

Missoula Big Sky whips Billings Senior in debut

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China, Russia, India show unity at Tianjin summit

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INDIGENOUS CONTEMPORARY ART

# ‘REWRITING THE RULES’



SHANNA MADISON PHOTOS, MISSOULIAN

“Split War Shield” by Corwin “Corky” Clairmont in the “Good Relations” exhibition at the Missoula Art Museum on Friday, Aug. 29 in Missoula.

## Missoula Art Museum exhibit offers window into dynamic work of Native artists

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Contemporary Native American art is more visible than ever in media, museums and galleries around the U.S. and abroad. Nicholas Galanin, a Tlingit and Unangax from Alaska, turned the Hollywood sign on its head for an installation that read, “Indian Land,” an image that circulated far outside of the art world into mainstream social media feeds. A sculpture by Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke/Crow) was displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., later finding a home at the Tippet Rise Art Center in southcentral Montana.

Those are just a few examples from recent years. Locally, Missoula Art Museum draws on its holdings for a new exhibition, “Good Relations: Contemporary Native Artists in the MAM Collection,” a show that can work as an introduction to the myriad avenues that Indigenous artists have been exploring for the past several decades.

According to MAM’s executive director, Brandon Reintjes, Indigenous artists defy easy

categorization. A contemporary piece might include allusions to cultural heritage, politics and mediums like beadwork and ledger drawings, along with techniques and ideas from myriad other sources.

“The exciting thing about contemporary Native art is that it’s rewriting the rules about what art is and can do,” said Brandon Reintjes, MAM’s executive director. Creators take on difficult subjects like patriarchy and colonization, or make art for art’s sake, through complex and individual approaches.

“Visual representation is really vast and really experimental, and so what you see is things that are challenging the status quo, that are expanding the language of visual art, that are pushing the boundaries,” he said.

It’s a “fast-moving” area of contemporary art, said senior curator John Calsbeek. Nowadays, there’s both more attention from media and cultural institutions, but artists have been working in this vein for decades. Unlike

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“Recycled Warrior” by Dwight Billedeaux in the “Good Relations” exhibit at the Missoula Art Museum on Friday, Aug. 29 in Missoula.

## Dems lose candidates to GOP on local level

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As Democrats at the national and state level grapple with the party’s identity, their counterparts in Cascade County continue losing candidates to the other side.

County Attorney Josh Racki announced Thursday he will run for his third term as a Republican after holding the post as a Democrat since 2018.

The transition is the third time a sitting Democratic official in Cascade County has declared for the GOP since 2021.

Racki broke the news on social media with a video denouncing the left’s embrace of the “Defund the Police” movement, which is considerably washed out of the current political lexicon but remains salient with Montana voters.

“For a long time now I’ve been feeling that way,” Racki said in a phone interview on Thursday.

The county prosecutor’s office is hardly, if ever, a political pulpit. Still, he said the move does realign him with the local community, which has trended further to the conservative side in recent election cycles.

“That was one of the reasons I did it,” Racki said. “Especially at the national level, the Democrat Party does not represent the values of Montana. And it wasn’t always that way, but it appears to be now.”

Racki said his new alignment has less to do with any personal shift and more to do with the Democratic Party’s

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## Horse law shields Paws Up from suit

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A luxury ranch in western Montana is shielded from a Connecticut doctor’s lawsuit stemming from injuries he sustained on a guided horseback ride, the state Supreme Court ruled this week.

In a 4-3 decision issued on Tuesday, the court’s majority found the Montana Equine Activities Act barred Gerard Girasole, an orthopedic surgeon, from seeking damages against Paws Up Luxury Ranch Resort because his injuries resulted from the inherent risks of horseback riding.

In this case, Girasole and his wife traveled to Montana in 2022 to vacation at the dude ranch east of Missoula. Girasole signed an assumption-of-risk agreement before he mounted Reba, who a Paws Up employee described as a “good, easy, steady-going horse” who had been safely ridden by children.

But roughly 20 minutes into the ride, Reba stumbled and fell to her front knees, throwing Girasole’s body forward as she stood up again. The jolt injured Girasole’s spine and pelvis, and court documents note he was life-flighted to Seattle for surgery.

When Girasole sued the resort in 2022, he claimed negligence on behalf

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