



Prayer Service

7:00 p.m., Thursday, December 11, 2025
Akicita Mato Gym
Fort Thompson, South Dakota

Funeral Mass & Traditional Service

10:00 a.m., Friday, December 12, 2025
Akicita Mato Gym
Fort Thompson, South Dakota

Celebrant

Deacon Steve McLaughlin

Pallbearers

Julius Grey Owl - Kiron Thompson
Joseph Shields Jr - Ricardo Garcia
Anthony Padron - Marty Montgomery

Honorary Pallbearers

Rozelle & Darrel Lockwood
Lynn Miranda - Eugene Newman
Marilyn Prosser - Paula Horne
Arvol Looking Horse - Elaine Martinez
Evelyn Lone Bear - Rosanne Abrahamson
Mary Puthoff - Marcos Madril
Rose Amador - Carol Seeking Land
Karen Dojaquez - Kelly Looking Horse
Linda Tungate - Lupe Lopez
Annie Begay - Art Martinez
Melody His Law - Sean Spicer
Darlene Williams - Gerry Rodriguez-Estes
Heidi Jaramillo - Lavonne Redsteer
Edna Allen - Genevieve Lemaster
Carol Beers - Janessa Rey Starkey
Bessie Good Face - Mary & Terry Fiddler
And all friends & family

Burial

St. Joseph's Lakeview Cemetery
Fort Thompson, South Dakota

In Memory Of

Arnita Shortbear-Swanson

Mathó Winyan
"Bear Woman"



September 14, 1941
November 22, 2025





Arnita Magdeline Shortbear-Swanson, 84, an enrolled member of the Crow Creek Tribe, passed away on Saturday, November 22, 2025, at Kaweah Health Medical Center in Visalia, California, surrounded by her family.

Arnita will be laid to rest with her children at St. Joseph's Lakeview Cemetery in Fort Thompson, SD.

Arnita Magdeline Shortbear-Swanson was born September 14, 1941, to Jasper Shortbear and Cora Bad Horse at Crow Creek Agency Hospital in Fort Thompson, SD.

Arnita married Hugh H. Swanson in November 1967 and enjoyed traveling throughout the United States. Her husband died in 1981, and she found her companion, Harold Vondall, who kept her and her loving dog Chiquita company on their many travels.

Arnita has seven children: Tammy Padron, Robert Whitelight, Donita Smalling, Anthony LeVassur, Kelly Swanson, Jeffrey Swanson, and Cheri Cruz. Arnita loved spending time with her 16 grandchildren: Alisha, Nicholas, Leo Jr, Lanissa, Tanisha, Michaela, Cyrisha, Ricardo, Joseph, Janessa, Janeane, Nicholas, Aaron, Cheri, Jeremy, and Jason. Arnita has 24 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great grandchildren.

Grandma Sioux, as so many called her, took Loraine (Pebby) Montgomery & Grace Numugrace, as her Hunka daughters, Julie Labrake as her granddaughter, and Jeff Lippencott as her grandson.

Throughout her Pow-wow travels, she made many friends, family, and countless people she loved dearly, many of whom she called her family! All are very important to her.

She was an advocate for Sobriety and traditional knowledge. She has been in sobriety since 1986 and counseled countless relatives into recovery. Through her recovery, she was a listening shoulder and helped anyway she could. Taking time to drive, call, hustle for those suffering with addiction to find a path to healing.

She enjoyed sharing our culture and traditions with all who would ask for her knowledge and support. She was gracious in never keeping her knowledge to herself.

She was a superstar; her role in the movie "Sky" with Norman Redius was a highlight of her accomplishments, along with her anti-vaping commercial and advocacy during the opioid crisis to provide education on the dangers of opioids and vaping. Her work on World Peace and Prayer Day took her to Mexico City and on to meeting so many religious/traditional leaders that impacted her generosity and care for others.

She is survived by her daughters, Kelly Swanson and Cherie Cruz; her son, Jeffrey Swanson and wife, Anne Marie Swanson; Hunka daughters: Loraine and Grace; Hunka granddaughter, Julie Labrake; grandson, Jeff Lippencott; her sisters: Ramona Taylor and Bernetta Traversie; 16 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren; 3 great-great grandchildren; and countless nieces and nephews and extended family.

Preceded her in death: husband, Hugh Swanson; sons: Robert Whitelight and Anthony LeVassur; daughters: Tammy Padron and Donita Smalling; life partner, Harold Vondall; parents, Jasper Shortbear and Cora Bad Horse; sisters: Wanda (Mickey) Shortbear-Estes and Maria Sexton; brother, Leroy (Maka) Shortbear; many dearly loved nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and grandchildren, far too many to name.



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