



# 'Beyond frustrating': Family claims they weren't properly notified about 16-year-old's disappearance



Mason Cree (Courtesy of Mason Cree's family)

**Mason Cree's aunt learns he is missing through social media post**

By *Jolan Kruse*  
Reprinted from *Buffalo's Fire*

Angela Gourneau was scrolling through Facebook in late February when she saw a photo of her 16-year-old nephew, Mason Cree, next to the word "missing." Gourneau told Buffalo's Fire that she had been trying to get legal custody of him and that a court date on the case had been scheduled for March 3. She said Cree had been staying at a Turtle Mountain Child Welfare and Family Services youth shelter for about a year.

She was infuriated. "My nephew Mason has been missing since February 20, and not one single member of our family was

notified," she said over Facebook Messenger. "We didn't get a phone call. We didn't get a visit. We found out through a Facebook post. That is unacceptable."

After seeing the post about Cree by an MMIP group, Gourneau said she reached out to Cree's caseworker multiple times but did not hear back from her. Several family members also frantically made calls and sent texts to the caseworker, according to Gourneau, who says the caseworker replied to one of Cree's siblings saying that Cree had jumped out a window to escape the youth shelter.

Turtle Mountain Child and Family Services referred Buffalo's Fire to Cree's caseworker, Lori St. Claire. St. Claire said she could not comment on the specifics of the situation, but she did confirm that Turtle Mountain Child Welfare and Family Services notified law enforcement that Cree had run away while under

their care.

She also said the parents and police were both notified, a claim that Gourneau and Cree's father dispute.

The father, Joel Gourneau, confirmed with Buffalo's Fire that authorities never notified him that his son was missing. Cree's mother could not be reached.

Cree's grandmother has also expressed frustration about a lack of communication from authorities. "My grandson is still missing!" she posted on Facebook. "No information from Police or CPS as to his whereabouts or if they have found him."

On March 2, one of Cree's sisters posted, "I've been getting a lot of questions on my brother asking if he has been found. And the answer is NO He hasn't been found. I still haven't been contacted by cps. Nor has my aunt, or my grandmother."

In addition to being frustrated about not being contacted by authorities, Gourneau said she is also upset that some of her nephew's biographical information, including his age, is incorrect in his missing persons report.

The North Dakota Attorney General's Office lists Cree as 17. Gourneau said he is 16. She said authorities also misidentified Cree's height, eye color and hair color.

"His height was wrong. His age was wrong. The picture wasn't even updated," Gourneau said. "How are you going to ask the public for help finding a child when you can't even provide accurate details about him?"

Gourneau said she got a call from the Bureau of Indian Affairs

on Feb. 25, five days after Cree was last seen. The agent had just learned that Cree was missing and was "really worried about finding him," Gourneau said. She provided the agent with the correct biographical information. Days later, she checked the attorney general's missing persons page again and saw that it hadn't been updated.

An agent with the Turtle Mountain BIA told Buffalo's Fire he can not give out information relating to the case. The BIA media contact did not respond to questions about whether the bureau is working with the family to update information about Cree.

The family posted an updated flyer with the correct information.

"This is a child. This is our family. He is loved. He matters. And the lack of communication and care shown in this situation is beyond frustrating," Gourneau said. "We deserve answers. We deserve transparency. And most importantly, Mason deserves to be found and brought home safely."

*This story was updated March 9 after Joel Gourneau responded to our reporter's attempt to reach him.*

**NAME:**  
CREE, MASON

**Aliases:** Family photo

**Current Age:**  
~~17~~ 16

**Race:**  
AMERICAN INDIAN

**Sex:**  
MALE ND AG photo

**Height:**  
~~5'0"~~ 5'9"

**Weight:**  
190 LBS

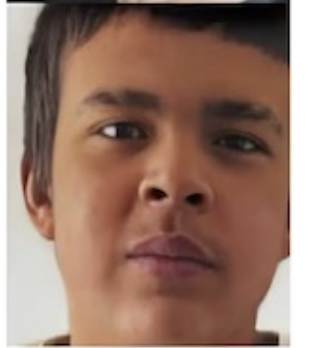
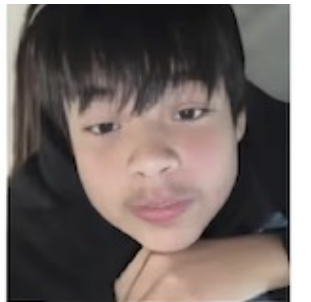
**Eye Color:**  
~~BLACK~~ Brown

**Hair Color:** Brown  
~~BLACK~~

**Last Seen:**  
02/20/2026

Updated flyer posted to Facebook by Mason Cree's family.

**Missing 2-20-26**



**Turtle Mountain Reservation ND**  
**If seen call**  
**BIA Turtle Mountain Agency**  
**(701) 477-6134**

North Dakota Missing Persons  
Office of Attorney General

## UPDATE from pg 4B

tively plan staffing, resources, and programming to meet student needs. Athletic Directors Report: Spring is in the air! Our programs have begun with a whirlwind trying to get in as many contests as possible revolving around the ever-changing weather. One day, nice, and one day not so nice seems to be the trend with "Mother Nature" this spring. Nevertheless, we have bats swinging, kids running, and soccer balls being kicked. We can't complain. Over the past month, we have kicked off the indoor track season for the varsity runners and held a similar kick start with an indoor track meet

for the junior high at the BDYWC. To get the bats swinging early, the softball program also held an indoor round robin softball tournament at the BDYWC. We have hosted games for local teams and had a few at bats for our softball and baseball programs too outside. The girls' soccer team played a few games home and away. One of the first "Proud AD" moments of spring came last week when we were able to host a soccer, baseball, and softball game all at home on the beautiful turf fields. What stellar additions to our campus. In the last few weeks, elementary basketball, elementary volleyball, and Boys High School and Junior High golf began their respective seasons. We are looking forward to hosting the annual WDA tournament at Rolla Golf Course on May 2nd.

Rolette County Athlete of the Year nominations will be coming up on April 29th at the Kiwanis Club, proposals for Summer Funding were sent to our Head Coaches to be selected on April 30th and in between that time, we will be hosting a slough of other events at home for our local student athletes. All spring schedules are online at [www.westerndakotaassociation.org](http://www.westerndakotaassociation.org). Reminder, we will be migrating to Arbiter Sports scheduler in the fall of 2026. The new website address is arbiter.io.

Sincerely,  
*Shane M. Martin, Ph.D.,*  
Superintendent  
Athletic and Activities Director  
Turtle Mountain Community School

**TMBCI PRESENTS**  
**3RD ANNUAL**  
**AUTISM**  
**AWARENESS/ ACCEPTANCE WALK**  
**April 21, 2026**  
**@5:30PM**  
**LELE PAD, Belcourt, ND**  
**(Speakers, Food, T-Shirts)**  
**MIKINOK ENTERPRISES**

**ADVERTISEMENT – REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS April 6, 2026**  
**Procurement of Architectural and Engineering Services**

**Construction of New Physical Education Gymnasium for Belcourt School District #7**  
**Located on the Turtle Mountain School Campus in Belcourt, North Dakota**

Belcourt School District #7 is soliciting proposals from qualified architectural firms with architectural, structural, civil, mechanical and electrical engineering capabilities to provide design, planning, drawings, and specifications for construction of a new physical education gymnasium to be located on the Turtle Mountain School campus in Belcourt, North Dakota. This facility is intended to support the physical educational space needs of our students in a modern, functional, and sustainable environment. This new facility is envisioned to be 22,000 square feet.

**Scope of Work:**

- Develop comprehensive architectural and engineering plans for a state-of-the-art facility that meets physical education standards & requirements for students, community spectators and sports competitors in a setting within budget as specified by the District.
- Provide full architectural and engineering services, including conceptual design, schematic drawings, detailed construction plans, specifications, and cost estimates.
- Ensure the design complies with local, state, and federal regulations, as well as the unique needs of the Belcourt School District community.
- Incorporate sustainability and energy-efficient practices into the design.

**Eligibility:**

- Firms must have prior experience in designing educational facilities and projects of similar scope and size.
- Architects and engineers must be properly licensed.
- Firms must be licensed by the State of North Dakota at time of proposal submission. Firms submitting proposals are responsible to comply with the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) Requirements. Successful firm must also hold a current Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa TERO license prior to contract.

**Proposal Requirements:**

- A comprehensive fee schedule which shall include a fee scale based on final project cost from design planning to specifications through construction administration to final inspection of the project.

**Belcourt School District #7** is an equal opportunity employer and will accept proposals from all qualified firms. The Belcourt School District #7 reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. The District will not be responsible for costs incurred by firms in preparation of proposals. The contract will be with the Belcourt School District #7.

**Questions/Clarifications:** Any questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing by email to Duane Poitra, Business Manager at [duane.poitra@k12.nd.us](mailto:duane.poitra@k12.nd.us) cc: [kevin.davis@k12.nd.us](mailto:kevin.davis@k12.nd.us) with a read receipt request no later than April 27, 2026 at 4:00 pm.

**Proposal Submission Deadline:** Firms must ensure all required documentation is included and submitted by the indicated deadline. Sealed proposals must be received no later than April 27, 2026 at 4:00 pm. Late submissions will not be considered. Proposals will be opened and reviewed at a meeting of the District's construction committee, scheduled no later than April 28, 2026 at which meeting firms may present their proposals to committee if they so choose.

**Proposal Submission Address:** All sealed proposals must be submitted to the following address:

Belcourt School District #7  
Attn: Duane Poitra, Business Manager  
1207 William Hardesty St  
PO Box 440  
Belcourt, ND 58316