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Montana

Historical Society

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES' *HERITAGE KEEPER & HERITAGE GUARDIAN AWARD*

NOMINATION FORM

ABOUT THE NOMINEE

Name of Nominee: Bud Cheff, Jr.
Address: 31927 Mollman Pass Trail; Ronan, MT 59864
Phone Numbers: (406) 644-3435
E-mail: budnlaurel@blackfoot.net

ABOUT YOU

In case we need more information about your nominee.

Nomination Submitted by: Gretchen Schnitzer
Address: 60566 Hillside Road, St. Ignatius, MT 59865
Phone Number: (858) 354-8615
E-mail: fgschnitzer@aol.com

Date Nomination Submitted: March 14, 2019

Return completed form, narrative & support documents **by March 16, 2019** to: **Heritage Keeper Awards Chair**

**Montana Historical Society
P.O. Box 201201, 225 North Roberts
Helena, MT 59620-1201**

Or e-mail to: Joy Lewis, jlewis@mt.gov , or FAX to: 406-444-2696. For information call: 406-444-1799

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NOMINATION NARRATIVE for the nomination of Bud Cheff, Jr.

Please answer the following questions:

1. **Contribution(s) to Montana history**—*please describe the project or on-going service within Montana's historical community that has been accomplished by the nominee.*

Bud Cheff, Jr. is a storyteller of the highest caliber. His stories draw from the rich history, legends, land and wildlife of Western Montana and from life on his family's homestead in one of the earliest regions of Euro-America and Native American co-existence, the Mission Valley. As a young boy, Bud spent many evenings listening to elders' tales of adventure and legends, which kindled Bud's lifelong passion for preserving the past and his cultural heritage. He began in natural way for young boys, by collecting objects that symbolized the past, then learning everything he could about the history of each treasure.

The first real treasure in Bud's collection was a Native-American War Club that he and his sister found in a cave during a family outing. How a nine-year-old boy's imagination must soar with an Indian War Club in hand! But instead of war games, Bud's imagination led to a determination to preserve the treasures he collected and share them with others. Does that sound like the birth of a museum? That's what evolved decades later.

In 1997 Bud Cheff, Jr. with his wife, Laurel, and their family founded the non-profit *Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana* in the Mission Valley on the Flathead Reservation of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe. Thousands of visitors come each year to immerse themselves in Montana's cultural heritage. Nearly 2,000 items—historic photos, artwork, and objects of Native American and historic Montana significance—speak to Montana's cultural heritage and past. Bud's genius for storytelling brings life to oral history presentations, personal tours, display signs, and dioramas about the lifestyle and culture of the people who lived in this valley and western Montana. Notably, where history often emphasizes the tension and war that came with the convergence of cultures in the American West, Bud's oral history focuses on personal accounts of relationships, cooperation and community.

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2. What are the particular strengths and impacts of the Montana history goals the nominee has achieved? *What impact has the work had on the community/intended audience?*

Four historical gems grace Mission Valley today. The Mission Church in St. Ignatius tells the story of “Black Robes” who crossed the Rockies to the Flathead Indian Reservation. The National Bison Range gives us a majestic glimpse of Bison herds that roamed the plains. Fort Connah stands alone in a pasture, the last of the Hudson Bay trading posts in the US. The valley’s fourth gem, the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana, helps visitors connect the many dots of historical Western Montana, giving us a big picture of regional history through exhibits, oral history, local programs, educational events (especially for young people), nature trails, and family activities like a summer Round Dance. It’s an irreplaceable picture of times past— a picture that might have been scattered like stones in a river except for the vision of Bud Cheff.

Certainly the most treasured part of Bud’s creation is the focus on Native American culture. When Bud was able to actually buy artifacts for his collection in the 1970s, he was troubled by the number of Native-American artifacts that were leaving Montana, many of them destined for other countries. Today’s visitors to Ninepipes Museum see hundreds of Native American objects from the mid-19th to early 20th century which, if not for Bud’s passion for preservation, would probably be in private hands.

Each of Montana’s registered reservations is represented: Salish, Pend d’Oreille, Kootenai, Blackfeet, Chippewa, Plains Cree, Gros Ventre, Assiniboine, Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, Crow and Little Shell Chippewa. Visitors see clothing adorned in intricate bead and quill work, cradleboards, headdresses and personal things that illuminate daily life and rituals. Many objects belonged to historic families of the Flathead Reservation. Visitors can view Chief Koostatah’s moccasins and the teepee and ceremonial clothing belonging to the grandsons of Joseph Ninepipes, the museum’s namesake and sub-chief under Chief Victor of the Bitterroot Salish. As a result of Bud’s vision and the relationships he has with the Native-American community, the museum also cares for irreplaceable Native-American artifacts such as a rare Crazy Dog Society shirt from the Blackfeet tribe and the singular buffalo-hide story count that records the exploits of Percy Bullchild’s Uncle Weasel Tail, veteran of intertribal wars, who died in 1950.

Bud deeply respects the ceremonial and cultural traditions of Native Americans. The museum welcomes “blessing ceremonies” on objects and collections and seeks input on displays. Descendants who recognize objects or photos of family significance often spend time with Bud and the museum staff, reminiscing and recounting family stories. They universally acknowledge a strong sense of spirit in the museum and appreciate the respectful representation of their history and culture.

Bud’s legacy of historical preservation and interpretation traces back to evenings long ago when elders told stories of the past and Bud’s lifelong pathway became clear. Eighty years later, Bud is the elder and many of us listen to him, and learn, and come to respect and cherish our history.

Thank you for considering my nomination of Bud Cheff, Jr. to be an MHS *Heritage Keeper*.

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3. **Describe the nominee**—*provide a short biographical sketch/history of the nominee, including: length of involvement in service; effectiveness of service; level of prior recognition; and degree of commitment to the general concepts and highest goals of the historical community.*

Written by Bud Cheff, Jr. on March 12, 2018:

As a boy I listened to the elders telling stories of the past, and was enthralled with them. I witnessed the last gasp of the old days, and watched as that way of life disappeared. I started collecting at an early age, wanting to hold on to the past. Through the years many elders and family members gave me some of their treasured heirlooms and photographs. They were confident I would not sell them, but save them for all to see and enjoy. In the mid-1970s, my finances improved and I started to buy artifacts when I could. As I traveled around the country I watched for items from Montana. It bothered me to see Indian artifacts being sold and leaving the area, with many of them going overseas.

In 1978 I started aggressively to secure and preserve Indian and early Montana items. At that time, I started to think of building a museum to preserve as much of our history as I could, and share it with the public. I knew this would be a hard task with my limited resources. Our ranch was a breakeven operation, and our construction company made us a good living, but not much more.

In the mid-1990s, I drew the plans for the museum building and did cost estimates. I could see it would be a financial hardship for us. My wife Laurie and I discussed the pros and cons, and she said "Go for it." I think she did it mostly for me, as she knew it was my dream. Together we saved a lot of the cost by doing our own construction. I had seen John Lapka's excellent log work so I hired him to do our log construction. We had help from Mom and Dad, our children, Jim, Buddy, Jo, and other family members. I cut and peeled trees from the ranch to be used for log benches and displays. Even the metal railing in the diorama room was made in our shop. Laurie restored the old mannequins and painted the upper backdrop scenery. It was a work of sacrifice and love. Financially, we will never recover, and it was hard to have to sell part of our ranch, but Laurie and I are at peace with our decision to build it. It has been heartwarming to see how proud Mom and Dad were of it, and to have many from the valley and around the country give their support. In 1997, we created a non-profit to ensure the legacy of the museum would outlive us.

So many visitors tell us what a wonderful aura it has. A visitor said "It seems to be whispering a message from the past to us as we go through." This is what we had hoped and worked for, that all who visit will learn something of our past and have a good experience. I believe learning of the past is important to the future. We pray that the museum will continue to grow and be a part of the future.

Supporting Documentation: Letters of Support; Ninepipes Museum Newsletter; Book by Bud Cheff, Jr. *Legend Keeper*

Pat Jamieson
PO Box 136
Dixon, MT 59831

March 11, 2019

Heritage Keepers Awards
Montana Historical Society
225 North Roberts
PO Box 201201
Helena, MT 59620-1201

Dear Awards Committee:

I am writing to support the nomination of Bud Cheff, Jr for the Heritage Keeper Award, as I feel he embodies the spirit and passion of someone who strives to protect, preserve and share the heritage of Early Montana.

I worked as the Outdoor Recreation Planner at the National Bison Range (Moiese, MT) for over 20 years before retiring a few years ago. The Range is a National Wildlife Refuge and as such, it emphasizes the natural history of the land and the bison. However, Theodore Roosevelt established the Refuge in 1908 and history winds its way into any story about the Range, from the almost extermination of bison, the effort by local Native Americans to preserve these animals, and the part the Refuge played (and continues to play) in the restoration of our national mammal.

Such is the story of the National Bison Range. But it does not stand isolated within the stories of early Montana and of the Mission Valley. Bud has worked hard to tell a wider story of the people and lands and how they relate to each other. And he also tells the story of how the Refuge fits within this culture and history. While working at the Range, I would encourage visitors to stop in at the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana to expand their experience. The depth and breadth of the Museum is staggering and stories come alive through artifacts and stories. Of particular interest and tie-in with the Refuge is the "Mammal Diorama Room" where native wildlife is displayed and visitors learn how Native Americans were part of this natural world. This relates to experiences found at the Bison Range and starts putting history into a wider context that ties the past to the present.

Yet, with all the beautiful and wonderful items to be found at the Museum, nothing is more valuable than Bud himself. He readily shares his knowledge, love and passion for the history he and his family has experienced during his lifetime in the Mission Valley.

He strives to document his own history as well as that of elders and homesteaders of the Valley. Many of these stories can easily be lost unless someone makes the effort to preserve them, as Bud has.

Having experienced the Museum many times and discovering new insights each time, I can only be filled with admiration for Bud and his family for the effort they make to share these stories with us. I cannot conceive of the hole that would have been left in heart of this area Bud hadn't established the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana and opened it to all. What stories would have been lost of the early peoples, the history, the land of the whole area, including the National Bison Range, is a scary thought. But because of Bud and his passion, history will not be lost and will continue to be part of our future.

Bud Cheff, Jr. is truly one of the greatest treasures to be found at the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana and I fervently support his nomination for the Montana Heritage Keeper Award.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Jamieson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned centrally below the typed name.

Pat Jamieson



March 6, 2019

Heritage Keeper Award Committee
Montana Historical Society
Helena, MT

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to support the nomination of Bud Cheff for the Heritage Keeper Award. Bud has developed the Ninepipe Museum into a wonderful presentation of the history, culture, and wildlife of our Mission Valley. He has always had the desire to preserve our early Montana history and especially the history of our Flathead Indian Reservation. He has been a collector all of his life.

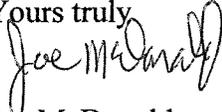
He has collected historical and cultural items of the western montana area as well as American Indian items from tribes throughout Montana and the Dakotas. He brought his life's dream to full fruition by building a beautiful log building to house and display the collection. The museum items are presented to the public in a very attractive and artistic way. Visitors feel really good and fulfilled when they complete the museum tour.

The museum has many life size exhibits that are very well done and much of the artistic work has been done by Bud. Tours of the museum display can be accompanied by an audio recording that is private to each user. The recording tells about each display individually. The museum gives the visitors a realistic historical view of our local area.

Upon entering the museum facility visitors are greeted with a very nice gift shop where American Indian bead work and regalia is displayed along with paintings, wall hangings, jewelry, and books. All of the items are presented in a very artistic and pleasing manner.

The museum has been organized by Bud Cheff to operate as a non-profit entity with a board of directors to oversee its operation. Bud serves as the curator for the museum and gives hours of his time to its operation and continued development.

School groups from western Montana visit the museum regularly as do touring groups from colleges and foreign countries. The museum serves as a vital part of maintaining our wonderful culture and history and Bud Cheff is responsible. Please give him ample consideration in choosing the recipient of the Heritage Keeper Award.

Yours truly,


Joe McDonald
Historian for
Fort Connah Restoration Society



Salish Kootenai College

Box 70
Pablo, Montana 59855
Phone (406) 275-4800
Fax (406) 275-4801



March 6, 2019

Ms. Kathy Senkler
Ninepipes Museum
69316 Highway US 93
Charlo, MT 59824

Dear Kathy,

I am pleased to be able to recommend Bud Cheff, Jr., for the 2019 Heritage Keeper Award from the Montana Historical Society.

As one of the founders of the Ninepipes Museum, Bud has poured his life into preserving the history and culture of the Mission Valley and the Salish and Kootenai people. Through the museum, he has also made the history available to community members and the general public. The museum's public events have enriched the social and cultural life of western Montana. Along with other members of his family, Bud has established a legacy that will enable future generations to understand the cultural and environmental uniqueness of the Mission Valley and its people.

In addition, as an author, Bud has preserved his memories and experiences in book form and made them available to historians and the general public. The special care and effort he made to preserve the past in his writings will be an example for young people today.

Bud Cheff's tireless efforts to preserve and propagate the heritage of Montana makes him a worthy candidate for the 2019 Heritage Keeper Award.

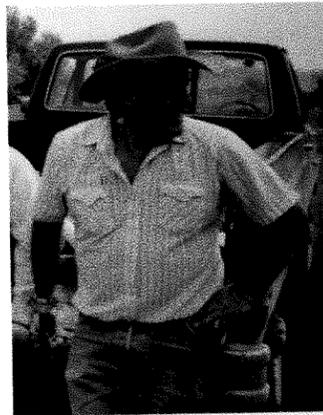
Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert Bigart
SKC Press

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am the oldest son of Bud Sr. and Adelle Cheff, born on my grandfather's ranch at the foot of the Mission Range on the Flathead Indian Reservation in 1936. I had loving, hard-working parents who set a wonderful example for me



and my six siblings. We had no electricity or modern conveniences; all the ranch work was done with horse and manpower. It was a hard life for my parents but a paradise for my older sister and me. We were on a horse from the time we could walk. We had a mountain wilderness at our back door, grizzly bears in our fruit trees and berry patch, and went to sleep at night to the sound of drums and Indian singing. What more could you want?

I developed a love of history at a young age and I was all ears when the elders told stories of the past. I grew up with a foot in two cultures as most of our neighbors were full-blood Indians, and my father was of French and Indian descent. I would often ride behind my dad on his horse when he went to visit some of his old Indian friends. When they came to visit us, it was a special thing for a young boy with a big imagination. The Indians did not write their history on paper; all the stories were passed down orally. Sadly, I never wrote down the stories at the time, but as a young man did make notes on many of them, to be sure I would not forget.

Now northwestern Montana is changing so rapidly that it's alarming. I feel the need to preserve some of this history and culture; thus this book. I hope you will journey, with me, back in my life and enjoy some of my stories or even find a little humor in some of the tales. Most of all I hope you get a feel for a way of life and history that is now gone forever.

Bud Cheff Jr.



Legend Keeper: More Trails and Tales Bud Cheff Jr.

Legend Keeper: More Trails and Tales

By Bud Cheff Jr.





Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana
69316 Hwy. 93
Charlo, MT 59824

NINEPIPES MUSEUM OF EARLY MONTANA

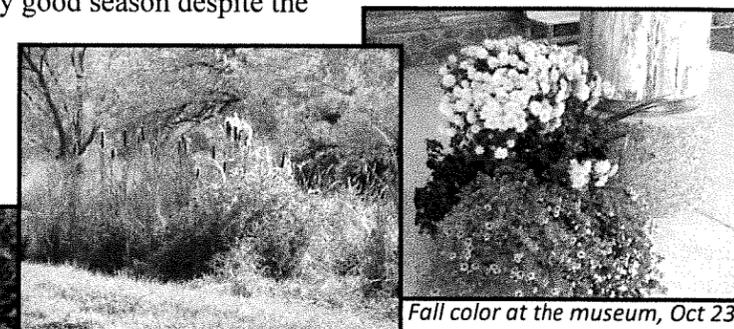


Quarterly Newsletter #76

Fall 2018

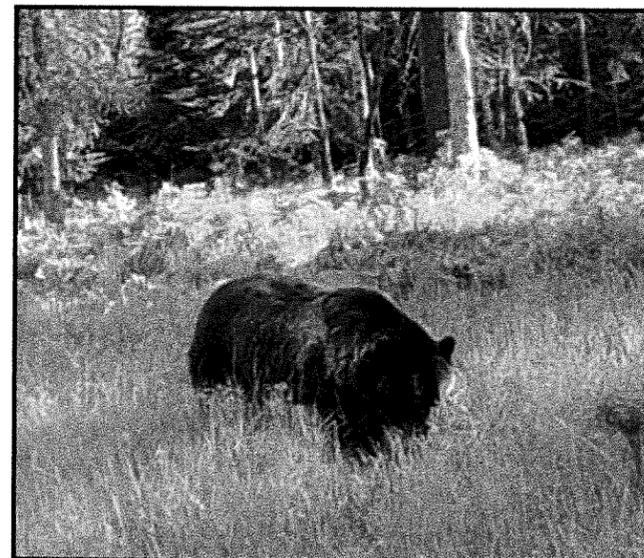
Dear Friends,

We are approaching the end of a very hot dry summer that was filled with smoke. Not as bad as last year, but enough to affect the museum visitors. There were weeks when you could not see the mountains of our beautiful Mission Range. The museum had a pretty good season despite the smoke, because of the hard work of Jo and her crew. As always I had the pleasure to meet and give tours to some wonderful people. It's very rewarding for me to hear so many positive comments on the museum.



Cattails along the Nature Trail.

Fall color at the museum, Oct 23.



Bud's picture of Big Old Boy taken about four years ago.

We didn't see much activity from the mountain goats this summer; it was just too hot for them on our side of the mountain. There was plenty of activity from the black bears all year. I think there was a record number of them around, and some made a nuisance of themselves. The grizzly numbers were way down here at the ranch. A number of the ones we normally see have been killed this summer. One was mistaken for a black bear and was shot. Six were killed crossing the highway. Two or three others were reported killed. One of these, I think was Big Old Boy, a favorite here on the ranch. I was told one was found dead in Crow Creek that

weighed 800 pounds. That is about what Big Old Boy would weigh — it makes me sad as he was a good bear. There are some people that want to kill every bear they see. In my 82 years of living around them I only had to kill one, and he had killed a man the year before. I just now looked out the front window and watched a pretty mom grizzly and two cubs crossing the field. This gives me some joy and hope for these big bears.

God Bless you all, our country, and great state.
Thank you for your continued support.

Bud Jr.

Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana Membership Form

Please complete the form below and mail it, along with a check made out to Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana:
Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana, 69316 Hwy. 93, Charlo, MT 59824. *Thank you!*

| | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Student \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> | NAME _____ | DATE _____ |
| Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> | ADDRESS _____ | |
| Family \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> | CITY _____ | STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____ |
| Sustaining \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> | PHONE NUMBER _____ | CELL PHONE _____ |
| Donor \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> | EMAIL ADDRESS _____ | |
| Lifetime \$1,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Membership dues cover approximately 10% of the museum's operations. Please consider supporting the museum's programs with a tax-deductible contribution. Call us at 406-644-3435 if you have any questions.

Membership Dues: _____
Donation: _____
Total Amount Enclosed: _____

www.ninepipesmuseum.org
info@ninepipesmuseum.org

PLEASE NOTE YOUR PREFERENCE:

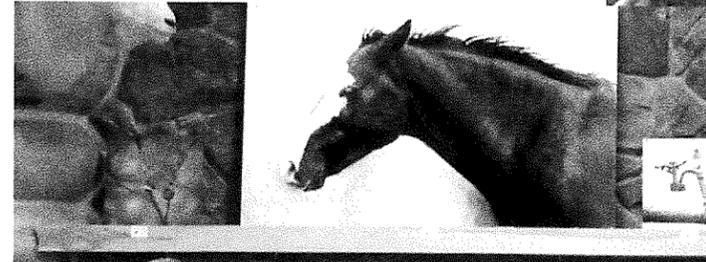
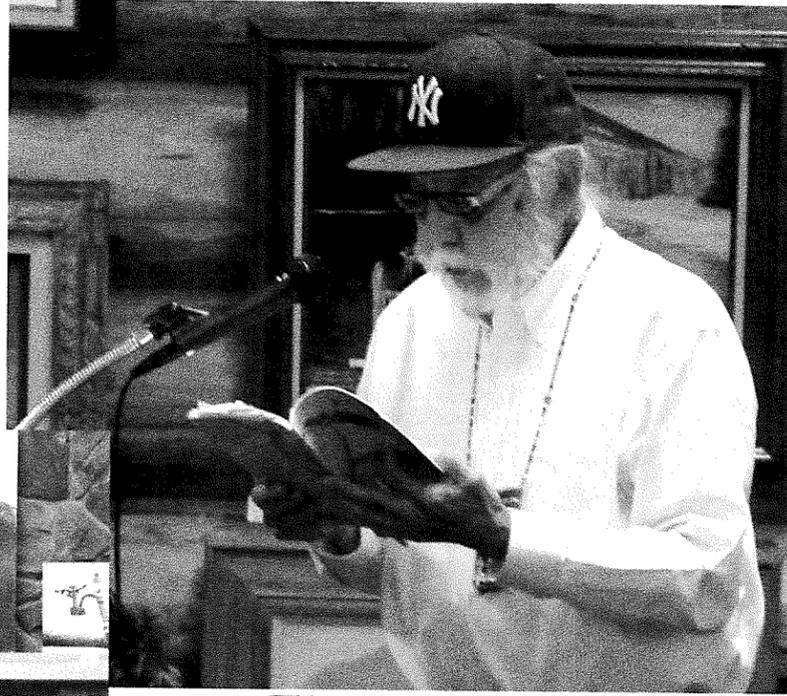
SEND NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL _____ or VIA REGULAR MAIL _____

The Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization: Tax ID #81-0519834.
IRS Publication 526: "If you pay more than fair market value to a qualified organization for goods or services, the excess may be a charitable contribution. For the excess amount to qualify, you must pay it with the intent to make a charitable contribution." (Ninepipes Museum Fair Market Values for Membership Levels: Student Membership \$20; Individual \$25; and Family \$40.) Membership benefits include free admission to the museum for the year and four (4) newsletters.

"FIRST SATURDAY" - Oct. 6, 2018

Victor Charlo, Salish poet, reads from his books of poetry to an appreciative audience. His daughter, April, repeated in Salish a few of the poems Charlo read from *Put Sey* and *Dirty Corners and Other Stories*.

Laurie Childs' photography was featured for the month of October — one picture can be seen above the fireplace mantel in the picture below.



Richard Tobel and Jim Pettit sang some beautiful traditional western songs following the poetry reading.

The drawing for the season-long raffle items was held at 3 p.m. and both winners were local Montanans this year!

BLACK TIE DINNER *(Black Tie Optional!)*
Thursday, January 17, 2019

Patrick Matt Jr. is our featured speaker for the 19th annual Black Tie Dinner scheduled for January 17, 2019. He is a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and his family history encompasses both the Pend d'Oreille and Salish heritages. Patrick received his traditional name, Song of the Thunder, at a jump ceremony.

Matt is a cultural educator/performing artist who has been doing historic presentations, traditional storytelling, reservation arts and crafts, and traditional drumming and singing for the past 15-20 years. He has also been the master of ceremonies at various pow wows, including local area round dances. Matt has a keen sense of humor and enjoys practicing his stand-up comedy.

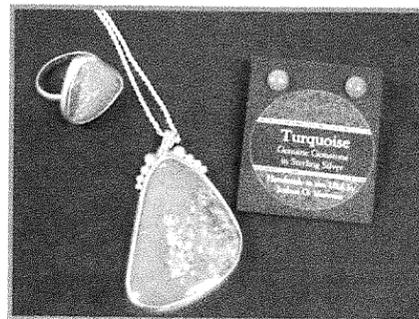
He is a traditional pow wow singer and songwriter of contemporary and traditional music. Matt wrote a song that went international in 2007. Black Tie Dinner guests will be treated to also hear him play the hand drum and flute.

Matt was born and raised in Polson where he attended high school. He graduated from SKC with a liberal arts degree in 2001, and he studied theology at the American Indian College in Phoenix.

While at SKC, Matt started a group called the Rez Poets' Society. He also was a writer and director for local public television programs and was mentored by Frank Tyro. His 2000 KSC TV/PBS documentary, "Dancing Boy," centers on the origins of the Arlee and Standing Arrow pow wows.

Matt says his talk at the 2019 Black Tie Dinner will "inform people of who we are, where we've been and, in essence, where we're going as a people."

LIVE AUCTION ITEMS! Here are two of our auction items to be auctioned by Jason Clinkenbeard of Rivers West! If you are unable to attend the event and would like to bid on these, or other items, give us a call at 644-3435 before January 17. A staff or board member will be happy to place a bid for you!

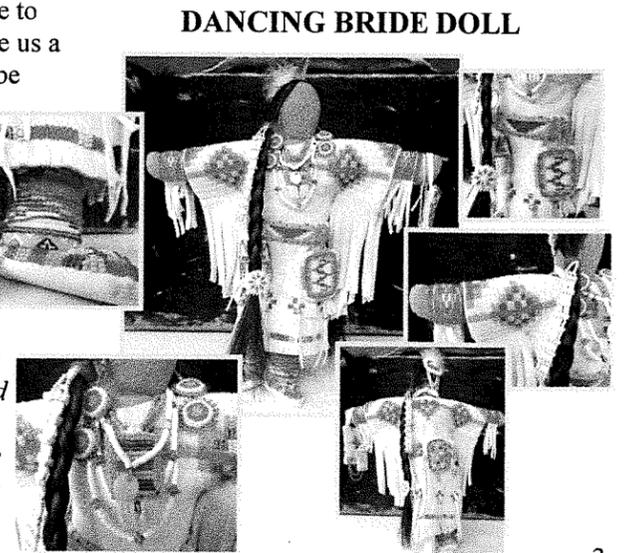


Dark blue U.S. turquoise and sterling silver pendant, ring and stud earrings created by Joshua Marceau. One-of-a-kind set valued at \$966.



This hand-crafted doll's accessories are all removable! Valued at \$950.

The doll was made by a local anonymous donor in honor of Karen Coffee.



5-6 p.m.— Courtesy tour of museum
 6-7 p.m.— No-host social hour at The Lodge
 7 p.m. — Dinner plus Silent and Live Auctions



Guest Speaker: **PATRICK MATT JR.**
"Visions: Historical and Cultural Reflections of the Pend d'Oreille and Salish People"

Reserve your tickets now for the 19th annual Black Tie Dinner!
\$50 per person. Call 644-3435

Entrée options:
 ALLENTOWN PRIME RIB
 FRESH KING SALMON
 ORANGE-GLAZED DUCK

DANCING BRIDE DOLL