

WELCOME TO

Big Island Lake Cree Nation



**TEACH
FOR
CANADA**
GAKINAAMAAGE

tānisi c̣σʔ





Big Island Lake Cree Nation

Dear Teachers,

We are thrilled to welcome you to Big Island Lake Cree Nation, a vibrant and culturally rich community nestled in the beautiful Saskatchewan wilderness. On behalf of the community, I would like to express our excitement and gratitude for your decision to teach here and become a part of our community.

Big Island Lake Cree Nation is a Cree First Nation that prides itself on its deep cultural heritage, strong community spirit, and commitment to education. As teachers, you will play a vital role in shaping the minds of our youth and future generations, and we are confident that you will find our community to be a welcoming and supportive environment to do so.

One unique aspect of our community is our Land-Based Education Program, which combines traditional Cree teachings with modern educational practices to provide a well-rounded educational experience that nurtures the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of our students. Our program emphasizes hands-on learning experiences in the natural environment, which allows students to develop a deep connection with the land and a strong appreciation for their cultural heritage.

We are also proud to mention that Big Island Lake Cree Nation has made the decision to remain independent from Provincial Territorial Organizations or Tribal Councils, which allows us to preserve our unique cultural identity and traditions while still providing our community with the resources and services they need to thrive.

As you prepare to teach in our community, we understand that there may be some challenges and adjustments that come with moving to a new place. However, we are committed to making this transition as smooth and enjoyable as possible for you. Our community members are friendly and welcoming, and we look forward to showing you all that our community has to offer.

Once again, we would like to extend a warm welcome to Big Island Lake Cree Nation. We are excited to have you as a part of our community and look forward to working with you to provide the best possible education and support for our children.

Sincerely,

Joe LaChance, Principal
Colleen Sandfly, Director of Education

Community

Our community is located on some of the traditional territory of Big Island Lake Cree Nation, just south of Meadow Lake Provincial Park in Saskatchewan. In 1973, our community's name was changed from Joseph Bighead to Big Island Lake Cree Territory. The traditional name is Mistikoskāw Sākahikan ᐃᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ ᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ, meaning big island lake.

Big Island Lake Cree Nation belongs to no National, Provincial Organization or Tribal Council. Chief Napayow (Jumbo Bighead) - Misistikwan was a leader who chose not to follow anyone. He and his Band continue to be independent of any Tribal Council or Federation, believing that membership serves to diminish Treaty Rights.



A Brief History

1700-1800

Founding father of this territory was known as Neso Kwaneo (Two Feathers)

Early 1800s

Yapew Atihk (Bull Caribou) resided in the traditional territory which stemmed from the now Saskatchewan/Alberta border along the Beaver River, east to Second Mustus Lake towards Lost Lake, and West to Watapi Lake and back towards the border. Today, this is now M38b Fur Block (a government-prescribed area approved for hunting and trapping) and Meadow Lake Provincial Park

1876

Big Island Lake Cree Nation was offered Adhesion to Treaty 6, but Chief Yapew Atihk refused to sign the treaty for 37 years

1913

Adhesion to Treaty 6 signed on the shores of Waterhen River on June 25. Before signing the treaty, Chief Yapew Atihk guided his sons Misistikwan (Joseph Bighead) and Peeweenese on the importance of traditional knowledge and protecting the land and water along with the livelihood of the people

1919

In May, the tragedy of the Great Fire struck Big Island Lake Cree Nation. It was one of the largest fire complexes to ever burn the boreal forest at 2.8 million hectares. Many people, including Peeweenese and his wife, perished in the fire

1913-25

The passing of Chief Misistikwan meant no Chief in community. The Headman (a title equitable to Councilor today) Oseemeemow was in charge

1927-1948

Napayow (Jumbo Bighead) became Chief

1948-1958

Last hereditary Chief William Kahpoonapit

1958

The appointment of a chief was decided by a show of hands. Chiefs who followed included Albert Ochuschayoo, George Sandfly, and Leo Bighead

1972

The Ranch (the first ranch with cattle and horses on Big Island Lake Cree Nation) was created. This historic location is no longer in use, however the buildings still stand

Big Island Lake Community Map



Timeline of Chiefs

- 1958-1961:** First elected Chief, Chief Albert Ochuschayoo
- 1961-1963:** Chief George Sandfly
- 1963-1965:** Chief Albert Ochuschayoo
- 1965-1973:** Chief Leo Bighead
- 1975:** Chief Philip Kahpeepatow
- 1976-1978:** Chief Leo Bighead
- 1978-2008:** Ernest Sundown became the longest-standing Chief (27 years)
- 2004-2006:** First Female Chief, Chief Colleen Sandfly
- 2008-2014:** Chief David Sandfly
- 2015-2018:** Chief Roland Sandfly
- 2018-2023:** Chief David Sandfly

Chief Nâpew Memorial School was named after
Chief Napayow (Jumbo Bighead)



Chief Nâpew Memorial School



Welcome!

School Population

354

Grades

Pre-Kindergarten to
Grade 12

Principal

Joe LaChance

Vice Principal

Carey Stoebich

Education Director

Colleen Sandfly

Facilities

- Gym
- Land-Based Classroom
- Nurse's Office
- Science Room
- Industrial Arts Room
- Library
- Camp
- Farm
- River Build (Outdoor Education)
- Teacher's Lounge

Welcome to Chief Nâpew Memorial School. Our students are amazing, and the whole school feels like a family.

Our school was named after Chief Napayow (Jumbo Bighead). We have 20 classrooms and 3 portables, and a number of facilities available.

100% of our Kindergarten through Grade 12 students are given the opportunity to participate in Land-Based Learning exploring Big Island Lake. We have a farm featuring pigs and chickens. Our children

take care of the animals (supervised by teachers) and practice maintenance of the equipment. An ongoing high-school project has been the construction of a fence for the addition of horses and sheep.

We are proud that all of our students and teachers benefit from participating in Cree language classes for 20 minutes every day.

School Mission, Values, and Vision

Our Mission Statement: Big Island Lake Education will be an excellent place for children to learn, for enhancing self-image, promoting academic excellence, and developing an awareness and pride in the cultural origin of its people.

Values: Our school focuses on Miyopimatisowin, "The Good Within".

Vision: We seek the Elders' guidance for the benefit of our students. We believe in fostering the whole being; where we all learn to excel in a safe, positive, respectful environment.



A Day in the Life of a Teacher



Teachers and staff arrive at school before 8:30 AM and sign in. They greet the kids before breakfast, which is delivered to each classroom. Recess is 10 minutes, lunch is 20 minutes, and school ends at 3:15PM.

Teachers have rotating duties supervising lunch and recess for 2 days every 6 days. They are given 2 days in lieu for supervision. In the 6-day cycle, teachers receive 3 prep periods of 55 minutes each.

Staff meetings happen on the second Tuesday of each month.

Teachers are required to lead 80 hours of volunteer extracurriculars per year, which can mean chairing a committee or coaching a team.

Teachers are encouraged to use land-based resources. They receive one education assistant per class and have access to counsellors as well as school Elders.

Our school pivoted to using Google Classroom during COVID-19 lockdowns. Each home on our territory was provided with internet and technology so that our students could participate. We have since returned to in-person learning.

Our school year calendar starts and ends typically around August 24 - June 22. We have 189 staff work days and 178 student instruction days. Our school day is 330 minutes per day, totaling 980 hours of student instruction.

We have six mobile Chrome cart labs (4 carts of 24, 1 with 30, and 1 with 36).



School Offerings

- Land-Based Learning
- Breakfast and Hot Lunch Programs
- Odyssey Lab
- Cree Language
- Library Resources/Coordinator
- Computer Tech
- Head Start
- Post-Secondary
- Youth Employment
- Youth Experience
- Student Recognition Monthly Assemblies
- Right To Play's Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program



Example Timetable for Grade 1



Grade 1B

	Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four	Day Five	Day Six
9:00 – 9:27	Words Their Way Jolly Phonics Sight Words/Word Study	Words Their Way Jolly Phonics Sight Words/Word Study	Words Their Way Jolly Phonics Sight Words/Word Study	Words Their Way Jolly Phonics Sight Words/Word Study	Words Their Way Jolly Phonics Sight Words/Word Study	Words Their Way Jolly Phonics Sight Words/Word Study
9:28 – 9:55	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading	Shared Reading
9:55 – 10:22	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading	Guided Reading
10:23 – 10:50	Mental Math	Mental Math	Mental Math	Mental Math	Mental Math	Mental Math
10:50 – 11:00	RECESS BREAK					
11:00 – 11:27	PREP (Phys. Ed.)	PREP (Phys. Ed.)	Land Based	PREP (Phys. Ed.)	PREP (Phys. Ed.)	Land Based
11:28 – 11:55	Cree	Cree	Cree	Cree	Cree	Cree
11:55 – 12:10	LUNCH					
12:10 – 12:30	LUNCH RECESS					
12:30 – 12:57	Guided/Modeled Shared/Independent Writing	Guided/Modeled Shared/Independent Writing	Guided/Modeled Shared/Independent Writing	Guided/Modeled Shared/Independent Writing	Guided/Modeled Shared/Independent Writing	Guided/Modeled Shared/Independent Writing
12:58 – 1:25	Read Aloud Comprehension and Vocabulary	Read Aloud Comprehension and Vocabulary	Read Aloud Comprehension and Vocabulary	Read Aloud Comprehension and Vocabulary	Read Aloud Comprehension and Vocabulary	Read Aloud Comprehension and Vocabulary
1:25 – 1:52	LLI Intervention	LLI Intervention	LLI Intervention	LLI Intervention	LLI Intervention	PREP (PAA)
1:53 – 2:20	Whole Group Math Instruction and Practice	Whole Group Math Instruction and Practice	Whole Group Math Instruction and Practice	Whole Group Math Instruction and Practice	Whole Group Math Instruction and Practice	
2:20 – 2:47	Guided Math	Guided Math	Guided Math	Guided Math	Guided Math	Guided Math
2:48 – 3:15	Literacy Choice	Literacy Choice	Literacy Choice	Literacy Choice	Literacy Choice	Literacy Choice

Extracurricular Activities and Clubs

- Swimming
- Curling
- Skiing
- Driver's Ed
- Bowling
- Girls hockey
- Boys and Girls junior and senior teams: volleyball, basketball, badminton, floor hockey, cross country, and track and field
- Yearbook
- Student Council
- Parent Connections
- Drum and Dance Group
- Outside Looking In
- Toy & Turkey Bingo
- Casino Night
- 100th Day of School Activities



Community Life



There are lots of things to do in community, with a strong focus on culture, traditional ways of living, and language.

Most teachers prefer to live in the neighbouring towns of Goodsoil, Pierceland, and Cold Lake. Admin at Chief Nâpew Memorial School will assist in finding accommodations.

Major retailers are available a half hour drive away in Cold Lake. Pierceland features a restaurant, accommodations, automotive garages, beauty salons, a credit union, gift stores, and a grocery store.





Staying Connected

We stay connected through Facebook, via the Chief Nâpew Memorial School Group. Teachers are also added to a private Facebook Messenger Group when they join our team.

Other ways to stay connected include joining the Big Island Lake Cree Nation Facebook Group. We have community message boards at school, the band office, and gas bar.

Visit our website and Facebook page for correspondence and to strengthen our connections: www.chiefnapew.ca.

- **Event Committees**

- Every Child Matters
- Pink Shirt Day
- Youth Conference
- Rock Your Moc Week
- Red Dress Day
- Mental Health Week
- Christmas Concert
- Interschool Powwow
- Education Week
- Grade 12 Grad
- Kindergarten Grad

- Grandparents' Day
- Aboriginal Awareness Week
- Remembrance Day
- Science Fair
- Terry Fox Run
- Winter Festival
- Spring Fling
- Career Fair
- Virtues Committee
- Sunshine Committee
- Special Dinners Committee





Community Events

- Powwows
- Spring/Summer/Fall Clubs
- Ice Fishing
- Hunting
- Snaring
- Family Fun Nights
- Twin Round Dance
- Family Math & Literacy Events
- Community Connections
- Annual Christmas & Boxing Day Round Dance

Youth Conference

A four-day event that has taken place every February for the past 7 years. Our school treats the kids to an excellent experience.

Everyone receives a tee shirt, attends special sessions for all grades, and hears from keynote speakers (such as AJ Douglas Bear). The day also includes haircuts, manicures and pedicures, and fashion shows.

Outside Looking In (OLI)

OLI offers dance classes and other programming to remote Indigenous communities as a tool to motivate youth to stay in school.

Our school is in its second year of partnership with OLI and is preparing a group of youth to travel to Toronto in April to showcase their talents.

Around the Community



2

1

Adventure Camp

2

Land-Based Learning

3

Snaring

4

Fishing Net

5

Kayak Trip



3



4



5

Get to Know Big Island Lake Community Members



MEET ERNEST SUNDOWN

Member of Big Island Lake Cree Nation

Former Chief of 27 Years, former Councillor for 3 years

What are you proud of your community for?

Being independent. We think for ourselves, stick up for ourselves, stand up, and declare the truth: We are a Nation. To be a Nation you need five things: Language, Culture, Community, Land, and Citizenship. We have all of these things here.

What do you like about your work at Chief Nâpew Memorial School?

Being an Elder for the school, I feel like a grandfather to everyone—the students, the teachers, and the community. Our school is really strong on land-based education. We teach students about living off the land, hunting, trapping, and gathering. This education is essential, and the right to it is part of our Treaty.

I am also an Elder for Ohpikihawasowin “Raising of Children,” which helps First Nations families in Saskatchewan who are going through the legal system. We help to give the children a voice and defend them against being taken away from their families and communities. We give the children a say in where they want to go, and where they would feel most safe. Children need to belong somewhere.

Do you have any advice for teachers coming to your community?

Be yourself, and learn as much as you can from the people here. We pick staff who we think will fit in with us. It’s good to learn about the community, and if you want to learn the language, we encourage you to do it! You will have lots of opportunities to learn our beautiful language here.



MEET FRANCES KAHPEEPATOW (MOTHER BEAR)

Member of Big Island Lake Cree Nation

Land-Based Learning Specialist

Tell us about yourself.

I started working at the school as a janitor. After that, I became a youth mentor and I talked to kids about smoking, substance abuse, and other things. Eventually, I became an in-school Elder and Land-Based Learning Specialist. This school focuses on your strengths, life experiences, and what you can teach the kids. I started as a janitor, and they saw my gifts (wisdom of my life, values, and teachings passed down from our Elders like how to cook, always stay clean, and how to present yourself as a woman).

Now that I am a Land-Based Specialist, I can take a class out on the land and pass on my gifts. When the children are younger, I start small with the smaller plants like sweetgrass, sage, and other plants used for smudging. We respect family beliefs and don't force anything, but we ensure all the children have the teachings and can decide for themselves.

What do you love about your job?

The kids. Watching them grow up from kindergarten to adults, and seeing the changes they go through is beautiful. Our staff here, we all support each other. We all take the responsibility to help raise each child. If one person can't get through to a child, another might be able to. We focus on the child.

What's it like being a Land-Based Teacher?

With Land-Based, we teach medicines and local plants (yarrow, wild rose, sweetgrasses, sages, etc.) and pass on their purposes and power. For example, yarrow is for breaking fevers, and rosehip has vitamin C for fighting off a cold. In the springtime, I take the children and show them how to tap birch trees. We gather the water at its purest and use that for cancer patients. It rejuvenates those who drink it. The kids never knew you could tap birch trees and get water out.

We get the children to set their own snares. They have to solve problems like "why didn't that work?", or "how do I fix this?". I ask them things like "If I was a rabbit, how would I travel through here?". This helps them to problem solve and think outside the box. The goal is to help them on their path to self-sufficiency, encourage them, and make sure that they try. That's what I tell them: "There's never a right way or a wrong way to do it, we just try."



ARTIST FEATURE: LANCE SINGER
Member of Big Island Lake Cree Nation

A professional artist of the Woodland Cree Tribe of Big Island Lake Cree Territory, Saskatchewan, Canada, Lance Singer has been creating works of art since age six.

He is known for his fine detail work within murals, paintings, sketches, carvings, pow wow regalia, rock and arrowhead paintings. Creating custom designs, Lance is proficient in a multitude of media including pastel, pen and ink, acrylic, watercolor, oil, pencil, and incorporates natural earth pigments in his creations.

Learning about oneself from within is the message that the artist conveys through his art.

facebook.com/wolfchildthundercat





Traditions and Customs

Traditional Cree / Catholic / Pentecostal

Fun Facts

Big Island Lake Cree Nation is noted for having numerous sets of twins born in the community. Since the late 1990s, they have been celebrating these twins at an Annual Twin Round Dance.

Getting to and from Big Island Lake

Road Travel

Our community is accessible by major road from Cold Lake, Alberta or Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Drive times

To Cold Lake: ½ hour
To Saskatoon: 3.5 hours
To Edmonton: 4 hours

Land-Based Education



Land-Based Education teaches:

mācīwin-hunting, kinosēw-fishing
ēkwa pisiskow nōhcīkēwin-trapping,
ka nētawaskēhk-exploring,
ka māwasakonkēhk-gathering, and
ekwa naspasinahikewin-art.

①

Lean-to and Archery

②

Bannock on a Stick

③

Drying Herbs

④

Ice Fishing

⑤

Swimming with Horses

⑥

Fish

⑦

Hide Stretching

⑧

Fire Building





Quick Facts

Population On-Reserve



1266

Language Spoken



Cree and English

Treaty



Adhesion to Treaty 6

Average Yearly Temperature



-22°C
January

23°C
August

Access



No direct access



Year-round



Big Island Lake Directory

Chief Nâpew Memorial School

1 (306) 839-2297

Education Director, Colleen Sandfly

1 (306) 839-7360

Principal, Joe LaChance

1 (306) 238 7433

Band Office

1 (306) 839-2277

Napesis Health Centre

1 (306) 839-2330

Pierceland RCMP

1 (306) 839-3330 / 911

Big Island Lake Store & Gas Bar

1 (306) 839-4855

Pierceland Grocery LTD

1 (306) 839-2033

Daycare

1 (306) 829-4407

Prevention Support

1 (306) 839-4167



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