



A documentary film by Lana Šlezić

Written, Produced & Directed by  
Lana Šlezić

Genre // Documentary  
Country of Origin // Canada  
Run Time // 78 Minutes

# BEE NATION

## Website

www.beenationfilm.com

www.lanaslezic.com

## Social Media Handles:

@CBCdocs and #CBCFirstHand



@beenationfilm @lanaslezic

## Hashtag

#beenationfilm

## Press Materials link

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/v70pxfpjgvxw3j1/AAArYSm\\_n7IO0PippjwKBMISa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/v70pxfpjgvxw3j1/AAArYSm_n7IO0PippjwKBMISa?dl=0)

## Media requests

For all press related inquires please contact:

Robyn Mogil, Partner, TARO PR, robyn@taropr.com

Brianna Hurley, Sr. Publicist, TARO PR, brianna@taropr.com

***BEE NATION airing on CBC'S FIRSTHAND***  
**Sunday September 24 at 9 p.m. ET/9:30 p.m. NT**

## **About CBC Firsthand**

CBC/Radio-Canada is Canada's national public broadcaster and one of its largest cultural institutions. We are Canada's trusted source of news, information and Canadian entertainment. Deeply rooted in communities all across the country, CBC/Radio-Canada offers diverse content in English, French and eight Indigenous languages. We also provide international news and information from a uniquely Canadian perspective. In 2017, CBC/Radio-Canada will be at the heart of the celebrations and conversations with special 2017-themed multiplatform programming and events across Canada.

### **Short Synopsis**

Bee Nation is a Canadian documentary produced and directed by Lana Šlezić. The film follows the inspirational stories of six students in the first-ever First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee in Canada. Through the eyes of students, parents and educators, we learn of the challenges and opportunities awaiting the First Nations students in Saskatchewan as they strive to make it to the National Championships in Toronto; the highs, the lows, and everything in between.

### **Long Synopsis**

*Bee Nation* is a heart-warming and inspiring film that follows six First Nations families as they prepare their children for the first-ever First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee in Canada. Out on the breathy landscapes of Saskatchewan Reserves, we meet students, parents and educators in the weeks leading up to the spelling bee. We go ice fishing on a school outing, we revel in a dance at a powwow, we see best friends study together and we hover in the excitement as the day draws nearer. We see the hardships our characters face but we also feel the love and support that exists within the family home. And as we spend time with the children who will compete, we find ourselves investing in them, cheering for them and wanting them to succeed.

The future of our children is common ground we can all agree is paramount to a better world. In *Bee Nation*, family is at the core of that future.

## About the Filmmaker

Lana Šlezić

Lana Šlezić is an award winning Canadian photographer and filmmaker who has lived and worked all over the world. Lana grew up in Port Credit, Ontario. From 2004 to 2006 Lana spent two years documenting the lives of women across Afghanistan. She authored the internationally acclaimed book *Forsaken* which won numerous awards and was selected in 2008 by American Photo Magazine as one of the Top Ten photo books of that year. Among other awards, she also won a World Press Photo award for her portrait series on Afghan women entitled *A Window Inside*. Lana has lived in India, Turkey, Afghanistan and the UAE and has a body of photographic work that has been published globally including National Geographic, TIME, Newsweek, Der Spiegel, Macleans, The Walrus and many more. Her work has also been exhibited internationally.

More recently, Lana has turned her storytelling eye to film and has produced, directed and/or shot several commercial works and short documentaries, including *Breaking Caste*, *Serhiy's Story* and *The Little Things*. Her latest short film *Andy Barrie: The Voice* is a candid portrait of former CBC radio host Andy Barrie's struggle with Parkinson's Disease and was featured at the 2016 Hot Docs Film Festival. *Bee Nation* is Lana's first feature length documentary film and was selected as the opening night film for the 2017 Hot Docs Film Festival.

When not traveling the world, Lana resides in Toronto, Canada, where she is raising her two beloved children



**THE**

**CHILDREN OF BEE**

## NATION

### **William Kaysaywaysemat III**

Kahkewistahaw First Nation Reserve, Saskatchewan



William Kaysaywaysemat III is 9 years old and from Kahkewistahaw First Nation. He attends the Chief Kahkewistahaw Community School where he is in the fourth grade. William is an ambitious child having achieved so many accomplishments already. He excels academically in all areas with math being his favourite subject. He is very active in sports such as hockey, soccer, basketball, golf and softball. His favourite sport is hockey and he just completed his fourth season.

William is also active in his culture. He has been dancing powwow since he was 3 years old. During the Summer, he travels to powwows with his family almost every weekend. In 2014-2015 season, he was the Little Warrior for his own First Nation, Kahkewistahaw. In 2015-2016 season, he was the Little Warrior for the Treaty 4 territory. This was a huge honor and responsibility as he was given the opportunity to represent his First Nation as well as Treaty 4 at all the powwows he attended. 2016 was a memorable one for William.

### **Makayla Cannepotato**

Onion Lake First Nation Reserve, Saskatchewan



Makayla Cannepotato lives in Onion Lake Cree Nation Reserve. She is 12 years old and is in grade 6 at Chief Taylor Elementary School. She has a little sister and an older brother. Her hobbies are playing sports and spending time with friends. She also loves to read and competes regularly at cross country and track and field events.

**Alexander Johansson (Xander)**

Saulteaux Cree Nation Reserve, Saskatchewan



Alexander Johansson, affectionately known as Xander, is thirteen years old. His parents are Toy Johansson and Joanne Moccasin. Xander was born in North Battleford, SK but later moved to Saulteaux First Nation, Saskatchewan. He attends Saulteaux Heritage School. Xander likes building fires (in their fire pit), reading books (if they're interesting), cleaning up and sometimes participating in sports and building things. His favourite thing to do is play video games because he started playing games when he was little and has been playing ever since. Xander will soon finish grade eight at Saulteaux Heritage school and then is off to high school.

**Thomas Isbister**

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation Reserve, Saskatchewan





Thomas Edward Dale Isbister hails from Ahtahkakoop reserve in Saskatchewan. He is eleven years old and enjoys playing hockey. He has received the math award every year and enjoys school. Thomas is the only boy in a large family of six sisters. He wants to play in the NHL and be a power engineer when he grows up.

**Savannah Nicks and Josie Singer**

Big River First Nation Reserve, Saskatchewan





Savannah Nicks and Josie Singer are good friends at Sesewahum School in Big River First Nation reserve. Josie loves to draw, especially dreamcatchers. She is part of a big family with many sisters, brothers and cousins. Her parents are Marion and Dennis Joseph. Savannah likes school and is very studious. Her dad is Randy LaChance. Both Josie and Savannah play soccer and do many sports at school. They studied together for the First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee.

## **The Evolution of the Spelling Bee Programs within First Nations Communities**

### **Pauline Favel**

President, Saskatchewan Region for the First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee (FNSPB)

Pauline Favel is the President of the Saskatchewan Region for the First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee (FNPSB). Pauline has been at the forefront of volunteering her time to establish this non-profit initiative for First Nations youth across Saskatchewan. Pauline's involvement with spelling bees began in the 2012-2013 academic year while she was employed as a special education teacher at Chief Paskwa School. Her first experience was in coordinating a spelling bee at her school to select winners to represent their school at the File Hills Tribal Council Spelling Bee. The excitement and enthusiasm that she saw with her students was all she needed to continue with Spelling Bees. For the next two years, Pauline increased her involvement and role by coordinating two Tribal Council Spelling Bees. The belief that our First Nations students could compete at a higher level is what inspired Pauline to consider taking the Tribal Council Spelling Bees to the next level. Why not take our First Nations youth to the Nationals? Upon her employment as special education teacher, Pauline began her search for a national spelling bee program. Pauline was able to connect with Julie Spence, Founder and Executive Director of Spelling Bee of Canada (SBOC). Hence, Chief Poundmaker began the plans to host the first ever First Nations Provincial (Regional) Spelling in partnership with Spelling Bee of Canada.

Last year history was made in Saskatchewan! For the first time ever a First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee (FNPSB) was held in North Battleford, Saskatchewan on Friday, April 8, 2016. This event provided First Nations children an opportunity to prepare, practise and compete in the provincial competition sanctioned by Spelling Bee of Canada (SBOC). The 3 finalists earned the right to compete at the national Bee in Toronto on May 14, 2016. Over 120 students ages 6 – 14, who represented nineteen First Nations Schools across Saskatchewan competed in the FNPSB. The FNPSB was very well received and had gained provincial, national and soon international attention.

This year, due to the high interest from the people, the FNPSB has expanded their capacity to include provincial school students. This year will be the largest FNPSB to date with 39 schools and 157 participants from across Saskatchewan.

Additionally, the FNPSB Committee has been granted an opportunity to present at the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) which will be held in Toronto, July 24 – 29, 2017. The presentation category encompasses the following: Innovations in Indigenous Education, Lifelong Learning, Partnerships in Indigenous

Education, Literacy Initiatives for First Nations Youth and Student Engagement. Along with sharing our success in Saskatchewan our vision is to host in partnership with Spelling Bee of Canada (SBOC) a National First Nations Spelling Bee. WIPCE 2017 is the perfect venue for Pauline to promote this valuable and innovative literacy initiative for all First Nations and Indigenous Communities.

The first ever First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee (FNPSB) aligns with *Truth and Reconciliation Reports*. The FNPSB hosted in partnership with SBOC was in response to creating partnerships and opportunities for building student engagement and lifelong learning for our First Nations youth in our communities. We know our First Nations youth are just as capable as everyone and we believe we needed to take action on this important and valuable literacy initiative. The FNPSB provides awareness and participation in a provincial/regional literacy competition where they earn the right and have the financial means to move forward to represent our province at the Spelling Bee of Canada Championships (Nationals) in Toronto. Our vision is to host a National First Nations Spelling Bee where all First Nations Schools across Canada come together to compete with the best of the best. Since the inception of the FNPSB in 2015, we had numerous inquiries regarding why The FNPSB is limited only to students of First Nations ancestry. The intention of the FNPSB is to create a venue to increase the literacy rates of our First Nations youth and to demonstrate that our First Nations students are just as skilled and talented and can compete with the best of the best given the opportunity. While we focus only on First Nations youth, we do hope to inspire other non -First Nations parents or groups to make the same investment in increasing the literacy rates of their youth.

### **Julie Spence**

Founder of Spelling Bee of Canada

Julie Spence is the founder of Spelling Bee of Canada. In 1987, Julie listened to the government of the day about the relationship that parents had with their children's education. She was inspired to start a literacy movement that captures Spelling, Finances and Health to improve children's self confidence, public speaking skills and

their overall well being. Spelling Bee of Canada was born after a deep introspection as well as her fond memories of the Spelling Bee programme in her hometown of Lucea, Hanover in Jamaica.

Julie Spence believes that in spite of her previous involvements, her life's purpose is to be a difference-maker in literacy. She has the passion, vision and energy to be a beacon of hope in uniting families around education and their children.

### **About Spelling Bee of Canada (SBOC)**

Spelling Bee of Canada (SBOC), established in 1987, is an educational organization that encourages youth, parents, teachers and the community at large to participate in the education process. With the support of schools, student literacy representatives, sponsors, parents, chapter presidents and volunteers, Spelling Bee of Canada aims to encourage young people to expand their vocabulary, communication skills and self-confidence, by providing a foundation for future scholastic achievements.

For more information, please visit: [www.spellingbeeofcanada.ca](http://www.spellingbeeofcanada.ca)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SpellingBeeofCa>

### CREDITS

#### **Director and Producer**

Lana Šlezić

#### **Editor**

Mahi Rahgozar

#### **Composer**

Casey Manierka-Quaile

**Director of Photography**

Lana Šlezić

**Special thanks to:**

William Kaysaywaysemat III and Family

Makayla Cannepotato and Family

Alexander Johansson and Family

Josie Singer and Family

Savannah Nicks and Family

Thomas Isbister and Family

Evan Taypotat, Chief Kahkewistahaw Community School Principal

Kahkewistahaw First Nation Reserve

Onion Lake Cree Nation Reserve

Salteaux First Nation Reserve

Big River First Nation Reserve

Ahtakakoop Cree Nation Reserve

Pauline Favel and The First Nation Provincial Spelling Bee

Julie Spence and The Spelling Bee of Canada

**Additional Cinematography**

Pawel Dwulit

Marta Iwanek

**Aerial Cinematography**

Pawel Dwulit

**First Assistant Editor**

Astrid Schau-Larsen

**Trailer Editor**

Anne-Marie Jackson

**Assistant Editors**

Andrew Moniz

Steven Patoine

Alex D'Avolio

Mitchell Belman

**Music Consultant**

John Welsman

**Sound Design Supervisor**

Daniel Pellerin

**Dialogue / Sync Track Editor**

Rob Hutchins

**Sound Effects / Design**

Michelle Irving

**Re-Recording Mixers**

Daniel Pellerin

Bret Killoran

Jeremy Fong

**Mixing Studio**

Contemporary Sound

**Mastering Studio**

The Royal Cinema

**Location Sound**

Brian Sheridan

Lana Šlezić

**Online Editing**

Red Square Motion

**Business Affairs Consultant, Tax Credits**

Del Mehes

**Production Manager**

Avi Federgreen

Mia Sheldon

**Rights And Clearance Supervisor**

Tammy Egan

**Accountant**

M. Schwab Accounting Services

**Title Design**

Anne Feldman

**Poster Design**

Joanne Howard, Small Dog Design

Maiingan Productions

**Footage provided by:**

Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) clip with permission from

the Walt Disney Animation Studios Motion Picture

Shutterstock

Pond5

Chance Brown

**Music**

“Raven Song”

Shannon Thunderbird

“Free”

Ali Fontaine

**Choir**

Atticus Phoenix

Ever Phoenix

Ignatius Phoenix

Adam Ghalayini

Joshua Wallenberg

Karina Wallenberg

Miley Fremont

Zara Comes

Jaime Seigel

Emily Ziv

Brooke Mecklinger



Dayle Friedman  
Taylor Seigel  
Kennedy Friedman  
Sophie Ziv  
Luka Semchyshyn  
Žaža Semchyshyn

**Choir Coordinator**

Joanne Sleightholm

**Choir Recording Location**

Resa Kochberg

**Choir Recording Engineer**

Jamie Quaile

**Transcription Services**

Laurel Toews  
Fiona Jackson

**Legal Services**

Angelika Heim  
Stohn Hay Cafazzo Dembroski Richmond LLP

**Publicity**

TARO PR

**First Nations Consultant**

Pauline Favel

**Fixer**

Chantelle Cannepotato  
Ken Beatty

**Additional thanks to the following for their assistance & participation:**

The Ismaili Centre, Toronto  
The Don Ross Centre, North Battleford  
Treaty 4 Annual Gathering  
Chief Taylor School  
Chief Kahkewistahaw Community School

Salteaux Heritage School  
Sesewahum School  
Ahtahkakoop School  
Judges and Announcers at the FNPSB and SBOC  
Vice Chief Robert Merasty  
Katherine Masuskapoe  
Nicole Jordan  
Clinton Swiftwolf  
Lee-Ann Bonaise  
Charlotte Campbell  
The Katcheech Family  
The Yellowbird Family  
The Baldhead Family  
Chief Poundmaker School  
Chief Beardy Memorial Elementary School  
Toronto Blue Jays Baseball Club  
Rogers Centre  
Steve Kent  
Shannon Cossette  
Saskatoon John G. Diefenbaker International Airport  
Calgary International Airport

**For the CBC**

**General Manager, Programming**

Sally Catto

**Executive Director, Unscripted Content**

Jennifer Dettman

**Senior Director, Documentary**

Sandra Kleinfeld

**Executive in Charge of Production**

Charlotte Engel

**Director of Production**

Alexandra Lane

**Director of Finance**

Julie Lawlor

Produced with the participation of:



**Canada Media Fund**  
**Fonds des médias du Canada**

 **ROGERS.**  
Documentary Fund

**Canada**<sup>🇨🇦</sup>



**Ontario**

Ontario Media Development  
Corporation

Ontario Interactive  
Digital Media Tax Credit

The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit

Produced in association with:



Produced by  
Idle Hunch Ltd.  
Copyright 2017

