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Pete Bigstone has dedicated his life to preserving the Nakoda language and culture . (Photo supplied)

By *Lindell Haywahe*
for *Eagle Feather News*

Peter Bigstone of Ocean Man First Nation has made it part of his life’s work to preserve the Nakota language.

Twenty years ago, he was one of 10 fluent Nakoda speakers from his community.

Today, he is the only one left.

But there is a glimmer of hope.

Madison Bigstone, Junior McArthur and Juanita Big Eagle are all actively working to learn the language.

The 76-year-old says he is very proud of them and the progress they’re making.

Bigstone remains very active, he spends the school year teaching children at the Ocean Man Education Centre.

However, his work doesn’t stop there.

Bigstone embraces any opportunity to promote and preserve the language.

Most recently, he was featured in a YouTube series called, 10 Days of Nakota.

To put the plight of the language into perspective, there are currently only four Nakoda communities in the province, two in Alberta along with the Assiniboine Tribe in Montana.

Each community has its own dialect, which can pose a challenge in language preservation because each dialect requires its own resources.

Bigstone says he can count the number of fluent Nakoda speakers among the Southern Saskatchewan tribes on one hand.

This fact alone is what is pushing him to continue to do what he can to preserve, protect and promote the language he loves.

continued page 2 ...



NORMAN LEDOUX
Start of a Journey

“It was a gift I didn’t know I had,” said Ledoux. “After a visit from my late father, who was looking for his rattle, he told me what I should be doing.”

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October 2023 is our
Role Models Theme
November 2023 Issue:
Veterans, Policing, MMIWG



BEARDY’S & OKEMASIS CREE NATION
Much Needed Updates

“The volume of sales will add up over time, and we can offer services to our people, essential things like medical taxis,” he said. “We take patients every day to Saskatoon. And so, these kinds of essential services all require fuel.”

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JAMES SMITH CREE NATION
KidSport in James Smith

“We saw that there were a lot of children who were being helped out through our provincial fund at James Smith Cree Nation so, we thought it would be a great place to open our first national chapter,”

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Peter Bigstone's mission to save the Nakoda Language

... continued from page 1

Bigstone has many years of language teaching under his belt and it's taken him to several communities.

In 2003, a Class 7 teaching certificate allowed him to work at the Fort Peck Community College in Montana.

Bigstone's reason for speaking is not to "brag" about his knowledge, but rather to raise awareness about the very real possibility of losing the language forever.

He wants people to know he's here to help and is willing to do what he can to save Nakoda for future generations.

Bigstone says preserving the Nakoda language is about preserving the Nakoda identity.

He says everything is related.

Language helps people understand their culture and identity; once that happens, they will remember their connection to the land; and finally, they will see how land is connected to language.

Bigstone has spent his life in both the United States and Canada working in a range of positions, which have allowed him to help people.

He was a certified EMT in Saskatchewan and has worked as an addictions counsellor in both Saskatchewan and Montana.

Bigstone was also in a documentary called "Assiniboine Chief Rosebud remembers Lewis & Clark", which available on YouTube.

He says life is too short, and despite his age he's ways willing to try something new.

In 2018, Bigstone began teaching Nakoda and land-based education in Ocean Man.

Not only is he a language and culture specialist, he's also a Knowledge Keeper.

Much of what he learned has come from his grandfather Dick Nahbexie. Bigstone can trace his ancestors back several generations.

He is the great-great grandson of both Ocean Man and Pheasant Rump. He is also the grandson of Chief Jimmy Bigstone of Whitebear.

Bigstone keeps reminders of his life neatly tucked into a portfolio.

Among his many certificates and accomplishments are photos of his children, because, to him, family is everything.

Bigstone also has images of his ancestors from the Whitebear First Nation. Although the community is predominantly Cree it has some Nakoda

descendants.

In addition to language, he provides land-based education such as teepee teachings, animals and hunting skills, survival skills, plant knowledge and spiritual teachings.

Bigstone says the Nakoda culture is complex, but said, the values can be easily applied to everyday life.

For him, teaching Nakoda is the path to self-fulfillment.

Although he is currently Ocean Man's last fluent Nakoda speaker he believed the language can survive there are people trying to learn it.

"I advocate for the language without political aid because it is important people take responsibility for their own culture and spirituality because of the broad spectrum of practices in different communities," said Bigstone.



Peter Bigstone the last fluent Nakoda speaker from his community shares his journey of language preservation. The 76-year-old is still active. He teaches language and land-based education at the Ocean Man Education Centre. (Photo by Lindell Haywahe)



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MANAGING PARTNER: Melody Lynch, melody@eaglefeathernews.com

MANAGING PARTNER: Ben Borne, ben@eaglefeathernews.com

MANAGING EDITOR: Kerry Benjoe, kerry@eaglefeathernews.com

SOCIAL / DIGITAL MEDIA : Errol Sutherland, errol@eaglefeathernews.com

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Big Island Cree Nation is part of a national effort to improve education outcomes in Northern communities

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

A Canadian non-profit is working to increase the number of high school graduates living on reserve and has partnered with Big Island Cree Nation. Current numbers don't paint the most encouraging picture. According to a 2023 Statistics Canada report, only 46 per cent of all First Nation youth living on reserve obtain their high school diploma, compared to 73-per-cent living off reserve, and 91-per-cent of non-Indigenous youth. The graduation rate is even lower in northern communities. It's believed this is due in part to access because nearly half of all First Nations don't have access to a high school. Big Island is located 360 kilometres northwest of Prince Albert. It is part of Treaty 6 but is an unaffiliated band meaning it is not a member of a tribal council, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations or the Assembly of First Nations. It does have a K-12 school on reserve called the Chief Napew Memorial School. Teach For Canada – Gakinaamaage (TFC), works with northern First Nations to recruit, prepare, and support teachers committed to working in the north, all in an effort to make education more equal. "We are looking for teachers who have a genuine love for working with children," said Ken Sanderson, executive director at TFC, and member of Pinaymootang First Nation in Manitoba. "We want that as a core value, which we build into the selection process. We also look for things like teachers who have an adventurous spirit or those who really appreciate the outdoors." Recruitment efforts involve the participation of the communities the candidates could be working in. Community partners help interview and assess the candidates and once they're chosen, they go through a Summer Enrichment program.



Teach for Canada 2023 cohort. (Photo supplied by Meredith Stapon with Teach for Canada)

"It's really aimed towards helping them be successful in the community, (engaging in topics like) trauma-informed classrooms, the history of residential schools, and adapting pedagogy to First Nations contexts for northern communities," said Sanderson. TFC is in its eighth year and is in 26 communities, but for the first seven years it worked only with northern communities in Ontario and Manitoba. This year it expanded to include one northern community in Alberta and another in Saskatchewan. Thanks to a \$300,000 donation from BMO, TFC will soon expand to 45 northern First Nations. TFC supports teachers through the two-year teaching commitment, which involves peer support networks, one-on-one sessions with teacher development managers, mental health counselling, and a variety of other supports critical to helping with success and retention, said Sanderson. "It's easier to approach someone and say, 'Would you be willing to commit to two years?' rather than saying '[Where] would you like to go for the rest of your life?' " he said. He knows the approach TFC is utilizing is the right one because they are seeing results. There is a 95-per-cent retention rate for the teachers in Year One who utilize the supports and to put that into perspective it means 2,980 students from kindergarten to grade 12 are impacted by these teachers. "For kids to have a successful education journey, you need to become engaged in learning, but you can't become engaged in learning if you don't have a trusting relationship with your educator and that can't happen if you don't have teachers open to being there, or teachers who just spend a couple months and it's a revolving door," said Sanderson. But to make a significant impact on the education outcomes across Canada, society on a whole must make it a priority.



The Claims Period has been extended to
March 7, 2024

If you are a First Nations member impacted by a long-term drinking water advisory, you now have more time to submit a claim for compensation.



FirstNationsDrinkingWater.ca



Crafting Tradition

*By Campbell Stevenson
for Eagle Feather News*

For more than three years, Norman Ledoux, from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, has been crafting traditional drums, hand drums, flutes and rattles. Although this venture began a few short years ago, it has already been met with great success across the world. Ledoux spent several years working at ‘unfulfilling’ jobs and when he felt it was time to ‘slow down’, he decided to explore the art of drum making. Beginning this journey was easier than anticipated.



Norman Ledoux, in front of his trailer. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson)

“It was a gift I didn’t know I had,” said Ledoux. “After a visit from my late father, who was looking for his rattle, he told me what I should be doing.” It was a big lifestyle change, so before he acted he discussed it with his wife and gave it careful thought and consideration. “It just seemed like people were waiting,” said Ledoux, after he began creating drums and rattles. “It was natural.” Born and raised in Saskatchewan, several years ago he moved to Haida Gwaii, B.C. where he lives for most of the year with his family. It’s there, Ledoux gathers the materials he needs.

He sources his hides, such as deer, buffalo and elk from the Hudson Bay area in B.C.



Norman Ledoux, in his mobile-workshop, completing a custom drum for a buyer in France. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson)

The cedar used to create the drum frames is gathered from local mills; the wood for drumsticks, and stones for rattles from the beaches of Haida Gwaii. During the summer months, Ledoux returns to Saskatchewan by RV, transporting a trailer, with all his tools and supplies. Many of his drums have been purchased and shipped across the world. The majority of his clientele are from the U.S. and abroad. When he’s not filling orders from his online store Black Sage Woodworks, Ledoux works in schools and community centres hosting drum making workshops.

He provides the supplies, as well as the step-by-step instructions on how to respect, and construct the drums. When hosting these workshops, Ledoux provides an environment free from judgment. He asks the students to relax and clear their minds before the lessons start. “Just give me two hours of happiness and laughter, and smiles,” Ledoux asks the students. “You want good feelings, good spirits going into your drum, to where you can depend on it to make you feel good.”

When he first started making drums he was met mostly with positivity but there was some criticism.



Norman Ledoux, holding a custom hand Drum for the Metis nation. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson)

Ledoux emphasizes both comfort and inclusiveness. “I always question things,” he said. “One of the biggest things is ‘women shouldn’t be able to play drums’...No one has been able to tell me why.” Ledoux believes in exercising kindness in everything he does, and this includes drum making. He has hosted women-only workshops. Moving forward, he hopes more Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women, will break away from negativity, and the fear of doing things the wrong way. “Our creator is very forgiving,” said Ledoux. “We have to go with what’s in our heart, what makes us feel good.” As a drum maker, Ledoux believes it isn’t just about crafting instruments it’s about honouring the ancestors and strengthening the bonds that tie Indigenous people together.

An Affinity for community

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Indigenous Filmmakers Making History with Virtual Production

By Bee Bird
of Eagle Feather News

In late August, the Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver hosted the world’s first Indigenous-led IM4 Virtual Production Storytelling Micro-Credential, co-hosted by the IM4 Media Lab and Screen Industry Training Hub.

Indigenous filmmakers from across Canada worked in cohorts to create short film animations through two modules.

The first module focused on learning the technology workflow of virtual production and working with Unreal Engine to create short films in eight weeks.

The IM4 Creative Director, Loretta Todd, is a filmmaker from the White Fish Lake First Nation and the Red River Metis.

She said there is a need for virtual production training specifically for Indigenous people.

“Our people are so creative, innovative, and versatile,” said Todd. “I wanted to make sure our people were right there at the beginning of this virtual production technology, and that we have the same opportunities as everybody else.”

The skills acquired through this training could assist Indigenous filmmakers in securing jobs within the industry and bring those skills back to their own communities.

The curriculum consisted of 115 hours of learning.

In the second module, students attended an in-person training ses-



Indigenous Film makers Dallas Flett-Wapash behind the camera. (Photo supplied by Bee Bird)

sion at Emily Carr University in BC, where they had the opportunity to direct a short film using all the necessary equipment and an LED wall.

IM4 Project Lead Shenaz Baksh, was amazed by how fast the Indigenous creators developed their short films and their dedication to the program.

“It is important to bring access to Indigenous creators and people who don’t have the technology in their own communities,” she said. “Our Indigenous creators have really embraced this challenge and created something meaningful to put on their portfolios.”

Baksh has been working to get the project off the ground since January and was so happy to see everything come to fruition.

“It was such an emotional day when you see the result of everybody’s hard work,” she said. “I was sitting in during the development and feedback process of mentors during the production phases but I waited till the screening to watch everybody’s short films projects and I was so blown away by all of the cohort’s work and what they’ve created in such a short period of time”.

The screening of the short film animations took place at the end of the second in-person module.

The short films will also be screened at this year’s Vancouver International Film Festival taking place later this month.

The practical hands-on training will not only allow Indigenous creators to take their careers to the next level but also potentially help them become trainers in the rapidly changing virtual production industry, which is revolutionizing film production.

The processes of motion capture, meta-humans, and virtual reality



Indigenous Filmmakers Bee Bird with instructor Cynthia Ruiz Muñive. (Photo supplied by Bee Bird)

are just the beginning of the new technologies on the rise.

Todd said Indigenous communities hold the true stories, which are passed down from generation-to-generation.

“Every indigenous community should have the means to produce their own work and produce their own stories because we are the ones who lived it and we are the ones who inherited these stories from our ancestors,” she said.

Filmmakers who completed the program have the knowledge which they can take back to their communities.

Ideally, they will now be able to contribute to the growth of the industry and promote Indigenous representation in film.



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KidSport opens Chapter on the James Smith Cree Nation

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

The first KidSport chapter located on a First Nation has opened on the James Smith Cree Nation (JSCN) – and the community couldn’t be happier. “We already have 22 young people registered for hockey, many of whom are playing for the first time,” said Dinah Marion, JSCN KidSport coordinator and community member. “And we’re hiring a sports and rec coordinator, which we haven’t had for five years.”

Opening the chapter is something everyone involved is excited about. “After the big tragedy in our community, we thought sport would be a good way to keep the kids busy,” said Marion.

KidSport is a children’s charity that provides grants to help cover the costs of sports enrolment for kids aged 5 to 18. They have over 40 local chapters but have never operated one on-reserve until now.

“We saw that there were a lot of children who were being helped out through our provincial fund at James Smith Cree Nation so, we thought it would be a great place to open our first national chapter,” said Daphne Van Den Hurk, KidSport community consultant.

Now, not only can families apply and get advice on funding but they can receive information on other programs, opportunities, or sports they might not know about without having to leave the reserve.

“I think it’s going to have a great impact in the community,” said Van Den Hurk. “Our goal is always to get more children involved in sports, get them out there and active, give them a healthy lifestyle, and to become potentially good leaders in their community.”

The new chapter received \$25,000 in funding from Sport Canada, which helps

cover things like startup fees and operating grants, said Van Den Hurk. The James Smith chapter will also receive \$1,500 annually for allocations funding and \$500 annually for operating grants.

“A lot of our parents come from low-income families, so it’s a struggle sometimes to even think of being involved in sports,” said Marion.

“We can now cover costs, even transportation and travel costs for parents,” she said. “We can give them that extra support and help they need.”

Last September, James Smith made international headlines after a mass murder took place on the reserve followed by a manhunt for the suspect.

For months following the tragedy people, including the youth, were left afraid and scared to leave their homes, and too fearful to get involved in the community.

“I think it’s going to help the kids in a big way,” said Marion. “It’s going to give them something to look forward to. They’re going to be able to get out there again.”

She believes the presence of KidSport will help further strengthen and rebuild their nation one family at a time.

“It was so hard to get programming going again after the tragedy,” said Marion. “Things are starting to pick up again, so this is going to be a really good thing for the community.”

Marion said other First Nations are interested in starting their own chapters and want to know how to do it.

Van Den Hurk said KidSport has no immediate arrangements to open a new chapter in other communities in Saskatchewan, but they are open and hoping to further expand into the province’s First Nations.

KidSport Saskatchewan has been in operation for 28 years, in which time they’ve raised over \$13 million for kids in sports.



James Smith and Kidsport 1. (Photo by Daphne Van Den Hurk/KidSport)



2023 SIGA Scholarships

Congratulations to our 2023 Recipients!

Dryden Clarke Mistawasis First Nation	Conrad Charles Lac La Ronge Indian Band	Jennifer Cheecham Clearwater River Dene Nation	Rhonda Smallchild Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation
Kendra Doehl Kawacatoose First Nation	Crystal Iron Canoe Lake First Nation	Jennifer Pahtayken Onion Lake Cree Nation	Saffron Powell Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Leona Cook Lac La Ronge Indian Band	Delilah Fisher George Gordon First Nation	Kaden Johns Pasqua First Nation	Shalane Albert Thunderchild First Nation
Tianna-Lee George-Peepeetch Zagime Anishinabek (Sakimay) First Nation	Dominga Robinson Pheasant Rump Nakota Nation	Keisha Ermine Sturgeon Lake First Nation	Shavon Norman Flying Dust First Nation
Elizabeth Mckay James Smith Cree Nation	Easton Thomas Pelican Lake First Nation	Krysta Hatfield Kahkewistahaw First Nation	Sohmer Macdonald Onion Lake Cree Nation
Amy Constant James Smith Cree Nation	Eliza Dubinak Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation	Kylie Sanderson Lac La Ronge Indian Band	Stephanie Lachance Big River First Nation
Brandon Roy English River First Nation	Ellery Lewis Island Lake First Nation (Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation)	Margaret Dumais Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation	Stephanie Sewap Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation
Breanna Tremblay Alexander First Nation (Kipohtakaw)	Gail Ratt Lac La Ronge Indian Band	Miranda Parenteau Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation	Tamarus Mckay Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation
Cherish Alexson Kahkewistahaw First Nation	Gessika Laliberte Fond Du Lac Denesuline Nation	Nikia Pratt George Gordon First Nation	Tanzzy Janvier Clearwater River Dene Nation
Christine Fiddler Waterhen First Nation	Jamie Mispounas Lac La Ronge Indian Band	Nya Palahicky Piapot First Nation	Terri Thunder Thunderchild First Nation
	Jasmine Roberts Sturgeon Lake First Nation	Remington Bracher Muskoday First Nation	Thalia Gardippi Sturgeon Lake First Nation
		Rheanne Peigan Pasqua First Nation	



Pimâcihowin

Helping to build a brighter future

At SIGA we know that Pimâcihowin refers to making a living, and we understand education and continuous learning are essential ingredients in doing so. We also know training, upgrading and education programs cost money and that’s why we established our SIGA First Nations Scholarship Awards Program.

In 2023, SIGA’s Scholarship Program awarded more than \$50,000 to Saskatchewan Indigenous post-secondary students. These awards are distributed through the following three scholarships: SIGA Justice Paul Favel Indigenous Award for Outstanding Leadership in Community Involvement; Shauna Bear Memorial Scholarship for Aspiring Indigenous Human Resources Professionals; and SIGA Scholarships for Saskatchewan First Nations Post-Secondary Students.

On September 21, 2023, SIGA held its Scholarship and Networking Event, in Saskatoon, to honour and recognize Scholarship Award Winners and build bridges with Indigenous youth.

We look forward to applicants in 2024!

Visit our website at siga.ca/scholarships for more information.

Gearing up for another exciting season of sports

The brisk, cold mornings is something that brings back memories of back to school for most kids, but in Canada it reminds us of hockey season.

This is something Saskatchewan residents enjoy throughout the winter to help keep our spirits high during dark mornings and short days.

The Big River First Nation gave us a taste of what's to come this hockey season when it hosted an SJHL exhibition game between the Nipawin Hawks and the LaRonge Ice Wolves in the Jim Neilson arena.

The game was made extra special because it featured Big River's own Deegan Wapass who plays for the Hawks facing off against childhood friend Sage Roberts a forward for the Ice Wolves.

It was a spirited affair with the two young Indigenous players each vying to crack a spot on the Junior A line up for their respective teams. To do so is a big accomplishment in the highly competitive league.

It was a tight game throughout the three periods until the last five minutes of the game.

The score was 6-4 for the Hawks, when Wapass sealed the win with his first goal.

He dished the puck to his linemate as they crossed the blue line, Wapass dashed to the net with his stick on the ice and scored!

It was what everyone was waiting for as the crowd burst into loud cheers.

The Ice wolves were shorthanded through a good majority of the game, so Roberts had limited opportunities to score.

However, when he was on the ice, he created chances with his slick passing skills and hard work on the boards showing he belongs in this elite league.

As the game ended, I bolted to go meet Wapass and Roberts in their dressing rooms.

I took immediate notice of their parents, all of whom beamed with pride. I can only imagine it must be the best feeling in the world watching your

all winter.

Coincidentally both players are products of the Indigenous Sports Academy Eagles U17 Prep Hockey Program operated by Courage Bear in Saskatoon.

I will do a deeper dive in the ISA program later this winter so, stay tuned.

Another ISA Eagles alumnus who was at the game was Connor Watson of Mistawasis First Nation.

Although, he put in a valiant effort as he tried out for Nipawin, he's still underage. Watson is returning to his perspective team in Prince Albert.

I am sure we will see him next year, bigger, stronger, and ready to play Junior A hockey.

Switching gears, let's talk fastball.

The Treaty 4 fastball tournament took place in Fort Qu'Appelle a few weeks ago.

It was quite the battle for the Waywayseecappo A's from Manitoba on Sunday with a 7-0 win over Okanese, a 1-0 win over Pasqua, followed by a 2-0 win over Little Black Bear, before finishing it off undefeated with a 6-4 win over Ochapowace.

Congratulations Waywayseecappo for making the long trek to play fastball and winning it all.

Pitcher Curtis Cote took home the MVP and Tony Sparvier of Ochapowace was named best pitcher.

The organizing committee did an amazing job completing the tournament on time and committing so much to the game we all love.

Meegwitch



Sports Report
Errol Kayseas

children excel in the sport they love.

The commitment and dedication to get to this level of hockey takes a lot of hard work and sacrifice by everyone.

I know watching my daughter play brings me sheer joy knowing she is doing what she loves and that is hockey!

I am happy to report Wapass and Roberts made their teams. I look forward to keeping up with them



We're Here To Help

The Ministry of Agriculture has 10 regional offices around the province. Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre (AKC) to connect with a specialist to learn about our programs and services.



Celebrate Agriculture in October

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