



MEDIA RELEASE

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The Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council (MASRC) Announces Winners of the Prestigious Indigenous Sport Decade Awards

Each year the MASRC honours athletes, coaches, and volunteers who demonstrate great determination, leadership, and giving back to their community. However, this year our annual awards will be celebrating a decade of achievement! With the cancellation of most sports this year due to ongoing pandemic, this is an opportunity to celebrate a career award rather than one season award.

The award recipients were chosen by following a set of guidelines and were selected through the Award/Scholarship Selection Committee.

Looking back on the past decade really showed everyone how incredibly talented, strong and resilient Manitoba's Indigenous sport community has become. Today we are honoured to announce the following Indigenous Sport Decade Award winners:

Manitoba Indigenous Female Athlete of the Decade - Jocelyne Larocque (Métis - Ste. Anne, MB)

Jocelyne Larocque is a Métis athlete from Ste. Anne, Manitoba. She was speechless when she received the news that she had won this award. She was seen as the anchor of Team Canada and her skill as a defenceman played a large part in bringing home a gold medal at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and most recently a silver medal in the 2018 Winter Olympics PyeongChang.

Before the Olympics, Jocelyne made her debut on the International stage in 2011 at the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Women's World Championship. She has won one gold, five silver, and one bronze medal since then. Medaling in every event she participated in!

After earning her Accounting degree with Honours from the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 2011, she won two National Championships with the University and ended her college hockey career as the Bulldogs' all-time leader in scoring for defencemen with 105 points on 19 goals and 86 assists in 127 games. She then played with the Manitoba Maple Leafs of the Western Women's Hockey League (WWHL), a team organized specifically so Manitoba's stars had a place to play. She then joined Alberta of the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL) in 2012-2013. In 2013, Jocelyne was traded to the Brampton Thunder where she became captain in 2015-2016. In 2017-2018, the Thunder won the league championship.

Other awards and honours that Jocelyne has received over the years:

- WCHA Defensive Player of the Week (Week of February 16, 2011)
- 2011 Patty Kazmaier Award Nominee
- 2011 WCHA Outstanding Student-Athlete of the Year
- 2011 WCHA Defensive Player of the Year
- 2011 All-WCHA First Team
- 2011 First Team All-America selection
- 2018 winner of the Tom Longboat Award
- 2020 named to TSN's All-Time Women's Team Canada roster

Jocelyne became part-owner and hockey program coordinator at Stoke Strength and Conditioning and hopes to continue playing the game on the competitive stage soon. Jocelyne has demonstrated leadership and humility throughout her successful career so far and it is with great pleasure that we celebrate her career and name her our *Indigenous Female Athlete of the Decade*.

Manitoba Indigenous Male Athlete of the Decade - Zach Whitecloud (First Nations - Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, MB)

In 2013, an article stated that regardless of your birth year, you're basically looking at 1-in-2,500 chance of playing one game in the National Hockey League (NHL) when it comes to the general public. Those chances are much lower when we are talking about Indigenous athletes. There have been less than 100 NHL players ever, who had Indigenous ancestry. Zach Whitecloud is one of them and he has now played 40 games and counting with the Vegas Golden Knights.

Zach's career over the last decade demonstrates how persistence and taking advantage of opportunities can lead you to great things. In 2014, Zach competed with Team Manitoba in the National Aboriginal Hockey Championships along with teammate Brady Keeper, who was drafted into the NHL and also played a couple games with the Florida Panthers.

In the past decade, Zach has played for seven different teams from the Manitoba Midget 'AAA' Hockey League (MMHL), Manitoba Junior Hockey League (MJHL), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), to finally being signed by the Golden Knights to a three year entry-level contract. His first career NHL game was on April 5, 2018 against the Edmonton Oilers.

Other notable highlights from the past ten years:

- 2016-2017 - WCHA All-Rookie Team
- 2016-2017 - Rookie year at Bemidji State - Lead defenceman in scoring
- 2017 - played for Team Canada and placed fourth at the Karjala Cup in Finland. Zach was the youngest skater selected to play for Team Canada.
- He was later named to Team Canada's pre-Olympic roster before the 2018 Winter Olympics but did not make the final roster.
- During the 2018 offseason, Whitecloud volunteered as a guest instructor at Micheal Ferland's Hockey School in Brandon, Manitoba, alongside other NAHC stars including Brigette Lacquette, Harley Garrioch, and Shaq Merasty.

We look forward to continue watching Zach's career in the next decade and congratulate him on his achievements as we name him the *Indigenous Male Athlete of the Decade*.

Manitoba Indigenous Female Coach of the Decade - Jayme Menzies (Métis - Winnipeg, MB)

A proud Métis, Jayme excels at leveraging sport as a vehicle for social change. Jayme continues to build her volleyball pedigree: She moved to Winnipeg at 17, where she played multiple positions in her five-year career with the University of Winnipeg Wesmen Athletics. Leading by example, Jayme has shown that volleyball is about much more than just striving to win.

Jayme has represented Manitoba multiple times as a coach, most recently at 2017 North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) in Toronto, and at the 2017 Canada Summer Games in Winnipeg, where they brought home the Gold. Jayme is a certified facilitator for the NCCP Aboriginal Coaching Modules (ACM) course and has trained over 50 coaches in nine communities this past year alone.

As a coach, she has won the following awards:

- MHSAA Girls Coach of the Year, 2015
- Volleyball Manitoba Jean England Developmental Coach of the Year, 2015
- MASRC Aboriginal Coach of the Year, 2016
- #WeAllPlayForCanada Award Recipient, 2017
- Sport Manitoba's Jack Hunt Developmental Coach Nominee, 2017

As an Indigenous coach and an instructor for the Aboriginal Coaching Modules, it is extremely important for Jayme to use a holistic approach to coaching. The Agoojin Volleyball Club she co-founded, directs, and coaches has spots designated for rural and northern athletes, incorporates culturally-relevant team bonding, mentors young female and Indigenous coaches, and prioritizes holistic wellness of each individual. She endeavours to mentor the entire athlete - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and culturally.

As Jayme continues to raise the bar in female coaching, we can take a look back and truly celebrate her achievements as we name her the *Indigenous Female Coach of the Decade*.

Manitoba Indigenous Male Coach of the Decade - Dale Bear (First Nations - Peguis First Nation, MB)

Dale's career as an Indigenous coach has been focused on developing Indigenous athletes. He has contributed national medals to the province's hockey program as the coach for the National Aboriginal Hockey Championship (NAHC) Female hockey team. He has brought back gold in 2017 and 2018, and silver in 2019, and bronze in 2013, 2015, 2016. Since he started his involvement with the Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council (MASRC) ten years ago, we have seen an increase of female participation in hockey academies and university teams. His philosophy is to always bring up "aged-out" athletes from his teams to develop them as coaches. His commitment to increasing female representation in coaching, and on the provincial and national stages is unparalleled.

At the grassroots level, Dale has coached for the Norquay Knights in the North End Hockey Program (NEHP) in Winnipeg for six consecutive years winning one city championship and were runner up the following year. He then went on to coach for the Prairie Blaze in the Manitoba Junior Women's Hockey League (MJWHL) in 2018-2019. With Prairie Blaze he coached the team from middle of the pack to elite in the league and led the team to victory at the 2019 Provincial MWJHL League Championships. Many of his female hockey players have gone on to playing on university and college teams. Being able to coach at all levels goes to show how well rounded of a coach Dale is.

Dale is a pioneer in the Indigenous coaching world in terms of having an Indigenous worldview and using a holistic approach to coaching. It is second nature for Dale as he lives and breathes this way of life that was passed down by his ancestors. His coaching style results in overall empowerment. He invites others to lead with him. He encourages his athletes to go to school and to value their education. He teaches his female athletes to set healthy and strong boundaries in life. To Dale, sport isn't the be all and end all, his athlete's mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health is a priority and if those are suffering, then hockey is a low priority. These are true qualities of a leader and we are happy to name Dale as our *Indigenous Male Coach of the Decade*.

Manitoba Indigenous Female Volunteer of the Decade - Jacinta Bear (First Nations - Fisher River, MB)

Jacinta Bear has managed the Norquay Knights teams from 2010 to 2016. She organized the teams each year, did all the paperwork, kept in contact with all players and parents, and attended many games and practices.

From 2013 to 2020 (2020 was cancelled), she has managed Manitoba's National Aboriginal Hockey Championships (NAHC) female team (the male team in 2015). Jacinta attended tryouts and practices for all NAHC, did all gathering of information for her teams, kept in constant contact with families and athletes throughout the process, and took a week off work each time to attend the event and manage the team there.

Jacinta along with her husband Dale (Indigenous Male Coach of the Decade) work together to develop Indigenous youth and athletes. This is the cornerstone of what the Bear family does. They have dedicated and sacrificed many hours to build into these young Indigenous youth. They do it for the love of sport and youth and comes from the good in their hearts. The perfect example of true volunteers.

When told that she was nominated and selected for this award, Jacinta echoed the same statement as her husband "If you can give the award to another deserving volunteer, please do so. We don't do it for the recognition, we do it for the kids.". With a comment like that, there was no question that Jacinta demonstrates the true spirit of volunteerism and is no doubt our Indigenous Female Volunteer of the Decade.

Manitoba Indigenous Male Volunteer of the Decade - Faron Asham (Métis - Brandon, MB)

Faron Asham is no stranger to being recognized in the sport world. In 2018 Faron was inducted into the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame. In 2017, Faron coached Team Manitoba to a silver medal at the 2017 Canada Summer Games, which was the highest placement for a Manitoba baseball team on a Canada Games podium in 32 years. He has been involved in amateur baseball for over 25 years and wore many volunteer hats. Mostly serving as a coach, he also served as league president and an executive member for various communities.

As a highly knowledgeable and organized volunteer, Faron has experienced coaching success at every level of play in Manitoba and has been a leader in coaching development and mentorship across the province. He has coached at Manitoba Games, Western Canada Games, Canada Games and the National Aboriginal Indigenous Games.

Faron has served on executive committees in many leagues for over 30 years. He served as President for Brandon Minor for ten years during which time they were asked to take over Simplot Park. Faron was instrumental and put in countless hours in changing over the existing softball diamonds into hardball diamonds, adding infields, bullpens, batting cages and upgraded equipment as needed. The park opened in 2004 and was overseen by Faron for 11 years until 2015. Faron is the Baseball Manitoba Vice-President of Coaching Development, and as a Baseball Manitoba NCCP Facilitator and Evaluator, he organizes and instructs well over 20 coach clinics a year in various communities all over the province.

It is volunteers like Faron Asham that keep sport alive in our communities and for that we are honoured to award Faron with the Indigenous Male Volunteer of the Decade Award.

Please join us in celebrating their achievements and their contributions to Indigenous sport in Manitoba and our country. Make sure to stay connected through the MARC's website and social media channels:

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About Manitoba Aboriginal Sports & Recreation Council: The MASRC is a non-profit organization established in 1988 and is the mandated Provincial/Territorial Aboriginal Sport Body (PTASB) for Manitoba. We believe that physical activity is a healthy and positive tool to empower and build strong and vibrant Indigenous (First Nation, Métis, Inuit) people and communities. The MASRC is "the bridge" between existing partners in the sport and recreation delivery system and Manitoba's Indigenous community. Our focus is to work with Indigenous communities, organizations and individuals to develop sustainable programs that improve opportunities for community members to participate in sport and recreation.

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