

Looking in Many Directions

I AM CAPTIVATED by this photo included in *Minnesota 2000*, a photo documentation project on the cusp of the new millennium that challenged 12 photographers to document 12 different aspects of our state. Dude, the young man in the center of the photo, looks squarely at us, dressed in regalia reflecting his community's deep ties to the past. At the same time, as a young Native man, he is the future of his people. The wooden post in the center visually separates Dude from his uncle, Donovan, who is looking outside the frame to an unknown future. The others in the photo shut us out and look away.

Minnesota 2000 contains 369 significant photos like this one by photographer Joseph J. Allen. His contributions to the project illuminate Native American life in the Twin Cities. Allen photographed Donovan Goodman and his nephew Dude Goodman at the Shakopee community powwow in August 1999. Other images in the series show Donovan getting married, his wife Terry cooking fry bread, and other aspects of everyday life in the community. Together they weave an intimate portrayal of urban Native American life.

Allen's subjects knew and trusted him, important elements for good documentaries. He is one of only a few Native American photographers in Minnesota, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe who currently lives on the White Earth Ojibwe Reservation. During the documentation for the *Minnesota 2000* project, he was a photojournalist, editor, and publisher for *The Circle* newspaper



"Donovan and Dude, Shakopee Community Pow Wow, August 1999," by Joseph J. Allen. (MNHS)

in Minneapolis. Since then, he has exhibited widely and taught photography at the White Earth Tribal and Community College.

Each of Allen's *Minnesota 2000* photos exhibits both elements of change and continuity. For instance, Donovan and Terry, photographed on their wedding day, later separated. On the other hand, the Shakopee community powwow just celebrated its 150th anniversary.

Perhaps Minnesota should launch another such project in 2025 or 2050. The 2000 project contains only black-and-white photographs that were archivally printed and are now housed as fine art prints in the MNHS collections. Would the next such project be electronically created and stored? The 2000 project employed outstanding photographers of the time, many of whom are still actively

photographing our time and place. Who will be the next documentarians? The 12 photographers focused on significant aspects of that time: business and labor, small towns, lakes and rivers, education, teenagers, and retirement. What should be documented now?

You can view a selection of photos from this project in the book *Minnesota in Our Time: A Photographic Portrait*, published by MNHS Press. Or, take a look at all 369 by going online to search.mnhs.org; use "Minnesota 2000 Documentary Photography Project" (in quotation marks) as the search term. See if you agree that this is the way we were.

—Bonnie Wilson

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