

## Obituary

**Born:** Thursday, September 10, 1964

**Died:** Monday, January 25, 2021

[Leslie "Les" H. Costel, sr., passed on January 25, 2021 in Seattle, Washington. Services are slated to begin Sunday, January 31, 2021 with escort home by Glacier Electric Cooperative and arrival at the Glacier Homes Community Center at 12 noon. Rosary at the center \(via livestream\). Specific participation and viewing instructions will be provided separately via social media. The Funeral Mass will be held on Monday, February 1, 2021 at 11:00am at the Little Flower Parish, Browning, Montana.](#)

Les was born in Browning, Montana on September 10, 1964 to Estella "Stella" Whitegrass and raised at Starr School. Les is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe and was given his Blackfeet name ?kk?yaamstsinniim? (Double Rainbow) by his great grandmother Mary Ground. As a child he was nicknamed by his cousin Daryl Homegun, Joe Spud – because of his love of potatoes. He was raised on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and attended High School at Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon, graduating in 1983. Les and Stacey (Kipp) met in 1984 and married on June 25, 1988. They welcomed their first born, a son, Les "JR" Costel in 1986 and then a daughter, Beth Ellen, in 1991.

Les is survived by his wife, Stacey, son JR (Kristy, grandchildren, Kaci and Eli) and his daughter Beth Ellen (Bill). Sisters Patty (Craig) Hall of Leesville, Louisiana and Charlene Finley of Browning. His nephews Adrian "Slew" (Elisha) Costel and Fudd Whitegrass of Browning. Daniel Salway, Fairbanks, Alaska, Craig Al Hall, and a niece Andrea K. Hall, all of Leesville, Louisiana.

Les is predeceased by his mother, Stella, brothers Eugene "Jug" Whitegrass and Nels Costel.

Les did many jobs during his time in this world. Beginning with his cowboy life working on Dan & Phyllis Connelly's ranch west of Starr School, and he logged firewood for sale and for his own use, a wildland fire fighter, as a Hot Shot firefighter for Zig Zag Ranger Station in Zig Zag, Oregon, BIA Chemawa Indian School and Blackfeet Boarding Dormitory as a Home Living Assistant, a ground man with Redrock Power and becoming a journeyman lineman with Glacier Electric Cooperative.

Les continued the legacy of being a lineman after his eldest brother Jug and his son JR also becoming a lineman. Les didn't consider being a lineman his job, it was who he was.

Les began his lineman career with Glacier Electric Cooperative in April 1997 as an Apprentice Lineman and completing the apprenticeship and becoming a journeyman lineman in May 2002. He enjoyed all aspects of being a lineman, from the maintenance of power lines, the camaraderie of his fellow lineman, being called out for a 'trouble call' – where many an adventure would be had based on our Montana seasons. Once JR began working at Glacier Electric Cooperative in 2007 the adventures were shared, a unique opportunity for a father and son and an even stronger bond was formed. In the beginning of working together, JR commented that although his peer his dad still had higher expectations for him. The discussions between the two related to power lines and related topics of their lineman duties were invaluable. A prouder father and fellow lineman

you could not meet. He was cool and level headed during some really stressful situations, he took a lot of pride in this trade and prided himself on getting the power back on. There probably isn't a power pole in the Glacier Electric Cooperative territory that Les didn't work on. Les returned to work at Glacier Electric in June 2020 (after his new kidney was installed in November 2019) he didn't participate in after call hours by going to the site, however, his fellow lineman would phone him all hours to ask for directions to a location. Although not on call, Les had the call radio on 24/7 listening to the crews out on the call and staying up into the wee hours – until everyone signaled off safely.

Les was physically fit and preferred physical work and labor as well as a mental strength to handle any and all situations presented to him in the course of his life and his work.

JR and Kristy have gifted us with two precious grandchildren. Again, a proud and loving papa, as evidenced by the fact he learned to embrace technology and his cellphone so that he could share texts and snapchats with Kaci. His patience with his grandkids was markedly more so than his children recall he had with them. Quoting his mom, Stella, if I had known grandkids were going to be this much fun I would've had them first!

Beth Ellen, a daddy's' girl from birth, and something she embraced, shares her father's personality, kindness, generosity, ability to easily love others and a love of horses. They shared a musical bond, his love of country music as he often listened to while relaxing with his Bud Light. He would text Beth a new song he'd heard or one that reminded him of her and suggest she listen to it if she hadn't already. He and Beth would have their Bud light over a long chat, truck ride or when ice fishing - his best friend and he always wanted the best for her. Every conversation or text he closed with 'I love you, you're my baby – no matter how old you get.' He was proud of her independence, her career choice, and the purchase of her own home in 2018.

Les doted on and loved Stacey. After 35 years of marriage they had become best friends, the shared and mutually enjoyed experiences, the traveling, being with family and friends, the life at Fox Creek ranching and camping, the ATV rides, picnicking or just sitting quietly at home in their matching recliners. He conceded to her plans and direction, saying, if that's what you want – you're the boss. He said recently that when his health issues began looming he probably wouldn't have lived as long as he had if Stacey hadn't 'run interference'.

There were many serious health issues that he faced, beginning in 2013 to the present – each time, his only inquiry was 'when can I go back to work?' In January 2019, after Les went into renal failure, he was gifted a kidney – Koala – (kiwi) from Janet Reindl on November 5, 2019. Our generous, loving and selfless friend.

Les loved a good meal, in particular meat and potatoes and he could cook a mean steak! He performed most of the outdoor cooking, picnicking and gathering over a meal with family was a favorite time for him.

Les was a true cowboy, what you saw is what you got. He lived that life at Fox Creek by ranching, pasturing cattle and recreating there and camping there – year round. From May to October Les welcomed many to a blazing fire and a chair to sit up and visit. While he preferred a horseback ride, he also utilized the modern day horse, ATV's, which we enjoyed with our children, grandchildren and friends. Many cross country rides were taken from Starr School to Livermore. The camaraderie with his fellow ranchers between St. Mary and Birch Creek is evidenced by his passion for the cowboy way of life and his ability to ride a good horse – broke or not. Les loved to ice fish – he owns 5 ice houses and never passed up an opportunity to go ice fishing or buy ice fishing supplies!

Les was well known for his sense of humor and got a good laugh about teasing his friends and the like, his ability to relate to everyone he came in contact with knew he would get around to 'picking on' them. One of his fellow lineman said this "he could pick on you and make you feel good about it!"

Les touched so many lives and impacted and influenced many children from his days working at the Blackfeet Boarding Dorm and Chemawa Indian School as well as the 'extra' children he raised for brief periods of time or needed a helping hand. Jolene and Joe Barrientes among the many young adults, his fellow lineman and the cowboys and ranchers from St. Mary to Birch Creek, he considered them all friends.

Les' final act of generosity was that he chose to be an organ donor. He has gifted his cornea to the sightlife.org of Seattle, Washington.

## **Service Summary**

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### **Funeral Mass**

11:00 AM Mon Feb 01, 2021

### **Little Flower Catholic Church**

1 block from teepees  
Browning, Montana 59743