



ALBERTA NATIVE NEWS



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Jerry Whitehead paints his love for family and culture

By Laura Mushamanski

Family is of great importance to Vancouver-based artist Jerry Whitehead. And when admiring the serene painting on the cover of the *Alberta Native News* June 2020 edition, the carefully chosen vibrant and rich colours painted on the previously blank canvas incorporates several *nehiyawak* (Cree people) representing Whitehead’s family. The painting is titled ‘Being Together.’

What is now present day *Peter Chapman Band* within *James Smith Cree Nation* in Saskatchewan, where Whitehead grew up, Jerry found various art implements that would open his mind up to the world of creativity and imagination. Whitehead explored different mediums to draw pictures by using lead bullets from his father’s hunting and trapping ammunition, ash as chalk from outdoor fires his



Keep our Circle Strong by Jerry Whitehead.

grandparents would make, and before the invention of the plastic bag, Whitehead utilized brown paper grocery bags and catalogs as drawing paper.

The *iskwew* (Cree woman) that is a central figure in Whitehead’s paintings represents the strong influence in his life that he has carried with him in his heart and throughout his lifetime. *nihtâmâwâyâwin* (Being Together) was created when Whitehead reflected on the relationship he shared and cherished with *okawiya* (his mother). Throughout Whitehead’s art journey, he has painted his mother as the central figure in his artwork. The *iskwew* in the middle of the painting *nihtâmâwâyâwin*, is *okawiya* surrounded by her husband, parents, children, grandchildren and children with no faces representing future children, the next generations to come.

For over 40 years as a professional artist, Jerry Whitehead has been capturing people’s awe and attention with every brush stroke featuring vibrant hues of purples, blues, greens, yellows, reds, oranges and pinks that he methodically paints onto all of his art pieces. As a young child, Whitehead was drawn to bright vibrant colors. His mother influenced his attraction towards the vibrant rich colors that we see today in all of his artwork. A memory that Whitehead treasures from when he was a *napisis* (boy), was when he would watch *okawiya* cut up colorful rags, and then braid them together to make rugs. He would play on the floor in his family home with all the different colors of fabric. Whitehead’s first memory of colour is tied to *okawiya*, because she was also his first teacher to teach him about colour.

nihtâmâwâyâwin is a compilation of Whitehead’s many painting styles. He incorporates the majestic Northern Lights of our ancestors dancing into the background. The stained glass painted dancers on the bottom right reflect the many colours that our people wear on their regalia when dancing in *isihcikewin* (ceremony). On the bottom left of Whitehead’s creation, the mosaic patterns shaping



Artist Jerry Whitehead.

the powwow dancers’ faces is another style of painting that is distinctly recognizable as a Whitehead art piece.

"Powwow dancers have been an ongoing theme in my work since I began painting. Seeing the dancers as a child had a lasting impression. The subject matter has been ideal for expressing a part of my culture as well as accommodating changes in my work."

In each one of Whitehead’s creations, powwow dancers have been an ongoing theme. The women and men on every canvas, rock, wall, and media of choice are identified by their regalia and the number of feathers painted above their heads. *iskwew* have a single feather and the men are painted with two feathers that correspond with the dancer’s regalia. The *iskwew* also have shawls and the men have medallions. *isihcikewin* is incorporated into every one of Whitehead’s brush strokes, and when speaking with him, his love and gratitude towards Indigenous culture exudes genuine warm-heartedness into every conversation.

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Tasha Hubbard masterfully advocates for justice

By Laura Mushumanski

Director and filmmaker Tasha Hubbard was the recent recipient of a prestigious Canadian Screen Award. On May 25, the 2020 Canadian Screen Awards named the film *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* the Ted Rogers Best Feature Length Documentary.

Last year Hubbard also received 8 awards for *nîpawistamâsowin*, including The Vancouver Film Critics Circle award for Best Canadian Documentary of 2019.

nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up is a story about the death of a young Cree man, Colten Boushie, from the Cree Red Pheasant First Nation. After Boushie and his friends entered Gerald Stanley’s rural property near Biggar, Saskatchewan, Colten was shot in the back of the head by Stanley. The police inquiry was inadequate along with an unfair trial that consisted of an all-white jury that led to international attention and Boushie’s family in pursuit of justice for Colten. The film narrates how institutionalized racism is embedded within the Canadian legal system. At the same time, it deftly shares the history of colonialism in Treaty 6 Territory, and provides a vision for a Canada where Indigenous children are safe in their communities.

Hubbard, a University of Alberta professor and film maker stated about the making of the film, “I thought about Colten’s mother and family and what they were going through. And then I started to think, well this is part of this context of this particular area, this is part of a continuum of colonial violence. I just wanted to, in some way, document what was happening, give the family the opportunity to speak about what they were going through.”

Previous to winning the awards for the documentary *nîpawistamâsowin*, Hubbard achieved another significant milestone in April of 2019. *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* was the first film by an Indigenous filmmaker to open for the Hot Docs International Canadian Documentary Film Festival, the largest film documentary film festival in North America.

Hubbard appreciates the accolades but cautions about looking too much at the “celebratory elements”

of things. “Absolutely we can celebrate, we can be thankful, however, I think history has shown us that a lot of times that gives people who need to do the work, permission to sit back and do nothing else,” said Hubbard. “I feel that with the film industry, we see a shift happening in how Indigenous film is viewed by broadcasters and funders, who are finally realizing that an Indigenous story needs to have a key creative Indigenous lead, telling that story. It needs to be told in a way that is responsible, that comes from us, from a filmmaker that understands the complexities of stories. There needs to be work done at all different levels.”

Hubbard never forgets how fortunate she was that her adopted family didn’t try and make her deny who she was. At the age of 16, Tasha met her biological family. She reflected back on her coming to terms with Indigenous history, “When I started to learn the true history [of Indigenous people], I was really angry. How come I didn’t already know this? Why was this not taught? Why was I led to believe through media, through films, through literature that there is something lacking in Indigenous people? Because that is how we have been represented.”

The story of Colten Boushie in the media came with heavy hearts, as the stories being told were from only one narrative - a non-Indigenous narrative. Hubbard acknowledges that she saw an opportunity to make things right, about “the way in which words were used to deflect blame, and to place blame on the victim. That’s what happened with the press release the RCMP put out; it was carefully worded to put the blame on these young people, rather than on the two men who acted in a violent way and one of whom went and got a gun,” said Hubbard. “I just felt that the



Colten Boushie's family and advocates presented their case to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York.

media was not going to cover the story with that knowledge and complexity and deeply search the truth.”

Hubbard’s talent as a filmmaker and storyteller and her belief that we all have unique abilities to contribute to make things better, encouraged her to share Colten Boushie’s story. For her it was a merging of her abilities and her desire “to make things better however I can, for my son, nephew and our children.”

Hubbard’s vision for sharing the story of Colten Boushie and her experience with Colten’s family inspired her to write *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*.

“Something I saw in Colten’s family - Debbie and Jade, and Elenor Sunchild - they had a similar sense of what can they do, how can they contribute. For them it is about using the experience of what they went through and wanting to encourage others to speak out and to push for that change.”

For anyone interested in learning about film making, The Indigenous Screen Office and The National Screen Institute can provide resources and information about mentorships.

nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up is available for screening at nfb.ca.

Laura Mushumanski is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter.





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2020 Powwow Lockout: The dancers respond

By Jake Cardinal

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit artists and culture creators incredibly hard this year - in Alberta especially as the province has shelved grants and created an uncertainty in the future of Alberta's Arts industry.

"Decisions like this are going to drive away people like me, who have an international reputation, and decided to make Alberta my home," said Vern Thiessen, award-winning playwright and former director of Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has not just been tough for Urban Artists, as many powwows across the province have been cancelled due to the virus as well.

Because of the province's social distancing restrictions, (during phase 2 of the recovery) no more than 100 people can be at an out-door event.

A powwow can easily reach upwards of thousands of people - with many of them being powwow dancers, powwow singers, stick-game players, food trucks, arts and crafts vendors, jewellery vendors, among other things.

To give some perspective as to how big a powwow can get, the Facebook page "Quarantine Dance specials 2020," which features home-made videos of powwow dancers, has 65.3k members.

These cancellations are made even worse by the fact that Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada falls during the COVID-19 pandemic - on June 21.

"Due to the seriousness of the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of Canada invites Canadians to celebrate this year's National Indigenous History Month and National Indigenous Peoples Day at home," said the Government of Canada on its website.

Therefore, in order to catch a glimpse of the under-represented artists working in their traditional mediums, I spoke with a few powwow dancers to hear their thoughts on the cancellations:

Harold - Kehiwin and Maskwacis (Samson), Treaty 6

"I started dancing in 1997, when I was 6 years old. I begged my kokom, Lillian Gadwa, to make me grass dancer regalia and I think it's just in my blood. My family, the Gadwas, are a bunch of dancers. In fact, my father put my umbilical cord in a powwow arbor.

"I'm pretty sad about the powwow's being cancelled, a lot of people are very saddened about it, but maybe sometimes the whole thing needs a refresher. A hit of the reboot button in order to keep things fresh.

"It reminds me of the 2005 NHL lockout, when they didn't have hockey for a whole year, and there was no Stanley Cup champion—well, this is the "2020 Powwow Lockout."

"I also think it makes people appreciate them more. A lot of my friends on Facebook are saying that they want powwows to be un-cancelled.

"It just gives everyone an opportunity to reinvent themselves, get new stuff, and spend a lot of time with family.

"Y'know, you just have to look at it from a positive perspective, that's what I'm doing."

Tyleigh - Samson Cree Nation, Treaty 6

"I was encouraged to dance after my mother passed away back in 2006. She also danced Fancy Shawl. So, I began practicing our cultural dance as a way to keep my mother's spirit alive. I am now 20 years old.



Journalist Jake Cardinal at the empty Saddle Lake Cree Nation powwow arbor - the powwow is canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It is saddening to not have powwows to look forward to this summer, but until this pandemic rolls over, I'd rather have our people stay safe and protected from the virus at home.

"There will be time in the future to share laughs and dance as a community again."

Tia - Saddle Lake Cree Nation and Whonnock Stl'at'imx Nation, Treaty 6 and Unceded Territory

"Ever since powwows started getting cancelled, I've been feeling pretty down. I miss seeing my friends, hearing the drums and dancing. I miss seeing all the familiar faces of adopted family and good friends. Most of all I miss all the good food!

"Dancing and singing have always been such a huge part of my life and to have the beginning of the season cancelled sucks because it's been such a long winter without it.

"When I'm on the dance floor, it's just me. My worries, doubts, and any sort of negativity disappears.

"But although all of this is very close to my heart and I wish the whole pandemic didn't exist, I'm very happy to know we are protecting our elders, children,

Continued on page 23

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Indigenous Rights advocates celebrate 73 years of marriage

By Laura Mushumanski

Seventy-three years ago, when marriages were arranged, Elmer Carlson went outside cultural norms and chose to marry a woman that he saw possessed great strength, *otehiwin* (compassion), strong morals and perseverance, Nellie Makokis. The start of their life journey together began when they married on June 12, 1947.

Nellie, a status *nehiyaw-iskwew* (Cree woman), was born and resided on Saddle Lake Cree Nation until shortly after she said ‘I do’ to Elmer, a non-status *apihtawikosisan-napew* (Métis man).

Before April 1985, status Indian women were forced to disenfranchise their Indian rights. Under the 1876 Indian Act, legally if a status Indian woman married a non-Indian man, she would lose her status; an Indian woman's status was conditional on her husband's status. If a status woman chose to marry a status Indian man from another community or a non-Indian man, she would have been separated from her family, community and connections to her Indigenous culture.

Our Indigenous sister, who was born *nehiyaw-iskwew*, lost her status and rights 18 days after June 12, 1947.

The signing of Treaty 6 in 1876 by Nellie's *nehiyaw* ancestors and representatives of the Crown, promised one square mile of land for each family of five on a permanent reserve, hunting and fishing rights, education benefits, health benefits and annual treaty payments.

The power couple, Nellie and Elmer, had 11 children, with 9 of them surviving to adulthood. And when Nellie lost her status, this also meant the Carlson children would not be entitled to their status, along with having connections to their ancestral knowledge and culture.

With *pakoseyimowin ekwa sohkitewin* (hope and courage) close to Nellie's heart, she became part of an

advocacy group of Indigenous women that created a movement *wícihitok* (to help one another). Active since 1967, the Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society, as well as *Indian Rights For Indian Women* in '68', Nellie was one of the founding members for both advocacy groups, advocating for status and non-status Indian women and children to regain their Indian status.

After 38 years, the Indian Rights For Indian Women advocacy group's persistence created a brighter future for Indigenous *iskwew ekwa awasis* (women and children); *Bill C-31* passed into law. April 1985 was a celebratory moment for all Indigenous women and their children. The Indian Act of 1985, gender equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, removed enfranchisement law, and restored 127,000 Indigenous *iskwew ekwa awasis* their status, including Nellie and *otawasimisa* (her children).

Throughout Nellie's lifetime, alongside her advocacy work with Indigenous *iskwew*, she always saw *kiskinohamâkewin* (education) as of great importance and held it close to her heart. She persistently advocated equal rights for First Nations, Métis and Inuit *iskwew ekwa awasis* with a focus on the importance of *kiskinohamâkewin*. The well-respected Elder, Nellie was honored by *Edmonton Public Schools* with the naming of the Nellie Carlson School. In September 2016, Nellie Carlson School doors opened. Nellie, with Elmer by her side,



Indigenous rights advocates Nellie and Elmer Carlson are celebrating 73 years of marriage.

celebrated the opening of the Nellie Carlson School, located on the southside of Edmonton.

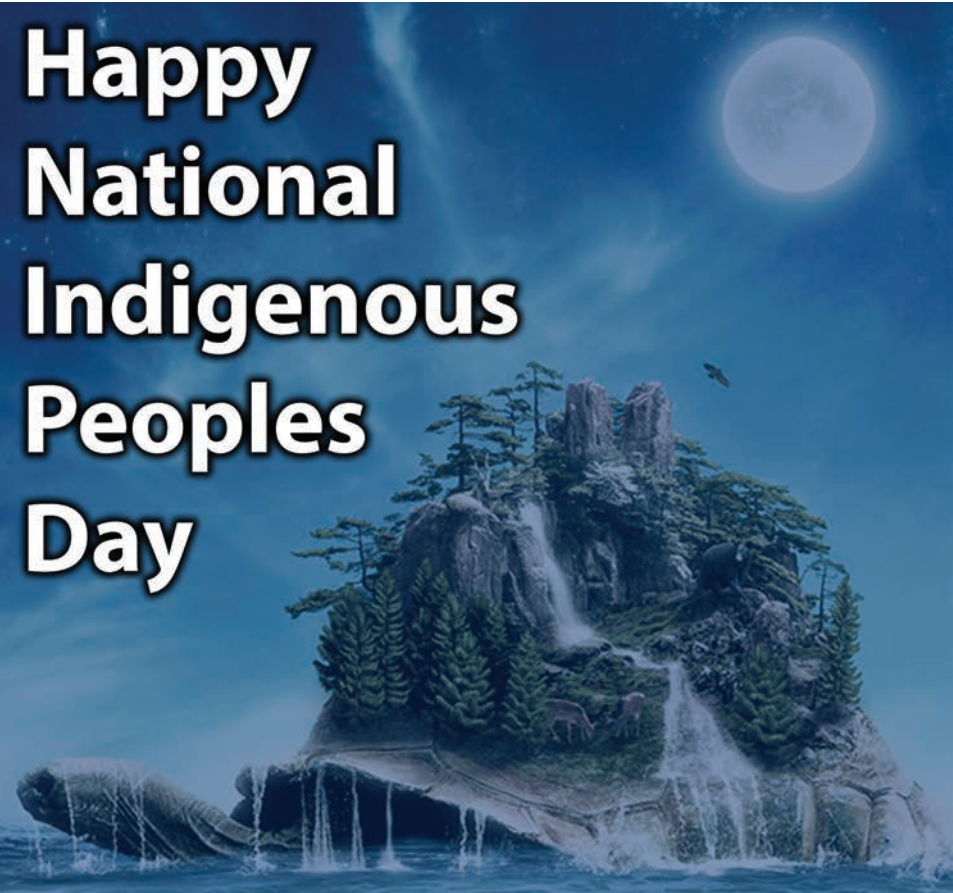
On February 8, 2016, Nellie's husband, Elmer Carlson, a Canadian Armed Forces Veteran was awarded the Legion d'Honneur - the highest decoration that France can bestow, and equivalent to the Order of Canada. The Legion d'Honneur rewards outstanding merits of individuals from all walks of life, regardless of their respective social, economic, hereditary or national backgrounds. Elmer served overseas during WW2 and was part of the Lake Superior Scottish Regiment.

It has now been 35 years since Nellie's proud moment when she received her status number. Since that day, the last 4-digits of Nellie's phone number has matched her status number.

On July 3, 2020 Nellie Carlson will be turning 7 years shy of a century- at 93 years of age, alongside her husband, Elmer Carlson, who will be turning 96 come October 7th. The Carlsons currently reside in their family home.

Laura Mushumanski is a Local Journalism Initiatives reporter for Alberta Native News.

Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day





For thousands of years, Alberta has been home to diverse Indigenous communities. To this day the rich culture and histories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities enrich our province.

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Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: Circulation Department:
102, 10155 114 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5K 1R8
E-mail: natnews@shaw.ca
Tel: (780) 421-7966

Volume 37, Number 6, June 2020
ISSN #08294135
www.albertanativenews.com

EDITOR: Deborah Shatz

ADVERTISING:
Dan Moser 780-421-7966

Alberta Native News is published monthly for distribution to Native Bands and Metis Settlements across Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Northwest Territories.

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Walking the journey for justice

By AFN Regional Chief Marlene Poitras

Tân'si nitotemak (hello friends):

Like many of you, I have been deeply affected by the demonstrations demanding justice for Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Machuar Madut, George Floyd and countless other Black and Black-Indigenous lives that have been unjustly taken on Turtle Island. I also shared my horror over the several tragic headlines about Indigenous people dying or being brutalized at the hands of police, including Chantel Moore in Edmonton and in Fort McMurray, Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

I stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and add my voice in condemning anti-Black racism in all of its forms. We need to bring an end to the colonial and anti-Black violence that plagues this country and continues to dehumanize and oppress Black and Indigenous peoples and communities.

I have been reflecting on a message echoed by advocates at rallies held in Alberta over the weekend: Black liberation and Indigenous sovereignty are interwoven. This message of solidarity was shared when Black activists stood with Indigenous people at Standing Rock and during Idle No More; it continues to reverberate across Turtle Island as our Elders, leaders, youth, and citizens once again mobilize with the Black community. From Calgary to Edmonton to Fort McMurray, choruses of "Black Lives Matter" have harmonized with chants of "Indigenous Lives Matter." I was honoured to stand beside demonstrators in Fort McMurray on Saturday as we called for justice, reconciliation, and transformation of the criminal justice system.

Black and First Nations communities are fighting against the same system of colonization and white supremacy that created two different, but not dissimilar, legacies of poverty, incarceration, and

socioeconomic and health disparities. I stand behind Black activists calling for transformational change to how we protect and provide emergency services to Black, Indigenous, people of colour, and other vulnerable communities, especially during mental health crises. In the words of my colleague B.C. Regional Chief Terry Tegee, "We don't need a reform of a broken system. We need a revolution of hearts, minds and souls to create justice and equality." I am proud to stand with the National Chief and all my AFN Executive colleagues who are lifting their voices to support the calls to action from the Black community.

On Saturday, I attended a news conference in Fort McMurray in support of Chief Allan Adam where I condemned the total disregard and disrespect for one of our esteemed leaders on the part of the police. I also expressed my frustration with the reality that police forces have never existed to protect our communities but, rather, the interests of the state and white settlers. It's clear to me that, by way of a different history, police continue failing to protect Black communities and individuals. Just as our people deserve to determine how we are protected, Black people too deserve to be protected by people who understand them, who know where they are coming from, who treat them like human beings.

As a proud *nehiyaw iskwew*, I support calls to action from the Black community to re-allocate police funding to agencies that will provide them with better services such as mental wellness support, child welfare protection and domestic violence response, to name a few. Action towards creating these kinds of services by-and-for Black and Indigenous communities must accelerate. I commit to pressing for progress on these and other goals, alongside my advocacy to advance First Nation authority and jurisdiction over law enforcement.





Ben Henderson
Councillor, Ward 8

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Celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21

National Indigenous Peoples Day is a time to celebrate the outstanding contributions of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples in all aspects of Canadian Life. In this time of COVID-19 social distancing, we can all do that from the comfort of our own homes while watching the 2020 *Indspire Awards* which will be broadcast on APTN, CBC, CBC Radio and CBC GEM on Sunday June 21, 2020 at 8:00pm / 8:30pm NT.

The 2020 *Indspire Awards* honour eleven First Nations, Inuit and Métis individuals who exemplify Indigenous excellence and whose stories inspire, uplift, and educate Canadians about the tremendous contributions Indigenous people make to our country. The 2020 *Indspire Awards* was filmed in Ottawa on March 6 at the National Arts Centre just before the nation went into lock down mode to protect Canadians from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The *Indspire Awards* represents the highest honour the Indigenous community bestows upon its own people. After 27 years, the *Indspire Awards* have honoured 373 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals who demonstrate outstanding achievement. The show is a nationally broadcast celebration of culture showcasing the diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada including performances by Canada’s biggest names in Indigenous entertainment.

“2020 represents the 27th year that the Indspire Awards have been presented to honour the outstanding achievements of extraordinary First Nations, Inuit, and Métis individuals,” said Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of Indspire. “Their accomplishments are celebrated on a national scale, and we are very pleased to be able to share their stories with all Canadians.”

Join Indspire Awards co-hosts Tiffany Ayalik and Craig Lauzon in this wonderful celebration of Indigenous excellence. In addition to introducing the award’s recipients, the evening has star studded performances by Adrian Sutherland & Midnight

Shine, Genevieve Fisher, Tom Wilson, iskwē | Δʹq-o, Chuck Copenace and Leela Gilday. Youth Award presenters are “Amazing Race Canada” winners Dr. James Makokis & Anthony Johnson.

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Indspire’s *Building Brighter Futures* program is helping students realize their educational dreams. The following are recent student testimonials about how Indspire’s *Building Brighter Futures* program is helping them through their educational journey.

Jerry Johnathan-Shawada: I would like to thank you for donating to me and my struggles through school. I have been struggling to pay my bills lately and with all this craziness with the COVID-19. My school has shut down most of my courses and I have only a few online classes.

I’m not sure how this year will turn out but it is a hell of a lot easier with your donation. I won’t have to worry about having enough for rent until my lease is up and I can pay for the necessary actions I may need to stay in school if they continue to close mandatory program classes. Overall thank you for helping me through school and it really means a lot for us students during these weird times.

Maison Leitch: Words cannot adequately express my gratitude for your generous support. I will begin by sharing a little bit about myself: I am a Métis first-year medical student at the University of Alberta set to graduate in 2023. So far, the experience has been incredibly fulfilling. I love learning medicine and have been able to maintain a high standard of academic performance.



When I am a practicing physician and have the financial means, I intend to give back so that future students can similarly benefit. Thank you again for the generous support; I am forever grateful. Merci beaucoup!

Mariah Mazer: I am a fourth-year, Metis nursing student at the University of Alberta. Caring for people is my passion and I am so grateful to have the opportunity to pursue an education in a career that I love. I am especially passionate about using my personal experience and knowledge to address health disparities experienced by indigenous people.

In the future, I will use my education to continue to give back to the community. It has been a great blessing to go to school. Generous donors and Indspire make it financially possible for me to pursue an education, and for that I am eternally grateful. When I graduate, I will use my knowledge of the health disparities experienced by Indigenous peoples and leadership abilities to advocate for changes in policies and programs that will allow more culturally sensitive care. When I graduate, I will donate to programs such as Indspire so in the future, Metis people can have the same opportunity I did to pursue their ambitions and aren’t restricted by any sort of financial hardship.

For more information visit www.indspire.ca

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Nominations for 2021 *Indspire Awards* are now open! Visit indspireawards.ca for more info.

Activist Christi Belcourt: Counteract chaos, stand up for what's right

By Brandi Morin

Renowned Metis/Cree artist Christi Belcourt, originally from Alberta now living in Anishinaabe territory in Northern Ontario, was the April feature artist of the month for *Alberta Native News*.

Her piece, “The Crow Taught her. She listened,” features a masked, green skinned woman, with long, black hair holding a crow on her hand against a psychedelic looking background of abstract colors and shapes. It’s visually striking, like all of her intricate work – but it’s disturbingly jarring too.

The woman wearing a red bandanna over her nose and mouth protecting herself from the elements and the threat of a pandemic speaks to the crisis the world is in.

“There’s a greater mystery that’s happening here that we don’t understand,” explained Belcourt during a Zoom interview with journalist Brandi Morin. “Which is spiritual...we’re not listening to the earth or animals. Remember the whole earth is one, living, breathing, life and spirit.”

Belcourt’s work has been featured in Italian

designer Valentino’s fashion line and Holt Renfrew – her famous Metis themed floral/nature patterns are showcased in the National Art Gallery of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, just to note a few.

She designed competition medals for the 2015 Pan American Games and the list of her accomplishments is extensive.

Belcourt is also an advocate for Indigenous rights. Perhaps most dear to her heart is creating awareness about issues facing the earth like climate change and injustice addressing it via an Indigenous perspective.

She said humanity’s negative impacts on the earth such as resource extraction partnered with selfishness and greed all play a part in igniting a pandemic or climate change.

“The overconsumption by humanity on earth, and greed – we’re always, as a species, very greedy and we are right now. There’s a few exceptions of people who are giving, kind people, yes. But that’s not the majority. Our whole economy is based on ‘I have a right to consume this material good’,” she explained.

And when those rights are challenged, as currently during the COVID19 pandemic with businesses being closed other than those offering essentials, chaos erupts.

“People protesting to open it all up-who cares if people die? That’s a really wack way of looking at the world,” she said.

Belcourt encourages people to counteract the chaos by standing up for “things that are right.”

She applied this mindset into her art at a young age when she began studying the earth and hanging out

with elders who taught her about the land.

“Once you sit on the ground and you hold a leaf in your hand, and you’re looking at this plant with a mind to study how it looks. All of a sudden you’re seeing other things, you start to hear the insects flying around. You see fine, white hairs on each stem. And spider webs. Insects on every plant. You realize how interconnected everything is and you as a human being are really small in the grand scheme of things.”

In 2014 Belcourt co-founded the Onaman Collective, a land based art initiative incorporating traditional knowledge, youth, elders and Anishnaabemowin and Cree languages. The camp community is located in rural Northern Ontario where Belcourt is isolated along with a small group of friends. She’s spending most of her time learning Anishnaabemowin and continuing her advocacy work through social media.

Belcourt’s advice about life is to take a leap towards what’s calling you from your heart. Based on a dream she had of standing by a large lake on the edge of a shore, “I don’t want to stand on the shore of my life looking at that lake and never going in – I want to take the leap. You should too.”

Brandi Morin is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter for *Alberta Native News*.



Our Lives are in the Land by Christi Belcourt (Reprinted with permission).



Artist Christi Belcourt (Photo supplied)

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Bringing business principles to social services

“You can’t go home again,” the saying goes—proving only that clichés can persist despite being untrue. The idea is that it is impossible to return to your past, but you can go back to your roots, of course—and quite happily, as Heather Buffalo will tell you.

Buffalo grew up in Samson Cree Nation, in Alberta, but left to pursue studies in Calgary and then Los Angeles before coming home to Maskwacis, where she has spent the last two decades working to bring change and innovation to community programs.

Buffalo, who has an MBA from Athabasca University, is senior manager for Nipisihkopahk Wellness and Social Development on the Samson reserve. The value of education was instilled by her father, a five-term Samson Cree chief, and founder of an education trust that brought the first on-reserve schools to the community in the 1980s.

As a teen Heather went to Athol Murray College of Notre Dame, a top-notch Catholic high school in Wilcox, Sask., with an emphasis on academics, athletics, and faith. Post-graduation, she started with modest ambitions. She took a few courses at Mount Royal University in Calgary, then returned to Samson to work a series of clerical jobs, in customer service, and payroll. In 1994, she returned to school, leaving home for Glendale Community College, in California.

“I needed something different in my life, and I had friends down there,” she says.

California was certainly different; on her first night in her own apartment the famous Northridge earthquake occurred. But she settled into her new life. At first, she says, “my aspirations weren’t high at all.” Then she met a student counselor, who reviewed her coursework and encouraged her to apply to California State University. “She was really good and really patient,” Buffalo says.

So Buffalo did, and was accepted. She earned her Bachelor of Science in business administration from Cal-State, then headed back to Canada after graduating in 1999. It was not a struggle to leave.

“I was going home,” she says. “I got a U-Haul, and family came down and helped me move.”

For a time she worked at Peace Hills Trust, the First Nations-owned bank, then moved on to a position as manager of human resource training and development for Samson Cree Nation. Her role involved helping low-income individuals participate in training

programs and opportunities to employment.

In 2007, hungry for another challenge, she enrolled at Athabasca. She continued to work, and a couple of years after she enrolled, she was promoted to her current position. She now oversees various departments in the area of social development focusing on service delivery to Samson Cree Nation members and residents.

Her MBA proved useful from day one, she says. Her coursework focused on areas such as leadership, change-management theory, and team building, which were entirely relevant to her new position.

“What benefited me the most was (studying) negotiation,” she says, explaining that she deals a lot with provincial and federal governments on funding arrangements.

Her MBA program also helped her in “changing the culture in the organization,” she says. In her work, Buffalo found herself confronting staffing issues.

“At one point I was overseeing 15 managers, and I thought that was ridi-culous,” she says. “Some of the work was redundant and some of it was duplication. They all knew changes needed to be made, and we were going to streamline.”

The challenge was getting people onside.

“I brought them all together and we did kind of a retreat. It took time, but we compromised and agreed to five managers,” she says.

The focus of the social services she oversees is, she says, “building capacity among community members to help each other.” There are funding constraints, of course.

“One of the biggest challenges is in not meeting the needs of every person,” she says.

But she aims to bring a solid grounding in business principles to the administration of



Athabasca U graduate Heather Buffalo.


programs and resources on the reserve.


“With the new tools, my team and I have worked to integrate programs and departments and break down silos. With limited resources,” she says, “we do our best.”

As we celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day, let us take time to reflect on the important contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Metis People to our society and reaffirm our commitment to walk the path to justice, equality and reconciliation together.

MLA Chris Nielsen
Edmonton-Decore


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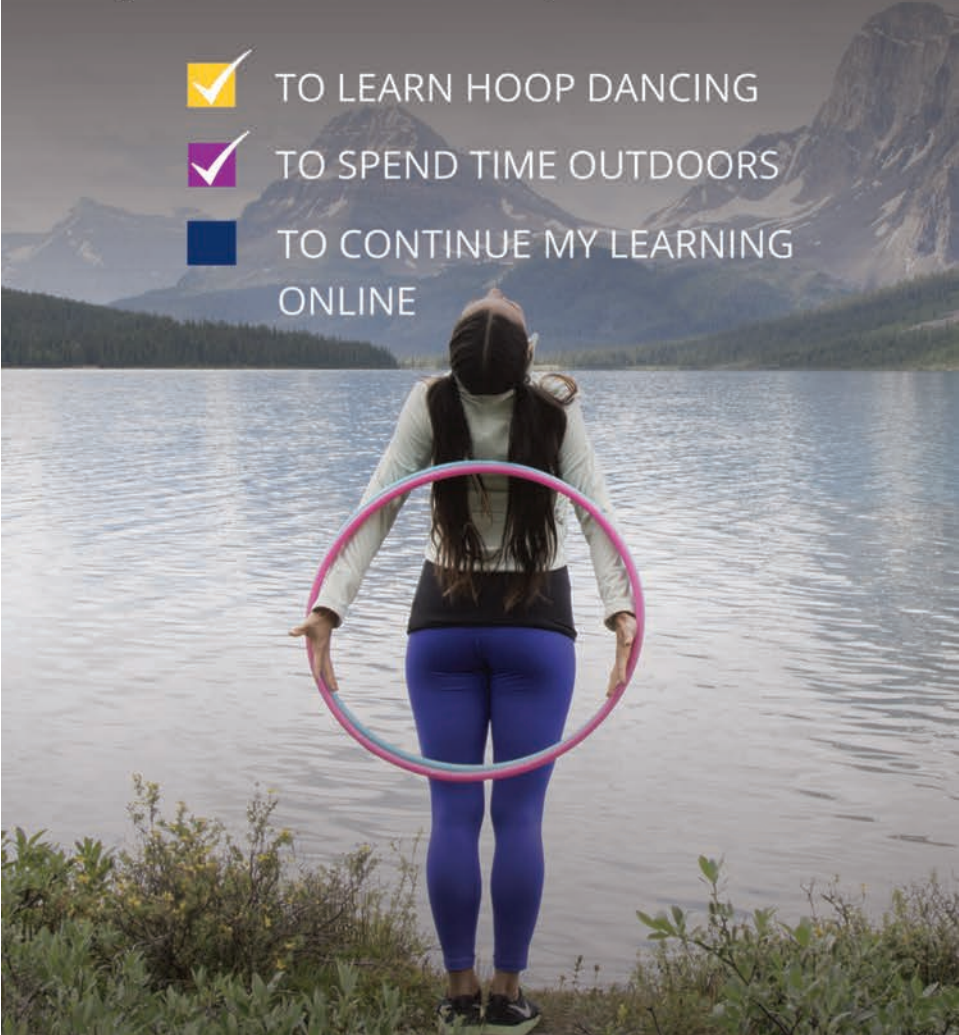
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InfoPoint provides help for FNMI health managers

By Laura Mushumanski

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of the First Nations Health Managers Association (FNHMA) there is a valuable new sharing resource now available for First Nation Health providers called InfoPoint. It is bringing comprehensive health information to the people who need it most, at a time when they need it most.

For the past 10 years, the FNHMA's mission has been to provide leadership in health management activities for First Nations health managers, and during this chaotic time, FNHMA continues to live up to their mission.

The association is a grassroots health leader network that has the seven sacred teachings woven into its description and its vision of expanding health capacity for First Nations.

To further enhance support around COVID-19, the First Nations Health Managers Association has structured a support service dedicated to First Nations Health Managers. The service, InfoPoint, provides credible information and resources tailored to having a single point of contact. In other words, "First Nations Health Managers Association will do the work for you."

The *iskwew* (Cree woman) and CEO representing First Nations Health Managers Association, Marion Crowe, has the privilege of leading an organization that continuously works hard and is committed to building wellness throughout the Nation, enhancing community engagement and preparing wellness initiatives and supports for the next seven generations.

There is an endless amount of health resources on the internet. The First Nations Health Managers Association has consolidated relevant resources, and created InfoPoint, that specifically serves First Nations health managers. InfoPoint is accessible online, by phone, and by email.

Ms. Crowe stated in an interview, "We thought, we can do more than just host resources, we can actually search out the information, so that First Nations health

managers don't have to. We can tailor it; we can put together a package directly related to what they are looking for."

With the realization and knowledge that the front-line workers are seeking resources and information about COVID-19, the idea for InfoPoint was put into action. After 15 days of pouring blood, sweat and tears, InfoPoint was launched on May 11, 2020. And with the goal of having a personal connection with the First Nations health managers seeking support, InfoPoint has become an invaluable resource.

The First Nations Health Managers Association has partnered with Indigenous Services Canada, Indigenous Health Today, NationTalk, Red Cross, and various Indigenous health supporting organizations while staying within FNHMA mandate.

It also partnered with NationTalk to host weekly virtual town hall meetings every Thursday at 1 pm EDT. Each week the virtual town halls feature speakers from different organizations to provide information, resources and updates on how their organization is combatting COVID-19. The virtual town halls and resources for each region throughout Turtle Island are accessible to the general public to participate and inquire about COVID-19 concerns.

In addition to being a valuable resource, InfoPoint has brought employment for First Nations summer students and shone a light on partnerships throughout Indigenous health organizations, as well as non-Indigenous people's commitment to The Truth and



FNHMA has launched a new resource sharing initiative called InfoPoint. CEO Marion Crowe is in the centre - taken before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reconciliation Calls to Action.

"The magnified light on the commitment to equal, equitable, and accessible services for First Nations populations, demonstrates the commitment to breaking barriers and walls," noted Ms. Crowe. "As well, we are seeing the community getting back to our roots by shining light on spiritual and mental wellness and getting back onto the land."

Marion's heartfelt words, "it is humbly a blessing to serve in this capacity," exemplify how passionate she is about finding her path within the health industry and by leading, supporting and enhancing relationships with the FNHMA family and front-line workers.

The next step for the First Nations Health Managers Association's family is to continue to build up partnership with Indigenous Service Canada, support First Nations health managers and encourage health leaders to be kind to themselves.

InfoPoint is accessible by phone: 1-855-446-2719, and email: infopoint@fnhma.ca; Monday to Friday, from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., EDT, and with services available in both English and French.

Laura Mushumanski is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

In recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day
we celebrate the cultures, heritage
and incredible contributions of
First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people.

In addition, I would like to congratulate
the graduating class of 2020!

Jeremy Nixon, MLA
Calgary-Klein

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*Special congratulations
to the grads of 2020*

*We salute your achievements and
wish you the very best in the future.*

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Thousands protest systemic racism at Edmonton rally

By Jake Cardinal

On June 5, 2020 Edmonton, Alberta was the host of a Black Lives Matter protest in which upwards of 15,000 people were in attendance.

The protest was held behind the legislature grounds in Edmonton. It was one of countless rallies that took place worldwide as part of the largest human rights protest in history, resulting from a pressure cooker of police sadism and systemic racism, which exploded on May 25, 2020 when George Floyd was murdered by police in Minnesota for an alleged \$20 counterfeit bill.

Among the protestors were several Indigenous people who were standing in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter group and with the larger anti-racism and pro-equality theme of the rally. Some of the protestors discussed their experiences with police harassment and racial profiling in Alberta.

Olivia: “A few times I’ve gotten pulled over when I was walking on the street. A cop would pull me over and ask me questions. And I don’t know if it was because I was Native, but I do know that I wasn’t being suspicious. It happens.”

Mercedes: “Being a Native in Canada is tough. It comes with a lot of discrimination based on how we look, how we dress, how we present ourselves. I stand with the Black Lives Matter because they’re going through what we’re going through. Enough is enough.”

The main part of the Edmonton “equality” protest ended around 8pm, which saw a large chunk of the crowd disperse back to their homes. However, a few hundred protestors took to the streets and continued to protest until midnight approximately.

During this time, *Global News* reported that one arrest was made in regards to a smashed police windshield. The perpetrator was charged with mischief, but was released. In the same incident, a police officer was also struck in the face by an unknown woman. She was not charged, nor did any

injuries occur. The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) responded to the protest by taking a knee while a police helicopter circled the protestors and the downtown area until 5am. The EPS also allegedly had vans equipped with multiple police officers a few blocks down from the protest grounds in case it turned violent.

Nathan: “I get pulled over all the time just because I’m Brown. They’re always checking if I’m smoking dope or if I’m drunk. They follow us all the time, even when I’m going to buy make-up for my wife they think I’m going to steal something. I think that’s racism.”

Despite the EPS taking a knee and other News Media reports, there are citizen reports making the rounds on social media which argue for different events. For example, in a Twitter thread made by @ashyslashyxo, they claimed that the EPS allegedly pulled out AR-15s and tear gas canisters during the peaceful protest.

The anti-racism protests against brutal and sadistic abuses of power came a day after the murder of Chantel Moore, an Indigenous woman living in New Brunswick; a month after the man who murdered Jake Sansom and Maurice Cardinal pleaded “not guilty” of second degree murder; three months after the senseless beating of Athabaskan Chipewyan First Nation Chief, Allan Adam; more than six months after the release of the *Globe and Mail* report, in which they revealed that more than one third of people shot to death over a decade by RCMP officers were Indigenous.

Eagle Whistle Woman: “There’ve been plenty of

times when I’ve seen and experienced racial profiling. I’ve been followed, shopper racism, it’s just common. If you come from the reservation to the city, just to spend a day, I guarantee you will most likely experience one form of racism or another. It’s just an everyday thing here.”

Albert: “I was walking across the street, jay-walking, on Whyte Ave and I was tackled by a police officer. I wasn’t the only one walking, I was also walking with many others [of multiple ethnicities], but they singled me out because of my braid. This was about two years ago.”

For these reasons the hashtag, DefundthePolice, has blown up in the past few days. An online petition calling to defund the EPS has gained over 10,000 signatures.

Some believe that it is radical to call for the defunding/disarmament of police, while others argue that it is radical to defund education and other public sectors to militarize police.

Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson, stated in a *Global News* article, “on several occasions in budgets over

Continued on page 19



Thousands of Edmontonians took to the streets on June 5, 2020 to protest racism at home and around the world in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. Pictured above: Caleb, Olivia and Mercedes speak out against police harassment.

June is a time for Canadians to share and learn from Indigenous stories, traditions and culture in new ways that keep us together and connected.

The Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary recognizes the importance and sacred nature of cultural ceremonies and celebrations year round. During the past few months, with COVID-19, we recognize that it has been very difficult for our Elders and most vulnerable community members.

We wish to extend our gratitude to all the essential workers, community outreach teams, and funders who collectively have mobilized to selflessly support the most vulnerable.



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ECS teaches traditional knowledge to Indigenous youth

By Jake Cardinal

June, also known as National Indigenous History Month, is upon us and despite everything happening around the globe it is important to acknowledge those who are role models in their communities, and also to the Indigenous population as a whole.

One of the positive things happening in Edmonton is the Edmonton Catholic School's (ECS) Indigenous Leadership Program, which has been teaching their students both the traditional way of life, and the necessary skills to succeed in our modern world.

The leadership program is administrated by the Council of Elders, which consists of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit members. The Council of Elders are the knowledge and wisdom keepers of the ECS system. They provide language, cultural wisdom, and spiritual guidance to students and District staff based on the *Pimatisiwin*, teachings. *Pimatisiwin* means "Way of Life," and is a value that includes growth/change, pride, healing, self-esteem, unity, identity, tradition and culture.

This year, there are 9 graduates of the leadership program who have been participating – along with a few past graduates who are in their second year at the University of Alberta. Due to the pandemic, they have been meeting regularly online on Google Meet and they continue to take the initiative despite the public gathering restrictions.

To those graduating, here are some inspirational words for you all from the facilitator of the program Elder Betty Letendre:

"Congratulations to all our leadership graduates! As you begin the next journey of your education, knowing who you are, where you come from, the strength you have inherited from your Indigenous heritage, is instilled in you. Never forget, as thousands, we are standing with you, and so proud of your accomplishments. We will always be here to support you. Kisakihtinawah. Ekosi Pitama."

I spoke with Elder Betty who reflected back on her

time at ESC. She started as an Elder there in 2004. She has since retired but is very much involved with the 2020 leadership program.

Elder Betty introduced herself, "I am a Cree speaking woman, I know my language, and I know who I am as an Indigenous woman."

When asked about the origins of the leadership program, she stated: "This has been my journey not only with the program, but with the Ben Calf School. It started way back in the early 80s, when my children went there—when it first became an Indigenous school."

"That was my connection when I was hired to come on and work with Indigenous Learning Services. I was in the office to enhance the language, and the cultural and historical knowledge." Elder Betty continued, "Around 2005, Ben Calf was not doing very well. There was low attendance and I came along and met with the administrators to see what was going on. To see what it was we needed to do to bring our students back into the school. And that's where my journey began."

"There are five schools here in Edmonton which are highly populated with First Nations students. We call them 'Native way of life schools,' and the district identifies them as such," Elder Betty explained.

"The grade 9s at the time [2005] had a high rate of drop-out. They would graduate junior high, attend high school for a few months, then drop out. Not all the students, but a majority of them." Elder Betty said, "What was lacking?"

"When you come to Edmonton from a different community—whether it be a from a reserve, a settlement, what have you—sometimes we lose our way in this concrete city of ours. We don't have a connection back to the land, culture, or spirituality. This connection is now abundant at Ben Calf."

In the beginning of the program, they only had about 12 students who were part of the group.



Elder Betty Letendre

"I wanted to work with them because I was seeing so much in what was lacking in their self-identification, in being proud of who they were. We wanted to also stress the importance of western education," Elder Betty noted. "That first year we went to a culture camp, which was an overnight excursion, and now we have one annually."

The Leadership program has since grown into an award-winning program that travels across Canada to places like Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Ottawa and are attendants at the Indspire conference.

"When I went to Ben Calf School in 2005, there were less than 150 students. Today there are over 400. So, you can see the need for cultural education within the school system," Elder Betty stated. "From the time we started to now, we have had 60 kids who have graduated. We've gone to so many places, we've won awards, we have students at the University of Alberta, we've been sponsored to go to Indspire. And some of these youth have never been given the chance to go anywhere."

She continued, "I don't take these things lightly because this is for our youth. We have to invest in so much; we have to invest in our community, our leaders, and our children's education. What else can we do except give them every opportunity and every

Continued on page 16

National Indigenous Peoples Day 2020

Special congratulations to all 2020 Graduates!
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Canadian Native Flag (Standing together in support of each other)
by Mulidzas-Curtis Wilson (1980-2019)



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Wishing everyone a Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day

David Hanson, MLA

Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul



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**We would also like to
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congratulations
to all graduates of 2020.**

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Five things you should do this month

By Jake Cardinal

June is probably the best month there is. My birthday is in June, my mom’s birthday is in June, the days are nice, Saddle Lake Powwow happens in June, and the whole month is dedicated to Indigenous Peoples’ History.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, some of those things aren’t happening this year. But do not fear, Indigenous History Month goes on and we here at *Alberta Native News* have compiled some things that should bring a smile to your face.

In no particular order, here are five things happening with Indigenous Artists this month:

The Art Gallery of Alberta

The Art Gallery of Alberta is hosting an exhibit called: *“Halie Finney: The Ghosts of the Mink Make a Big Spirit.”*

From the Lesser Slave Lake Region, but currently residing in Edmonton, Halie is an emerging Métis Artist. She graduated from MacEwan in 2014 with a diploma in Fine Arts and also received her degree from Alberta University of Art and Design in 2017 where she majored in drawing.

To give you a taste of what the Exhibition entails, here is an excerpt of its description:

Smoke can be a threat, a sign of danger of impending doom, or a happy signal that you can follow as it rises up on a summer evening to find friends and family gathered together.

You can see *“Halie Finney: The Ghosts of the Mink Make a Big Spirit”* from now until October 25, 2020.

To find out more about Halie Finney and her wondrous work, visit youraga.ca.

Calgary Public Library’s Storyteller in Residence

On June 11, 2020 Calgary Public Library (CPL) welcomed its first ever Storyteller in Residence: Richard Van Camp.

You may recognize the name Richard Van Camp as he is an award-winning author who has published five short story collections, six graphic novels, nine children’s books, and two novels, including the coming-of-age classic, *The Lesser Blessed*, which was adapted into a critically acclaimed film.

This month, storytellers and prospective storytellers are invited to attend a virtual workshop program with Van Camp. On June 17, at 6:30 pm he will be offering an introduction to storytelling where he’ll discuss the craft and basic elements of a good narrative and how to turn a tiny tale into a compelling whopper.

On June 23, at 7 pm, he’ll discuss the two C’s of a good story – character and conflict.

You can also book a 1-on-1 consultation with Van Camp. He is available to consult with storytellers of all ages to discuss story craft, delivery technique, or whatever aspect of storytelling you would like to explore.

For more information visit calgarylibrary.ca.

IKEA Canada’s First Indigenous Mural

On June 11, 2020 award-winning designer, artist, performer, and photographer Lance Cardinal announced the creation of a new 40’ mural celebrating the Indigenous peoples of the local Treaty 6 territory.

The mural is being commissioned by IKEA Edmonton as part of their new renovation and will be the first of its kind in all of Canada.

Cardinal stated, “This is such an honour and one that I do not take lightly... We will be working together as a team to create an educational and interactive representation of the Indigenous spirit.”

“This is such an exciting and well needed moment of collaboration, reconciliation and inspiration,” Lance said.

Canada House Gallery Indigenous Exhibit

For Indigenous History Month, the Canada House Gallery, located in Banff National Park, is featuring an exhibit entitled “Indigenous History Day.”

The House Gallery was established in 1974 to support Canadian artists and has since become a national leader in sharing the creations of Canada’s Indigenous artists with an international audience.

Join them in honouring Indigenous heritage and culture through this exquisite exhibition of curated artworks by some of Canada’s most prominent Indigenous artists.

J Akulukjuk, Nellie Appakqaq, Kenojuak Ashevak, Pitseolak Ashoona, Kingmeata Etidlooie, Bill Henderson, and Stanley Clifford Hunt are just a few of the artists featured in this exhibition.



A powwow dancer from last year's Ben Calf Robe Powwow. Photo by Terry Lusty

To view the artwork, visit canadahouse.com.

2020 Summer Solstice Concert

Last on the list, but certainly not least, comes the 2020 Summer Solstice Music Festival.

The festival itself is free and will be broadcast June 21 on APTN from 6pm to 8pm ET/CT/MT along with some select radio stations. So, create some space this Indigenous Peoples’ Day and join the Summer Solstice Festival in celebrating our musical artists.

“Even while apart, we can still come together and celebrate our Peoples through performances from Indigenous artists across the country,” states the festival website.

Some of the featured performers include: Carolina East, Cris Derkson, G.R. Gritt, Julian Taylor, and many more.

For more information on the festival, you can visit aptn.ca/summersolstice.

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No-blame No-shame approach to diabetes support

By Laura Mushumanski

The literal translation in Plains Cree for diabetes is *sugar sickness (sôkâwâspinewin)*, and when eating too much of the ‘good stuff’ starts wreaking havoc on a person’s body, the Indigenous Wellness Clinic (IWC) in Edmonton, Alberta offers diabetes support for our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

The Indigenous Wellness Clinic is located east of the Royal Alexandra Hospital on the second floor in Anderson Hall. IWC is affiliated with Alberta Health Services, and with a provincial health care number, IWC won’t be sending you a bill in the mail. Indigenous patients have the opportunity to participate in IWC’s culturally supported diabetes education program: the Indigenous Wellness Program. The program blends the knowledge of both western medicine and traditional Indigenous teachings, by taking a holistic healing approach to Indigenous health and wellness.

Around 20 years ago, when everyone was purchasing generators for Y2K, a group of Elders came together to initiate a culturally appropriate education program for diabetes. The Indigenous Wellness Program welcomes those seeking support without making anyone feel like they should be wearing a dunce hat. Since the start of the new millennium, IWC has been expanding on their services. To date, the IWC family includes five family physicians, two part-time specialists (diabetes and obstetrics/gynecology), a physiotherapist, dietician, nurses, and cultural helpers (social work and mental health). The health and well-being of Indigenous people are important to IWC and can offer support to Indigenous people living in Edmonton, Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

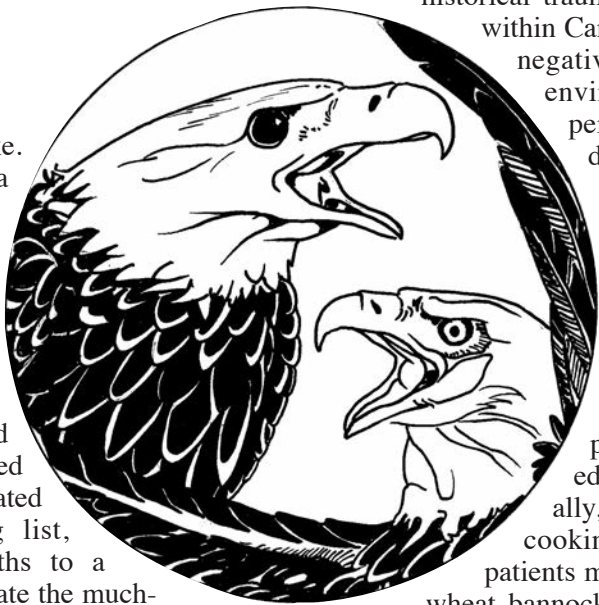
The dietician at IWC, Jane Jensen, is largely involved in the monthly four-day diabetes retreat, the Indigenous Wellness Program. In order for anyone to talk about their sweet tooth in a group setting, there is

an initial patient intake. Clients first engage in a one-on-one meet and greet with the diabetes specialist, nurse and then dietician. Following the client’s confession about their midnight walkabout to fetch a pint of Ben and Jerry’s, they are registered on a longer than anticipated wait list. The waiting list, ranging from six-months to a year, seems to demonstrate the much-needed cultural support for Indigenous health and wellness.

The approach that Jane takes to understanding an Indigenous person living with the diabetes is listening and treating the entire person as a whole, as opposed to only acknowledging the illness. Jensen acts as a sounding board by taking her time to listen to anyone who walks through the Indigenous Wellness Clinic’s doors. She listens with compassion, by understanding where a person is in their life, their personal experiences, what may be inhibiting them from accessing basic needs, what is affecting their personhood, and what kind of support they are looking for.

When the participants are being asked, “how are you coping with diabetes?” one of the most important messages that Jane emphasizes is that “diabetes is only a small part of who you are.”

Jensen’s shared observation on Indigenous people’s dietary practices, states that “most Indigenous people love their meat . . . vegetables - not so much. If vegetables are less consumed, it is not the end of the world, there are different approaches to healthy eating and lifestyles.” One of the different approaches she acknowledges and enables is using the medicine wheel to support realistic goals, and healthy dietary options for each patient by taking their physical, emotional, spiritual and mental health into account.



Jane’s forefront. She states that, “there is a good reason for Indigenous people to feel upset about their relationship to food and health,” when thinking about historical trauma among Indigenous populations within Canada, unreliable food sources from negative impacts on the natural environment, and an Indigenous person’s relationship with food during their childhood.

The interactive learning environment that is provided during a patient’s all inclusive, four-day stay at Anderson Hall, also encourages patients to bring a family member for moral support. Meals and housing accommodations are provided during the four-day education program. And traditionally, there is an interactive hands-on cooking session with Jane, where patients make bullet soup and fibrous whole wheat bannock that will sort out any plumbing issues.

The IWC staff involved in the intensive diabetes education program provide a sense of support and not feeling alone. The program includes interactive sessions about healthy eating, food and blood sugar levels, food label reading, as well as nutrition and nursing presentations: what is diabetes, diabetes medications and diabetes complications. There also is a cultural aspect on diabetes and health, and a physical activity component that includes specific exercise and stretching techniques.

At the Indigenous Wellness Clinic, Jensen’s own experience with the staff has been a humbling one for her, stating that, “it is an honour to be part of a group that is willing to let me learn alongside them.” The staff are known to be respectful, practice inclusion, form kinships with their patients and treat everyone as invaluable. Jensen also incorporates the same ideologies by not undermining the reality of an Indigenous person’s hardships and how that has directly impacted their overall health and wellness.

Anyone seeking diabetes information, support, or nutrition inquiries can contact Jane Jensen via email: jane.jensen2@ahs.ca, or by phone: 780-735-4512.

The Indigenous Wellness Clinic offers various services relating to health-related issues and concerns. Staff includes: family doctors, diabetes specialist, registered nurses, mental health workers, a physiotherapist, and cultural support workers. Additional information about IWC can be found online on Alberta Health Services website.

IWC staff is available during COVID-19, by phone: 780-735-4512, (toll free: 1-844-441-4512), or e-mail: indigenoushealthprogram@ahs.ca.

The no blame, no shame mentality is on Laura Mushumanski is a Local Initiative Reporter for Alberta Native News.



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Casino closures hurt all Alberta First Nations

By Jake Cardinal

On March 17, 2020 the Alberta Government forced the closure of all casinos, entertainment races and bingo halls due to concerns over the COVID-19 virus.

On June 15, nearly two months later, the casinos are now in the early stages of re-opening.

There is no denying that the closures were justified due to unforeseeable health issues but the impact of this decision on First Nations is far reaching. The Alberta Government receives \$1.4 Billion annually from these casinos and other lotteries so the shortfall will surely be felt by Alberta's already struggling economy (in April 2020, Alberta's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 13.4%, up from 6.7% in April 2019). However, the impact will be devastating to all First Nations across the province.

I sat down with a Development Fund Director who represents one of Alberta's First Nations (who wished to remain anonymous) to help explain why.

The position of Development Fund Director involves allocating First Nation Development Fund (FNDF) money to different projects and programs throughout the Nation.

"First Nations entered into an agreement with Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission," said the Fund director, which allowed First Nations to build casinos on reservation land.

There are currently 5 Indigenous owned-and-operated casinos in Alberta:

- Stoney Nakoda Resort & Casino (Stoney Nakoda First Nation, Morley)
- Eagle River Casino & Travel Plaza (Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Whitecourt)
- Grey Eagle Resort & Casino (Tsuut'ina First Nation, Calgary)
- Casino Dene (Cold Lake First Nation, Cold Lake)
- River Cree Resort & Casino (Enoch Cree Nation, Enoch)

"Part of the requirements of the deal was that these reserves had to share the slot-machine revenue with the other nations of Alberta and the Alberta Lottery Fund (ALF)," continued the Fund Director.

The amount shared with the other Nations in Alberta is the First Nation Development Fund (FNDF).

The funding model goes as follows:

For each dollar earned in slots the host nation receives 30%, the FNDF receives 40%, and the ALF receives the remaining 30%.

"The FNDF is an application driven grant program which allocates the 40% of revenues to projects in First Nations communities to address chronic underfunding in areas of economic, social and community development. The remaining 30% remains in the ALF and is spread across eleven ministries for a variety of programs benefiting everyday Albertans and supporting various community initiatives," said the Yellowhead Institute in a report done on May 22, 2019.

"Given the poor state of infrastructure and economies in First Nations communities, Alberta should reconsider its 30% take from the First Nations casinos and redirect it back into the First Nations Development Fund. This conclusion was based upon

the reality that First Nations comprise 3% of Alberta's population, contributed +25% to the ALF, but accessed just 0.12 percent of available charitable monies during the period 2006-11," continued the report.

But that is a different article, I just wanted to give you some foundational knowledge of how the funding works (if you would like to know more, here is the Yellowhead Institute's report). This article is focused on a band not associated with any casino host nations and relies on the FNDF for financial support.

"It's not a very large amount they share with the Nations, but it's better than nothing. It does help out a lot of our nations," the Fund Director said of the FNDF fund, but with "the casinos closed, the result is: our program has been deemed non-essential because we're not receiving any type of revenue."

The amount of FNDF funds allocated to the band is "generally between \$300,000 to \$350,000. But in this fourth quarter and because of the casino closure, our allocation was only \$236,000. Now, at some point, if the casinos don't open, our staff, which consists of myself and a data technician, will have to be laid off," stated the Fund Director.

The loss of money is even greater when you learn that the band had loaned the FNDF development fund program \$300,000 for projects such as the pow-wow, the relay races, and the rodeo. "These are all held before our payment. So, the band loaned us \$300,000 to cover those expenses and when the (FNDF) revenue comes in on July 15, it goes back into the band. It's a rotating fund." The Fund Director explained, "the band is currently living on that \$300,000 loan."

The FNDF fund supports not only entertainment projects like pow-wows, rodeos, and races, but it also contributes to band needs such as powering and funding the Youth Centre and the Cultural hall, as well as, bereavement costs for the nation, meaning: band-member funerals will have to be paid for some other way.

When asked if this situation is happening in all First Nations in Alberta, the Fund Director said: "I'm confident to say yes. Usually each Nation set up a division underneath the administrative arm and hired someone to facilitate the implementation of this money - to make sure the funds continue to flow. Because if you don't comply with the regulations of the agreement that was entered into, then they don't pay you until you comply."

"But if there's no




money coming in, how do you justify paying people? You can't." The Fund Director continued, "It's put the band in a precarious financial position because now that (FNDF) money - which generally totals about \$1.2 to 1.5 million a year - is no longer there and will not be there until the casinos open. Even then, I don't know what's going to happen because there won't be as many people in the casinos, so there won't be that much revenue. So, it might just do away with my program."

As demonstrated above, the impact of the casino closures goes beyond casino patrons. It goes beyond the First Nations that operate casinos and beyond the Alberta government shortfall of revenues. The decision has systemic repercussions that affect all of the First Nations across the province.

There are 48 First Nation bands in Alberta, meaning there are approximately 48 communities on the brink of losing a huge portion of funding. The question remains: Where will the money come from to pay for these programs?

Jake Cardinal is a Local Initiative Reporter for Alberta Native News



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Suncor Base Mine Extension Project Participant Funding Available

June 1, 2020 — The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) is making funding available through its Participant Funding Program to assist the participation of the public and Indigenous peoples in the federal impact assessment for the proposed Suncor Base Mine Extension Project, located approximately three kilometres north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

Funding is available for eligible individuals and groups to assist their participation in the upcoming steps of the impact assessment's planning phase, specifically for reviewing and providing comments on the draft Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines and the draft Public Participation Plan. Once this phase is complete, the public and Indigenous peoples will have another opportunity to apply for funding to assist their participation in the other phases of the impact assessment process.

Applications received **by June 22, 2020**, will be considered.

The Agency recognizes that it is more challenging to undertake meaningful public engagement and Indigenous consultation in light of the circumstances arising from COVID-19. The Agency continues to assess the situation with key stakeholders, make adjustments to consultation activities, and is providing flexibility as needed in order to prioritize the health and safety of all Canadians, while maintaining its duty to conduct meaningful engagement with interested groups.


The Agency will determine if a federal impact assessment is required for the project and if one is required, recipients and the amount of funding allocated will be announced at a later date. If the Agency determines a federal impact assessment is not required, no funds will be allocated and there will be no further opportunity to apply for funding for this project.

To apply for funding, complete the Application Form for the Planning Phase available on the Agency's website at canada.ca/iaac under Funding Programs. For more information, contact the Participant Funding Program by writing to iaac.FP-PAF.aeic@canada.ca, or by calling 1-866-582-1884.

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The Proposed Project
Suncor Energy Inc. is proposing to develop the Base Mine Extension Project to sustain the supply of bitumen to the existing upgraders at Suncor's Oil Sands Base Plant operation. The project includes an open pit mining operation and associated infrastructure that is required to supply oil sands to new bitumen froth production facilities and deliver bitumen froth by pipeline to the existing Base Plant facilities where further processing occurs, including upgrading into various product blends for market. The project is located adjacent to existing Base Plant operations north of Fort McMurray, Alberta, within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. The project's footprint is anticipated to be approximately 20 000 hectares.


More information on this project is available on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry website, Registry reference number 80521.



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Learning Together - Success for All

‘Finding the Secret Path’ wins a 2020 Canadian Screen Award

By Laura Mushumanski

Finding the Secret Path, directed by Mike Downie, was the recipient of a Canadian Screen Award for the 2020 Best Biography or Arts Documentary Program or Series.

Finding the Secret Path documents the last year of the Tragically Hip’s frontman Gord Downie’s life along with his efforts to bring awareness of the story of Chanie Wenjack and the tragic, dark and heavyhearted history of Canada’s Indian Residential Schools.

The documentary premiered October 18, 2018, on the one-year anniversary of the passing of Gord Downie and the 52nd year since the passing of Chanie Wenjack. *Finding the Secret Path* shares reflections from the Wenjack family, Indigenous leaders throughout Turtle Island, and Downie’s team that worked with Downie on the *Secret Path*.

When Downie discovered *The Lonely Death of Chanie Wenjack* news story, which was originally published in Maclean’s magazine in 1967, four-months after Wenjack’s passing, Downie made it his mission to make sure Chanie’s story was heard.

Misnamed Charlie by his teachers, Chanie Wenjack was only 12 years old on October 23, 1966, when he died alone and starving as he tried to travel 400 miles by foot to his hometown. Before his passing, Wenjack managed to escape the *Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School* that he was attending and sought

out to find his father who was residing in the Ogoki Post village on *Martin Falls First Nation*.

Downie was moved by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Chief Commissioner *Murray Sinclair’s* description of the ‘Canadian problem’ on May 24, 2015, “This is not an Aboriginal problem. This is a Canadian problem. Because at the same time that Aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools and their culture and language were being taken away from them and they were being told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected — that very same message was being given to the non-Aboriginal children in the public schools as well...They need to know that history includes them.”

The documentary originated from Downie’s effort to tell the story of Chanie Wenjack through a series of 10 poems he called the *Secret Path*. *Secret Path* later became 10 songs and then turned into an animated book followed by an animated film, illustrating Wenjack’s lonely journey home to find his father.



Image from ‘The Secret Path’ by Gord Downie and Jeff Lamire.

Since its release, the animated book and film *Secret Path* has been used as a learning tool in elementary and middle schools across Canada to teach children about the history of Indian Residential Schools through the acts reconciliation, awareness and education.

Proceeds from the *Secret Path’s* sales are directed to the *Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund for Truth and Reconciliation* via The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba. *The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation* funds are dedicated to finding the missing children that escaped Canada’s Indian Residential Schools, preserving the history of residential schools, making Canada’s history known and moving Canada forward on the path of reconciliation.

Laura Mushumanski is a Local Initiative Reporter on Indigenous Issues for Alberta Native News.

ECS teaches *cont. from p 12*

skill? We’ve seen every kind of child come through our doors and we never turned any one away. We are a family. There are youth who have been in foster homes, separated from their families, their parents have passed away, or their grandparents are the parents.

“And each year we take the grade nines to the camp. It creates bonding and a peer support system, and we take them to enhance their Indigenous traditional teachings. We take them to the land and some of them start crying—they don’t want to go back to the city.”

“But this story is so long, and there’s no way I can do the reality justice in a short answer. There’s a whole lot more than what I’m telling you,”

Elder Betty explained. “It’s about identifying who they are, researching their genealogy, what nation they come from, and what land are we on.”

“It’s about nurturing that spirit within,” she concluded, so they have the confidence and strength to move forward in the best possible way.

Jake Cardinal is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter.



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Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day & Congratulations to the Class of 2020!

I’m grateful for the many contributions the First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples have made.

Nathan Neudorf
MLA – Lethbridge East
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We honor and celebrate National Indigenous Peoples’ Day with all communities throughout Canada.

2020 marks the 10th anniversary of Alberta Women Entrepreneurs “NextStep to Success: Business Planning Series” for Alberta’s Indigenous women entrepreneurs, who are starting new or growing businesses.

We look forward to being a part of supporting, celebrating and recognizing Indigenous peoples contributions to Canada’s economy.

Women Building Futures: Removing barriers to support success

By Laura Mushumanski

In 1998, a group of social workers came together with a shared dream to support women and children to live a life outside of poverty. To date, this shared dream has created opportunities for over 2,300 graduates, their families and communities from the programs offered by Women Building Futures (WBF).

The Edmonton based, non-profit organization empowers women to become economically prosperous through industry recognized training in maintenance and construction related trades, and the driving and operating industries. The organization started by offering a 3-week carpentry class for women to enter the construction industry and now offers an introductory construction trades program along with a variety of driving and operating programs.

Over the last two decades, WBF has worked with women across the province to remove barriers and support their economic success. Their wrap around supports remove common barriers many women are faced with some of which include access to affordable housing, access to affordable childcare, academic supports and more.

communities to increase awareness of opportunity for Indigenous women.

“We empower women to believe in themselves and I want Indigenous women to know that Women Building Futures will make you stronger and understand the value you hold in this industry. Becoming a graduate of our programs will open so many opportunities for you and future generation,” shares Arlene. “The advice I would give is to never give up on what you want, believe that you deserve this and remember that it’s important to invest the time it takes to train & learn a new skill.”

WBF focuses on transforming women’s lives by increasing the awareness of opportunity for women, preparing women to successfully enter programs, train for employment, and supporting long term career growth. Their programs are industry recognized, highly reputable, and endorsed by the Alberta Motor Transport Association.

Journeywoman Start (JWS) is WBF’s introductory trades program and provides 12-17 weeks of hands-on introductory training in a variety of construction trades: carpentry, electrical, pipefitting, plumbing,

by the Government of Alberta. Additional funding is also available to support students with living expenses while they’re in the program. WBF’s Admissions Team will help applicants through the funding application process to determine an applicant’s eligibility.

Professional Class 1 Driver is an 8-week program that prepares women with essential safety awareness and certification and provides exposure to the technical skills and hands-on training needed to support and prepare them to successfully obtain their Class 1 license under the new mandatory entry-level training. Tuition for this program is covered by WBF’s program partners: Caron Transportation Systems, Rosenau Transport, Trimac, Watt & Stewart and Westcan.

Driver & Operator Training is a 6-week program that prepares women to successfully obtain their Class 3 license and operate equipment such as snowplows, wireline trucks, and hydrovacs. Tuition for this program is covered by WBF’s program partners: Badger Daylighting, The Calgary Airport Authority at YYC, Carmack’s, Chemco and Clean Harbors.

WBF also offers a variety of employer titled programs in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Many of these programs are in partnership with Suncor and Syncrude.

After completion of a program, alumni are offered support from WBF’s Alumni Advisor Team to find employment and apprenticeship guidance. Over the years, WBF has built a strong relationship with many industry partners who are excited to support WBF graduates with a commitment to inclusive and safe work environments and career growth.

Women who are interested in pursuing a career in the construction trades or driving and operating industries are encouraged to attend an online information session or connect directly with a WBF Success Coach to explore more.

For more information about available training programs or to learn more about the success graduates have seen since completing their training, visit womenbuildingfutures.ca today.

Laura Mushumanski is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter at Alberta Native News.



“Pursuing a career in the trades is the best thing I’ve ever done for myself and my daughter, it has given us the privilege to do some pretty amazing things that I wouldn’t have ever dreamed of before.”
– Erin, WBF Graduate

Through community building and connection, WBF’s Indigenous Community Relations team offers support to Indigenous women to explore careers in areas where historically, women have been under-represented. Arlene Twin, WBF’s Indigenous Community Relations Lead, primarily focuses on direct community outreach with Indigenous

sheet metal and welding. JWS is designed to prepare women to begin their careers in entry level positions within the construction and maintenance industries.

During the program, students receive essential safety awareness training and certifications to prepare them for immediate entry into the industry. Tuition for the JWS program is covered, for qualified applicants,

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“Women carry responsibility for the land and the water and women are fantastic in the trades.”

Sandra Sutter, WBF Community Partner

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Łutsël K’é Dene First Nation awarded UN Prize for protecting National Park

By Laura Mushumanski

At the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Congress on Thursday, June 4th, 2020, the UNDP awarded Łutsël K’é Dene First Nation of N.W.T., with the 2020 Equator Prize.

Łutsël K’é Dene First Nations has been named one of 10 winners out of 583 nominees from 120 countries worldwide to be awarded for community and Indigenous initiatives advancing in nature-based solutions for local sustainable development.

For 15 years, the Equator Prize has been organized by the Equator Initiative within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to recognize innovative initiatives from local communities and Indigenous peoples for their efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In August of 2019, after 40 years of protecting the land and water, the Łutsël K’é Dene First Nation, signed an agreement between Parks Canada, the Deninu K’ue First Nation, Yellowknife’s Dene First Nation and the Northwest Territories government for the creation of The Land of Ancestors, Thaidene Nënë -in the Dënesųłíné or Chipewyan language, National Park Reserve.

The Łutsël K’é Dene First Nation has been honoured for their successes in fostering ecological integrity, cultural continuity, and economic sustainability through permanent protection of

The Land of Ancestors ecological and cultural landscape.

The vision for Thaidene Nënë is to always be a place for hunting caribou and other land animals that provide Indigenous people sustenance, to fish in deep, clear, and clean waters and to practice and strengthen Łutsël K’é Dene culture that will create sustainable livelihoods and opportunities to share with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within Canada.

Located on the east arm of Great Slave Lake, The Land of Ancestors National Park Reserve is part of an Indigenous Protected Area, stretching 26,000 square kilometres between the Canadian boreal forest and the arctic tundra. Thaidene Nënë habitats some of the last herds of the barren-ground caribou, moose, muskox, grey wolf, black and grizzly bears, red and Arctic fox, lynx, wolverine, as well as numerous species of birds and fish.

The Thaidene Nënë Fund has been established to ensure long-term financial support to protect Thaidene Nënë’s land, water and animals. The Trust and Indigenous local leadership lay the groundwork to entrust funds directly underpin community



The Land of Ancestors National Park Reserve is located on the east arm of Great Slave Lake.

stewardship and economic diversification.

September 21-27, 2020, the 10 Equator Prize winners will be celebrated through a series of virtual events during Climate Week NYC, in parallel with the UN General Assembly and Nature Summit.

Laura Mushumanski is a Local Initiative Journalism Reporter for Alberta Native News.

Jerry Whitehead *cont. from p 2*

Jerry Whitehead grew up in a family with 10 children. And while growing up, Whitehead was always surrounded by his family. The island painted in the middle of the painting *nihtâmâwâyâwin*, represents peace and quiet, a safe place when being with family; Whitehead thinks of it as his own little


island of family. And within the island there is a story, one that reminds Whitehead of tranquility, part of healing and part of his gift that he shares with the world.

Whitehead’s passion for art has taken him on a journey throughout Canada and has touched many hearts. Some of his recent artwork throughout *amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton)* can be found on campus at the *University of Alberta* and the *Indigenous Art Park*. Whitehead also has a *website* showcasing his various styles of painting, starting with his art journey using oil-based paints and then eventually switching

over to acrylic paints.

Whitehead has a Bachelor of Arts degree (in Indian Art) from the *First Nations University of Canada* and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the *Nova Scotia College of Art and Design* in Halifax. He encourages people to find their creativity and use it as a form of healing. When spending time with little ones, like his granddaughter that paints with him, he emphasizes that “every child is an artist. They are [gifted] in certain ways. And if you keep encouraging kids, they will become artists,” and the next generation can carry on telling stories through various forms of art.



Laura Mushumanski is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter.



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- Elder cultural supports with Dakota Eaglewoman via telephone at **403-801-7482**

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To inquire about these supports and services please contact our Indigenous COVID-19 Task Force Coordinator:

LORI JOHNSTONE | 403-370-6422 | ICTF@AFCCALGARY.ORG

New, innovative Indigenous management consulting company announced

(Enoch, AB) - WinFire Business Services Ltd. is excited to announce its formal launch of operations. Located in the River Cree Crossing Business Park, ‘WinFire’ is a First Nation-owned, for-profit management consulting company that reinvests into a social enterprise model dedicated to the growth of Indigenous business.

“We’re collectively creating something that will be an ongoing, self-supporting, and a critical piece for First Nation people to become self-sustaining in business,” said Rocky Sinclair, CEO.

Proudly serving the Indigenous business community since 1997, Terry Coyes, a Métis from St. Albert, Alberta, leads WinFire Business Services Ltd. as the Principal Consultant. Terry is an evaluative & creative thinker, whose strong deportment, presentation and negotiation skills allow him to successfully respond to and effectively work with his clients to serve their business development needs.

“One of the reasons I joined WinFire is the social enterprise model that has been established,” said Coyes. “It is a company that reinvests into a social enterprise model dedicated to the growth of Indigenous business.”

Consulting services delivered by WinFire include

entrepreneurship education, feasibility assessment, business planning, start-up and aftercare assistance, bookkeeping, as well as strategic planning and project management assistance both existing businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs.

The company is committed to supporting the growth and sustainability of Indigenous business through the development of management and governance capacity, and has set the following goals:

- Increased numbers of entrepreneurs that obtain commercial financing/term loans to start or expand their businesses;
- Increases in the number of business that successfully make it through the start-up or expansion phases of their development;
- Increases in the number of businesses that have practical, effective and affordable bookkeeping services available to them;
- Decrease in the number of start-up and expansion projects that fail; and
- Increase the financial sustainability of Indigenous business operations.

Equipped with state-of-the-art electronic communications facilities, WinFire is able to work from a virtual platform to effectively serve the

management consulting requirements of our clients, regardless of location, self-isolation/community restriction measures being implemented through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whether navigating the assistance available to businesses to deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, or providing any other management consulting assistance, our primary objective is to give our clients the tools and resources needed to carry their business initiative to its next stage of development.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with you and believe that WinFire Business Services can be a positive force in helping you realize your business development objectives.



Thousands protest *cont. from p 11*

previous years, we have chosen to fund those community safety partnerships over increasing the policing budget because we believe there is a strong return to working with community that way.”

The Edmonton Police Service is expected to receive an additional \$75 million dollars over the next few years. This money is being added on top of their 300 million dollar budget.

Who said protecting environmental destruction was cheap?

In the same *Global News* article, president of the Edmonton Police Association, Sgt. Michael Elliot said, “I know the stress is high but I think at this moment to defund (the police) would be detrimental not only to policing in general but to continue with our relationship with the community.”

After engaging in some discourse analysis, it would be interesting to know what Sgt. Elliot meant when he said, “to continue our relationship with the community.”

It could be interpreted as a vague threat or a simple plea to keep a job during an economic depression

caused by COVID-19. Either way, there is no question that if the Edmonton Police Service (and Police across Alberta) were to be defunded: the rich, white politicians destroying the environment and stepping on not only Indigenous rights, but basic human rights as well, would have no one to enforce their laws.

Jake Cardinal is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter for Alberta Native News.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

I would like to recognize National Indigenous Peoples Day. On June 21, Canadians celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day to honour the history, heritage and diversity of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

We have a very rich history in Wood Buffalo. It is also an opportunity to recognize the strength of our present-day Indigenous communities. Wood Buffalo is located on Treaty 8, land of the Cree and Dene and traditional Métis territory. There is a lot to celebrate in our region, even if we can't physically come together to celebrate.

Thank you.

Mayor Don Scott

Maskwacis celebrates Pride

Earlier this month Maskwacis Alberta celebrated it's 3rd pride with a flag raising and rainbow crosswalk.

Chevi Rabbit LGBTQ advocate and chair of Maskwacis 2 spirit society says "we kept it small, not too extravagant due to Covid 19, but we wanted to send a message of love and inclusiveness to the community, to know that even in the time where Alberta legislature doesn't keep a pride flag up for less than 24 hours, that they are loved, supported, and welcomed in Maskwacis".

Maskwacis is believed to be the first indigenous community to celebrate and paint an lgtbq2s pride crosswalk.



AHS amped up their Nehiyawewin during COVID-19

By Laura Mushumanski

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is working hard to keep Albertans healthy, informed and educated about the Coronavirus pandemic. It has continued to provide clear descriptions of the hygienic requirements and social distance strategies needed to keep the numbers low. It's also provided detailed updates on the number of cases found throughout the province including in First Nations. AHS has commended First Nations for their efforts in keeping their communities safe.

A rigorous testing and information campaign has been key to the AHS strategy to keep Albertans healthy.

Recently AHS produced translated resources for COVID-19, in several languages including Plains Cree. Although they do not use words like *tapwe* and *stagutts*, the resources being used are aimed at lessening the language barriers between Indigenous and non-indigenous people during COVID-19.

Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention & Control have put together 8 COVID-19 resource links

written in *nehiyawewin* for our Indigenous community members that speak, read and write in their mother tongue. There is also a video Alberta Health Services has provided in Cree for information about COVID-19 and physical distancing.

The first poster explains COVID-19 restrictions for visitors coming into any Alberta Health Services facility, *kihokewin mekwâc oma âhkosiwin ka pim wik* (visiting during COVID-19); only essential visitors are allowed in and they have to pre-arrange their visitation prior to visiting a loved one on site. The poster includes a large red micihciy (hand), followed by an explanation of what to do if wanting to visit a loved one in a healthcare facility during COVID.

On the second link taken from AHS *nehiyawewin COVID-19*, it includes a six-page guideline translated in Cree with English in brackets, listing the restrictions for visiting patients in long-term care, acute care, end of life, with suspected COVID-19, and requirement for all visitors regardless of setting. Essentially, if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19, *ay-api-wîkîhk!* (stay home!)

NAKI! Translates to STOP!, and with COVID

precautions in mind, once again anyone traveling outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days, as well as anyone that has been close contact with a confirmed case of COVID, or has symptoms of COVID, please hibernate in your home for the next two weeks.

Alberta Health Services has also put together a poster for how to care for a COVID patient at home, *tanisîsi awîyak kanakateyimihî omâ ka âhkosiîhk COVID-19 wîkîhk*. Information includes *metonî kanakateyehamihî otâhkosiw, âkawâyâhk cîkâhtaw ka wecikapawestawat* (maintaining safe distancing from the ill individual), *kasichiche kahkiyipa asici kisepekinikan ekwa kisâkamicêwâpô* (washing hands frequently with soap and warm water), *ekwa namoya okiyokêw ka pihtikwet wîkowiin* (and visitors should not be coming to the house).

Kîspin ostototamowin, kisisowin, ahpô misamiyêhêw – peyakwanohk kâyâhk kikiîhk sewepitamaw 811; If you develop symptoms – cough, fever or difficulty breathing – stay home and call Health Link 811 for instructions and testing. Do not go to the ER or doctor's office. Call 911 for a healthcare emergency.


For more information about COVID-19 and Indigenous people and communities, please refer to AHS online Indigenous Peoples & Communities resources.

AHS formed 11 years ago and has continued to follow its mission to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.



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Mark Smith, MLA
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Laura Mushumanski is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter on Indigenous issues for Alberta Native News.

Wishing everyone a happy National Indigenous Peoples Day



from Edmonton Councillor
Scott McKeen, Ward 6

PH: 780-496-8140
Scott.McKeen@Edmonton.ca

 / Scott_McKeen
 / ScottMcKeenWard6

Best wishes for a Happy National Indigenous Peoples Day!

Congratulations to the class of 2020!



MLA Adriana LaGrange
Red Deer-North

Constituency Office
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Red Deer, AB
Canada T4N 4C4

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Celebrating the amazing cultures and outstanding contributions of the First Nation, Metis and Inuit peoples of Canada.




STEPHANIE KUSIE MP
CALGARY MIDNAPORE

204-279 Midpark Way SE
Calgary, AB T2X 1M2
403-225-3480
stephanie.kusie@parl.gc.ca

Warmest greetings for a happy National Indigenous Peoples Day

Congratulations to the Class of 2020!



Whitney Issik
MLA – Calgary Glenmore

311A, 2525 Woodview Dr SW
Calgary, AB T2W 4N4
T: 403-216-5421
Calgary.Glenmore@assembly.ab.ca

Congratulations Grads of 2020



Northland School Division extends congratulations to the Bill Woodward School graduating class of 2020! Check out these beautiful banners in both Anzac & Janvier honouring and celebrating their grade 12 grads!

Alberta Court of Appeal rules in favour of Fort McKay’s Moose Lake Plan

The Fort McKay First Nation is deeply moved by the recent Alberta Court of Appeal decision to rescind the Alberta Energy Regulator’s approval of Prosper’s Rigel Project.

In its unanimous decision, the Alberta Court of Appeal overturned AER’s approval of the Prosper Rigel Project and directed that any future proceeding must reconsider the project, and AER must consider the ‘honour of the Crown.’

The court also strongly implied that Alberta should complete the Moose Lake Plan expeditiously, and that the plan must be figured into any future resource decisions.

“The Court of Appeal decision takes an unequivocal stand on Indigenous treaty rights,” said Fort McKay First Nation Chief Mel Grandjamb.

Judge Sheila Greckol said in a concurring opinion that augments the unanimous decision that: “The honour of the Crown may not mandate that the

parties agree to any one particular settlement, but it does require that the Crown keep promises made during negotiations designed to protect treaty rights. It certainly demands more than allowing the Crown to placate [Fort McKay First Nation] while its treaty rights career into obliteration. That is not honourable. And it is not reconciliation.”

“From the start, Fort McKay wanted only fair consideration of our 20-year struggle to protect Moose Lake as the last intact piece of wilderness in our traditional territory, even as it was encroached upon by oil sands development,” explained Chief Grandjamb. “This decision provides everyone with clear direction and increases the certainty industry requires to make sound business decisions.

“As we celebrate this momentous decision that acknowledges Moose Lake is a sacred landscape, Fort McKay – like all Albertans — continues to focus our efforts to manage the impact of the global collapse of

oil prices on our businesses and ensure the health and safety of our community members through the COVID-19 pandemic response.

This decision states clearly that true reconciliation requires genuine respect and consideration of Treaty rights. Reconciliation must be co-created through partnerships with Indigenous communities moving forward.

“This clarity will support our efforts to help economic recovery by setting new ground rules for engagement,” concluded Chieg Grandjamb.

“We anticipate Alberta will approve the Moose Lake Plan in the late spring and that Fort McKay will have finally obtained the government’s commitment to jointly protect Moose Lake. We look forward to crossing the finish line with Minister Nixon, Premier Kenney and the entire Cabinet to complete the Moose Lake Plan.”

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Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women’s Report deserves action

By the National MMIW Inquiry Commissioners

One year ago, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls presented its Final Report, Reclaiming Power and Place, through ceremony to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and to each province and territory. After almost three years of heartbreaking testimony, families and survivors gathered in Gatineau, Quebec, to see the culmination of one phase of the journey, and the beginning of another. Families gathered expressed hope for a new future – one that would see the safety and security of sisters, mothers, aunties, daughters, granddaughters, partners and friends.

Sharing deeply personal stories and articulating best practices as encapsulated within the Final Report within the constraints of the mandate was not easy. Therefore, we first acknowledge the thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Metis families, survivors, Elders, community members, grass roots and front-line leaders, experts and knowledge keepers and other witnesses who shared their truths and their strength. To these families and individuals, we say “thank you”, for re-writing Canadian history by courageously telling your truths. We also acknowledge all the work of the families, survivors, grassroots organizations and frontline workers who have taken these truths to heart, and who continue the hard work of seeking justice and fight daily to keep our Indigenous women, girls and 2S people safe. Finally, we acknowledge the individuals and organizations that have taken to heart the need for all Canadians to read the Final Report, to learn the true history of Canada.

Despite these successes and a growing awareness of the issues, we deplore inaction on the part of some governments. As the Final Report asserts, the Calls for Justice are not mere recommendations or a quaint list of best practices – they are legal imperatives rooted in Canada’s obligations under international and domestic human rights norms and laws. As the

ongoing levels of violence attest, the fundamental human rights and Indigenous rights of Indigenous women, girls and 2S people continue to be violated daily in Canada, and Indigenous women, girls and 2S people continue to be subjected to colonial violence, physical violence, disappearances and murder.

In addition, as the Principles of Change and Call for Justice 1.1 of the Final Report demonstrate, how the Calls for Justice are implemented is as imperative as the Calls for Justice themselves. To start, implementation must be done in a manner that restores Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people to their leadership roles. It is central to the process. In addition, the work must be trauma-informed: that means being transparent and accountable.

To date, families, survivors and Canadians have yet to be presented with the federal government’s workplan for implementation or any progress on the National Action Plan. There has been little, if any, commitment demonstrated to ensure the work is led by Indigenous Peoples, with Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA peoples central in that process. With the exception of Yukon, which has

developed comprehensive plans and commenced implementation, there has been deafening silence and unacceptable inaction from most governments.

The path towards a decolonized Canada requires a profound change in thinking. Addressing genocide requires an honest and active process of decolonization of structures, institutions, legislation and policies. The swift implementation of the National Inquiry’s Calls for Justice is essential to address Canada’s responsibility for the commission of genocide and for violations of fundamental human rights.



Due to the one year of inaction, the lack of transparency, the growing race and gender-based tensions, Indigenous people’s distrust of governments, and the failure to heed the principles for change in the Final Report, we assert the need for international attention to implementation. Without the establishment of the Ombudsperson and Tribunal as per Call for Justice 1.7, there is no fair and just forum in Canada where Indigenous women, girls and 2S people can turn to ensure full participation in the implementation process for the Calls for Justice. We call on Canada to move past fear and in partnership with Indigenous women, girls and 2S people, engage an international and impartial organization to mediate and oversee the implementation of the Calls for Justice. Should Canada fail to do so in a timely manner, we strongly encourage Indigenous women, girls and 2S people to invite international and impartial oversight of the implementation of the Calls for Justice.

After all, lives depend on it.

Marion Buller, Michèle Audette, Brian Eyolfson and Qajaq Robinson are the commissioners from the National Commission on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.



Call for Indigenous Curator

The City of Calgary is seeking an Indigenous Curator to play a key role in developing and implementing opportunities for artists and help The City build relationships with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in and around Calgary.

This position will work in close collaboration with the Moh'kinsstis Public Art Guiding Circle, Public Art Program staff and the Indigenous Relations Office at The City of Calgary.

The City of Calgary recognizes and values diversity and inclusion; and unique dimensions of diversity including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, work style, communication style, learning preferences and others.

The competition will be open from June 8 to July 20.
Deadline for Questions: 2020 July 16 at 4:30 pm MST
Questions/submissions to: publicart@calgary.ca
Submission Deadline: 2020 July 20 at 4:30 pm MST
Target Start Date: 2020 September
Target End Date: 2021 September

The contract is \$70,000.00 plus up to \$1,400 in travel expenses (maximum, inclusive of all fees; not including GST).

How to Apply

For information on how to apply visit:
<https://www.calgary.ca/csps/recreation/public-art/opportunities-for-artists.html>

Please review the following sections:

- Call for Indigenous Curator
- City of Calgary Professional Services Provider Agreement
- Consulting General Conditions

Eligible submissions will contain:

A response to the application criteria on page 5 of the Call for Indigenous Curator with the following information: A letter of interest describing why this opportunity interests the Curator, and how the Curator’s background and practice will contribute to this project;

A resume / Curriculum Vitae showing applicable examples of work in related area and educational experience.

All eligible submissions are reviewed by a selection panel consisting of members of the Moh'kinsstis Public Art Guiding Circle, a community member and representatives from the Public Art Program and the Indigenous Relations Office.

Shortlisted curators will be invited to an interview with the selection panel. The same evaluation criteria will be used as in the shortlisting stage.



National Indigenous Peoples Day is a time for Canadians to recognize the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people.

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Dances of the Powwow

(ANNews) - Powwows are cancelled this year due to Covid-19 gathering restrictions but there is still virtual dancing taking place online. The costumes are vivid and colourful with ribbons and fringes swaying with the wind and to the beat of the drums.

The modern day powwow serves to unify First Nation peoples. It is used as a tool to rebuild First Nation cultures and to reinforce Aboriginal identities. It also acts as a bridge to give non-Natives a glimpse of the traditions and culture of their First Nation neighbours.

Today’s powwows maintain traditions and help define the First Nation peoples as distinct. They combine the old ways with a new vitality that helps keep hope for the future alive.

The term “powwow” comes from the Algonquin word “pauau” which translates roughly as “he dreams.” The term is now used to describe any communal celebration held by North American Indigenous Peoples, but originally referred to ceremonies of a religious/spiritual nature. Each powwow is a little different but central to all are the dance celebrations and competitions.

Competitive powwow dancing is split into four categories for men and three for women. Very often categories also exist for youth and tots.

• Fancy Dance: The Fancy Dance is an energetic, creative dance where the dancer has the freedom to

create new moves to interpret the music of the drum beat and chants. For men this can include high kicks and gymnastic moves.

For women it generally includes graceful movements with a shawl and also spinning, kicking and fancy footwork.

• Traditional Dance: For women the traditional dances are graceful and slow. They involve very little movement, usually on the spot turns or side to side-weight shifts.

Mens’ traditional dances are more active, generally depicting the movements of warriors.

• Jingle Dance: The Jingle Dance is a womens’ dance where the costume includes shiny cones or some kind of jingling beads. The noise adds a percussion element to the music and the movements are sliding, shuffling and quick side steps.

• Grass Dance: The mens’ Grass Dance is a very



2019 Ben Calf Robe Powwow dancers. Photo by Terry Lusty

spiritual dance which honours the relationship of the dancer and the earth. The dancers depict the grass blowing in the wind with their movements and costumes.

• Buckskin Dance: The Buckskin Dance is regarded as the most prestigious of all. It is reserved for Elders, Leaders and men of high prestige and profile in the community. Costumes generally include sacred eagle feathers and headdresses.

Powwow Lockout *cont. from p 4*

and all those who are at risk of transmitting COVID-19 for they are the future and the knowledge keepers of our tribes.

“What keeps me optimistic is thinking about how jamming they’re going to be when this whole thing blows over.

“But until then, I hope everyone stays safe & takes care.”

Joel (Kiseyiniw Asiniy – Cree for Old Man Rock). Maskwacis, Treaty 6

“The powwow, although not a ceremony (more of a

celebration), is for our Creator. We dance and look our best for the Creator and celebrate with friends and family.

“However, if a community deems it necessary to cancel powwows, we have to respect the leadership’s wishes.

“I can trace some of my family’s lineage to Wandering Spirit, who was Big Bear’s War Chief. My Indian name and initiation into the sacred circle comes from Wandering Spirit’s direct descendants who now reside in Rocky Boy, Montana, USA.

“So, the powwow is very important and very meaningful—not just to me, but all of Indian Country

and all who carry feathers and sacred medicines for healing.

“I can’t wait to dance again though. It’s really good for our spirits.

“To the Jingers, the Chicken dancers, the Fancy Shawlers, the Men’s Fancy category, women’s traditional, the tiny tots: I can’t wait to see you all out in the powwow circle again and bettering our communities in Indian Country.

“We pray, hai hai.”

Jake Cardinal is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter.

Increased knowledge of Indigenous cultures is for all learners and plays a vital role in Indigenous learners’ success.

The Cultural Resource Elders Program at Bow Valley College provides the opportunity for learners to witness, experience, and ask questions about Indigenous ways of knowing, to learn about ceremony, spirituality, and history. The elders bring to the College expertise as knowledge keepers, ceremonialists, and historians. They are the people who can share their knowledge with all learners and bring an important understanding of Indigenous experiences.

For Noella Wells, Director of the Iniiikokaan Centre, Bow Valley College’s gathering place for Indigenous learners, the elders are an important touchpoint and a cornerstone of college culture.

“Our elders give learners the knowledge, the encouragement, the confidence because they’ve been there before. This is stuff you just don’t find on Google.” she says.

As our Indigenous student population has grown at the College, the number of elders has also grown. Starting with one elder in 2008, there are now seven elders from across southern Alberta and Canada. These elders are an invaluable resource for Indigenous learners, as some learners have little or no connection to their Indigenous identity, culture, language, community, and ceremony. Through the elders, learners can find out who they are. Elders give them the knowledge, awareness, and confidence to say, “I am Cree, I am Tsuut’ina, I am Siksika, I am Piikani, I am Kainai, I am Niitsitapi.”



In addition to celebrating cultural, emotional, physical, and spiritual support, the elders act as influencers for learners and are proven to help with learner retention and graduation success. In the words of a recent Indigenous graduate: “I was thinking of quitting my school, but the elders inspired me to stay in school to learn more, to help other people in the future, just like they did.”

Many of the Cultural Resource Elders are survivors of residential schools. Their experience, memories, and learnings provide understanding of the trauma that so many of Canada’s Indigenous peoples have experienced. Our elders play an important role in keeping the conversation alive to make the world a better place for Indigenous peoples everywhere.



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“NEC has proven to be a safe place where I have been able to learn and grow. The cultural and traditional values that NEC demonstrates is really important to me.

My dream is to gain the tools to go back to my community, Matsqui First Nation, and help them develop and grow in a good way. Just like any community of people, they’re trying to evolve and grow.”

JUSTIN SIDON
ILS Student



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