

# Sisters' sewing helps build self-esteem

Founded in 2018, the Kwek Society strives to decrease access barriers to menstrual supplies that many young women, especially Native Americans, face. Citizen Potawatomi Nation tribal member and District 2 Legislator Eva Marie Carney formed the organization to help end period poverty across Indian Country. Her nonprofit's efforts inspired fellow CPN members and sisters Jayne Fleischfresser and Czarina Thompson to create special, handmade fabric moon time bags that the Kwek Society gifts to students across North America.

"I love our culture, for what we stand for and how we come together as a whole," Fleischfresser said. "It's amazing what we take for granted in our daily routine we call life. To imagine that there are young girls and women that cannot attend school or work because they are on their moon cycle and they don't have the items they need to get them through the day — if we can make a difference in their lives, well then, that just enriches our lives too."

Knowing the vast skillset of Thompson, Fleischfresser and other members of *Dewegen Kwek* — a local women's drum group — Carney asked if they could help create moon time bags.

"I can't say enough about Eva Marie Carney's good and gracious heart," Fleischfresser said. "She had mentioned this project to me and my sister Czarina at the Potawatomi Gathering of Nations in Mayetta, Kansas, in 2018 to see if we could help, and it was a definite yes."

The Kwek Society strives to uplift the successes of Native Americans and provide menstrual supplies, as funds allow, while also raising awareness of the dire need for period equality across Indian Country and beyond.



*Native American students across North America receive moon time bags through the Kwek Society as well as additional supplies and educational materials. (photo provided)*

## The process

After the sisters spoke with Carney, they started creating plans and trying out new methods to sew the discreet bags as well as opened the opportunity for other *Dewegen Kwek* members to get involved.

"My sister is a Pinterest freak," Thompson said and laughed. "She started playing with her material and using different patterns from online. We were just looking at what we could do with whatever we had."

Fleischfresser purchased pads to help determine the amount of fabric needed to complete the project.

"We were looking for something that would be discreet when carried in a purse or a backpack and be able to meet their needs," Fleischfresser said. "I was looking through patterns and came

across one to hold travel-size tissues, and I thought, 'This could work.'

"Then we just modified it from there. I got my rotary cutter and mat, and started going through scraps of material. I have found that using fat quarters is pretty good — the ones that are 18 by 21 inches at least in size," she added.

Using 18-by-21-inch fabric can yield approximately three moon time bags, and often, strips designed for quilts work as well.

Just as the Kwek Society celebrates womanhood and provides connections, the moon time bag project also served as a chance for the sisters and fellow *Dewegen Kwek* participants to spend quality time together.

Although both sisters grew up learning to sew from their mother

and grandmother, the past few years, Fleischfresser has attended regalia classes at the CPN Cultural Heritage Center under Leslie Deer.

"I would have to say, joining regalia classes taught by Leslie Deer would be my turning point in loving the creation process and knowledge," Fleischfresser said.

The sisters — with the assistance of fellow *Dewegen Kwek* members — combined their sewing skills to develop a step-by-step moon time bag tutorial that Carney shared on the Kwek Society's webpage and social media.

"My sister is one of the most caring people I know," Fleischfresser said. "She's always there, able and willing to help where she can and rallies the troops to help, and we do. We have such wonderful support in our ladies hand drum group *Dewegen Kwek*; they are always willing and able to help wherever it is needed."

The Kwek Society's work positively influences women and girls across the continent every day. Because of this, the sisters' personal experience and their connections as Bourbonnais and Tescier descendants inspired them to complete the moon time bag project, making hundreds of satchels to assist fellow Native American women and girls.

"We've all been caught off guard without something in our lives — at least most women have," Thompson said. "Multiply that times any other social stigma, socioeconomic problem, or whatever; maybe you don't have a place to get them ... if someone never has to get to that point that would be nice."

To learn more about the Kwek Society and detailed instructions on creating moon time bags, visit [kweksociety.org](http://kweksociety.org). ♡