the Cisco award, while Anna Matchuk, Sarah Gremmer, and Sarah Menzl were the recipients of the 2026 DEIJB Travel Awards.



Left to right Corey Jerome, Taylor Skiles, Maggie Haite, Dana Castle, and Kathleen Quebedeaux

For their dedicated involvement in the FishCAST committee Kathleen, Maggie and Taylor received the Cisco award. Although they have taken active roles in all the committee's activities, they have been most influential in shaping the Tackle Box and the DEIJB Committee Mentorship program. Through their involvement in these and other committee activities Kathleen, Maggie and Taylor have helped others to build lasting relationships across Michigan's natural resource professionals and have been able to share information that improves the understanding of why diversity and inclusion is key to the future of fisheries and aquatic sciences.



From left to right Dana Castle stands with Anna Matchuk, Sarah Gremmer, and Sarah Menzl

This year the DEIJB Travel Awards were granted to three young professionals for incorporating DEIJB related values in their research, academics, and club activities. While conducting her master's research at Michigan State University, Sarah Menzl actively mentors students, providing skill-building opportunities and modeling how to thoughtfully integrate DEIJB values into research. Her work requires collaboration with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and by incorporating DEIJB principles, she helps ensure that all participants feel welcomed, respected, and heard.

While both Sarah Gremmer and Anna Matchuk hail from Lake Superior State University their approach to DEIJB is slightly different. In their professional role in South Dakota, Sarah Gremmer applies the lessons they learned at Lake State about inclusive education and public outreach, helping to protect aquatic ecosystems for future generations by building trust among researchers, agencies, and community members. As president of the Society of Conservation Biology, Anna Matchuk works to make the field of natural resources more accessible to individuals who may not have had prior exposure to outdoor experiences. To help dismantle invisible barriers, she has led educational programs with the Art Club, organized a snowshoe hike with the Recreation Club, and encouraged students from all majors to participate in invasive species removal events.

We are proud to recognize the efforts these individuals have made to create a more inclusive and welcoming fisheries and aquatic science community. By intentionally cultivating spaces where individuals feel a genuine sense of belonging, regardless of background, these individuals are actively helping to strengthen diversity within the profession. Thank you, Kathleen, Maggie, Taylor, Anna, Sarah, and Sarah, for your service to the Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

In our closing we want to again assure our readers that even though our name has changed or mission has not. We remain committed to recruiting and retaining members from diverse identities and backgrounds; cultivating a chapter culture that ensures every member feels welcome and respected; and work with the Executive Committee to create and advocate for policies and procedures that promote diversity of thought, equity of opportunity, and inclusion of all at the chapter, regional, and international levels.

As always, feel free to reach out if you have feedback, would like to get involved or if you have items you would like to share. You can contact us at mifishcastafs@gmail.com, or [anonymously](#).

Warm Wishes -

Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)