

## Fort Bridger Treaty 150

# Bonatsie carries on Big Horse dance song from Shoshone ancestors

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Sho-Ban News

FORT BRIDGER, Wyo. —

Wayland Edmo Bonatsie carries the songs of his Eastern Shoshone ancestors in his mind and he brought the Big Horse dance song out once again at the Fort Bridger Treaty 150 reenactment July 3.

The Big Horse Dance was done at the original signing of the Fort Bridger Treaty. Bonatsie said they hadn't done it in a long time, "Since we had this song, we put it on for both tribes - it's a joyful dance and supposed to make everybody feel good especially at the end when we whoop and holler."

The Big Horse Dance and song belongs to the Bonatsie family and it was composed way back when Wayland's grandfather Red Lake or "Ainga agai bagad" in Shoshone was alive. Bonatsie's parents are Lucy Hill Pocatello Bonatsie and Ed Edmo Bonatsie.

Ralphaelita Stump said Red Lake was a scout and the dance was given to him via ghost power. The poha (power) allowed him to become invisible in battles and the ghost told him he should do a dance to revere the horse because the horse is what took care of the tribal people when they traveled from place to place. The dancer wears a horsetail when dancing.

Wayland chose Starr Weed Jr. to do the dance at the reenactment.

The horsetail Weed wore is from one of Bonatsie's horses that passed on. He did a horse ceremony to take the tail from the horse so that way everybody could feel good about it. The horse was an Appaloosa mix but the tail was solid white.

Generally a veteran is selected but it's up to the family on who they want to dance. Bonatsie is a U.S. Army veteran and served in Vietnam.

He learned the

song for the Big Horse Dance when he was about 12 years old. He also learned the warbonnet song, scalp dance, giveaway, coin dance songs plus Sundance songs. Wayland also knows the Gift of the Waters songs. He doesn't understand why the younger guys stay away from learning them but he's teaching his crew how the songs go. "We have them old chief songs too and honor songs from way back - the Crowheart Butte battle songs - they are all in my mind and I practice them once in awhile," he said.

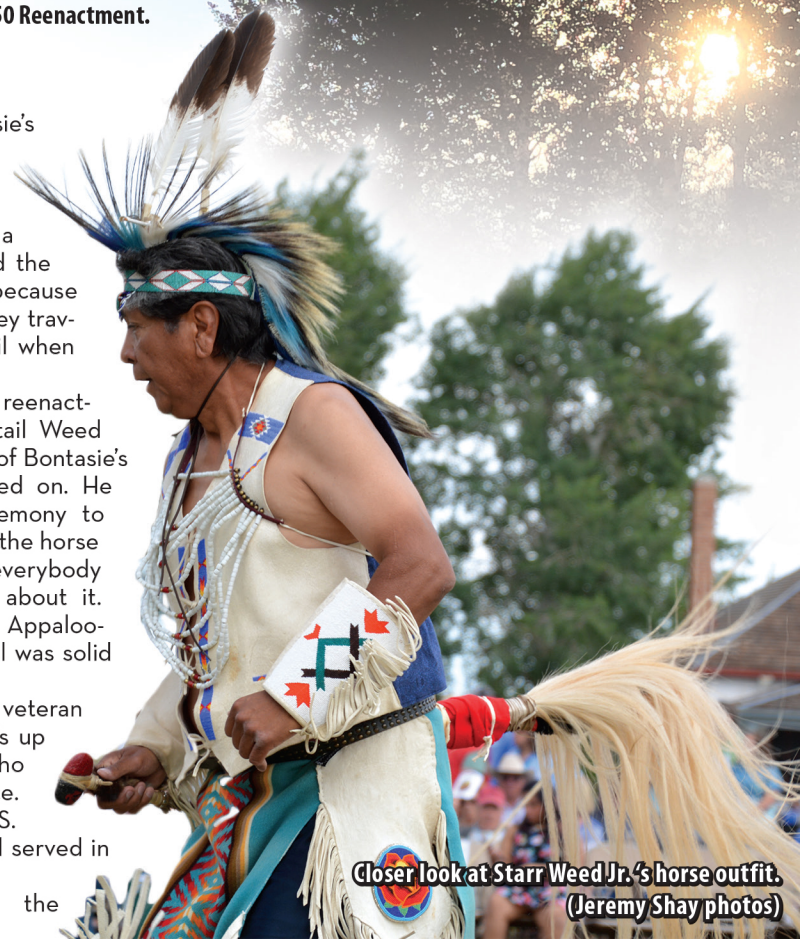
Bonatsie said the Big Horse Dance could be done on special occasions but it is mostly at treaty reenactments. He's concerned many in the Eastern Shoshone tribe don't know their own ceremonial songs but his family is the holdouts for the songs.



**Starr Weed Jr. (left) and Wayland Bonatsie at the Fort Bridger Treaty 150 Reenactment. (Lori Ann Edmo photo)**



**Starr Weed Jr. performs the Big Horse Dance during the reenactment.**



**Closer look at Starr Weed Jr.'s horse outfit. (Jeremy Shay photos)**