

MHS Heritage Keeper and Heritage Guardian Award Nomination Form (Plainfeather)

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES' HERITAGE KEEPER & HERITAGE
GUARDIAN AWARD -- NOMINATION FORM

ABOUT THE NOMINEE

Name of Nominee Mardell Hogan Plainfeather

Address 10 Bing St., Billings, MT 59105

Phone Numbers (406) 651-1380 home, (406) 927-2514 cell

E-mail hoganmardell@gmail.com

ABOUT YOU In case we need more information about your nominee.

Nomination Submitted by Tim Bernardis, Little Big Horn College;
& Dr. C. Adrian Heidenreich, Montana State University Billings

Address P.O. Box 370, Crow Agency, MT 59022
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Date Nomination Submitted March 15th, 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

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

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. (Limit 500 words)
SEE ATTACHED
2. What are the particular strengths and impacts of the Montana history goals the nominee has achieved? What impact has the work accomplished had on the community/intended audience? (Limit 500 words)
SEE ATTACHED

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. (Limit 500 words)

SEE ATTACHED

4. Attach Supporting Documentation—i.e. news articles, commendations, letters of support (limit – 3 documents)

SEE ATTACHED:

-Crow Women Gather to Practice Language, Saying 'Our Language is Our Identity', Billings Gazette, June 25th, 2017

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/crow-women-gather-to-practice-language-saying-our-language-is/article_0237b1c2-25a5-5f0b-b81b-e64b31f1a60a.html

-Letter of support from Dr. Janine Pease, Little Big Horn College

-Collage of photographs of Mardell Hogan Plainfeather

**Mardell Plainfeather, nomination for Heritage Award, Montana Historical Society (2019)
by Tim Bernardis and C. Adrian Heidenreich**

Following are three parts: History Contributions, Public Contributions, & Biographical Sketch

History Contributions

Mardell Plainfeather has accomplished important work during a 40-year career. Most of her professional employment was as Plains Indian historian in the U.S. National Park Service. She has done lifelong, in-depth research about her own Crow and other tribes. Her work has been through participation, observation, interviews, and personal experience. She has contributed significantly to Montana State, regional, and community history and culture.

Her book, *The Woman Who Loved Mankind: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Crow Elder* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012, 496 pages) is the autobiographical life story of Lillian Bullshogs Hogan (1905-2003). Mardell wrote it with her friend and scholar, Barbara Loeb. It is a major contribution to Native American history, women's studies, and interpretive autobiography. It is a groundbreaking work of ethnopoetry, a form of ethnographic method recording narrative using poetic lines, rhythm, and structure of speaking to capture performance elements in addition to standard prose.

She was Field Director of the American Indian Tribal Histories Project for the Western Heritage Center in Billings, Montana (2003 to 2006). Her work had many dimensions. She interviewed approximately 80 Crow Tribal members; selected material for five visual DVDs on Crow history; and supervised design of an exhibit, "Parading Through History" (2006), including a guide book. She has continued guidance for exhibits, including "Art & Adaptation: Transforming Art Among the Apsaalooke" at the Western Heritage Center (2019).

Mardell was a member of the team for "Respectful Treatment of Crow Sacred Objects at Chief Plenty Coups State Park, Montana: Working Successfully with a Native Community – Process as Product." Those were Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) grants (1998-1999 & 2002-2005). She interviewed 30 Crow elders (in Crow and English) for information about objects in the collection of the Park, and helped prepare a "Sacred Object Care and Treatment Manual" (2004).

In 1987, she was instrumental in planning a symposium on the Wraps His Tail Rebellion Centennial (sponsored by Little Bighorn Battlefield and Little Big Horn College).

Her research work has resulted in presentations about "Clothing as Art: A Crow Tradition." She demonstrates different styles of Crow women's clothing and how they changed through time, using items she created herself. She has given that presentation to many groups.

She has provided commentary for the research of others. One notable work is *Crow Indian Photographer: The Work of Richard Throssel*, by Peggy Albright (University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

One of her published articles is about one of the six Crow scouts for Custer: "A Personal Look at Curley's Life After the Battle of the Little Big Horn," in *Greasy Grass*, Vol. 4 (1988), pp. 17-24. Recently, she wrote the Introduction to a biography of White Swan, another Crow scout, in preparation by Rodney Thomas (2019).

Currently, she is writing several entries for *The Story of the Crow Indians: Past to the Present* (Janine Pease, D. Ed., author/editor) for Little Big Horn College and Greenwood Press. For "Crow Oral History Post WWII," a project for Little Big Horn College, funded by National Endowment for the Humanities, she is transcribing and translating interviews of Crow tribal members, including elders (in Crow and English languages).

Public Contributions

The site “Honoring Tribal Legacies” includes four people who illustrate Crow history, performance, art, and education: Mardell Plainfeather, Christian Takes Gun (Supaman), Kevin Red Star, and Joe Medicine Crow. <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/honoringtriballegacies/?s=Mardell>

Since retirement from Federal service in 1997, she has had a personal mission to support efforts of institutions, including Little Big Horn College, Plenty Coups State Park, Western Heritage Center in Billings, and Brinton Museum in Big Horn Wyoming, to interpret history and preserve materials relevant to the Crow Tribe. She has been involved with many organizations, public and private, including schools and library programs, to support work with students and others for research and understanding of Native history, culture, and language.

Mardell is listed on the Little Big Horn College speakers list, and has been a Humanities Montana speaker. She did public radio broadcasts about her book, *The Woman Who Loved Mankind*: KUFM: <https://beta.prx.org/stories/94029-mardell-hogan-plainfeather-coauthor-of-the-woman>.

As Historian Park Ranger at Little Bighorn National Battlefield and Fort Smith National Historic Site (Arkansas), she gave hundreds of lectures to school groups, tourists, and the general public. Since “retirement,” she has contributed to the general public through lectures, discussions, and interpretive programs for many groups.

Based on her research, she has presented lectures on “Clothing as Art: A Crow Tradition.” Two venues were: Indian Arts Showcase at Fort Union Trading Post National Historic Site and “Clark on the Rochejhone” at Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation 2017 Meeting.

She was a dinner speaker at The Carbon County Historical Society & Museum in Red Lodge, in association with a “Bison Exhibit.” She has given presentations on Native American culture at the Billings Public Library Native American Lecture Series which discusses issues affecting the Native American community.

She was Crow Field Director of the American Indian Tribal Histories Project for the Western Heritage Center in Billings, Montana (2003 to 2006). For the public, she selected topics for DVDs on Crow history, and supervised design of an exhibit, “Parading Through History” (2006).

She supports many programs benefitting students and faculty of Little Big Horn College. She was Adjunct Professor (1986 to 1988), teaching “Montana State History.” She also taught “Native American History” at Rocky Mountain College in Billings.

She has been an interviewee for several public TV documentary film series, including “The Way West” for The American Experience, PBS series (2004). One review stated: “The four native voices ... [including] Mardell Plainfeather... usually offer careful, personalized observations on specific events and avoid rash generalizations.”

As Extension Agent for Tourism and Small Business at Little Big Horn College (1998 to 2000) she trained college students as summer tour guides. She and the Extension Agent of Dull Knife Memorial College formed the American Indian Tribal Tourism Alliance to work with the Montana State Tourism Department for promotion of all seven of Montana’s reservations.

She continues her work. She is Representative at Large for Brinton Museum’s American Indian Advisory Council. She has advised Little Big Horn College in museum planning. A current exhibit for which she gave guidance is: “Art & Adaptation: Transforming Art Among the Apsaalooke” at the Western Heritage Center. Currently she is writing several entries for *The Story of the Crow Indians: Past to the Present* (Janine Pease, D. Ed., author/editor) for Little Big Horn College and Greenwood Press, intended as a reference for students at Native American Tribal colleges and the general public.

Biographical Sketch

Mardell Plainfeather has been a lifelong Keeper and Guardian of Heritage, contributing significantly to Montana State, regional, and community history and culture.

Mardell's Crow name is *Baa Hinnaché*, Always Working. She is enrolled in the Crow (Apsáalooke) Tribe. She is a member of the Big Lodge clan and is a Whistling Waters child. She is fully bicultural-bilingual, and is a fluent speaker of both the Crow and English languages. She is adopted in the Sacred Tobacco Society of the Crow – the original “medicine” of the Tribe. She is a member of a Crow Women's Language Club, a small group of women who gather frequently to practice language, have discussions, share food, and do beadwork; they say, “our language is our identity.” She is a mother, grandmother, and aunt, and has helped raise many children.

The site “Honoring Tribal Legacies” includes four people who illustrate Crow history, performance, art, and education: Mardell Plainfeather, Christian Takes Gun (Supaman), Kevin Red Star, and Joe Medicine Crow. <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/honoringtriballegeries/?s=Mardell>

Mardell is a distinguished Crow / Apsáalooke historian who has done lifelong, in-depth research about her own Crow and other tribes. Her work has been through participation, observation, interviews, and personal experience. Since retirement from Federal service in 1997, her personal mission has been to support efforts of many individuals and institutions to interpret history and preserve materials relevant to the Crow. She has been involved with government agencies and parks, private organizations, schools, and library programs to support work with students and others for research and understanding of Native history, culture, and language.

She has contributed to the general public through lectures, discussions, and interpretive programs for many groups. She is listed on the Little Big Horn College Apsáalooke (Crow) speakers list, and has been a Humanities Montana speaker.

Education:

Bachelor of Arts Degree in History, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, Montana (Cum Laude, 1979)

Post Graduate work in Native American Studies, Montana State University Billings (Winter Quarter, 1986)

Hardin Senior High School, Hardin, Montana (Graduated 1963)

Awards:

Humanities Hero Award from Humanities Montana, 2016.

Horace Albright Award, National Park Service, 1986 & 1989 (Albright was founder of the Park Service)

Employment History:

2018- current - Transcribing and translating interviews of Crow tribal members for “*Crow Oral History Post WWII*,” Little Big Horn College, funded by National Endowment for the Humanities.

2018 - She wrote a letter of commitment and support for a grant submitted by Little Big Horn College Library and Archives to Institute of Museum and Library Services for *Cultivating Ourselves: Digitization and Access to Crow Historical and Cultural Resources*.” She will participate in the project.

2003-2006 - Crow Field Director, "*American Indian Tribal Histories Project*," Western Heritage Center, Billings, Montana.

1998-2000 - Extension Agent (Tourism & Small Business), Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, Montana.

1990-1997 - Supervisory Park Ranger of Interpretation & Visitor Services, Fort Smith National Historic Site, Fort Smith, Arkansas, National Park Service

1998-1999, 2001-2004 - Oral Historian, "*Respectful Treatment of Crow Sacred Objects at Chief Plenty Coups State Park, Montana: Working Successfully with a Native Community – Process as Product*," Native American Graves Protection Act grant to Friends of Chief Plenty Coups State Park, Pryor, Montana.

1986-1988 - Adjunct Professor, Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, Montana.

1979-1990 - Plains Indian Historian Park Ranger, Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, National Park Service, Crow Agency, Montana.



Janine Pease, D. Ed., Faculty Member
Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency MT 59022
March 15, 2019

To the Selection Committee, Heritage and Keeper Award, Montana Historical Society:

This letter is to support the nomination of Mardell Plainfeather for the Heritage and Keeper Award.

As the first president of Little Big Horn College, my association with Mardell goes way back – in fact, our entire lives as members of the Crow Apsáalooke Tribe.

Mardell's long career is well reviewed in the nomination categories: History Contributions, Public Contributions, and Biographical Sketch. I concur with this comprehensive statement of her work.

Mardell Plainfeather's 40-year career is highlighted by her participation and observations, her interviews and experiences in the Crow tribal, Montana State, regional, and community history and culture. Indeed, Mardell Plainfeather is properly included with Christian Takes Gun (Supaman), Kevin Red Star, and Joe Medicine Crow in the site "[Honoring Tribal Legacies](#)."

The work she co-authored with scholar Barbara Loeb, *The Woman Who Loved Mankind: The Life of a Twentieth-Century Crow Elder*, is a major contribution to Native American and women's history, and interpretive autobiography. Especially notable are her four years of fine work as Field Director of the "American Indian Tribal Histories Project" for the Western Heritage Center in Billings, and her five years as a team member for "Respectful Treatment of Crow Sacred Objects at Chief Plenty Coups State Park, Montana: Working Successfully with a Native Community – Process as Product."

As Extension Agent for Tourism and Small Business at Little Big Horn College (1998 - 2000) she co-founded the American Indian Tribal Tourism Alliance to work with all seven of Montana's Indian nations. The final result is: "The Seven Lodges: Montana Tribal Tourism Handbook."

Her significant research on "Clothing as Art: A Crow Tradition" and her presentations are popular, especially with women who have attended them. She and others paved the way for several young Crow women who now are a new generation of contemporary clothing designers.

Mardell is an essential contributor to the writing team working on the current book, *The Story of the Crow Indians: Past to the Present* (of which I am the lead author/editor). It will be a major resource for tribal college students and the general public. In the college work "*Crow Oral History Post WWII*," funded by National Endowment for the Humanities, Mardell's is the expert transcriptionist and translator of tribal members' interviews. Her eminent historical and linguistic scholarship in the Crow and English history and languages are an invaluable asset to the project.

As Chairperson of the Crow Language Consortium, I deeply respect and acknowledge Mardell's valued language activism, through her involvement in the Crow women's group, who gather to speak the language.

Sincerely,

Janine Pease, D. Ed.

Janine Pease, D. Ed.
Faculty Member and PI for the Chickadee Lodge Immersion School
Little Big Horn College
406-638-3149 office, 406-208-4549 cell



Mardell Plainfeather talking with
Crow elder Winona Plenty Hoops
Little Big Horn College Cultural Enrichment Series



Mardell Plainfeather, giving the presentation
"Clothing as Art: A Crow Tradition."
She demonstrates different styles of Crow women's clothing
and how they changed through time.
She has given the presentation to many groups.



Members of the Crow Women's Language Club
(Mardell Plainfeather is in front center)
*Crow women gather to practice language,
saying 'our language is our identity'*
by Jaci Webb, *Billings Gazette*, June 25, 2017