

# Fort Belknap Indian Community NEWSLETTER

Aaniiih - Nakoda



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## *Celebrating the Life of Michelle Fox*



Michelle Marie Fox, a proud enrolled member of the Aaniiih (Gros Ventre) Tribe of Fort Belknap began her journey to the Big Sands on February 21, 2026. Michelle is the daughter of former councilman, Stephen “Shelly” Fox and Geri Show-Fox. She was the sister of Jerry and Dale Fox, Clarissa Bell, and Paula Hawley, and the Mother of Mackenzie and Avery. Michelle graduated from Dartmouth in the Spring of 1998. Her tenacity didn’t stop there. Michelle was a remarkable leader, founder, and driving force behind multiple Native American enterprises. She founded Island Mountain Development Group (IMDG), serving as its former CEO and later as legal counsel. IMDG operates across Hays, Billings, Havre, and is currently expanding with a new call center at Fort Belknap Agency. Michelle also founded Cedar Tree Law, a 100% Native American woman-owned law firm with offices in Omaha, Nebraska, and Rapid City, South Dakota, and had plans for further growth. Her dedication extended to her work as a board member with the Native American Agriculture Fund. Michelle has left a remarkable legacy in our community and throughout Indian Country. Her unexpected loss is deeply felt by many who knew and admired her. She dedicated herself tirelessly to making a positive difference, driven by passion and a fearless spirit. Michelle was confident, intelligent, and always greeted life with a warm smile that inspired those around her. Her love for her community was genuine and unwavering, and she never forgot her roots. Through her hard work and commitment, Michelle touched countless lives and helped build stronger connections within the community. She was full of motivation and embraced every opportunity to build a better future for all. We honor her legacy with resilience, ensuring that the values she stood for remain alive and impactful. On behalf of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council, we extend our heartfelt condolences to her children, parents, brothers, sisters, family, friends, colleagues and our entire community during this difficult time. Her impact has left a lasting impression that will be remembered with respect and gratitude. May her spirit continue to inspire and guide those who knew her, and may her legacy live on in the hearts of all she influenced. As Michelle once said, *“Little Indian girls from Hays, Montana can do anything.”* May we carry those words forward as a promise to our children, our community, and the generations yet to come. A Rosary and



*September 3, 1976 - February 21, 2026*

Celebration of Life were held on March 6-7, 2026, in Hays, Montana, to honor the memory of Michelle. Family, friends, classmates, and colleagues all across Indian Country gathered at Hays High School to share stories, memories, and prayers. The services brought together a community united in grief and remembrance, offering comfort and support to those who knew Michelle. Through heartfelt speeches and shared moments, attendees celebrated Michelle’s life, her impact, and the lasting connections she created. This gathering was not only a time to mourn but also a chance to reflect on the joy and strength Michelle brought to the lives of many. The impact she made was felt across Indian Country and Social Media. Here are posts written by various Facebook Pages: **ISLAND MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT GROUP** - “With deep sadness, we honor the passing of our former Chief Executive Officer and Legal Counsel, Michelle Fox. Michelle was a visionary leader whose integrity, dedication, and unwavering commitment to IMDG shaped who we are today. Michelle carried a powerful vision to change the lives of tribal members on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation; and she did just that. –Continued on Pg. 2



*Continued from Pg. 1-* Through her leadership, the community experienced meaningful growth and lasting opportunity, leaving an impact that will be felt for generations. As we reflect on her life and legacy, we are grateful for the path she helped create and the lives she touched along the way. Our thoughts remain with those closest to her, and we will continue to honor Michelle by carrying her vision forward.” **CEDAR TREE NATIVE LAW** - “It is with great sadness that Cedar Tree Native Law shares the news of the tragic passing of founding shareholder—and beloved colleague and friend—Michelle Fox. We extend our condolences to her family and everyone else touched by this profound loss, which will be felt far across Indian country. Michelle was a bright star, a visionary, a fierce advocate for clients and loved ones alike, and a true leader who cultivated and trusted in Indigenous women’s leadership and believed deeply in the team she built up alongside her. She did things differently and took true care of her team and her clients. We stand committed to realizing Michelle’s vision. We will honor her legacy by continuing the work she so fearlessly pursued to provide excellent legal services in Indian Country.” **AANIIH NAKODA COLLEGE** - “On behalf of the Board of Directors, students, staff, and faculty we would like to express our condolences to family and friends of Michelle Fox. In the year 2008, Michelle was hired as the Public Relations Specialist. She and President Carole Falcon-Chandler began the College’s first capitol campaign program. Michelle engaged her excellent communications skills to market the college’s attributes. Michelle began by showcasing ANC students and graduates, focusing on generational education. Although she worked for the college for a very short time, in that space she created lasting memories and helped the college move forward through public relations. These amazing photos are still on display at Aaniih Nakoda College (ANC) and at the HLP High School. We join our community in honoring her legacy.” **HONOR THE EARTH** - “With a heavy heart we received the news of the passing of Michelle Fox over the weekend. We send our love and deepest condolences to Michelle’s family, community and loved ones, especially her children. Honor The Earth would not be where we are today without Michelle’s hard work and dedication. We were lucky to have someone like her by our side through organizational transitions and the battle for Indigenous self-

determination. Especially in a time where this world needs more people like Michelle, a defender rooted in our traditions and culture, this is a huge loss. We honor her legacy and the impact she left in this world as she makes her transition. Her legacy lives on with her children and all of us who will carry on the good fight. Rest in Power Michelle.” **INTERTRIBAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL** - “We are deeply saddened by the passing of our friend, Michelle Fox. Michelle was an attorney and founding Shareholder at Cedar Tree Native Law and focused her service to Indian Country. The Intertribal Agriculture Council had the benefit of seeing Michelle’s commitment to producers in Indian Country firsthand—she was always ready and willing to support Tribal agriculture, from sitting with producers and helping them navigate USDA programs to offering key insights around federal agency processes during our annual conference. Beyond her legal career, Michelle was a cowgirl and cattle producer who truly lived the agricultural life she championed. But most of all, she cherished her family above all—her children were the center of her world. We extend our heartfelt condolences and prayers to her family and all who loved her. Michelle’s dedication, spirit, and service will continue to live on through those who knew her.” **NATIVE AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION** - “On behalf of Native American Development Corporation and our subsidiaries, we extend our heartfelt condolences to the family, friends, and loved ones of Michelle Fox. Her passing leaves a profound void across Indian Country, but the impact of her work will be felt for generations to come. Most recently, Michelle served as legal counsel for NADC, bringing not only her expertise but also her passion and commitment to the mission and goals of our organization. As a fierce entrepreneur herself, she deeply understood the work we do and carried that understanding into every aspect of her service. Prior to her role as NADC legal counsel, she served as Chief Executive Officer of Island Mountain Development Group, Inc., where she was a strong supporter of NADC and believed wholeheartedly in its growth and success. ‘Michelle was an entrepreneur, an advocate, a leader, and always a professional. She was a mother, a sister, a daughter, and a friend. She worked hard for the people, and we share that same passion with her here at NADC. Together, we worked toward the same goals. We will remember her for her commitment, strength and her bravery in advancing economic development in Indian Country. We will carry her example forward.’ said, Mary Walks Over Ice, NADC Chief Operating Officer. Michelle’s dedication to uplifting Indigenous communities within entrepreneurial spaces was evident to all who had the privilege of working with her. Her impact and advocacy will not be forgotten. May she rest in peace, and may her spirit continue to guide and inspire the work she cared so deeply about.” **NATIVE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE FUND** - “The Native American Agriculture Fund mourns the loss of our respected trustee, Michelle Fox, who

passed away this weekend. Her absence is deeply felt within our board and throughout Indian Country. She was an enrolled member of the Aaniiih (Gros Ventre) Tribe of the Fort Belknap Indian Community and a Descendant of the Amskapi Pikuni (Blackfoot Nation), Nakoda (Assiniboine), Cheyenne River Sioux, Crow, and Little Shell Tribes. As a fifth-generation cattle rancher, she drew on her deep connection to culture and land to guide her work and enrich NAAF’s mission. Her love for her family was the most radiant part of her life. She was a devoted mother whose pride and joy were her children. The reach of her love was wide, and the impact of her life was greater still—touching family, friends, and colleagues in ways words cannot express. ‘Michelle was the essence of the strength and resiliency of Native women. Her grit, vibrancy, infectious laughter, and optimism lifted all those around her. She was a force for good, and her legacy and leadership reflected her deep commitment to our communities. She will live on in the countless lives she touched,’ said NAAF Board Chair Stacy Leeds. ‘Michelle was not only a respected colleague but a dear friend. She carried her family’s legacy with pride and purpose and brought a bold, principled voice to her service on the NAAF Board, holding our work firmly accountable to the original claimants. She understood that this work is generational and led with strength and conviction every day. Her counsel and unwavering commitment will be deeply missed. I will remember her boldness, her strength, and the clarity of her voice,’ said NAAF CEO Toni Stanger-McLaughlin. Michelle’s passing is a tremendous loss for her family, the Tribal law community, and all of us at the Native American Agriculture Fund. We extend our deepest sympathies to her loved ones. We honor her legacy by continuing her work and holding her family in our thoughts.”



*“My mom was truly the best person I have ever known. Her drive, determination, grit, tenacity, and bravery — and everything in between — shaped not only her life, but all of ours as her family, especially my baby sister Avery and me. She was intelligent, deeply compassionate, and unapologetically herself. In true reflection of who she was, even in her passing she chose to help others. It was her wish to be an organ donor so that, even at the end of her earthly journey, she could continue giving life and hope to others. Her generosity lives on in the lives she will help in ways we may never fully know. Her liver went to a man in Arizona, and her kidneys will be going to a man in Ohio. That was my mom — always thinking of how she could serve, uplift, and care for people beyond herself.” Mackenzie Fox*

## Councilmen Shambo and Allen Testify on Appropriations in Washington D.C.

Council Members, Cody Shambo and John A. Allen recently traveled to Washington D.C. where they attended important meetings and provided testimony on appropriations. During their visit, they met with Democratic staff from the House Natural Resources Committee and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, engaging in discussions that address key issues affecting the Fort Belknap Indian Community. Additionally, they attended meetings with staff members of Senators Sheehy and Daines to further advocate for support and resources. This trip highlights their ongoing commitment to representing local interests at the federal level and ensuring that the Fort Belknap Community's voice is heard in legislative processes. On March 18, 2026 they attended the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies where Councilman Cody Shambo testified on behalf of the Tribal Council and the Fort Belknap Indian Community. Full Testimony: *“Good morning Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Cody Shambo. I am the Mountain Gros Ventre Representative on the Fort Belknap Indian Community Tribal Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. **Our top priority is passage and funding our Fort Belknap Indian Community Water Rights Settlement Act.** The Act affirms our water rights and settles our damages claims against the United States. In 1908 we went all the way to the Supreme Court to fight for our water rights in the ‘Winters’ case. The court held that our Reservation included the water we need to make a homeland. This is known as the ‘Winters’ doctrine. Under this doctrine all tribes are able to protect and quantify their water rights. More than one hundred years later we still don’t have our water rights and the water projects the United States promised us are failing or were never built. Our water rights claims are currently pending in court. If we are forced to litigate there is no question who will win. We have the oldest priority date and farmer, ranchers, and towns upstream from us will have to stop using our water. We would rather settle. Our settlement is a win-win that provides water for all. Litigating 31 thousand water rights claims would take another forty years, waste taxpayer money, and upset about ten percent of Montana’s gross domestic product. Settlement also provides the funding to fix water infrastructure that was built in the early 1900’s. This aging water infrastructure threatens the economy, towns, and livelihood of northcentral Montana including more than 120 thousand acres of non-Indian irrigation and more than 25 thousand acres of irrigation on our Reservation that feeds about one million people a year. This infrastructure also provides drinking water for more*

*than 20 thousand people. Our water settlement will cost about 1.3 billion dollars and has already passed the Senate twice. Our settlement has the full support of our Tribes, the Administration, the Montana Governor, the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, the Milk River Joint Board of Control, the Saint Mary Rehabilitation Working Group, local counties, water users, stockmen, conservation groups, tribal members, and more. The Subcommittee should provide mandatory funding to implement our water settlement and other tribal water settlements. We need these funds to ensure that our settlement is final and enforceable. We need a stable and permanent fund just like the Department of Justice Settlement Fund. We should not have to spend all this time negotiating a water settlement and then have to come back year after year for discretionary funds. **Water is not our only priority. We also need to provide for our youth.** Congress must do more to help us overcome the drugs and crime infecting our youth, and create opportunities in our communities. In return for vast lands and resources, we’re promised the best education and healthcare the United States could offer. Our schools are falling down and the Indian Health Service is chronically underfunded. Congress and this Subcommittee have a treaty obligation to provide the funding we need. There are also too many restrictions on funding we do receive. Everyone wants tribes to take over, but our hands are tied behind our backs. **One promising program is the Tiwahe Program. We support the Tiwahe Program and ask that the Subcommittee increase funding.** Tiwahe means the interconnectedness of family and supports tribal self-determination by allowing flexibility in how we run our programs. Tiwahe breaks down silos between programs. Tiwahe also allows us to use culture in our programs. We use Tiwahe to support our Family Wellness Program. We work directly with each family and individual to design the services that they need. We are able to reach across programs to collaborate and pool resources to help our families. Our programs are designed to restore our people’s self-confidence, gain employment, and become independent. Tiwahe also supports our Soaring Eagle program. Soaring Eagle was originally started to reduce recidivism, including drug possession, truancy, and criminal contempt. We established an Elders Council and address underlying anger, grief, and abandonment that often lead to offending. We have been able to reduce recidivism to 34 percent which is well below national levels. Our approach has been extremely successful. Currently, our six-month rate of recidivism is 34% for 2025, with a four-year average of 36%, which remains well below national levels. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.”* Testifying in front of the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations is a significant opportunity. This committee is responsible for deciding how federal funds are allocated to various programs and projects across the –Continued on Pg. 4

Continued from Pg. 3 - country. When leaders testify, they share important information about local needs and priorities. Their voices help lawmakers understand the impact of funding decisions and why supporting specific initiatives matter. Successfully presenting testimony can lead to increased funding that supports infrastructure and other critical community services. Senator Steve Daines issued a statement regarding the water settlement: *“This week in Washington, I spoke in a Senate Indian Affairs Hearing about an issue that’s incredibly important to Montana’s farmers, our ranchers, and tribal communities, and that’s water security on the Hi-Line. The Fort Belknap Indian Community has been waiting more than a Century to settle its water rights. In fact, their case helped establish the ‘Winters’ doctrine, which recognizes tribal water rights under federal law, the tribe finished negotiating its settlement decades ago, and now it’s time for congress to do its job and ratify the compact. This matters a lot*

*because the Milk River is the lifeblood of Montana’s Hi-Line. It provides irrigation for roughly 140,000 acres of farmland and drinking water for about 20,000 people. It’s also one of the most productive regions in the country for both wheat and barley. However, the system delivering that water, the Milk River Project, is over 100 years old. With drought, aging infrastructure, and thousands of unresolved water claims, farmers and ranchers are facing real uncertainty about the future. That’s why I’m pushing legislation to finalize this settlement. My bill, called the Northern Montana Security Act, will help finish Montana’s final Indian Water Settlement, invest in critical infrastructure, and bring long-term certainty for everyone who depends on the Milk River. At the end of the day, this is about water security and stability for our Tribes, our farmers, our ranchers, and for Montana’s AG economy as a whole. It is time to finally get this done. As always, it’s my honor to serve you in the United States Senate.”*



## Fort Belknap Tribal Council Engages with Community Through Quarterly Meetings



Photos by: Tina Bierle

The Fort Belknap Tribal Council held quarterly meetings with local schools, senior centers, and community members in each district. These gatherings provided a valuable opportunity for students, elders, and other community members to speak directly with council representatives. Whether they have questions, concerns, or ideas, this face-to-face dialogue helps ensure that everyone’s voice is heard. By maintaining this open line of communication, the council strengthens community ties and keeps everyone informed about important matters. The council recently reconnected with the Student Council at Aaniiih Nakoda College for the first time in several years. This renewed collaboration brings a sense of unity and shared purpose within the Fort Belknap Community. Stay tuned for the next quarterly meetings which are scheduled for June 2026.



Photo by: ANC



Photo by: Tina Bierle



Photo by: Tina Bierle



Photo by: Dodson School



Photo by: Dodson School



Photo by: Dean Doney, Jr.



Photo by: RS8N (Planning Update)

## Board of Directors Meeting with Red Shield 8 Nations

Vice-President, Alan Bigby and Council Member, Michael King attended the Board of Directors Meeting with Red Shield 8 Nations in Great Falls, MT on March 25, 2026. **Red Shield 8 Nations (RS8N) is a Montana-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2024 by Native American tribal representatives to develop a 32-bed inpatient, culturally rooted addiction treatment center in Great Falls. Located on 15 acres donated by the Little Shell Tribe. The center aims to offer comprehensive substance use disorder treatment (ASAM Levels 3.5 & 3.7) to tribal members across the state by late 2027.** Agenda Topics included: Welcome & Introduction, Action Items – Board Secretary Position, Financial Report, RS8N Operational Policy Update, Charitable Donation Agreement, Land Donation Agreement, Executive Director Updates – Logo & Website Design, Architectural Peer Review (Alaska Architects), Fundraising RFP, Land Survey and Real Estate Documents, and Announcements.

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

- Discussions began 10+ years ago with tribal leaders and health directors about the need for an in-state Native culturally-relevant residential healing/treatment center.
- American Indian Health Leaders took the lead with support from Tribal Councils.
- All MT tribes submitted a resolution with the commitment to participate in a planning process.
- After a review of different models of development, it was determined to create a nonprofit organization.
- RS8N was founded in 2024 and incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; Montana tribes signed resolutions in support and designated a Board of Director.
- Approximately 200 adults (annually) need detoxification and/or medically managed withdrawal services. More than 400 are in need of high intensity residential services.

- Tribes have the greatest need for the highest level of residential care (ASAM Levels 3.5 & 3.7).
- All suffer from significant disparities in substance use and mental health issues, complicated by poor social and indigenous determinants of health.
- Culture and language is key to recovery, as is building a strong sobriety community.
- Data demonstrates that a 32 bed adult facility would be viable economically and that the need is greater.
- The RHC has the potential for more expansion in the future serving other targeted populations such as youth services.

Getting a new treatment facility up and running is an ongoing process that involves several important steps. First, planning and securing necessary permits must be completed to meet all legal and environmental standards. Throughout this process, testing and inspections help verify that everything operates smoothly and safely. Next comes a complete Land Survey which are contracted and *currently in progress*. Staffing is important throughout the process, ensuring that qualified professionals are hired and trained to provide top-quality care. Collaboration among engineers and healthcare experts are key factors, as well as the annual operating budget. While it may take time, each phase creates a fully functional, efficient treatment facility ready to serve its community. Before continued expansion or significant funding commitments, FBIC will ensure, sovereignty is protected, governance authority is balanced, and legal exposure is clearly defined and controlled.



Montana Regional Healing Center Site – Land Survey in Process Contracted with Ries & Associates. Photo by: RS8N (Planning Update)

# Wellness in the Workplace

The Head Start staff recently partnered with the Native Wellness Institute to participate in a Wellness in the Workplace training. This collaboration focused on traditional wellness practices with modern health strategies. The training emphasized mental, emotional, and physical health, encouraging staff to develop sustainable habits for a healthier work environment. By integrating culturally relevant approaches, the Native Wellness Institute helped foster a supportive space where team members could explore mindfulness, stress management, and self-care techniques. This initiative not only enhances individual wellness but also strengthens the overall workplace, creating a more positive and productive atmosphere. Through this training, the Head Start staff gained valuable tools to improve their well-being and support one another, highlighting the importance of wellness as a foundation for effective work and personal growth.

*The Native Wellness Institute (NWI) was founded in 2000 by a knowledgeable and dedicated group of Native individuals, including tribal leaders, committed to making a positive difference in Indian country. NWI is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization serving as the leading provider of Native-specific and wellness-related training and technical assistance to Native people, communities, tribes, and organizations throughout North America.*

*From bringing together the most highly-skilled Native trainers and consultants to share their knowledge and wisdom at large national conferences, to offering smaller regional workshops in Native communities that improve physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. The*

*Native Wellness Institute continues bringing positive changes throughout Indian Country by promoting healthy lifestyles, relationships, education, and overall wellness of Native Americans. As the Native Community's leading social-services resource, their current and future objectives focus on the following areas:*

- *Healthy Relationships*
- *Youth Leadership and Development*
- *Adult Leadership and Development*
- *Workplace Wellness and Staff Development*
- *Strategic Planning and Program Development*
- *Community Wellness Gatherings, Retreats, and Training*

*These goals are accomplished by implementing a leadership training initiative that will strengthen the circle and prepare Native people for leadership opportunities; and Developing programs and services to meet other areas of need that impact the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being of Native people.*



*Theda NewBreast, founding board member & master trainer/facilitator for NWI*



*Head Start Staff Members pictured with Theda New Breast. Photos by NWI.*

# Women's History Month

## In Remembrance of Theresa Walker Lamebull

Theresa Chandler Walker Lamebull was still teaching when she died in 2007 at 111 years of age. Her subject was *A'aniiih*, or White Clay, the language of the *A'aninin* (Gros Ventre) people and one of the world's most endangered languages. By the 1990s, Theresa Lamebull was one of only a dozen people to speak the language fluently. Her willingness to share her knowledge of the White Clay language became the foundation for its recovery. Theresa Elizabeth Chandler, or Kills At Night, was born to Kills In The Brush and Al Chandler in 1896 in a tipi near Hays on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Raised by her grandmother, Sharp Nose, for the first few years of her life, young Kills At Night was fully immersed in White Clay culture. She then lived with her mother and stepfather, White Weasel, until she was twelve and the federal government mandated she go to school. Without the option of a day school, Theresa attended St. Paul's Catholic boarding school in Harlem, Montana. She long remembered the fences that surrounded the mission school to keep children from running away and returning to their families. As institutions of assimilation, Indian boarding schools forbade indigenous children from speaking their mother's tongue. Thousands of Native people who attended such schools between the 1880s and early 1930s came to associate their first languages with shame and punishment. As adults, many of them refused to teach their languages to their own children, hoping to protect them from incurring shame at being "Indian." This situation created a language gap of two or even three generations in many families. Perhaps because she attended English-speaking schools for only about four years, then married a fellow tribal member, John Walker, and settled near her childhood home, Theresa Walker retained her fluency in the White Clay language. Her second husband, Andrew Lamebull, also spoke it fluently. For smaller tribes like the *A'aninin*, who numbered around six hundred people at the beginning of the twentieth century, only a few lifelong speakers remained at the century's end. After her ten children grew up, Theresa Walker Lamebull often longed to talk with someone who spoke the White Clay language. She visited the senior center to speak with other elders and shared her knowledge with the reservation schools' bilingual programs in the 1970s. Inconsistent funding and the scarcity of fluent speakers, however, made it difficult to establish lasting language programs. Then, in the late 1990s, Fort Belknap College received a grant to develop a mentorship program, Speaking White Clay, which paired elders like Theresa Walker Lamebull with new learners. Lamebull traveled seventy miles twice a week to the tribal college to teach. One of her students was educator Terry Brockie, who had begun studying *A'aniiih* with his traditional grandmother, Madeline Colliflower. Brockie understood that the endeavor was about more than learning words and phrases. It was about regaining what had been nearly lost for all time: their identity as White Clay people. Theresa Lamebull was essential to that process. "She is one of the few keepers of our way of life, our traditional way of life," he told the *Great Falls Tribune* in 2005. Reflecting on his studies with Lamebull, Brockie said, "She taught me traditional values that I use today to teach my own children. She was humble, spiritual, and never had a bad word to say about anyone. Over time I learned that those qualities are vested in our language, so it was natural to model that way of life." Realizing



Theresa Walker Lamebull - Photo Courtesy: Terry Brockie

that their elderly mentors would not always be around, younger adult students in the Speaking White Clay program committed themselves to preserving the language. The tribal education department had previously collected stories from elders, but those memories were written in English. A few older audiotapes existed, but without translations into English. Then Brockie discovered a new technology—the "Phraselator," a device originally developed for military use. With Brockie's help, Lamebull recorded hundreds of *A'aniiih* words and phrases and their English definitions into the Phraselator, teaching Brockie the more complex aspects of the White Clay language while sharing tales of the old way of life and the tribe's history. The more he learned, the more Brockie realized the responsibility of his own generation had to teach their culture to future generations. Although reservation-based Head Start preschools had tried to incorporate Native languages, funding for bilingual programs decreased over the years, making it impossible to teach children the language. In 2003, Brockie's classmate from the Speaking White Clay program, the late Lynette Chandler, developed a K-8 White Clay immersion school. Funded by private grants, the immersion school's first class of graduates not only speak their ancestral language, but have excelled in other academic subjects as well, including English. With over one hundred digital audio recordings of elders like Lamebull, Chandler and her husband, Sean, created a new digital curriculum for young speakers, including White Clay language apps. As the number of White Clay speakers grows, so has the appreciation for all Lamebull and her peers did to enable younger *A'aninin* to regain their language and heritage. In 2005 members of the tribe renamed the Hays Education Resource Center the Kills At Night Center in her honor. At the dedication Terry Brockie sang an honor song for Theresa Walker Lamebull, and he sang it in *A'aniiih*. Theresa was believed to be the oldest member of the Gros Ventre Tribe. – Continued on Page 8...



Theresa Walker Lamebull - Photo Courtesy: Great Falls Tribune

The family knew their grandmother, the matriarch of the Gros Ventre Tribe, was about 100. Delivered by a midwife on the Fort Belknap Reservation, she had no birth certificate. The exact date had never been an issue, until they received an invitation in the spring of 2006 from the governor's office. Theresa was to be honored at a banquet in Helena with other Montana centenarians. But her family had to first prove when she was born. They turned to the late Father Joseph Retzel at the St. Paul's Mission in Hays, where Lamebull was a devout, lifelong member. Soon after, the priest came to a family gathering with a copy of the baptismal certificate and some news. The family was stunned when the priest translated the careful Latin script on the baptismal certificate. "Grandma Theresa" was not 100. She was 110. On April 4, 1897, the certificate said, a couple called White Weasel brought their daughter to the St. Paul's Mission to be baptized. They named her Theresa. She was about 1-years-old, putting her birth in 1896. Lamebull has given other birth dates in the past that put her closer to 100. But Retzel at the time, said that he was confident the baptismal certificate he found is accurate and was hers. But Lamebull's significance reached far beyond talk of numbers. As a living bridge to what her tribe called the "buffalo days," she was a cultural and spiritual treasure to her people. In 1997, Terry Brockie took an interest in learning his native language. He spent countless hours with Lamebull, studying the Gros Ventre — or White Clay — language. Although young people are embracing the language, Lamebull was among fewer than five elders who spoke Gros Ventre as their first language. Brockie always visited her home in Hays, at the foot of the Little Rocky Mountains, bearing a traditional gift such as cow tongue. He believes Lamebull's longevity was a spiritual gift to the tribe. She carried the language and culture through turbulent times, holding it until younger generations were ready to learn and record it. "She was put on this Earth to keep things for our people," Brockie said. "To me, she was the most important person to our tribe." Theresa lived alone with her beloved dog "Nuisance." Her house was only a block from the old stone St. Paul's Mission Church where she was baptized. At the end of her life she was at the Northern Montana Care Center, where her good cheer and infectious giggle were heard throughout the halls. One afternoon, a handful of great-grandchildren crowded into Lamebull's room, with a great-great-granddaughter, Danielle, in tow. Lamebull beamed and reached out for the toddler. Danielle beamed right back and they gazed at each other across a century. "Happy! So happy!" Lamebull cooed to the smiling little girl. "What you got? You got feet!" Lamebull thrived on the commotion in her little room, unleashing peals of laughter as her great-grandson, Damion Walker, cracked jokes.

He urged his great-grandma, his "newa," to tell them about the past. Lamebull said, "In the old days, we never stayed in one place very long. There used to be deep snow, and they would clean a place for our camp. They'd get all the snow off the ground where they'd build their tepee." Every so often as she spoke, she pulled tight a brown blanket wrapped around her shoulders, her pink nail polish flashing from beneath. But her memories of those cold, hard winters are warm. "They used to keep fire in the middle of the tepee, and that kept the whole place warm," she said. "They used to take turns keeping up the fire." Lamebull was born the year door-to-door mail delivery started in Great Falls. Grover Cleveland was president. Lamebull remembers little of her father, White Weasel, who died of a war wound. "They never got that bullet out," she said. "It was poisoning him." Indeed, Lamebull cooked traditional foods for friends and family for years. She told her grandchildren how she made pemmican with Juneberries and cherries. "You put the tallow in there and put sugar in there. ... It was like powder," she said. "Everybody liked that. Hardly anybody knew how to make it. Everybody used to come and ask me to make some. ... I wish I had some now." Hooves were a childhood favorite for Lamebull. "They'd boil them a long time," she said, sounding as if she could almost taste the words. "And gee they were good wild animals. Better than this beef we're getting now," she said, setting her grandchildren laughing. But cattle were already taking over the prairie. The thundering buffalo herds that sustained her people's lifestyle were gone. "After, we built a house," Lamebull said. "Everybody was building houses. My dad built a house too. ... Ohhh, I thought it was a wonderful place to live." Lamebull spoke mostly of happy memories: Christmas dances, food and her favorite girlhood horse "Roanie," who would lie down for her to climb on his back so they could roam the prairie. But her youth was a time of hardship for the Gros Ventre. Those stories are captured in a book of memoirs of Fort Belknap elders compiled in 1982. Lamebull, then in her 80s, was among 20 elders interviewed for the book, "Recollections of Fort Belknap's Past," by the Curriculum Development Project of the Fort Belknap Education Department. Only the elderly received government food rations, and not enough to last a week, her memoir says. The rest survived on their gardens and whatever wildlife they could catch: rabbits, deer, sage hens, antelope and prairie chickens. Indians were not allowed to leave the reservation without a permit. At age 12, Lamebull was sent to school at St. Paul's Mission. "We had to stay there. We had a high fence and we couldn't go home when we wanted to," she said in the memoir. "It really was a poor school. We hardly had anything to eat. When the flu epidemic struck in 1918, the survivors couldn't build coffins fast enough," she said. "Babies, women, men, and mostly women died that time." Lamebull lost two sons of her own — a day apart — to diphtheria in the 1920s, according to her granddaughter, Patty Addy. "She made it through, and then she lost adult sons: my dad and my Uncle Henry and her daughter Virginia," Addy said. "They were hard on her, but she's really something. She'll grieve and then she'll let them go... She just has a way of carrying on." Lamebull was about 16 when she married her first husband, John Walker, who doted on her. He died of lung cancer in 1961. They had 10 children together. Lamebull outlived five of them and her second husband, Andrew Lamebull. Her greatest pride is that all of her children served in the military, with the exception of her daughter Virginia, whose poor health prevented it. —Continued on Pg. 9...

Portraits of them hung on a wall in her room at the care center, arranged around a hologram of Jesus on the cross. *"She has a marvelous spirit, and she does have a deep faith in the Lord, in Jesus, and her faith is very strong in her life,"* said the late Father Retzel. At the age of 107, Lamebull fell while walking along the gravel road to the church and couldn't get up, Retzel recalled. *"She just stayed there until somebody came along, and when they did, she just laughed it off,"* he said. *"That's typical of that lady."* When others fell along the path of life, Lamebull was there to pick them up or take them in. Addy was raised by Lamebull after her parents divorced and her mother fell ill with tuberculosis. She remembers her grandparents taking in three neighbor children, the Magpie kids. Lamebull taught them all to pray, go to church, be kind to each other and stay out of trouble. When her children were grown, Lamebull taught arts and crafts in local schools. Her quilts are in homes across the reservation and beyond. In her 80s, she found another calling. Lamebull and the late Elmer Main would drive 70-miles roundtrip twice a week to the tribal college at Fort Belknap Agency to teach Gros Ventre language. Lamebull taught into her 90s. *"She really made you feel good about who you are as a White Clay person,"* Brockie said. *"She had a real goodness about her, her aura. I think that came from being on this Earth for so long. To me she was one of the few keepers of our way of life, our traditional way of life."* Grandma Theresa," a woman who was never too tired, too frail or too old to greet you with a warm smile.



Theresa Walker Lamebull – Photo Courtesy: Gerontology Research Group

*\*Contents from this article (Minor changes in wording) were published in 2006 by Karen Ogden, Tribune Enterprise Editor. Personal correspondence by Terry Brockie with Laura Ferguson in February 2014.*



June 13, 2023 – Peggy was gifted and Honored by Tribal Council  
Photo by: Darcie Doney

## Margaret “Peggy” Doney Named Recipient for National Indian Realty Award

Former Land Director and retiree, Margaret “Peggy” Doney, is named a recipient of the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual National Indian Realty Awards Ceremony which is an annual platform dedicated to recognizing excellence in the Indian Realty sector. With a legacy spanning nearly three decades, the awards celebrate innovation, quality, and leadership that drive the Indian Realty field forward. This ceremony is set to honor outstanding achievements, innovation, and leadership across the Indian realty sector. This event brings together Indian Land Professionals and Indian Landowners to recognize excellence in the Trust and Restricted realty field which is scheduled to take place in Vancouver, Washington Mid-April. The National Indian Realty Awards continues its legacy as one of the most respected platforms celebrating success and progress within the Indian realty field. Features will include award presentations to the top 20 Indian Land Professionals in the Nation, the top 15 Realty Offices in the Nation, and keynote speakers from prominent industry figures, and networking opportunities for professionals and landowners. This year’s awards will highlight organizations and individuals who have demonstrated exceptional performance and sustainability initiatives.

In June 2023, the Fort Belknap Tribal Council honored Peggy for her remarkable 47 years of dedicated service to the Tribe. For nearly five decades, Peggy played a vital role in supporting the community. Earning this National Indian Realty Award speaks high volumes! She made a lasting impact with her dedication and professionalism. This award not only celebrates her individual achievements but also reflects the strength and resilience of the Fort Belknap community she has served so faithfully.

## Wildcat Fan & Local Photographer Both Recognized by Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Fame

BY: MT INDIAN ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

Mary Hoops Mount is an Ultimate Fan of the Harlem Wildcats, and has been since she was little. Her mom was a big-time fan, and she took them to as many games as she could. Mary remembers watching the Cats at State in 1977 with Benson, Walls, and Allen, led by Hall of Famer Tony Plumage. Always been a fan and always supported her kids and grandkids. Her husband, Harlan Mount, started up a team called Rez Rockers when their daughter wanted to play more. This grew into solid boys' and girls' teams for many years. Bringing connection and tradition to the youth centered around the basketball game they all loved. In the past decade, she's hit every game she could to cheer on her family, her children, and her grandchildren. Her ultimate fan path really took off when her grandson, Brad Cichosz, started playing varsity. She would record his games for family members who couldn't make it and show them afterward. Some wanted to experience the games in real time and asked her to go live. Many couldn't make the games, and most didn't have solid internet or streaming services at home, so going live helped them stay connected to the fire of basketball and the legacy of their athletes. The news spread that she was doing this, and in no time, she was receiving friend requests from people she didn't even know. One time her friend, Anita Haluszka, asked her to accept friend requests from people she didn't know because they heard Mary offered good game footage, showcasing the positive energy basketball brings. People who had moved away from Harlem years earlier started contacting her and joining her streams to become fans



Photo from: MIAHOF FB Page



Mary pictured with husband, Harlan Mount - Photo from: MIAHOF FB Page

again. She worried a bit because there were rules around that and was going to quit, but an elder in poor health told her how much he appreciated her streams. He was a long, long-time Wildcat fan who never missed a game until his health got bad and he had to use a wheelchair. He told Mary that he puts the stream up on his TV and he gets to watch from his living room. He thanked her and told her he hadn't been very mobile, and this kept him connected to the Harlem Wildcat teams he loved. That was the sign she needed, and she's been going ever since. Every game, every basketball season. She also emphasized the importance of our athletes being good examples because the young ones are always watching, and as fans and family, staying positive and letting the kids play the game. Her grandkids were good examples as players and now as successful people in the world, as soldiers for their tribe and country. Her family is close to their traditional way of life, and she believes the songs and ceremonies bring balance to her children and grandchildren through the ups and downs of sports and life. Mary shared, "A true fan is always supportive of the team, no matter what. Through the ups and downs, we still bleed maroon and white." We both agreed, once a Wildcat, always a Wildcat. She is proud of the community and its support, and of the Harlem Wildcat team as they head to the State B tournament in Bozeman. Their first game will be a rematch of that 1977 Championship, St. Labre vs. Harlem. She said, "It's gonna be a good one for sure! Go Cats Go!" – Continued on Page 11...



Photo by: MIAHOF

The man, the myth, the legend, Randy Perez, captures the game of basketball across the Hi-Line and at many tournaments in Montana. His willingness to share all the fantastic photos he takes of athletes, cheer squads, and fans makes him the amazing human he is. You'll see him all across the Hi-Line, hitting high school and college games alike. He captures the moment and promotes them on his Facebook page in fast fashion. He is a constant learner. He loves the games and loves the stats. One thing he would like to see more are game statistics available to everyone. Randy shared many great memories. Wishing he had a camera to capture athletes of old. *"Back during the 1977 Harlem run, there were some great games back then,"* he said. *"And then in the 60s, when Don Wetzel, Sr. was playing, I would have liked to capture that, and the old Wolf Point Wolves years of dominance with Bob Parsley and Willy Weeks. Great players. Then the 90s Harlem teams were exciting to watch. Hays-LodgePole has great teams and athletes. AJ Longsoldier was one of my favorites with Lenny Gray and Brockie. And I really like this year's Harlem team,"* he said. Randy likes to see all the great photographers out there now. He visits with Dean Hendrickson all the time. Dean, another legend, has captured fantastic photos of many great players, with one of the most famous ones of a Jonathan Takes Enemy lay-up seen in many magazines and websites. Tommy Robinson, Jennifer Ray, Thae Main, and Mariah Dimas are a few of Randy's favorite photographers coming up. He visits them when he sees them and enjoys the photos they take. He had to think for a minute on which photos are his favorites over the years, but concluded that he really enjoyed the Taya Trottier and RJ Ramone period. *"I started to move down under the basket when they were playing, and I like those photos now the best,"* he said. Randy takes his time to learn the camera settings and helps a few younger photographers with settings. They come up to him, and he shares the wisdom he has but also learns from them. He said, *"The digital cameras changed many things. The lighting features are amazing. (He shoots with a Nikon) It can be expensive. Good cameras are around \$6,000, and then you have to have a good computer to work with the photos. You*

*can buy an older camera to practice on for settings, but the newer ones will do it for you. I like to have a bit more control over my photos and I like photos of individuals."* He doesn't get a whole lot of feedback on the photos he takes from the athletes, but the parents reach out to him all the time through Messenger. They appreciate his dedication and his photos. He enjoys it and loves to share his work. Every year, he thinks of putting photos up at the mid-winter fair, but he never has. He wants to show all his photos to the community. He wants to get that done because many of his favorite athletes have passed on and he would like to bring those good pictures out. Randy has set a standard for many to follow with Tommy Robinson sharing some good words, *"Randy Perez is definitely an inspiration not only as a photographer but as a human being. I hope I can still be as active as a photographer when I get his age. I admire his dedication to showcasing the student athletics from the Hi-Line. I don't know if people know how long it takes to process photos after each game, yet Randy will post tons of action photos of the players, cheerleaders, and even the fans after every game he shoots. I hope his work is never taken for granted, as you can tell, it comes from the heart. I always enjoy running into him at State Tournaments each year and getting to visit for a bit - he's such a genuinely good person."* We meant to talk for 20-30 minutes and ended up talking for over an hour. He is truly a wealth of knowledge, and I'm honored by the conversation. Randy has finally added a watermark to his photos, because many use them, including us. At the MIAHOF, we do our best to credit all photos we grab and will try to contact those taking them to get permission to post. We have amazing talent in Indian Country in photography, and we wanted to share our thanks to Mr. Randy Perez for blazing a trail and lifting the youth and communities across Montana.

*On behalf of the Fort Belknap Indian Community, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Perez for his exceptional work in capturing memories that will last a lifetime. His dedication and skill have helped preserve important moments that are meaningful to all of us. We also want to express our sincere gratitude to Mrs. Mount for her unwavering support and commitment to providing live feeds throughout these events. Thanks to her efforts, those who could not attend in person were still able to share in the experience and stay connected with the community.*



Photo by: MIAHOF



Northern B Divisional Tournament in Shelby, MT – Photo by: Randy Perez

## HARLEM WILDCATS FINISH SEASON WITH 2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE STATE TITLE

The Harlem Wildcats had an impressive season that reignited community pride as well as the Harlem’s basketball program. After securing 1st place in the District Championship by defeating the Malta Mustangs, the Wildcats advanced to the Northern B Divisional Championship game. In a thrilling game against the Fairfield Eagles, Harlem clinched the title with a close 80-75 victory, marking their first Divisional Championship win in over 20 years. The Wildcats advanced on to the State Championship game held at Bozeman’s Brick Breeden Fieldhouse where they faced the undefeated Lodge Grass Indians. Despite their best efforts, Harlem fell short with a final score of 69-48. Nonetheless, the Wildcats’ journey was a celebration of determination, skill, and hard work! This marks an impressive achievement for the team and coaches!

*“The Fort Belknap Tribal Council extends their heartfelt congratulations and immense pride for reaching this significant milestone. This accomplishment not only highlights the Wildcats’ talent on the court but brought pride to the whole community. We celebrate their success and look forward to seeing continued growth and victories in the seasons ahead.”*

Facebook Post/Statement made from Head Coach, Ben Carrywater: *“After taking some time to reflect on this basketball season and post season. I want to say congrats to Lodge Grass, they were the better team. I also want to say congratulations to St. Labre on getting 3rd place, they really impressed me. I want to thank my wife and my kids who have sacrificed their time with me from November to March to allow me to coach. All the traveling they did by themselves to follow the team, they even had to watch late night film sessions with me. Without my wife Brandy’s support, I would not be the coach I am today. I really appreciate all the sacrifices she made. I was the head coach for the past 4 years. My seniors were freshmen when I took over the program. These are our records for each season I have coached: 2-18, 8-12, 13-14, and 24-3. Our records show this season wasn’t built over night or just this year. It took a lot of time, hard work, & dedication. We had the best season Harlem has had in years. The last time Harlem was 24-3 was back in 2003, a team I was a part of. This season was incredible - we won Districts, Northern B Divisionals, & Harlem has not done that since 2002. We didn’t get the outcome we wanted but we made it to the State Title game. A lot of people can’t say they have been able to experience that. I was hurting for my team, my boys were hurt after the game but they accepted it and they owned it. I am so proud of my boys for holding their heads high. They didn’t blame anyone, they didn’t blame the refs, they took that loss with grace. They did something bigger than basketball this season. They brought our community together especially in the post season. Most importantly they were great role models for our youth, they had so many kids looking up to them and cheering for them. I’m grateful for my coaching staff...Miles Werk, John Young, and Josh Rose for all their help & guidance this season. And Ira Talks Different, our bus driver who got us to and from all our games safely. Thank you to all the parents/guardians who allowed us to coach your sons/grandchildren and to the fans who came and supported the boys all season long. We appreciate everyone. Last but not least, my seniors. I am so proud of you for sticking it out since you were freshmen. The thousands of sprints you guys have done, the practices, and the time in the gym over the past 4 years. I am sad that it is over, but your life is just beginning. I know all four of you will do great things in life & I will always be in your corner. Thank you for allowing me to be your coach, I love you boys. Go Cats Go!”*





## Messerly receives All-Tourney and MVP at the 2026 AIHEC National Basketball Tournament

The 2026 AIHEC National Basketball Tournament took place in Newtown, North Dakota, from March 27 to 29, 2026. Hosted by Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, the event brought together top college teams for an exciting weekend of basketball. The Lady Bison triumphed in the Division II championship game against Sisseton Wahpeton College, securing a 67-56 victory at the 4 Bear Casino Event Center. Two standout players from the Fort Belknap Tribes, Chloe Shaidyn Messerly and Jaycee Werk, participated in the tournament. Chloe made a remarkable impact by scoring 19 points in the final game. Her performance earned her a spot on the All-Tourney Team as well as the Most Valuable Player (MVP) award. Off the court, Chloe continues to shine academically, having recently earned a place on the Dean’s List this quarter. Congratulations to Chloe and the Lady Bison on their well-deserved achievements!

Chloe is an enrolled member of the Nakoda Tribe and is the Daughter of Genevieve Cochran and Jered Messerly and Granddaughter of Dawn & Buster Moore; The Late Kass Perez; and Gordon & Susan Messerly.

*Top Photo – Salish Kootenai College Lady Bison Team Photo L to R: Coach Marty Wallace Sr., Seeley McDonald, Kason Page, Jaycee Werk (Fort Belknap), Chloe Messerly (Fort Belknap), Ashley Tryon, Destiny Finley, and Coach Missy Tiensvold. Bottom Photo – Chloe Messerly with MVP Trophy. ~Photos by: Genevieve Cochran~*

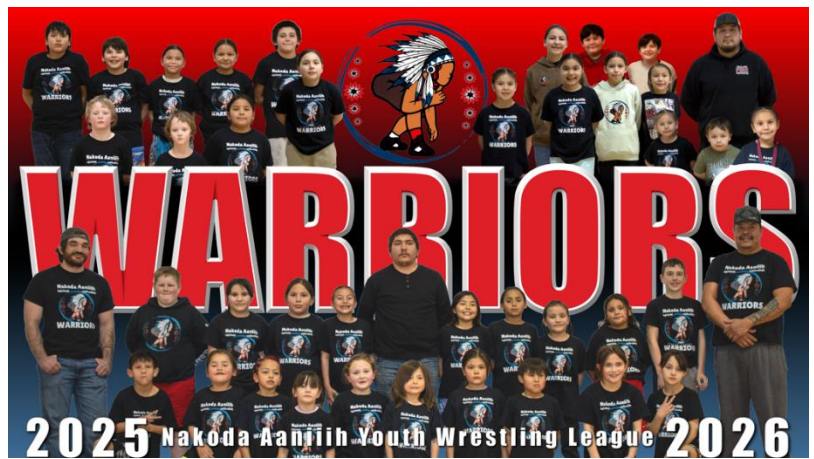
## 2026 Warriors Wrestling Season Comes to an End

**BY: LONETTE BLACKCROW, WRESTLING GRANDMA**

The season may be over, but the pride and gratitude we feel for our young wrestlers and the community that supported them will last far beyond the mat.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Nakoda Aaniiih Youth Athletic League for helping ignite a passion for sports among our youth. Programs like this create opportunities for young people to grow, challenge themselves, and build confidence while representing their community with pride.

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed to making this season unforgettable for our young Warriors. We are deeply grateful to our dedicated coaches—John Hughes, Brandon Beck, Bill Main, Eli Lewis, Trevor Boushie, Cody Blackcrow, Amelia Blackcrow, Lance Blackcrow, and William Blackcrow—who worked tirelessly to foster a culture of excellence while providing encouragement, mentorship, and unwavering support.



Special appreciation also goes to Leslie Horn, Aspen Baker, Janeese Brisbo, Valerie Blackcrow, and the many parents, grandparents, and family members who gave their time and energy to support this remarkable team throughout the season. Your dedication behind the scenes made a meaningful difference for every athlete. And to our talented young wrestlers—each of you showed incredible determination, heart, and commitment. You represented your community with pride and demonstrated the true spirit of teamwork and sportsmanship every time you stepped onto the mat. It has been an honor to witness your growth this season. The skills, friendships, and confidence you have built will carry forward into many future successes. We are proud of each and every one of you. Keep working hard, supporting one another, and chasing your goals. The future is bright for our young Warriors.



Photo by: Billings Elite Amateur Boxing

## Rodriguez Becomes a 6x National Champion

Congratulations to Taliyah Rodriguez (15 years of age) for winning her 6<sup>th</sup> title in Colorado Springs making her a 6x National Champion. Representing the Gros Ventre Tribe with pride and determination, Taliyah showcased incredible skill and sportsmanship throughout the National Women’s Tournament. She trains out of the Billings Elite Amateur Boxing Club, where her hard work and dedication have paid off. This remarkable achievement highlights not only her talent but also the strong support from her community and coaches. Taliyah is the daughter of Safara Shortman and the granddaughter of the late Mac Shortman. Rodriguez is currently ranked No. 1 nationally at 132 lbs. and at 138 lbs., and she has plenty of national titles to prove it. Her journey to the top began three years ago after the loss of her grandmother. Over the last three years, Rodriguez has met and drawn attention from several big names in the professional boxing world. Rodriguez’s main goal for the future is to make it to the U.S. Olympics, as she hopes to make the team by 2028 or 2032.

## Dodson and Harlem Schools Celebrate Spring Proms

Spring brought a joyful atmosphere as Dodson and Harlem High Schools hosted their annual proms, a special time for students to gather, enjoy snacks, and dance the night away. At Dodson School, Frank Cole and Precious Stiffarm were crowned King and Queen, while Lance Kill Eagle and Lillian Bearcub earned the titles of Prince and Princess. Meanwhile, Harlem School’s prom crowned Donovan Archambault and Cyla Adams as King and Queen, with Carter Lawrence and Madison Mount named Prince and Princess.

These celebrations mark a memorable moment for students, blending tradition with fun and friendship. The crowning of royalty adds an exciting highlight to the festivities, recognizing student spirit and youth involvement. Overall, the proms were a wonderful way for both schools to enjoy music, laughter, and shared memories. *Hays School is scheduled to have their prom on April 10, 2026.*



Dodson King/Queen: Frank Cole & Precious Stiffarm  
Photo by: Jennifer Perez



Dodson Prince/Princess: Lance Kill Eagle & Lillian Bearcub  
Photo by: Wesley Kill Eagle, Jr.



Harlem King/Queen: Donovan Archambault & Cyla Adams



Harlem Prince/Princess: Carter Lawrence & Madison Mount  
Photos by: Randy Perez

## Montana Department of Commerce Awards Small Business Grants to 26 Native-Owned Businesses in Montana

HELENA, MT. – The Montana Department of Commerce announced that \$320,000 of grant funding has been allocated to 26 Native American businesses in Montana. The funding is through Commerce’s Indian Equity Fund Small Business Grant Program. (Fort Belknap businesses that were awarded include: Pretty Paint Catering, LLC, Walking Sun Custom Cuts, LLC, and Water Dawgs Fire.) “Indian Equity Fund grants can be used to support a variety of business-related activities, such as the purchase of new equipment or the development of a new product line or expanding Native American businesses in Montana,” said Commerce Director Marta Bertoglio. IEF awards for individual businesses can be up to \$14,000 with a minimum dollar-to-dollar cash or in-kind match.

Eligible applicants for IEF grant funding include enrolled members of the eight federally recognized tribes in Montana. Each year, a total of \$320,000 of IEF Program funding is available for Native American businesses in Montana. The IEF is one of four financial assistance programs under Commerce’s Office of Indian Country Economic Development. Other funding opportunities include the Native American Business Advisors, Tribal Tourism and Native American Collateral Support grant programs. For more information about the IEF Grant Program, visit [commerce.mt.gov](http://commerce.mt.gov).

### THE FOLLOWING BUSINESSES TO RECEIVE IEF GRANT FUNDING:

- **Bamn Junk Removal and Moving, LLC** in Billings will receive \$14,000 to upgrade trailers and purchase tools necessary for junk removal and moving operations.
- **Caffiend to Go** in Poplar will receive \$5,000 for upgrading espresso and coffee equipment and trailer buildout.
- **Diamond M Towing** in Box Elder will receive \$9,000 to upgrade their tow trucks with necessary towing and safety equipment.
- **Elevate Fitness & Wellness Studio** in Havre will receive \$14,000 to replace worn flooring.
- **Evening Star Outdoor Adventures** in Browning will receive \$14,000 to purchase rental boats, safety gear and improve booking/operations infrastructure.
- **Glacier Gateway Vacation Rental & Culture Lodging** in Browning will receive \$12,000 to complete cabin interior as well as for furnishings, linens and appliances.
- **Hood Rescue, LLC in Box Elder** will receive \$7,000 to purchase specialized hood cleaning equipment, safety gear and a vehicle setup for commercial kitchen cleaning services.
- **Jack Rabbit Crossing Audio and Events, LLC** in Wyola will receive \$14,000 to purchase or upgrade sound, lighting and event production equipment, as well as a trailer and storage for mobile events.
- **KayCo BBQ, LLC** in Browning will receive \$14,000 to upgrade smoker and food trailer equipment, as well as for initial inventory to expand event and catering capacity.
- **Kilo Blends, LLC** in Billings will receive \$9,000 to buy and install barbershop equipment and to purchase a laptop.
- **Log Creations** in Box Elder will receive \$10,000 to acquire additional woodworking equipment and materials, as well as for shop upgrades to enhance production and product quality.
- **MK Media, LLC** in Poplar will receive \$11,000 to buy equipment and editing software to professionalize and expand media production.
- **Ni-Wah’s Kitchen** in Box Elder will receive \$14,000 to buy kitchen/catering equipment, storage and to improve mobile setup to expand capacity.
- **Pretty Paint Catering, LLC** in Harlem will receive \$12,000 to purchase commercial kitchen equipment, storage and serving gear for larger catering jobs and for improved food safety.
- **Rogue Grill & Catering** in East Glacier will receive \$14,000 to purchase a hot holding cabinet, a high-capacity generator and a commercial ice machine.
- **Rollin Bean V2** in Polson will receive \$13,000 to purchase espresso equipment, refrigeration and a generator.
- **RX Carwash** in Wolf Point will receive \$12,000 to purchase a new cement foundation for expansion.
- **Shiny Suds Car Wash** in Arlee will receive \$14,000 to upgrade wash equipment, install modern payment systems and improve signage.
- **SLD Moore LLC** in Havre will receive \$14,000 to help finance a larger trailer and purchase additional food service equipment.
- **Sunroad Woman, LLC** in Billings will receive \$14,000 to finance a production order of new apparel styles for the business.
- **Turcotte Food Bus** in Wolf Point will receive \$13,000 to upgrade kitchen equipment and refrigeration on the bus, as well as signage.
- **Walking Sun Custom Cuts, LLC** in Dodson will receive \$14,000 to purchase two refrigerated shipping containers to create separate cooler and freezer storage.
- **Warrior Trail Jewelry & Gifts** in Lame Deer will receive \$14,000 to purchase inventory and improve displays and branding.
- **Water Dawgs Fire** in Hays will receive \$12,000 to cover engine repairs and equipment to meet wildland engine contract requirements.
- **Water People Tours** in Ronan will receive \$13,000 to upgrade tour boat equipment and safety gear and marketing/booking tools.
- **Wolf Mountain Gunworks** in Lodge Grass will receive \$14,000 to build inventory, upgrade security, invest in marketing assets and purchase a computer.



## AWC Mobilization Begins Today — A New Era of Healthcare Is Underway!



Beginning Wednesday, March 25, 2026, Anaakyaaniin Wellness Center (AWC) is officially mobilizing on-site as preparations begin for construction of the new community health center. This marks the first major step toward a state-of-the-art facility designed to expand services, improve access, and strengthen the long-term health and wellness of our people.



Over the coming days and weeks, community members will notice increased activity in the project area as crews begin staging equipment, securing the site, and laying the groundwork for construction. This mobilization phase is an exciting milestone—one that brings us closer to a modern health center built to meet the needs of future generations.



This project represents progress, investment, and a shared commitment to a healthier, stronger community. We appreciate everyone's patience and cooperation as work gets underway, and we look forward to sharing updates as construction advances.

A new chapter in healthcare begins today—and we're building it together.



# EAGLE VALLEY UPDATE

## **FBTHA Homes:**

Exciting progress continues on the FBTHA Homes, with 16 units now fully connected to electricity and powered. Three homes have completed natural gas line installation, and an additional seven are nearing completion. Water and sewer line testing is expected within the next several weeks, bringing these homes closer to full-service activation. Appliance installation is also underway in units that are ready. Looking ahead, the Transportation Department and road crews will resume work in April, with plans to begin grading and graveling streets throughout the community—an important step in bringing the development together.

## **Dynamic Homes:**

Great progress is also being made on the Dynamic Homes, with all five units now connected to electricity. Pressure testing of the natural gas lines is currently underway in coordination with the plumbing contractor and Northwestern Energy and is expected to be completed within the next several weeks.

## **Contact Us**

 406-673-3031

 [www.islandmtn.com](http://www.islandmtn.com)





# IMDG AGENCY ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE



**Exciting progress is underway on the new IMDG administrative facility located on the site of the former IHS Building!**

**The first two building modules were successfully delivered on Saturday, March 28, marking a major milestone in the project. Two additional modules are set to arrive on Tuesday, March 31, with the final two expected later that week on April 3 or 4.**

**Once all six modules are in place, they will come together to form a modern, 5,400-square-foot administrative building designed to support IMDG employees and future operations.**

**Installation of the modules onto the prepared foundation is scheduled for early April. A crane will be on-site during this phase, creating an exciting visual moment as the building takes shape.**

**For everyone's safety, we ask the public to please keep a safe distance from the construction area during deliveries and crane activity.**

**We're proud to share that the project remains on schedule, with completion anticipated in July 2026. Stay tuned for more updates as we continue building for the future!**



**Health Alert Network - March 8, 2026 - Measles Case Detected in Blaine County**

**Background:** The Blaine County Health Department (BCHD), Fort Belknap Tribal Health/ Public Health Nursing (FBTH/PHN), and Fort Belknap IHS (FB IHS) have confirmed a case of measles in Blaine County. The individual was exposed while traveling out of state and was isolating at home. To date, a total of 36 confirmed measles cases have been reported to DPHHS since April 2025. This is the first case of measles in Montana reported in 2026. Note that this new case of measles in Blaine County will not be displayed on the DPHHS measles website because they are not a resident of Montana

**Information:** Public health officials have identified one location of potential public exposure at Fort Belknap Little River Health Center, Fort Belknap Agency IHS on Friday, March 6, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. There were additional household members exposed to the case who were recommended to seek medical care or testing, they were told to call ahead prior to visiting a medical facility. Measles outbreaks are also presently occurring in multiple locations throughout the United States, including Utah, Arizona, and South Carolina. High numbers of measles cases are also occurring globally, including Mexico and Canada. **Clarification to Joint Press Release Regarding Measles Exposure at Fort Belknap:** The Fort Belknap Tribal Health Department was receiving an influx of questions and concerns about the recent measles exposure. To clarify the joint press release from the Blaine County Health Department, the Fort Belknap Tribal Health Department would like to emphasize that the measles exposure was from a non-community member who was traveling through the area and does not reside on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. As mentioned in the original press release, the individual was isolated at home. Should you have any further questions please contact Fort Belknap Public Health Nursing Department at (406) 353-3250.

**Montana Missing Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Advisory Council Launches New Website** – The MMIP Advisory Council is the joint effort of collaboration and communication between tribes, federal and state agencies with the goal of improved response and awareness to missing indigenous persons of Montana. You can check out their website at <https://www.mtmissing.org> which features the Advisory Council, Community Feedback, Recommendations, Data Analysis, Resources, and Action Items. *The MMIP Advisory Council is administered by the Montana Department of Justice for staffing and administrative purposes only. The website is a culmination of work by the Advisory Council and is intended to be a resource point and place to share information about the Advisory Council. It is not affiliated with the Montana Department of Justice.*

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (Prairie Mountain Utilities) -** Beginning April 1, 2026, PMU will be starting water shut offs in Old Hays, Hays and Pine Grove areas. If you have not been paying your utilities, it is your responsibility to make payment arrangements with PMU. **LOW RENT & TAX CREDIT** tenants must set up an account with PMU, if you have not already. Housing sent out a reminder letter. Refusal to set up an account will end up in disruption of your utility services. Keep in mind, once your water is disconnected, there is a \$100 reconnection fee along with a payment agreement. PMU has a clover card reader and can now accept Debit/Credit Cards. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to PMU at (406) 399-2301 or (406) 353-8313, or email [kasey.ramone@ftbelknap.org](mailto:kasey.ramone@ftbelknap.org).

**PSA FROM ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM -** To All Community Members and Residents on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation: This PSA is in regards to the cutting of fence lines and locks to gates, at Transfer Sites in Hays and Lodge Pole. This is a direct violation of the Fort Belknap Indian Community Title XI: Environment Part I: Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Code of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Community, Resolution No. 239-2019 and pursuant to Section XV: Compliance and Enforcement, can be prosecuted under Section 15.02 Complaints: If the Environmental Compliance Officer receives a complaint concerning the violation of applicable FBIC or federal environmental laws, solid waste laws, regulations or permit conditions, the Environmental Compliance Officer shall investigate to ensure proper consideration of the complaint. The Environmental Compliance Officers investigation may include the inspection of the solid waste facility, records or solid waste collection vehicle to determine whether any applicable FBIC or federal law, regulation, or permit has been or is being violated. If the Environmental Compliance Officer receives a complaint by a person or another agency concerning a solid waste facility, transportation service, or other activity, and the Environmental Compliance Officer does not refer it to another agency, the Environmental Compliance Officer shall either take enforcement action concerning that solid waste facility, transportation service or transporter or provide the person or agency who filed the complaint with a written statement within thirty (30) business days explaining why an enforcement action would not be appropriate. When committing these violations, you are putting these sites in non-compliance and increasing the workload for PMU staff, in addition to increasing undue expense for PMU for the cost of materials and labor. Any person(s) with any knowledge or information pertaining to person(s) vandalizing transfer sites and stealing fencing materials, please notify Law Enf. at: (406) 353-2933 or Environmental Compliance Officer at: (406) 353-8368. You may/will remain anonymous.



**Newsletter Created and Published by:**  
Breanne Main, Public Relations Officer  
Fort Belknap Indian Community  
Central Administration  
E-mail: [breanne.main@ftbelknap.org](mailto:breanne.main@ftbelknap.org)

**NEW  
CRIMINAL  
CODE  
TRAINING**

APRIL 7-9, 2026  
AGENCY BINGO HALL  
9:00 AM to 12:00 NOON


For More Information  
CONTACT SARAH GONE, TRIBAL COURT  
ADMINISTRATOR AT (406)353-8418



Habitats and Locations of  
**Eatable and Medicinal Plants**

April 10, 2026 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

call (406) 399-3420  
for a ride



**Presenter: Dennis Longknife**  
**Sponsor: Renita Longknife**  
**Tiwahe Cultural Coordinator**  
**(406) 353-8349**

Tiwahe Conference Room  
250 Court Housing loop  
Ft. Belknap Agency

Green building at hays on  
Tuesdays  
Tribal courts at agency on  
Thursdays

**Batterers Intervention classes**

Tuesdays at 10 am  
Thursdays at 4pm  
Classes are weekly

For more information call Manuel  
DuBois Batterers Intervention  
Specialist at 4063538505

Open to court ordered clients "afm,  
elder abuse, child abuse, domestic  
violence."

**Celebrate Recovery**  
A Christ Centered Recovery program

Overcome life's hurts habits and hang ups

The Time Is **Thursdays at 6pm** Take The Road  
NOW! **Harlem Assembly of** To Recovery  
**God, bring a friend.**

**TIME FOR  
CHANGE**

[www.celebraterecovery.com](http://www.celebraterecovery.com)

**April 2026**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 Hays Foot Clinic	15 Lodge Pole Foot Clinic	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 Dodson Foot Clinic	23 Agency Foot Clinic	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 Agency Foot Clinic		

My notes

Foot Clinic Appointments :  
Contact the PHN at 353-3250  
or  
Nellie King at 353-8537

## Tiwahe FUN PASSPORT

**EARN FREE FAIR WRISTBANDS!**

Attend Tiwahe Family Activities,  
Collect Stamps & Earn Rewards!

**HOW TO PARTICIPATE:**

- ✓ Sign In with Parent & Child
- ✓ Attend Tiwahe Activities
- ✓ Collect Stamps in Your Passport
- ✓ Work Together as a Family!

**EARN REWARDS!**

- ◆ 10 Points: 1 FREE YOUTH WRISTBAND
- ◆ 15 Points: WRISTBANDS FOR YOUTH & PARENT!

Collect Points by Attending:

- Cultural Classes
- Family Fun Events
- Wellness Activities
- Community Projects

Have - Great Northern Fair  
July 15th - 19th, 2026

Morgan Horn  
406-353-8345

### ALTERNATIVE EMERGENCY ENTRANCE



Starting Monday April 6<sup>th</sup>

Fort Belknap Hospital will be undergoing major construction updates to enhance emergency healthcare services for Fort Belknap community

Please be aware of signs and our alternate entrance for emergency services!

All Emergency Department patients will be directed to enter the building through the front clinic entrance and will be escorted to the ED.

**NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE**

# Aaniiih Nakoda Workforce & Technology EXPO

North Central/Hi-Line Montana Businesses -  
this is your opportunity to invest  
in the future of our workforce.

You're invited to attend the 2026 Workforce & Technology EXPO to be part of our hands-on career activities and training paths to employment. Participating industries will offer students a hands-on experience associated with their business. Experts in their respective fields will share valuable insights and actively demonstrate key aspects of their professions to students from local and surrounding schools. Students will have the chance to immerse themselves in interactive and hands-on activities curated specifically to showcase the dynamic nature of these industries.

**Wednesday, April 29th, 8:30am ~ 4pm**  
**Fort Belknap Bingo Hall**

Specific time-frames for schools and the public will be announced in April.

For more information please contact the Fort Belknap TERO Office at 406-353-8437, 406-353-8454 or by email at [nboushie@ftbelknap.org](mailto:nboushie@ftbelknap.org) or [cheryl.horn@ftbelknap.org](mailto:cheryl.horn@ftbelknap.org)



COME DANCE & HAVE FUN!!!

## WACÍBI - BITÓCKK?I (POWWOW) PRACTICE

- Starting Tuesday, March 31 2026
- Time: 5:00 p.m. - 7:30 pm
- Practice every Tuesday,  
Last day May 5<sup>th</sup>

**Where:** Beaver Creek campgrounds  
NAEDC Headquarters, 152 youth  
Ranch Road Dodson Mt 59524

Ages: K-12  
\*Children younger than 6 must be accompanied by an adult

- Will be learning:
- The difference with dance categories
  - How to dance to certain songs
  - Aaniiih/Nakoda Language Introductions
  - Protocols
  - Physical health (why dancing and being healthy is good for you)

**\*Snacks & Drinks provided**

**\*\*Transportation Provided! if in need of a ride call the number below =)**



Instructor NAEDC Youth Coordinator:  
Kristie Runsabove

For more info Contact:  
406-301-3005  
[Kristie.runsabove@fbcedc.org](mailto:Kristie.runsabove@fbcedc.org)

# APRIL 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1 <b>April Fool's Day</b>	2	3	4 Pay Period 8
5 <b>HAPPY EASTER</b>	6 Timesheets Due Regular Council Meeting	7	8	9 Finance Committee Meeting	10 Payday Meeting in Chinook w/Blaine County Commissioners IIAM	11
12	13	14	15 Tribal Partner's Meeting	16 Health Committee Meeting	17	18 Pay Period 9
19	20 Timesheets Due	21 Land Committee Meeting	22 Earth Day Admin Assistants Day	23	24 Payday	25
26	27 Executive Committee Meeting	28 Insurance Board Meeting	29 Director's Meeting	30		

\*Subject to change at anytime\*



## APRIL 2026

### FORT BELKNAP FDIPIR ISSUANCE CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 <b>Partials Hays and Agency areas</b>	2 Agency Area *short staffed due to Baby Fair	3 Agency Area *short staffed due to Hays Easter Egg Hunt	4 <b>Agency Easter Egg Hunt 1-4</b>
5 <b>HAPPY EASTER</b>	6 <b>USDA TRUCK-CLOSED</b> Easter Monday	7 <b>Closed for USDA TRUCK</b>	8 1 <sup>st</sup> full day of issuance.	9 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	10 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	11
	13 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	14 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	15 8:45-1145 & <b>CLOSED 1-5 PM</b>	16 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	17 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	18
19	20 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	21 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	22 8:45-1145 & <b>CLOSED 1-5 PM</b>	23 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	24 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	25
26	27 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	28 8:45-1145 & 1:00-4:00	29 <b>LAST DAY OF ISSUANCE</b>	30 <b>CLOSED - MONTHLY REPORTS</b>		

445 Agency Drive St  
Harlem, Mt. 59526  
Fax: 406-353-2546

Sheri Carlson-Program Director 406-353-8487  
Jacob King-Certifying Clerk 406-353-8407  
Lexy Black Crow-Warehouse Clerk 406-353-8403



**EGG HUNT**

Calendar is subject to change



# Spring Word Search



BLOSSOM

BLOOM

FLOWERS

RAIN

SHOWERS

EASTER

SPRING BREAK

GRASS

HATCH

BIRDS

SUNSHINE

SEASON

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

N L M O R D Y S M B M O O L B

N I A R M E L E S E E A W O G

U O Y E L O S E A S O N M S S

L M L I O D N E K L A Y R P H

H C T A H I N G Q L D B R K U

U T P E H O O D I O O I F C L

Y T I S R E T R M D N T R E U

V W N A O E P J T G N E D X V

E U G R N A D M B R A Y A T E

S L M E U B G R T A S O U P A

R E F G L C E B T S I R G A S

B A L Y B A E N O S R E H R T

Y A O I K D O O H R E H O H E

U Y W E M S H O W E R S E D R

C H E F A M C L Y O G D R E S

X L R O V Z R C O J B R I N O

F I S E A R A K S L E I O E L

B L O S S O M C B J W B M O B



# Earth Day Word Search



O Z O N E C Y P L A S T I C S  
 W E C C L I M A T E Z O Z P E  
 E N E O L E N C V R I X A O N  
 N V A M A E W E R E C Y C L E  
 A I N P L S A T I C O G N L R  
 A R D O Z O Y N Y A S E Y U G  
 C O N S E R V A T I O N O T Y  
 A N A T U R E O X R E G E I O  
 N M T P R O T E C T S Y Z O B  
 S E R E R E D U C E G Y S N O  
 C N O V A I O W L S A Y C E T  
 A T R E E N L A S L Y R N A T  
 E O E P L A N T S E A A T T L  
 V O L U N T E E R V A N Q H E  
 P L A N E T E R E U S E D I S

AIR  
 APRIL  
 BOTTLES  
 CANS  
 CLEAN  
 CLIMATE  
 COMPOST

CONSERVATION  
 EARTH  
 ENERGY  
 ENVIRONMENT  
 LAND  
 NATURE  
 OCEAN

OXYGEN  
 OZONE  
 PLANET  
 PLANTS  
 PLASTIC  
 POLLUTION  
 PROTECT

RECYCLE  
 REDUCE  
 REUSE  
 TREE  
 VOLUNTEER  
 WATER