

BNAS Board Report October 2019

I attended the Blackfoot Confederacy Education Conference in Lethbridge from Oct. 10-11. The most unfortunate thing about this is that, although BNAS staff members were board approved to attend the conference (in less than a month outside of the state, something I greatly appreciate) they were unable to attend due to the conference having its registration fill in capacity before we were approved. It's an unfortunate occurrence that is directly related to the US-Canadian Border and the many years we, the umsskăăpii piikūni, have been growing distant from our Canadian brothers and sisters. The reality is simply that they are more connected with each other than we are with them. The result of this is a Blackfoot Language Education Conference's schedule and/or information isn't released more than a month before the event and the educational entities that are in Canada fill up all the slots before us Americans can make a move. Really, this is an insight into how that US-Canadian border harms our language revitalization efforts. I truly hope that we find a way to navigate this situation.

On the positive note at this conference, I showed the audience who were a large percentage Blackfoot Language speakers and/or Blackfoot Language teacher, footage of our BPS student, and last year's BNAS student of the year, Nancy Hardwood reading the complete Naapii and the Mice story and it received massive praise. I then showed the "wusuuup!" short video we did and topped it off by showing the audience William Big Bull's writing system, which I proved to them was easily learned within minutes. What this is resulting in is that BPS is now being seen, *within the Blackfoot Confederacy*, one of the for runners in our Blackfoot Language Revitalization Efforts.

What Does this mean, though? For starters, the people and speakers in Siksika, Kainai, and Northern Piikuni want me to visit their educational institutions and provide PD (see attachments). The place I got in the Blackfoot Language is due to my own ambition and passion along with my main teacher, William Big Bull. I am trusted in Canada because of how well and articulate I speak. I say this not to brag (even though I surely am not being humble writing this in my board report) but to make it clear that my efforts are paying off and I feel really good and I owe a lot to the Browning Public Schools for this job in which I get to focus my time, energy, and spirit into our beautiful language.

How do I proceed with these requests to visit our kin in Canada? Do I move forward as just myself, Robert Hall, or move forward and make this relationship with BPS and our northern kin? I want this to be a thing BPS is involved in and in order to make that happen we need to think and work on the logistics and proper paper work, aspects that are not my strong point. I end this part of the report sharing that after this Educational Conference schools from each Reserve in Canada had representatives go up front and praise their staff and I asked if us Southern Piikuni was ever involved with that and the organizers solemnly said we never were. This is something that I believe needs healing.

One thing I am very excited about is the drive to make media. I assume people reading this report have seen the videos put together- the 'wusuuuup!' video and the screen test. This is what I am most excited about. I have spoken to the Superintendent and with Mr. Everett Holms about creating a 'BNAS YouTube Channel' as a location to upload the educational videos we are beginning to create. This will open up many opportunities for our students and community to *have fun* while learning our language.