



Tom Cherveny / West Central Tribune

Walter “Super” LaBatte Jr. speaks at a book-signing event March 12 in Granite Falls about the book he and his niece, Teresa Peterson, at far right, co-authored. He handcrafted the drums seen on the table in front of him.

‘Voices From Pejuhutazizi’

Dakota stories given spotlight in new book authored by Upper Sioux Community members

By Tom Cherveny
West Central Tribune

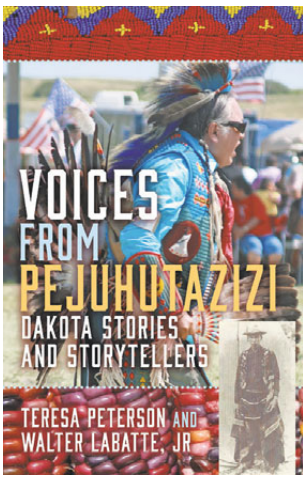
Upper Sioux Community
Walter “Super” LaBatte Jr. had no electricity in his home during most of his childhood years. “So our entertainment was my dad telling stories at night,” LaBatte told his audience at the Grinder coffeehouse in Granite Falls on March 12. The many stories he heard are alive today in “Voices From Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers.” The 195-page book, published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, is the work of LaBatte and his niece, Teresa Peterson, both of the Upper Sioux Community. They worked together over the course of 10 years to collect the stories handed generation to generation.

The book also comprises stories of their own of growing up as part of the Upper Sioux Community, or Pejuhutazizi, “the people who dig the yellow medicine.” The authors were aided greatly in this endeavor by their late ancestor, Fred Pearsall. Sometime around 1910, Peterson said her great-grandfather began to write down the stories he heard as part of the Dakota community. He continued to do so for decades. Pearsall’s daughter typed the stories and self-published a book to preserve them in 1983. At the gathering in March, LaBatte told his audience one of his best-known stories. It was made into a short feature by Pioneer Public Television. It tells of how a tame pelican saved a small



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Eunice Amos and Fred Pearsall in their wedding photo, circa 1900. Fred Pearsall wrote down the stories he heard in the Dakota community throughout his lifetime, and that record helped authors Teresa Peterson and Walter LaBatte Jr. as they developed their book, “Voices From Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers.”

encampment of Dakota from a war party on Lake Traverse. Most of the encampment’s men were away on a buffalo hunt when the war party was spotted on the water. The frightened residents fled. The invaders went to attack the chief’s tipi first. They found a pelican wearing a war bonnet inside it. The attackers retreated. The Dakota suspect that the attackers felt the Dakota had better medicine than they, since the chief had been able to change himself into a pelican. Some of the stories in “Voices From Pejuhutazizi” tell of the challenges the people knew. Pearsall recorded the story of a buffalo hunt in the early 1850s in South Dakota, during which the Dakota were caught on the open plains by a blizzard. It arrived too suddenly to erect their tent. They took cover under the flattened covering and survived two days of



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“Voices From Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers” by Teresa Peterson and Walter “Super” LaBatte Jr. is published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

the storm with only the light clothing they wore on the hunt and a few blankets. Some stories tell of the impact of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 on their family members, who were forced to flee their native land. One account tells of surviving a close encounter in 1863 when General Alfred Sully and



Tom Cherveny / West Central Tribune

Teresa Peterson spoke to the importance of stories as she and her uncle, Walter “Super” LaBatte hosted a book-signing event March 12 in Granite Falls for their new book, “Voices From Pejuhutazizi Dakota Stories and Storytellers.”

his troops rode west in search of those who had fled Minnesota.

Family history provides belonging, sense of place
LaBatte grew up in the Upper Sioux Community, and listened intently to the stories he remembers and tells so well. Peterson grew up near St. Cloud, and learned about her Dakota heritage through visits to family in the Upper Sioux Community. As she grew into adulthood, she came to appreciate her heritage and to realize the importance of stories and seek them out. She visited with family and elders to learn all she could. Stories convey traditions and cultural practices, she told her audience. They provide belonging and a sense of place. They entertain. Both authors know the importance of their



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Walter “Super” LaBatte Jr.’s love for dancing in Wacipis helped lead him to the traditional arts he practices.

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Tom Cherveny / West Central Tribune
Walter “Super” LaBatte Jr. speaks about “Voices From Pejuhutazizi: Dakota Stories and Storytellers” at a book-signing event March 12 in Granite Falls. He uses the traditional Dakota brain-tanning process to create the buckskin on display. LaBatte also handcrafts moccasins with Dakota beadwork, drums and other traditional items.

LABATTE

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heritage. Peterson is a co-founder of Wicohan. Its mission is to revitalize the Dakota language and life ways. LaBatte is known as a Dakota storyteller, and for his traditional Dakota art. He crafts beaded moccasins and Wacipi drums. He makes his own brain-tanned buckskin. His works have made their way to places around the globe, as his niece points out in their book. LaBatte said it was his desire to dance in traditional Wacipi celebrations that led him to the artwork for which he is so respected today. Lacking funds at the time, he at first attempted to sew his own garments for dancing. He struggled to push needles through tough leather, and showed his bandaged fingers to a fellow dancer while describing his challenge. The dancer suggested that he use instead

the soft and supple buckskin that Dakota elders have always produced using the brain-tanning method. LaBatte asked his dad if he knew how to brain-tan a hide. “He thought it was a ridiculous question to ask. ‘Of course I know how to make buckskin,’” LaBatte said. “I was 40 years old at the time. That was how I started.” “We all have stories in our families,” Peterson told her audience. “Sometimes they get lost. (This is) a call to action to collect, save your stories.”

DEMO Inc.

DEMO Inc. (Developing Exploring Maintaining Originality through the arts) has received funding from the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council to bring “Art to the Willmar Library” for students in grades 4-12. Monica Villars is the instructor. Maximum class size is 10. Pre-registration is required, write to Monica at DEMOinClass22@gmail.com with name, age, classes, and contact information. Walk-ins welcome if space allows. Class for students in grades 4-8, 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the library.

April 19: Drawing, Riley op art

Classes for students in grades 7-12, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at DEMO inc Studios, west of Svea on U.S. Highway 71.

April 18: Printmaking, Gelli printing

April 25: Intro to western paper

The annual Spring Paper sessions have been set for April. Pre-registration is required, send your name, age, address, phone number, your email and check made payable to DEMO Inc. to 728 Second St. S.E., Willmar, MN 56201. For more information, email DEMOinClass22@gmail.com. Walk-ins welcome if space is available.



ARTS CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Spring Paper: For teens and adults, learn and practice the “western paper” making process during the 90-minute class, come prepared to get wet and wear shoes that can get wet. Six sessions, 4 p.m. Friday, April 22; 10 a.m. and noon, Saturday, April 23; and 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 24; \$5 per person reservation fee that will be refunded at the workshop.

Willmar Community Center

Classes scheduled at the Willmar Community Center. To register call 320-262-5288 or willmarparks-rec.com.

Little Art Gallery-Little Art Class: The Willmar Community Center will have five free art classes to launch the Little Art Galleries around Willmar. You are welcome to come at any time between the advertised hours and make your own creation or follow a step-by-step project provided by the Willmar Community Center. The Little Art Gallery Program strives to create community connections, inclusion

and engagement toward creating different art. We encourage artists to use any art medium that will fit in our 12-inch by 20-inch gallery. Materials will be provided for patrons to borrow to complete their craft and Riley will be there to help with projects. The open class times are 3 to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 19, and from 2 to 5 p.m. Fridays, April 15 and April 22.

Cooking with Riley, Japanese Ramen: April 30, 2 p.m., \$25, pre-registration required; make this dish native to the Japanese culture.

Milan Village Arts

Milan Village Arts classes have been scheduled for the next year. The complete schedule is on the website. Members receive a discount on tuition. Supply fees are paid to the instructor at the end of class. To register or for more information on any of these workshops, call 320-734-4807 or visit the website at www.milanvasartsschool.org; email: mvas@fedtelnet.net. The art school has

several studios. Check the website for studio dates and more information. Upcoming classes listed by registration deadline are:

Shrink box magic: May 31-June 2, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; instructors Bill Rickard and School Johnson; beginner and above, minimum age 18; you will remove the bark from a section of a green tree or branch, hollow it out, fit the bottom in and carve and fit the lid; tuition \$200, supplies \$30; registration deadline May 17.

The Spoon Gathering: June 2-4, all day and into the evening; family friendly event for those interested in wood spoon carving and traditional handcrafts.

Tool sharpening demystified: June 2, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; instructor Paul Linden; beginners and above, minimum age 16; focus on the process of sharpening and maintaining various edge tools for woodworking with hands-on opportunity to take a tool to perfect sharpness; tuition \$75, supply fee \$25; registration deadline May 21.

PRAIRIE ARTS CHORALE

Spring 2022

Singers of Southwestern Minnesota • Brandon Hurley, Director

Presents... Words of Wisdom

Throughout history advice has usually been given to those in need whether it was asked for or not! This concert program explores wisdom that has been passed down through music over the years and continues today.

FEATURING:
You Can't Hurry Love
Man in the Mirror
Children Will Listen
You Will Be Found
We Shall Overcome

TICKETS:
Adults \$12 in advance
\$15 at the door
Students under 18 - Free

AVAILABLE AT:
Marshall: Hy-Vee Food Store, Marshall Area Fine Arts Council (MAFAC)
Montevideo: Thrifty White, Montevideo Market
Redwood Falls: Tersteeg's, GuidePoint Pharmacy
Spicer: Faith Lutheran Church
Willmar: Whitney Music, The Barn Theatre
Tickets also available from Chorale Members

This activity is funded in part by a grant from the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council, through an appropriation from the MN State Legislature, with money from the State's general fund.

www.PrairieArtsChorale.org

Redwood Falls	Esteban Performing Arts Center Friday April 22 7:00
Willmar	The Barn Theatre Saturday April 23 7:00
Spicer	Faith Lutheran Church Sunday April 24 4:00
Marshall	First Lutheran Church Friday April 29 7:00
Montevideo	United Methodist Church Saturday April 30 7:00

Life Connections

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Thursday Apr 21, 2022 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Friday Apr 22, 2022 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Willmar Civic Center
2707 Arena DR, Willmar, MN 56201

SAVE THE DATE

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RECONNECT WITH A FRIEND

ENJOY YOURSELF

Life Connections Schedule of Events:

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2022 • 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

GUEST SPEAKER:
• Dr. Nelson from Heartland Orthopedics | 5:00 PM

FRIDAY, APR 22, 2022 • 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

• Pancakes | 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM
SPONSORED BY: HERITAGE BANK

• Outstanding Senior Award | 9:45 AM
SPONSORED BY: WEST CENTRAL SANITATION

GUEST SPEAKER:
• Mark Rosen | 10:30 AM
• Kingery Family | 11:30 AM
• Bingo | 1:30 PM
SPONSORED BY: THRIFTY WHITE PHARMACY

• The Larry Olsen Band | 2:00 PM
SPONSORED BY: PIONEER PUBLIC TELEVISION