



# Capital Electric COOPERATIVE

## NOVEMBER 2025

The 55th annual United Tribes Technical College International Powwow brought communities together to appreciate Native Americans and their culture. Headlining the event were performers from tribes throughout the United States and Canada competing and displaying artful beauty.



PHOTO COURTESY MARCUS TAKEN ALIVE/UTTC

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# Beauty and culture unite at UTTC powwow

BY WES ENGBRECHT



PHOTOS COURTESY MARCUS TAKEN ALIVE/UTTC

Color guard members lead the grand entry at the 2025 United Tribes Technical College International Powwow.



**T**he annual United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) International Powwow celebration has been a local featured event in Bismarck for 55 years and continues to entertain and amaze those in attendance.

The UTTC International Powwow, held on the college campus in September, is one of the last large outdoor events on the Northern Great Plains powwow circuit. For that reason, this annual event is known as the Home of the Champions.

This year's powwow theme, Building Our Future, Celebrating Our Culture, recognizes those individuals who have led and championed sovereignty and culture as a foundation for the advancement of the Nations.

The pageantry of a powwow is unique and sometimes overwhelming in its beauty. The regalia sourced from individual tribal regions is connected to those regions in its style and coloring. The dances are also specific to tribal regions. This part of the powwow is a much anticipated and well-attended event.

UTTC President Dr. Leander McDonald is proud of what this event means and how it is received by the community.

"We feel this year's powwow has again been a success with so many offerings for spectators. Our staff does a great job organizing and carrying out the work needed to get it done well. We are also thankful to you, the surrounding communities, gathered Nations and all our sponsors, for supporting events week and the UTTC International Powwow through your presence and participation. Any profit generated from the events held throughout the course of this week is given out in student scholarships or contributed to an endowment to ensure this scholarship is available for future students in perpetuity," he says.

The purpose of a powwow is to celebrate Native

American culture and heritage and involves singing, dancing, feasting and the sharing of traditions, stories and crafts. Powwows are also social gatherings for community building, renewing friendships and honoring ancestors, inspiring cultural and personal pride within Indigenous communities, while providing a platform for artisans to sell their work and for cultural exchange between tribes.

Cultural traditions such as values and spirituality are passed from generation to generation during the powwows. Native American communities hold elders in high esteem as they possess the knowledge, both spiritual and cultural, for the growth of all tribal members.

Native American children are sacred gifts who are taught to carry on tribal culture and traditions. Extended family members are included in raising children, so they have the benefit of much knowledge as they grow. Family is at the core of community for each tribe.

UTTC welcomes all to the powwow and looks forward to seeing you again next year. ☺





COURTESY OF MARCUS TAKEN ALIVE

Snow Country Prison Japanese American Internment Memorial



COURTESY/UTTC LIBRARY/ARCHIVE

## Japanese internment camp monument is lasting memorial

BY WES ENGBRECHT

Past memories can be easily forgotten as time rolls on. Painful memories can be eluded as generations pass. Sharing the stories and keeping them alive provides healing to those most affected.

During World War II, the United States was at war with Germany, Italy and Japan. Following the Empire of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order resulting in the incarceration of more than 125,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps located throughout the United States.

Approximately two-thirds of those imprisoned were citizens born in this country. Nearly 2,000 were held at the Fort Lincoln Internment Camp in Bismarck, which is now the location of United Tribes Technical College (UTTC). The camp was closed after the war ended in 1946.

To create a lasting memorial of this period, a dedication was held on the UTTC campus Sept. 5. The dedication focused on a monument, known as the Snow Country Prison Japanese American Internment Memorial. UTTC and Japanese American historians hope to call attention to what incarcerated families suffered and how they resisted persecution by the U.S. government.

The monument was constructed to recognize the common experience shared by Japanese Americans and Indigenous communities who faced forced removal and oppression by the United States. It incorporates both Japanese and Native American design elements.

"This is important work, to not only recognize what happened to our Japanese American relatives, but to ourselves. This memorial will show that we're still here, that we've survived and that now we need to move

**"This is important work, to not only recognize what happened to our Japanese American relatives, but to ourselves. This memorial will show that we're still here, that we've survived and that now we need to move ahead."**

— Dr. Leander McDonald, UTTC president

ahead," says UTTC President Dr. Leander McDonald.

The inside walls of the memorial will display the names of the Japanese Americans imprisoned at the military post. The center features a drum circle shaped like an Indigenous medicine wheel. The site is meant to be a place for community building and collective healing.

The dedication coincided with UTTC's 55th annual International Powwow. The monument will be a lasting reminder for all generations and will encourage them to learn more about that time in history. The public is encouraged to visit the memorial site. It is located on the south side of the UTTC Education Building on the south side of the campus.

Capital Electric Cooperative proudly recognizes UTTC as a cooperative member.

"Our partnership is strong and we value the relationship greatly," says Capital Electric General Manager Paul Fitter. ☈

# Honor Flight wings veterans to Washington, D.C.

BY WES ENGBRECHT

Many of us know a veteran who has served our country and deserves recognition. Capital Electric Cooperative has employed many veterans over the years, and now two of our former longtime employees have been shown the gratitude they deserve as they boarded the Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., trip.

Rich Dunn and Larry Wittmayer spent most of their careers serving co-op members in Capital Electric's service area. What most didn't know is they both served in the Vietnam War prior to joining the co-op.

Dunn, a U.S. Navy veteran, served from 1973 to 1979 as an electronics technician first class.

"I think the attitude of the American people has changed 180 degrees since my service during the Vietnam era. They would tell us when traveling to wear civilian clothes to not agitate the war protests. The Honor Flight restored my view of people, as when we deplaned in D.C., there were hundreds lining the airport of all ages cheering! Very moving. Then back in Bismarck, 1,000 or more greeted us home!" he says.

Wittmayer enlisted in the U.S. Army following his high school graduation in Stanley. Following his basic training at Fort Lewis, Wash., he was stationed in Germany with the 189th Military Police Battalion, where he patrolled ammo bunkers and worked with the German police.

Wittmayer was born on Veterans Day and will celebrate his 74th birthday in November. On the Honor Flight, he felt honored by many aspects.

"It was a wonderful experience. On our way to the Capitol, our bus followed a police escort, which was a true sign of respect," he says.

On the Western ND Honor Flight, veterans from across western North Dakota are flown to Washington, D.C., to visit the national memorials built in their honor. The Honor Flight is currently serving veterans from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, and terminally ill veterans serving during any era.

During the trip, they see the Changing of the Guard ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, Lincoln Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the World War II Memorial. They also get a tour of the U.S. Capitol building. It's a powerful and emotional experience.

This experience is provided at no cost to the veteran. All funds raised have been generously donated by businesses, service organizations, fundraising events and donations from individuals. A donations page is set up on the website, [WesternNDHF.org](http://WesternNDHF.org). There are currently more than 280 western North Dakota veterans on the waiting list. The program is operated solely

by volunteers.

Rich and Larry, we give you honor and gratitude for your military service to our country! ☮



**Larry Wittmayer** visited several memorials in Washington, D.C., including the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial.



**Rich Dunn** visited the U.S. Navy Memorial on Pennsylvania Avenue.

# Committee engages in co-op issues

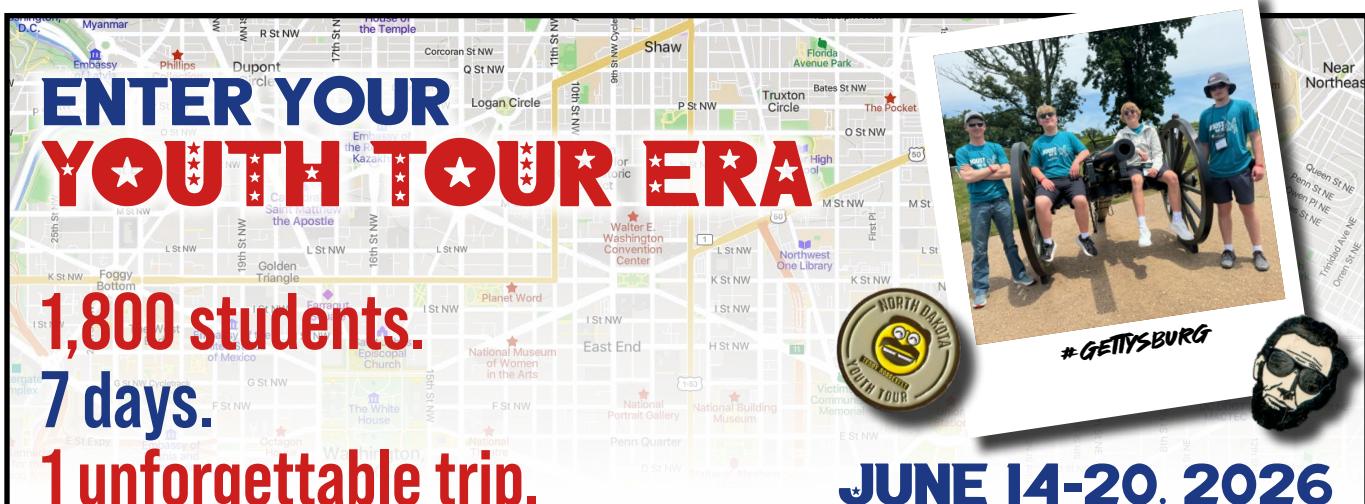
Twice each year, Capital Electric Cooperative's Member Advisory Committee (MAC) holds a meeting to discuss a variety of cooperative issues, ask questions and provide feedback. The most recent MAC meeting was held at Capital Electric's headquarters in September.

The MAC is comprised of members from across our service area who are interested in co-op operations and management. At this meeting, management provided current information and data. Here are some of the topics covered:

- The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association has developed a relationship with Guatemala to provide power to the country. Operations Manager Jeff Holzer will be part of the next trip, assisting other crews from the United States, as they do the work to make this happen.
- Holzer provided updates regarding work being done to improve our system.

- Engineering Manager Greg Owen covered the status of current grants we are working on and the 2025 work plan.
- Business Manager Luke Steen explained rate changes and structure, answering some in-depth questions along the way.
- Josh Schaffner, energy services manager, educated members on cost-savings methods, load controller changeout status and related topics.
- Manager of Communications Wes Engbrecht discussed changes to the 2026 annual meeting and updates on our new website being developed.

Member engagement is vital to maintain a well-functioning co-op model. We welcome you to join this committee and be part of the work we are doing to provide the best, most reliable and cost-effective service for you, our members. Call us at 701-223-1513 for more information. ☺



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**JUNE 14-20. 2026**

**To enter the essay-writing contest:**

- You must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Capital Electric Cooperative.

**Essay question:**  
As member-owned organizations, electric cooperatives are always seeking new ways to engage their members. What are some ways electric cooperatives can better communicate and connect, especially with students and young adults?

**The application deadline is Jan. 16, 2026.**

Questions? Please contact Wes Engbrecht, Capital Electric Cooperative, at 701-223-1513 during regular business hours.

Email entries to Wes Engbrecht at [wese@capitalelec.com](mailto:wese@capitalelec.com) or mail a hard copy to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck, ND, 58503.

**Learn more at [ndyouthtour.com](http://ndyouthtour.com).**



Wing Fire Chief **Frank Hein**, Capital Electric Cooperative Director **Sara Vollmer** and Wing Fire Department President **Jason Bosch**, left to right, were at the check presentation.

## Wing fire department supported by co-op

It was April 2025 when a controlled burn quickly transformed into a raging wildfire in Sheridan County near Highway 14. The fire spread rapidly, resulting in the destruction of nearly 4,100 acres or 6.5 square miles.

During the blaze, two firefighters suffered burns and equipment was destroyed. The firefighters were both treated for their injuries, one being sent to Regions Hospital Burn Center in St. Paul, Minn. Both were at home recovering following the event.

Capital Electric Cooperative provides electricity to rural Sheridan County and seeks to support the area when such an event occurs. Our members are vitally important to Capital Electric, as they are to every electric cooperative across the country.

During the fire, a wildland brush truck was destroyed, as well as extrication tools and equipment. Wing's fire department is a certified extrication unit. The tools are necessary to maintain its certified status. Replacing the extrication equipment is quite expensive, so Capital Electric stepped up to assist in covering the cost.

Capital Electric's board of directors approved a donation, which was matched in full by Basin Electric Power Cooperative and CoBank, an organization providing financing for Capital Electric's operations.

The combined amount donated covered the cost of the extrication equipment.

Fire Chief Frank Hein expressed his appreciation.

"We are thankful for the support from our cooperative to replace this important life-saving equipment," he says.

More importantly, Capital Electric appreciates the opportunity to help with these situations as these firefighters face dangerous conditions to keep our communities and residents safe. ☺

Capital Electric Cooperative is proud to participate in the Mercy Box program to benefit local nonprofit organizations. The organization chosen for each month provides a list of items needed for their mission. Capital Electric collects these items in the red Mercy Box in our lobby. Please visit [www.facebook.com/TheMercyBox/](http://www.facebook.com/TheMercyBox/) for information on the current organization and their needs.

Thank you for your support and know you are making a difference to someone in need.

**THE  
MERCY  
BOX**

## Board minute excerpts **SEPT. 19**

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Capital Electric Cooperative was held on Friday, Sept. 19. The meeting was held in person at Capital Electric, 7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck.

**Also present were:** Manager Paul Fitterer, Business Manager Luke Steen, Engineering Manager Greg Owen, Operations Manager Jeff Holzer, Energy Services Manager Josh Schaffner, Manager of Communications and IT Wes Engbrecht, IT Supervisor Kent Kensmoe and Attorney Zachary Pelham of Pearce Durick PLLC, who acted as recording secretary.

**Minutes and Agenda:** President Deon Vilhauer called the meeting to order. The agenda and minutes from the Aug. 22 board meeting were approved as presented.

**Financial Review:** Prior to the board meeting, Directors Kyle Tschosik and Sara Vollmer reviewed the August check register and expenditures. They advised all checks and expenditures were in order. The financial review was approved as presented.

**Management Reports (Business Department, Operations Department, Engineering Services, Energy Services and Communications/IT):**

**Business Department Report:** Steen presented the August financial and statistical report to the board.

Revenue was behind budget for August, as \$4,472,080 was generated in comparison with the budgeted figure of \$4,506,524 (unfavorable variance of \$34,444 or 0.8%).

Capital Electric's August power costs were over budget for August by 1.5%.

The operating margin for August was -\$168,749, ahead of the budgeted amount of -\$217,182. The total margin for August was \$15,465, which was behind the budgeted \$663,204.

Capital Electric began billing 29 new services in August, bringing our active services to 22,633 versus 22,445 at this time last year, or a net increase of 165 accounts over the last 12 months.

The cash flow statement was reviewed.

**Estate Retirements:** Following review of the financial condition of the cooperative and recommendation by management, payment of seven capital credit estate retirements totaling \$3,821.21 was approved.

**IRS Form 990 and Form 990T:** Steen reviewed tax Form 990 and 990T, which were approved as presented.

**Operations Report:** Holzer reviewed the written report from the operations department. Holzer reported crews are completing installation of power for 25 new lots at the Elk Ridge third subdivision and nearly completed work on the conversion of overhead to underground line on the University of Mary hill.

**Safety Report:** There were no lost-time accidents since the last board meeting. A North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) safety instructor met with line crews for a field visit in September. The safety report was reviewed.

**Engineering Services Report:** Owen reviewed the written report from engineering services. Twenty-five work orders were completed in September. Owen reported on ongoing and upcoming projects, including work on rerouting the primary line for University of Mary's new athletic complex, conversion of overhead to underground line in the Imperial Valley subdivision and continued work of the overhead to underground Highway 36 crossings.

**Township Franchise Agreements:** Owen reported on agreements with Painted Woods and Thelma townships, which were approved as presented.

**Property Closing Documents:** Owen reviewed closing documents for the 43rd Ave. property and the closing documents were approved as presented.

**Energy Services:** Schaffner reviewed the energy services report. Schaffner reported multiple onsite billing investigations were conducted, development of a cold-climate energy efficiency training curriculum and work on multiple large scale geothermal projects were done in September.

**Communications and IT:** Engbrecht reviewed the communications report. Engbrecht reported on the Member Advisory Committee meeting, upcoming local pages articles in *North Dakota Living* and various community interactions held in September. Kensmoe reviewed the IT report and reported on updates related to Capital Electric's server upgrade.

**University of Mary:** Fitterer reviewed a request for University of Mary's Vision 2030 Capital Campaign.

**2026 Load Forecast:** Steen reviewed the 2026 load forecast report. Following discussion, the load forecast resolution was approved as presented.

**2026 Budget:** Steen reviewed the 2026 preliminary budget and no action was taken. Steen reviewed the need for a rate increase for 2026. Following discussion, the 2026 rate increase was approved as presented with the understanding minor adjustments may be necessary at the October meeting to reflect any changes that are passed down from the wholesale power provider.

**Policies:** Fitterer reviewed Policy IV-08 Energy Conservation. Following discussion, it was approved to amend the policy as presented. Fitterer reviewed the Rural Energy Savings Program and the consensus of the board was to submit an application to participate in the program. Steen reviewed Policy IV-06 Billing, Collections, Delinquencies and Disconnections and the policy was approved as presented.

**Basin Electric Power Cooperative:** Fitterer reported on Basin Electric matters.

**Central Power Electric Cooperative:** Dave Charles reported on Central Power Electric matters and noted the Bismarck outpost is now operational.

**NDAREC:** Vilhauer reported on NDAREC.

**National Rural Electric Cooperative Association:** Fitterer reported on an upcoming regional meeting.

**RESCO:** Fitterer reported Director Vilhauer was elected to the RESCO board of directors. By consensus, Charles was selected as delegate for the upcoming RESCO annual meeting.

**National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC):** Fitterer reported on NISC matters.

**Industry Update:** Fitterer reviewed materials related to power markets and general cooperative news. ☺

**CAPITAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**  
7401 Yukon Drive, Bismarck, ND 58503  
Website: [www.capitalelec.com](http://www.capitalelec.com)

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

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**OFFICE HOURS:**

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Office phone: 701-223-1513

Toll-free: 888-223-1513

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