



MHA Education Highlight 2019



Benita Spotted Elk

Benita Spotted Elk, Walks in Beauty, is a member of the Ma?xo' oxadi clan. Her first five years of life were spent immersed in the Hidatsa language. Benita began her career in the field of education in the Edwin Loe Elementary School in New Town. She worked there for thirteen years before she began her work for the MHA Nation in the Contract Credit Department. Benita began working for the Tribal Education Department in 2005. One of the first projects she worked on is the Hidatsa Clanship Directory. The Department hosted a series of Earth Lodge Learning Centers where they covered many areas of language and culture such as arts, history, foods, customs, drum-making, basketry, lullabies, and shawl-making. In response to these events, Hidatsa elders requested a Clan event so all Hidatsa could know their clans and clan members. Elders voiced concerns about how many Hidatsa people were beginning to make mistakes choosing correct clan members for the Warbonnet Ceremony and the correct Senior Pallbearer for the burial rites. The Department developed a comprehensive Clanship Directory. It was updated in 2007, 2009, and in 2016. Benita has worked over all those years to circulate Clanship update forms that she uses to update the Clanship Directory. Over the fourteen years that Benita has worked for the Tribal Education Department, she has represented the Department at community cultural meetings. She strongly believes our language and culture are the backbone of our tribal education. She continues to encourage all her colleagues in the Education Department to learn and share our peoples' languages and cultures.

Benita is the Tribal Education Department's longest serving employee. We appreciate her dedication to our people and our tribal education system.