McKerchie develops guitar instruction book

By Rick Smith

Sault Tribe member Burton S. McKerchie recently completed the development of an instruction and reference book for guitarists. The 93-page book is titled *Playing By the Rules* and is geared toward anyone with an interest in playing guitar whether a beginner or a savvy, seasoned performer.

McKerchie notes that his book offers a fresh, new approach to guitar instruction, setting it apart from other works. He said the material in *Playing By the Rules* is set up to allow for visualizing a sequence of procedures as one complete function. In simple terms, he explained, he offered an example of knowing a route home from work or school. "You think of the route as one total process while the many individual traffic elements involved — stops, turns and so on — are instantly recalled from memory as needed," he said.

In addition, Mckerchie established a supporting website, www.indigitec.com, as an online source for subscribers to acquire the book, in either PDF or as a hardcopy, take lessons via Skype or online videos, get reference materials such as chord charts or address any concerns.

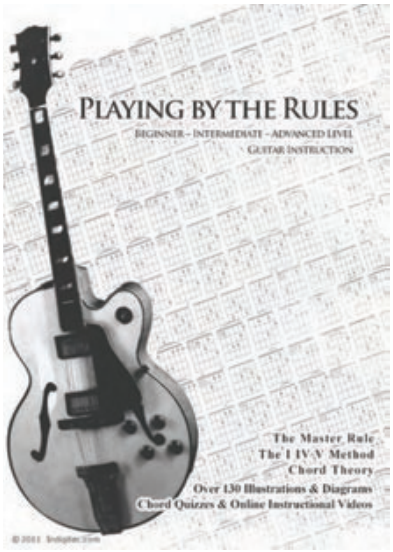

Image courtesy of Burton S. McKerchie

Cover of the guitar instruction book developed by Burton S. McKerchie. The book is intended for use by beginners as well as more advanced guitarists.

Photo by Rick Smith

Sault Tribe member Burton S. McKerchie recently developed an instruction book and website for learning how to play guitar.

Born and raised in Sault Ste. Marie, McKerchie began bending guitar strings at the age of 13 and started playing in bands during his high school years. A stint with the U.S. Marine Corps from 1969 to 1971 took him to Vietnam and, after his release from active duty, he moved to Minnesota where he continued playing in bands, which included work in Nashville, Tenn., and later started a music studio in Moses Lake, Wash. He became involved in a broadcast engineering program through National Public Radio (NPR) at Northern Michigan University in 1983. He stayed with the NMU NPR station for 11 years before moving on to other NPR stations in Arizona, including working on the Hopi Reservation for Northern Arizona University where he also worked in video production of instructional videos for schools and universities. Moving on to California, he worked for Radio Billingue, a Hispanic NPR station, and eventually took up consulting and contracting work in Mexico and Central America. He landed jobs with radio staions in Alaska and continues working as a broadcast engineering consultant.

McKerchie left Alaska last December, settling in Redwood City, Calif., to complete the book and concentrate on music production. "The book has been a thought for years; I didn't start on it until about a year ago," he said.

Those interested should follow developments at www.indigitec.com, check online book sources for availability or watch for hardcopies on the shelves of bookstores in Sault Ste. Marie.

Latest Ashley Macklin release: *Make it Out Alive*

By Jennifer Dale-Burton

Echoes author Ashley Macklin has a new book out that some might call controversial. Titled *Make it Out Alive*, Macklin's new book features a peripheral character from *Echoes*, Kiowa Loonsfoot, who is just trying to make it through his senior year and launch himself into life somewhat intact, considering his home life.

Unlike *Echoes*, this entry doesn't feature the supernatural. In *Make it Out Alive*, Macklin, 25 and a member of the Sault Tribe, examines the issues Native American youth still face today in their own communities and society at large, "growing up Native and dealing with all the stereotypes

that go with it," said Macklin.

Stereotypes and issues Native families face today includes Kiowa's father's alcoholism, drug use, teen pregnancy, depression, the friends' lives change and the dynamics of their friendships change along with them. The young people of *Echoes* are evolving closer to the adults they will become.

"I've gotten to know my characters so well," said Macklin. "The book wrote itself because that's what my characters would do, whether I wanted it to or not."

Macklin's last book had a widespread readership — she has something of a following in New Zealand as well as modest sales in Britain and France. "I paid for my book and then some," she said.

Macklin feels her work has improved in this most recent entry. The book teeters between teen and young adult — there's some violence, and mature topics. If it were a movie, she'd rate PG-13, Macklin said.

Kiowa, or "Key," was a side character in *Echoes*, but Macklin knew he'd have his own book. "There's so much going on in Indian Country that people don't now about," she said. In the first book, readers see him in the midst of cultural revival with his family. But in *Make it Out Alive*, Macklin goes deeper.

Macklin said she felt really connected to Key. When she moved to "the rez" in the Sault, her non-Native friends were afraid to get out of their cars when they picked her up or dropped her off. "They wouldn't come into my house," Macklin said. Some of their parents even thought they'd lose their civil rights on the reservation, under "Indian jurisdiction."

"A lot of people in this town don't know what's going on," she added.

The cover art for the last book was Macklin's and a friend posed for her current book's cover. Macklin used to have an issue with self-publishing, specifically print-on-demand books and eBooks. But the publishing industry today wants to "mess with your book" said Macklin. POD and eBooks do save trees and costs — even though there's nothing like a solid book in your hands, Macklin feels. But that's marketing.

"I do feel a little like I sold my soul to the devil, though," she laughed.

Get your copy — paperback or eBook — at Barnes and Noble or Amazon.

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