



Vaccines are coming but for now – COVID numbers are rising

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) – Vaccines are on their way across Canada, but it is not the time to relax COVID safety measures. Instead, Canadians, including all Albertans must be extra vigilant in practicing safe distancing, wearing masks, restricting contacts, washing hands, and limiting contacts and travel.

A Strained Healthcare System

Daniel Niven, a critical care doctor in Alberta, said that this is the busiest he's ever seen Alberta hospitals in his ten years working. "Our volume of patients in the intensive care unit is at a level that I've never seen it at before," said Dr. Niven, who is also an assistant professor at the University of Calgary's medical school.

"The COVID volume itself is quite high and the patients are quite sick and do require a fairly high level of care, especially once they enter into the intensive unit and their lungs, and sometimes other organs, are failing them."

Alberta has been adding beds as part of a larger plan to boost the system's capacity by 2,250 acute-care spaces and 425 ICU beds to prepare for a flood of COVID-19 patients. That plan involves repurposing hospital space, moving non-COVID patients into continuing care facilities and cancelling surgeries and other services to bring in doctors and nurses from other areas.

Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Deena Hinshaw, said that pushing the capacity on hospitals leaves other areas of healthcare vulnerable.

"The more we see that rise [in COVID-19 admissions], the more it puts pressure on other parts of the system," she said at a recent news conference. "In order to care for those [COVID-19] patients who are needing ICU care or hospital care, other patients waiting for services need to have those services delayed."

To give you an idea as to how full the healthcare system is in this second wave: if they didn't get the recently added beds, Calgary's ICUs would be at 114 per cent capacity and Edmonton's would be at 144 per cent, said AHS.

The province's health care system is bracing for hospitalizations to continue their sharp increase for the next month, with the number of people admitted with severe cases of the disease expected to at least double – or potentially worse.

The Vaccines

Announced in an Instagram post on Sunday December 13 by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada has received their first batch of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines.

"The first batch of doses of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine have arrived in Canada," reads part of Trudeau's post.

"This is good news. But our fight against COVID-19 is not over. Now more than ever, let's keep up our vigilance."

Canada's Procurement Minister Anita Anand stated that the shipment marks the first of 30,000 initial doses the country is expecting to receive between Sunday evening and Monday.

Because of this, some Indigenous leaders are voicing concern and citing treaty obligations so that Indigenous peoples will be a priority group for the initial roll-out of the vaccine. Saskatchewan treaty commissioner Mary Culbertson said Canada is legally obligated to give Indigenous communities early access to the vaccine.

"I do want to see our people prioritized because of treaty obligations," Culbertson said.

Treaty 6 has a clause that states the Crown must provide aid to Indigenous people during times of pestilence and famine. It was negotiated after European colonizers brought smallpox to Canada and decimated the buffalo population.



The mi-chif



"This is... one of the biggest emergencies that we're going to face in our lifetime," Culbertson said. "Yet, First Nations have been facing emergencies... for generations."

"You have communities that don't have water. They can't wash their hands," Culbertson said.

"Where the government has created those situations that you have people living in standards that are lower than the average Canadian, they have an obligation to provide priority to those people."

Continued on page 6

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Fred Saskamoose remembered as a hockey pioneer, a mentor and a humanitarian

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) – Fred Sasakamoose, one of the first Indigenous athletes to play in the National Hockey League, died on November 24, 2020 at age 86 after being hospitalized with COVID-19.

Tributes to Fred poured in from the countless people whose lives he had touched ranging from Indigenous leaders to NHL teams and politicians.

Justin Trudeau honoured the Indigenous pioneer by saying, “Fred Sasakamoose survived the residential school system, became the National Hockey League’s first-ever Indigenous player, and inspired many with his stories of suffering and success. He leaves behind an incredible legacy.”

“My condolences to all who are mourning his passing today.”

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indigenous Nations tweeted. “We are at a loss today. Fred Sasakamoose was a legend with humble beginnings. He will be dearly missed.”

“We are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Fred Sasakamoose. Fred holds a special place in the history of our great game,” tweeted Hockey Canada’s Tom Renney.

Brigitte Lacquette, the first First Nations woman to play for the Canadian women’s Olympic hockey team, said, “His story is just simply amazing and to have that perseverance and determination to get to where he [did] ... it’s pretty crazy to think what he has overcome.”

“He’s a very humble man, soft spoken, and could really make you feel like you’ve known him your whole life. [He] was just an amazing person and someone that I’m very glad that I crossed paths with,” said Lacquette.

Neil Sasakamoose, Fred’s son, said in a Facebook video, “The COVID virus did so much damage into his lungs, he just couldn’t keep responding... He just couldn’t keep up.”

Sasakamoose played 11 games with Chicago in 1953-54 and was the founder of the Chief Thunderstick national hockey championship for young Indigenous players.

Former Philadelphia Flyer and Stanley Cup champion Reggie Leach said, “A lot of people say he only played 11 games. But those 11 games were everything to our First Nations people.”

“Fred was the kindest man that you’d ever meet. And so down to earth,” Leach said

“He inspired many with his life story. Despite the hardships, he always had a smile and a kind word for everyone. To give back, he visited many First Nation communities and hosted a tournament to showcase the talents of up and coming Indigenous hockey players. His family meant the world to him as he always spoke with love about them.

“He treated everybody the same. There were no colour barriers or anything. He just treated everybody the same. And I wish the world would do that also.”

The Chicago Blackhawks paid respects to the pioneer in a Twitter post that read, “Today we lost a luminary in the hockey world with the passing of Fred Sasakamoose. Fred inspired many across the sport and North America after becoming one of the first Indigenous-born athletes to play in the NHL when he played 11 games with the Blackhawks in the 1953-54 season.”

Sasakamoose will also be remembered for his humanitarian work as a residential school survivor. He had a tremendous impact on the work of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Two years after the TRC started traveling across Canada to hear testimony from residential school survivors, it visited Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, for three days. On that third day, Sasakamoose gave his testimony.

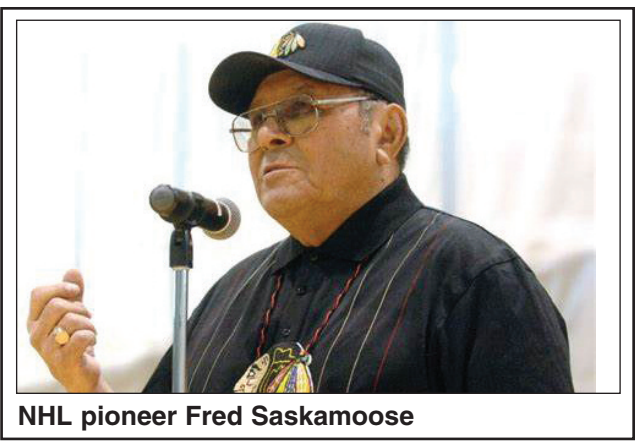
Commissioner Marie Wilson spoke of Fred by saying, “There was a point in the commission where I thought to myself, what if we do all this work and we bear witness to people spilling literally blood, sweat, and tears, and nothing changes and nothing happens?”

However, after Fred’s testimony, Wilson believed

that the work would never be in vain. “For those who are participating and for those who are taking part and for those who were in the room, things were shifting and things were lightening and things were transforming,” she said. “Fred Sasakamoose epitomized that.”

“It was an encouragement to us. It was an encouragement to the room,” Wilson said. “And it was, I think, just such a snapshot of his generous, generous character to push through his own difficulties and to have a lot to offer to everyone around him.”

“That’s how I remember him.”



NHL pioneer Fred Saskamoose




December is usually a month full of celebrations and family time. This year will be different and challenging for everyone.

For the past year the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary was privileged to support our most vulnerable through our Indigenous Task Force. Thanks to our friends at Toys R Us and Calgary Foundation we are able to provide Christmas food hampers and toys to bring light and love to families in need in Calgary.

We wish to extend our gratitude to all the essential workers, community outreach teams, stakeholders and funders who selflessly support our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the most vulnerable community members including Two-Spirited, homeless and other marginalized groups.

On behalf of the AFCC Senate, Board and staff we would like to wish everyone a safe and healthy Christmas and New Year!

Warmest Wishes
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RCMP Commissioner faces lawsuit

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) has announced that a lawsuit against RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki for “inexcusable delays preventing the release of a civilian watchdog report into RCMP spying on Indigenous and climate advocates,” is being launched.

In February 2014, the BCCLA filed a complaint which alleged that the national police illegally spied on democratic activities of organizations and Indigenous people opposed to the Northern Gateway pipeline. The huge pipeline would have brought in 520,000 barrels a day of oil sands bitumen to the B.C. coast.

The BCCLA has also alleged that the RCMP improperly shared the information it collected with oil companies and the National Energy Board – which the association describes as unconstitutional.

The complaint caused an investigation to be launched into the matter by The Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC) and in 2017, 3 years later, an interim report was completed by the commission and was sent off to Lucki herself.

However, the CRCC cannot prepare a final report available to the public and the BCCLA until the RCMP Commissioner responds and it is now 2020 – there is still no response.

The RCMP Act requires the RCMP Commissioner to respond to CRCC interim reports as soon as feasible.

In 2019, the RCMP specifically committed to responding to CRCC reports in a six-month timeline.

The federal RCMP Act requires the Commissioner to provide a written response to CRCC interim reports as soon as it is feasible to indicate further action that has or will be taken. Not to mention that in 2019, the RCMP specifically committed to responding to CRCC reports in a six-month timeline.

The lawsuit claims that the RCMP Commissioner has breached her obligations under the RCMP Act and violated the BCCLA’s Charter right to freedom of expression by failing to respond.

Executive Director of the BCCLA, Harsha Walia stated, “For over six years, we’ve been waiting for a response to our complaint against the RCMP for illegally spying on climate organizations and First Nations opposed to the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline Project... People who have been illegally spied on are waiting for real answers and accountability.”

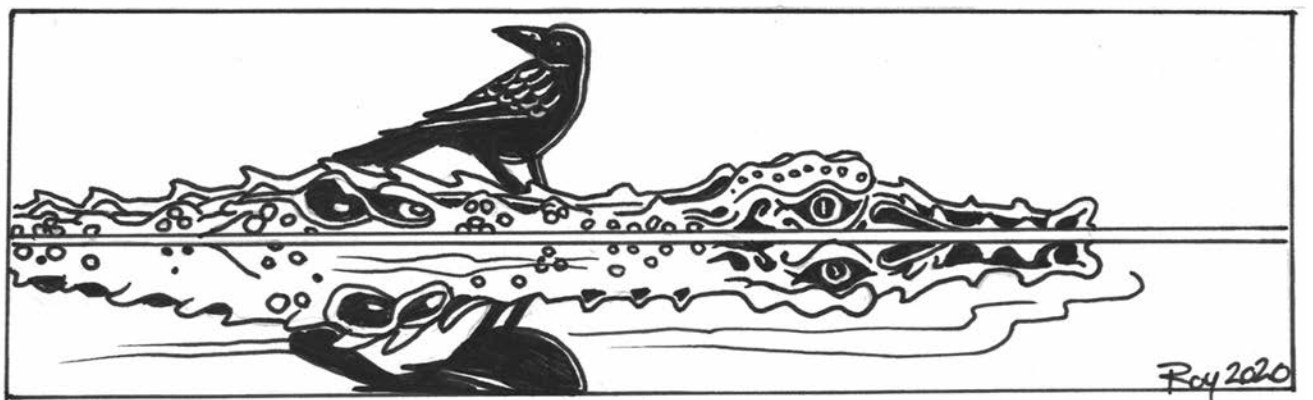
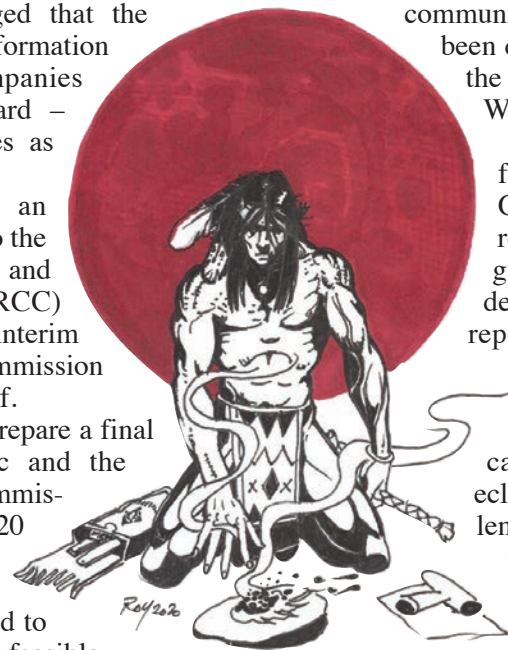
“Enough is enough. The RCMP Commissioner’s inexcusable delays are sabotaging the civilian watchdog complaint process. The BCCLA won’t let that stand.”

“We’re suing the RCMP commissioner because communities across these lands who have been demanding an end to the abuses of the police power deserve better,” said Walia.

Jessica Magonet, legal counsel for the BCCLA, added: “As the CRCC highlighted in its most recent annual report, the RCMP is guilty of serious and systematic delays in responding to CRCC reports. These delays undermine transparency, accountability, and trust in our national police force. The inordinate delay in this case is particularly extreme – eclipsing even the RCMP’s average lengthy response time of 17 months.”

Clayton Thomas-Müller, Indigenous rights advocate and a senior campaign specialist with 350.org said, “Being under police and security surveillance has caused harm to my family relationships, and I and others have paid a high price to support frontline Indigenous nations and fight for Indigenous rights and climate justice. The RCMP’s surveillance must be exposed, but we are still waiting to receive the report into their spying activities. This is a slap in the face of Canadian democracy and the legal nation-to-nation relationship between us as Indigenous peoples and Canada.”

The lawsuit will be heard at the Federal Court of Canada, where the BCCLA is represented by Paul Champ of Champ & Associates and Jessica Magonet of the BCCLA.



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Virtual Care Clinic celebrates successful launch

COVID-19 is impacting all aspects of our lives, from working from home to seeking medical help when needed. This is especially true for individuals in remote or isolated areas. As the pandemic continued to evolve, it was recognized that patients, in particular those living in remote areas, were in need of better healthcare access while still respecting public health guidelines and avoiding travel. With technical and operational support from the First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group Inc., the Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic is now able to offer health care services virtually, officially launching on December 1.

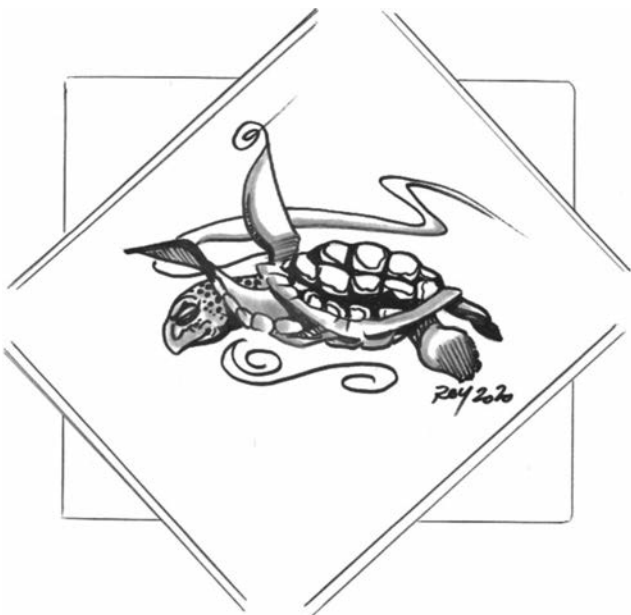
On December 11, Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada, joined the physicians at the Alberta Virtual Care Clinic and the First Nations Technical Services Advisory Group Inc. in celebrating the successful launch of their new service.

“Access to timely, high quality health care is essential,” stated Minister Miller. “The Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic is an example of how innovation in health care continues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Congratulations to all of the individuals who have worked tirelessly to make this concept a reality in such a short time. The

difference it will make to Indigenous Peoples in Alberta is immeasurable.”

Presently there are 17 physicians who are seeing patients via the Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic. Many of the physicians are Indigenous or have experience with Indigenous health and cultural safety, and have worked years with Indigenous patients. The clinic strives to provide same day care to rural and urban First Nations, Inuit and Métis via secure video or phone service.

“When TSAG was initially contacted about supporting the creation of the Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic we agreed that it was a service that was needed, however, supporting a medical clinic was something we had not done before,” remarked Chief Stanley Grier, from the Chief’s steering committee at First Nations TSAG. “The team at TSAG came together, developed a plan and implemented it and within four months the clinic was operational. I want to thank the amazing people we have at TSAG and our physician partners for making this happen. This clinic is going to positively impact many Indigenous people and we are proud to have played a role in its creation.”



“I am grateful to all partners who have brought the Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic to life,” concluded Dr. Esther Tailfeathers, Alberta Health Services Senior Medical Director of the Indigenous Wellness Core.

“The clinic will provide additional access to culturally safe primary care, both in rural areas and for underserved urban Indigenous populations. This is a very exciting step we’re taking to improve access and remove barriers to care for Indigenous persons across our province.”

Vaccines are coming *cont. from p 2*

However, much like the history of Jordan’s Principle, it is unclear who decides what a priority group is and the Public Health Agency of Canada has delegated vaccine distribution to the provinces and territories.

“They will be the ones setting up the priority populations to be vaccinated in light of their respective regional/provincial epidemiology,” a spokesperson said.

As a result, it seems the federal government is failing to fulfill its treaty obligation, said Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) treaty legal director Eleanore Sunchild.

“It really should be the federal government because the federal government is the party in the treaty,” Sunchild said in a recent interview.

While Culbertson is championing early access for

Indigenous people, she noted some people may be wary of the vaccine due to Canada’s history of conducting medical experiments in residential schools and racially segregated hospitals.

Officials responsible for vaccine rollout must consider ethics and education to ensure people make an informed choice, she said.

“When it comes to Indigenous people... (early access) definitely has to be a priority with safeguards in place,” she said.

COVID Numbers

On First Nations reserves, as of December 10, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is aware of:

- 5,675 confirmed positive COVID-19
- 2,100 active cases
- 240 hospitalizations
- 3,526 recovered cases
- 49 deaths

Case numbers per region:

- British Columbia: 440
- Alberta: 1,580
- Saskatchewan: 1,470
- Manitoba: 1,824
- Ontario: 200
- Quebec: 159
- Atlantic: 2

In the United States, which has seen the worst COVID numbers in the world, at least 1,357 new coronavirus deaths and 183,814 new cases were reported in the United States on Dec. 13. Over the past week, there has been an average of 210,039 cases per day, an increase of 30 percent from the average two weeks earlier.

As of right now, the world has seen 72,270,693 confirmed cases.

Godspeed and look after yourselves out there.



Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season, from Edmonton Councillors

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Merry Christmas

As we enjoy this special time with loved ones we hope that you all stay safe and healthy.

Happy New Year in 2021

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AFN Chief will not seek third term as leader

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative reporter

(ANNews) – The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the country’s most powerful Indigenous advocacy organization, will not seek a third term as leader when his mandate ends next summer.

Perry Bellegarde has spent his six years in the role helping bring Indigenous issues to the forefront of Canadian public life.

“Last night, I wrote to the Chiefs of Canada – saying I will not be seeking re-election in next July’s AFN National Chief’s election,” the National Chief said.

“Being National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has been the greatest job I could have imagined.”

“Issues and concerns that we used to talk about only among ourselves, around the kitchen table, are now out there in the media every day, at the centre of public debate,” Bellegarde said in a series of tweets on December 5.

Bellegarde has been the AFN National Chief since 2014 and in that time he has successfully advocated for laws protecting Indigenous children and languages as well as a new bill to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He also helped secure more than \$27 billion in new funding, he said.

“My term runs until July, 2021, and I want to give a lot of my energy, time and focus on the remaining six months we’ve got left in my term to get things done.”

“If you are running for re-election, you have to do a campaign, you have to do a team. That takes a lot of energy to do that ... it’s about really putting my energies in and not being distracted,” he said.

Among trying to influence the next Federal budget, Bellegarde is focusing his efforts into pushing for passage of legislation introduced last week by the federal government that would begin the process of bringing Canadian law into alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

People (UNDRIP).

The declaration, which was passed by the UN General Assembly in 2007, affirms the rights of Indigenous peoples to their language, culture, self-determination and traditional lands and establishes “minimum standards for the survival and well-being” of Indigenous people, according to the UN.

When Bellegarde took office, the previous Conservative Government did not support UNDRIP, however, as Bellegarde said himself, “Things have changed; things have moved.”

National Chief Bellegarde is from the Little Black Bear First Nation, Treaty 4 Territory. He served as Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Saskatchewan Regional Chief for the Assembly of First Nations. He has also served as the Tribal Chair of the Touchwood-File Hills-Qu’Appelle Tribal Council, Councillor for the Little Black Bear First Nation and Chief of Little Black Bear First Nation.

“I always say, what an amazing opportunity for a young guy from Little Black Bear to have been part of that.”

National Chief Perry Bellegarde said he will address the chiefs at their general assembly, which is being held virtually this week after it was put off last summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I will be both excited and anxious, but most of all,



Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde

AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde delivered an emotional opening address on December 7, at the Assembly of First Nations Virtual Annual General Meeting. He touched on racism, discrimination, and the lives violently taken this past year. “To all those who have been lost, to all of those who have been taken from us, I say: We love you. We value you. We remember you. And you will continue to motivate us to create the change we all want and need.”

He closed the 41st AFN AGA by reminding all to rely on the seven grandfather teachings during the ongoing pandemic: “Hang on to those words. Because they will give us strength and peace.”

proud of the work we did together,” he said. “We still have lots of work to do, so let’s fight together for First Nations’ priorities right to the end.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told a news conference in Ottawa on December 5 that Bellegarde has been a tireless leader and advocate for First Nations.

“I am joined by people across the country in recognizing and celebrating his years of devoted service to First Nations communities,” Trudeau said.

“We will continue to work with the national chief to advance the priorities identified by First Nations, including keeping First Nations communities safe from this pandemic,” he said.

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Métis father-son duo's sustainable disinfectant approved for use

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A Métis father-son duo in Edmonton have created an environmentally-sustainable disinfectant that has been approved for use in Canada and the United States.

Dylan Frank says he established the Phresh Health disinfection company with his father, Kelly, and five other people, back in June. Of the 500-or-so disinfectants approved by Health Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, theirs is the only one that's plant-based.

The product is made in Canada and the business is registered with the federal government as an Indigenous company.

"With COVID, it was essentially impossible to find a job months ago," Frank says. "I was trying to think of an alternative source to make income. As we know, last summer was very boring, because there was nothing to do. You couldn't go to concerts, you essentially couldn't go to bars, hang out with friends or anything."

This led to a brainstorming process with his partners to figure out a way to "resume people-to-people connections" and give people the "consciousness to go out and know that they're walking into an environment that is environmentally-friendly and is cleaned properly," said Frank.

He said there were doubts at first, since there are already so many cleaning products on the market, but that they found a niche.

"From what I'd seen, there was no other company that was trying to take an environmental approach to (disinfection). They were just trying to get in the door as fast as they could," said Frank. "A lot of places are just using a really strong solvent and alcohol-based product. It's just not safe to keep breathing in and it deteriorates random surfaces, like anything with a rubber seal."

An information sheet from Phresh Health boasts that it eliminates 99.99% of COVID, and other pathogen, particles in less than a minute.

Phresh's product is also food safe.

"You can literally spray it on an apple and eat it instantly," said Frank. "It's not bad to inhale, it's non-corrosive. It's just a really well-made product."

Frank says they use a rigorous testing process.

"We use our plant-based product accompanied by a Hygenia testing device," explains Frank. "Before we do any of our spraying, we do testing on the surface. It's essentially just a swab test, and it's put into a handheld unit that gives you a reading of the RLUs, or relative light units, and the amount of pathogens or viruses within that 2x2 space."

After the swab test, they do their electrostatic spraying. "With the spraying, it's a very fine mist that comes out of it. It's hard to see with the human eye — you have to be under certain lighting to see it efficiently," said Frank. "All the positive-charged particles wrap around all the negatively-charged particles."

He said the positive charges have a "wraparound effect", so if you're spraying a door handle or steering wheel, both sides will get cleaned.

The goal is to have a Hygenia reading below 100, which is considered to be "extremely environmentally safe," although hospital-room safety is around 80, Frank said.

"We do all the data management for customers, so we can prove area-by-area what our product is doing is actually working," Frank said.

One major challenge is that at the outset of the pandemic, many businesses made bulk purchases of alcohol-based sanitizer, so they're all stocked up.

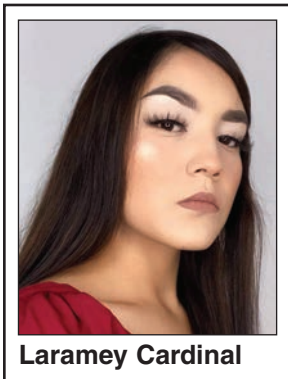
Frank, who also works as a class 1 truck driver, says he's accustomed to using alcohol-based sanitizers. He said a lot of his colleagues complain about it drying up their skin and can lead to breathing difficulties in a confined space, like a truck.

"I tried to find a product that would be safe for anyone to be around — no matter what age," he said. "If you were to come into contact with it and get it on your skin, it's not going to affect you. It's not going to be a deterrent to any surfaces that it's going on to."

Phresh in the process of negotiating its first contract. For more information visit phresh.health or call 780-720-0722.

Saddle Lake woman to compete in Miss Canada Pageant

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Laramey Cardinal

Laramey Cardinal, a 21-year-old Indigenous woman from Saddle Lake Cree Nation, has been selected to compete in Miss Canada Petite, the National Preliminary to the Miss Universal Petite Pageant, the winner of which will represent Canada at the annual Miss Universal Petite Pageant.

After being contacted personally by Miss Petite Ontario, Keely Wesley, Laramey Cardinal will be

representing Saddle Lake on the pageant stage in August 2021. "I wasn't sure if I wanted to do it at first, but she really encouraged me. She's reaching out for more [Indigenous] girls to join the competition," said Cardinal.

The application process for the pageant has been a long one she said, "I had to do an interview over the phone about why I want to represent Canada and all my favourite things about Canada. Then I got accepted and now I have to pay entrance fee for my shawl."

"Then I'll be going for a week in Toronto. I believe the first few days will be training — how to walk in heels, that kind of thing — you don't need experience to join."

Laramey described the format and structure of the pageant. "I know that they will have different

categories, like they'll be having *Miss Salsa*, *Miss Karaoke*, *Miss Photogenic* — There's a bunch of different categories," she said.

When asked about whether or not she will dance salsa, Cardinal said "Yes."

However, a career in pageantry is not Miss Cardinal's long-term goal. "Pageantry is just a hobby right now. I'm currently enrolled in college working towards my nursing degree. I'm just finishing my first semester at Portage College in Cold Lake."

When asked about where she sees herself in five years, Laramey said, "hopefully nursing."

"My biggest inspiration growing up was my older sister. She travelled all over the world to go help other countries - she went to Africa to build an orphanage and to Nicaragua," Cardinal said, and her inspirations can be seen in her humanitarian goals.

"I would like to bring recognition to the Indigenous communities to start initiatives that will set up regulations that protect people regardless of their ethnic background. A lot of our people are failed by the healthcare system and it's a really tough subject for me," Laramey said.

"A lot of our people get very poor treatment when they go to hospitals. Some people don't like going to hospitals because of their colour."

Winning the pageant is only one of the very many ambitions that Miss Cardinal has for the future. Her self-confidence should help pave the way.

When asked whether or not she thinks she will win, Cardinal responded with, "Yeah, I hope so."

Happy Holidays

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Local artist featured in Marvel's Indigenous Voices issue

By Terry Lusty

Kyle Charles, a member of Alberta's Whitefish Lake First Nation, northeast of Edmonton, has come full circle. He is living his own dream of a lifetime by having his illustrated works featured in a Marvel comic book.

On Wednesday, November 18, 2020, he shared his success with local fans as he signed copy after copy of "Marvel Voices: Indigenous Voices #1" - released and unveiled at Wonder Harbour Comics in Edmonton.

Dozens of fans lined the sidewalk adjacent to the huge bookshop that evening to meet the artist. The comic is one of Marvel Entertainment's first efforts at producing a comic book product that is both written and illustrated by Indigenous people.

At the signing, Charles could not but help smiling, albeit behind a covid-19 facemask, as he signed books and posed for photos with many of the fans that turned up for the occasion.

Indeed, Charles was visibly 'in the moment' and relishing his good fortune. After all, who knows what doors this could open for him and his future. Admittedly, he'd love nothing more than to be hired on again by the major comic book magnate. The young man has been drawing comic book figures since the tender age of three and Marvel has always been a dream.

Standing next to Charles as he signed copies was the store's owner/manager, Vincent Joyall (also Indigenous) who lends 110 percent support to the yet-rising illustrator.

Joyall surmises that this is the break that may well propel the artist forward.

"Absolutely," he quipped when asked if he thinks Marvel would call upon the artist's talents to create more images in the future for the major comic company. "They'd be fools not to," he added. "I see a number of companies lining up for him and, that includes my company which will work with him as much as it can."

Charles is a role model who has worked hard to achieve his success, explained Joyall and "I'd like him to tour to reserves, schools, communities, summer camps, even get out on the land - hunt, fish, and do art, storytelling and writer workshops."

It's a good fit for Charles, especially considering he already works with students and at-risk local youth. And he loves it.

Professionally, Joyall has well over three decades in the bookshop industry, having previous involvements with Wonderland Books in the northern Alberta community of Grande Prairie and in Prince George, B.C., before relocating to Edmonton where he is currently in partnership with a Calgary-based co-owner.

Joyall opened his present store situated at 105 Avenue and 105 Street last spring. It's a great location - right across the street from MacEwan University. "Location is important," he explained. It has easy access for university students, there's ample parking and the Rogers Place Arena LRT (rapid transit) station is very close.

The location has further helped the business

Continued on page 16



Local illustrator Kyle Charles at a book signing at Wonder Harbour Comics in Edmonton for the recently released "Marvel Voices: Indigenous Voices #1."

Merry Christmas

from your

Alberta Conservative Members of Parliament



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From music to medicine – with good intent

By Dale Ladouceur, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) - Medicines that have been gifted to us from Creator can be elusive to those who do not have noble intent. This is one thing that was abundantly clear while listening to medicine picker and Elder Darin James Ladouceur. This calling did not come early or easy to the Hanna, AB native who spent his time growing up in such diverse places as Lac la Biche, Churchill MB and Fort Smith NWT. Speaking from his home in Banff, Darin described his journey from music to medicine.

Ladouceur spent a large part of his life as a musician, “succumbing to the ills of that lifestyle” but even in that time before sobriety, he always saw sage around. Then, less than a decade ago, an elder told him that he was born and blessed to be picking medicines.

“We all have our destiny,” Ladouceur explained, “you just have to notice when it’s going by and reach up and grab it.”

His first experience was with sage, finding he was always able to identify it, no matter where he was. Twelve years ago he “left music, cleaned up and started smudging all the time.” Darin started picking sage and used sage to pray for teachers to come.

“Low and behold, six years down the road, a bunch of teachers came my way.” That’s when Darin Ladouceur started on this new path.

Darin softly recalled when he was blanketed in November 2019 as a teacher and elder by Métis Elder Edmee Comstock, (great granddaughter of John Bruce, the first president of the Métis in Canada). “There was a lot of good tears [shed] on that day.”

During his journey, Darin had elders from the Blackfoot, Stoney, Shuswap, Cree and Métis “take pity on him” and teach him how and where to find medicines. “This Stoney Elder, who was teaching me to scrap hides told me there was Sweetgrass in this field just outside of Banff. I’d never seen it in the wild before,” recalls Ladouceur. “I had just seen it in braids.”

He describes walking out into the 40-acre field and

taking out some tobacco. He held it up and offered it to the four directions, to the Creator and to the sacred Mother Earth and asked Creator to guide his hand. “I asked the ancestors if they want me to have this medicine, to guide my hand to find it. Within ten minutes of wandering in this large field something just came over me and I looked down and it just spoke to me and told me *here I am.*”

Elder Ladouceur, uses reverent tones to explain the importance of having good intent while medicine picking. “To this day, when I’m looking for different medicines for elders, the plant will call me to it and teach me how to pick it. But it all comes from going in the *right* way, with a good heart and good mind and speaking to that plant, letting it know what you are going to use it for and why you are there to get it.”

Ladouceur became known as a medicine picker when he started going to sweat ceremony with a gentleman from the Morley reserve. Each time, he would bring a few garbage bags filled with sage. He started doing this every year to give to elders who needed it. At that time, he didn’t know that you should not gather that much and that “doing so can bring harm to you.”

“Lennie Pousette who is Heyoekkah, (one of the backwards people) told me: Well, you are obviously blessed to pick medicines,” said Ladouceur.

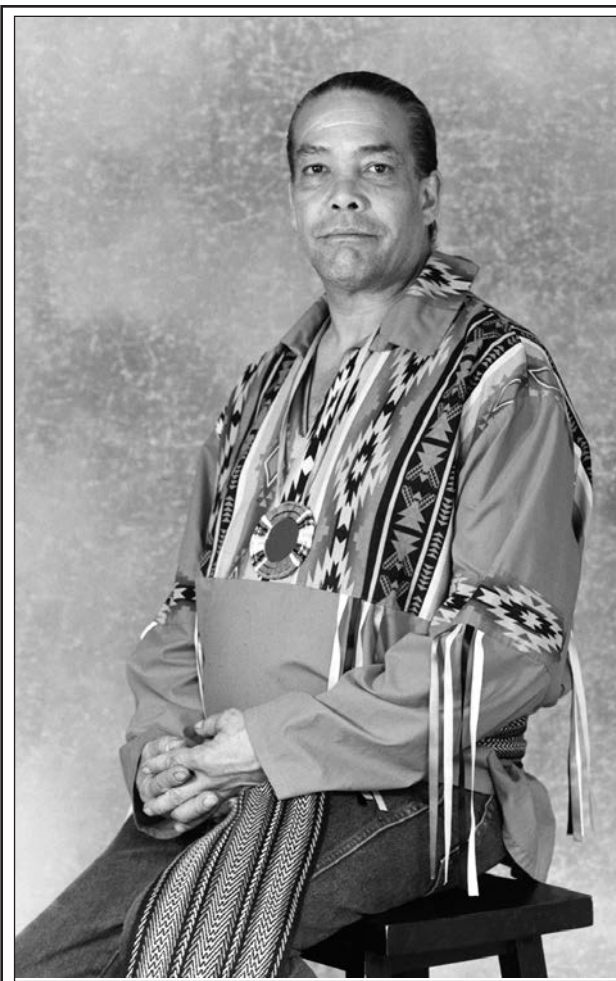
Learning from many elders, he found the Heyoekkah fascinating. “The sweat lodge door normally opens to the west but the Heyoekkah holy mans’ opens to the east. Their sweat lodge can actually open any direction and the pipe can be passed counter clockwise.” (There are Cree Heyoekkah but Heyoekkah are largely a Lakota tradition).

Ladouceur explains further on learning from the Heyoekkah, “It brings things out of people, especially at Sundance. When they are doing these things, they are shocked out of their normal reality and it brings forth a vision of how they should move forward.”

Elder Ladouceur now has medicines around him constantly. “I take three months out of my life to go and gather medicines. The rest of the year I give them out to the elders and people who need it across the country, for ceremony and [other uses].”

Now, in this time of Covid, Ladouceur is staying close to his community of Morley, supporting the elders that provide care. “I’m giving more medicines to the elders because they are using it for the people out here.”

Describing himself as an “experienced beginner” Ladouceur is passionate about his role and the



Medicine picker and Elder Darin Ladouceur

cultural hub he calls home. “Where I live in Banff, is the centre of six different language groups. There’s people that come from both sides of the mountains to use this area. Historically this was an area of trade, long before contact. The Shuswap lived here year-round, the Ktunaxa stayed in this valley as well and I’ve noticed family connections between the Stoney, the Shuswap, the Blackfoot and the Ktunaxa. All these different tribes are in this area including the Cree and of course, the Métis - this is part of our homeland.”

Throughout our conversation, the medicine picker talked about plants he’s found and how to use them as remedies: yew, because it’s a cancer medicine, tree fungus for respiratory infections, to stop seizures and relieve anxiety.

“There is a natural chemical in the smoke,” Darin explains. “That’s one thing I learned being a medicine picker that I never understood, how you could administer medication by burning it.”

Riding his bicycle around the area gives him more time to take stock of what is around him. “It’s funny, there are these little tiny spots and I’ll notice there’s medicine there.” That is, if you are open to finding it, and have good intent.




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Carrie Armstrong has a deep respect for the willow tree and all it's wondrous properties. Her new book "Mother Earth: Plants for Health and Beauty" is a treasure trove of useful and interesting information featuring the many amazing gifts from Mother Earth.

Okâwîmâwaskiy (Mother Earth's) Willow Tree: It's role in ceremony, healing and rebirth

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Below ground level, the *nîpisîy mistik* (willow tree) unites all roots systems as it holds hands in unity with all its relations on *okâwîmâwaskiy* (Mother Earth). The calming and grounding essence of a *nîpisîy mistik* connects us to the gifts *okâwîmâwaskiy* provides for us.

Much like the *nîpisîy mistik*, when our autonomic nervous system is regulated we can grow in abundance with love and compassion for all living things. But if there is a disruption within our familial ties, we struggle with nurturing ourselves and others, and growing strong and resilient like the *nîpisîy mistik*.

When Carrie Armstrong was a young girl, she was

taught the teachings of plants by her Metis grandmother. She remembers her grandmother being very guarded and nervous, she was fearful and ashamed. Her grandmother had two sides to her - one where she shared her knowledge about plants and medicines, and the other where she was afraid her grandchildren would be taken away from her- a too familiar feeling from when her own children were taken away to an Indian Residential School.

The heart of the *nîpisîy mistik* provides us with medicine, and each one of us is the medicine in the centre of our own medicine wheel. If our spirit has been hurt, then our nervous system will be dysregulated, and our connection to *okâwîmâwaskiy*

becomes lost.

Our autonomic nervous system has two branches: the sympathetic that enables us to go into fight-or-flight mode when we sense danger, and the parasympathetic, our *nîpisîy mistik*, that has a calming effect on our heart rate, and in turn relaxes our body, mind and spirit. And when there has been a disruption within our familial ties, the pain and suffering that comes with it, although we cannot see but feel, our nervous system will keep replaying hardship as it cannot distinguish between reality and past traumatic events.

The branches that build the frame to our ceremonial

Continued on page 12

Our cover artist: Rick Noname

The beautiful image on the cover of the December 2020 *Alberta Native News* is by Rick Noname, a traditional artist who was raised in the Piapot First Nations with traditional values.

Rick says that his artistic abilities allow him to express his understanding of the spiritual aspects of his culture. "Through imagery," he says, "I can give some of what was lost in my culture, back to all generations to share."

Rick has been a contributing artist to the pages of *Alberta Native News* for over 30 years. In fact, he was one of the first artists to help shape the newspaper.

Each of his paintings is an expression of his philosophy. "I put an Eagle Feather in every one of my paintings," explains Rick. "The power of the eagle feather can be felt when it's gently resting in your hand, gliding slowly through the air. The eagle feather is just as powerful as the eyes. Hold the eagle feather in front of yourself and feel the delicate balance that the feather creates as it cuts through the air. Look at the eagle feather and let your mind soar."

Native Spirituality strikes interest in people all over the world, notes Noname, who has paintings in Europe, Japan and the Philippines, as well as Canada and the U.S. "The beauty of the spiritual way is that there is great beauty in the Native way of life."

Rick wants to share his culture and artistic knowledge with the younger generation to ensure "that it is not lost, like so many of our teachings. Today we have freedom to express our views about our culture, and I express myself best through art."



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Mother Earth’s willow tree

cont. from p 11

sweat lodges, resembling the rib cage inside our mother’s womb, come from the *nîpisîy mistik*. The willow branches gift us the opportunity to engage in ceremony, and in prayers, respect and gratitude for our ancestors that have walked before us on *okâwîmâwaskiy* and gifted us the responsibility of paving the way for the generations that come after us.

The flexible and strong willow branches create a space for ceremony, our ways teach us that in sweat, the lodge represents the womb and rebirth. The connection the *nîpisîy mistik* shares with ceremony and *okâwîmâwaskiy* becomes a part of our healing journey. And part of our healing is finding our purpose in this lifetime, our gifts to share with others, our supportive roles within our communities, and to strengthen our connection to Creator.

The *nîpisîy mistik* benefits our livelihood as a food source, medicine and in ceremony. And when we are connecting with *okâwîmâwaskiy*, the *nîpisîy mistik* can also ground us.

The *nîpisîy mistik* is known for its healing properties and as part of our traditional ways, willow bark aids in pain, inflammation and fevers.

For Carrie Armstrong, the *nîpisîy mistik* symbolizes the strength that *okâwîmâwaskiy* provides for us, kindness that she gifts us, and love that flows in an abundance like the wind that carries a songbird’s voice through the serene mornings on a cool autumn day.

“Wisdom is knowing how to act, and not react.”

The wise woman tea that Armstrong blends together represents to her what it means to be a woman - strong and wise. When she blends together red clover, sage and raspberry leaves, that is Armstrong engaging in rewriting, healing and reconciling with her family's history of hardship, and gifting her three children with the strength and wisdom the medicines gifted her.

Armstrong found healing when she connected with the same medicines her grandmother worked with. Her love for connecting with the land, provided a safe place for her to ground her body, mind and spirit.

“The piece you need to heal, is the piece that we need to learn on how to be alone.”

Recipes from Carrie Armstrong (www.askiytea.com)

Elderberry Syrup Recipe

Quick and easy, and more affordable than the store-bought version!

Take 1 teaspoon when you feel like you need an immune boost; up to 3 times a day. (Note: Do not give honey to children under 1 year of age.)

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup dried elderberries
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced (optional)
- 1/2 cup honey
- fine mesh strainer

Instructions

Combine the elderberries, water, and ginger (if using) in a small saucepan over high heat and bring the mixture to a boil.

Lower the heat and allow the mixture to simmer until the water has been reduced by half, about 20 minutes.

Transfer the cooked berries and liquid to a clean bowl and pour it through a fine mesh strainer to remove the berry skins.

Use the back of a spoon to press on the berries in the strainer, to extract all of the juice, then discard the small amount of pulp left in the strainer.

Allow the elderberry juice to cool to room temperature, so that the heat doesn't harm the nutrients in the honey, then stir in the honey.

Use a whisk to incorporate it smoothly, then transfer the syrup into a sealed glass jar that you can store in the fridge.

This syrup should keep well for at least two weeks

when stored in the fridge, so if you don't think you'll use it all before then, feel free to freeze any extras. You can always thaw it overnight in the fridge when you need more.

Homemade elderberry syrup doesn't become as thick as the store bought version because it uses less sugar and no preservatives or thickeners, so don't be alarmed if the final syrup has a more liquid consistency.

Cold and Flu Healing Tea Recipe

I was taught that there is a particular bird that uses yarrow to line its nest in order to keep parasites away. Yarrow has been used traditionally to treat fever and diarrhea. Wild Mint is a great complementary plant because it helps with congestion and inflammation.

Ingredients

- 10 grams masân (Nettle)
- 10 grams wâpanewask (Yarrow)
- 10 grams âmiskowêhkask (Wild Mint)

Combine plants and store in an airtight container away from direct sunlight for up to 2 years.

Instructions

To prepare drinking tea, use about 5 grams of tea blend for each 250 mL of water.

Do not pour boiling water over your herbs, or you will burn the leaves. Bring the water to a boil and let it sit for a few minutes to cool slightly before adding the herbs.

You can use a tea strainer of some kind, or just let it sit in the cup.

Allow the tea to steep for at least 5 minutes.

Armstrong, the founder of Mother Earth’s Essentials walked with faith, and found courage to connect with the gifts Creator has gifted her.

She went back to school later in life so that she could teach. She was given the opportunity of incorporating plant teachings into everyday curriculums, that led to sparking interest in the kids while teaching them how to engage with plants through taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight - our five senses.

When we engage with our senses, we are calming our nervous systems and healing ourselves, and indirectly healing our communities.

In 2006, Armstrong began to blend not only teas, but beauty products from *okâwîmâwaskiy*. She incorporated the same teachings that she embodied when she was a little girl when she began to showcase the beauty of our culture.

The aromatic medicines of sweetgrass,

sage, cedar, peppermint, lavender and patchouli that Mother Earth’s Essentials lotions, candles, soaps, essential oils and shampoos relishes in, gifted our brothers and sisters across Turtle Island with the teachings from Armstrong’s grandmother. And by doing things the way our people traditionally would, this became Armstrong’s way of sharing her knowledge, connecting to healing, and taking responsibility in making sure her grandmother’s teachings were not being lost.

A big part of healing for Armstrong is education, and connecting and engaging with community. And with Armstrong’s love for blending teas she hand picked, she was able to launch a line of raspberry leaf, sage, elderberry, wild mint, yarrow, muskeg, nettle, and white willow teas to share with communities across Turtle Island, Askii Tea.

By honoring her grandmother’s memory, the gifts Armstrong offers all our relations have recently been published into a book, *Mother Earth: Plants for Health & Beauty*, gifting us with teachings of 26 edible and medicinal plants *okâwîmâwaskiy* shares with us.

Perhaps there is a teaching in itself, when kohkom would send us out into the bush to find the perfect *nîpisîhtak* (willow stick) for when we misbehaved, and that the teaching was how to ground ourselves amongst chaos of the external world that had no place for the serenity *okâwîmâwaskiy* gifts us.

For more information visit www.askiytea.com.



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Canada introduces legislation respecting UNDRIP

(Ottawa, ON) – On December 3, National Chief Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) welcomed the tabling of a federal bill to advance implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

“The bill tabled today contains key elements that the Assembly of First Nations has long sought to ensure that Canada meets its obligations to respect and implement the *UN Declaration*,” said National Chief Bellegarde. “The *UN Declaration* is a crucial tool for addressing systemic racism and closing the gap in quality of life between First Nations and Canadians. The new bill provides a much-needed framework to put the *Declaration* into practice.”

The proposed legislation would require the federal government to work collaboratively with Indigenous peoples to develop a National Action Plan to implement the *Declaration*, including measures to address prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against Indigenous peoples. The legislation calls for a process to identify laws that need to be reformed in order to meet Canada’s international human rights obligations. The bill would also require regular reporting on the progress made.

In addition, the Bill affirms the fact that the *UN Declaration* already has legal effect in Canada: it is increasingly being used by courts and tribunals to interpret federal and provincial laws. The preamble to the Bill condemns all racist and colonial doctrines and beliefs.

“Passing federal implementation legislation will be a positive step toward healing the wounds of racism and injustice,” said National Chief Bellegarde.

In its provisions, the new bill is closely modelled on Bill C-262, a private Member’s bill that was passed by the House of Commons in 2018. When Bill C-262 was blocked in the Senate, AFN Chiefs passed a resolution calling for federal legislation that “fully respects the intent of the *Declaration*, and establishes Bill C- 262 as the floor, rather than the ceiling.”

National Chief Bellegarde said, “The AFN has been given a clear mandate from our Chiefs to advocate for federal legislation that builds on the foundations of Bill C-262 and is every bit as strong as Bill C-262 in its respect for our rights. The bill tabled today meets that test.”

The AFN is urging all Parliamentarians to support adoption of a strong implementation framework before the close of this session of Parliament.

If passed by Parliament, Bill C-15 would require the Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the rights of Indigenous peoples set out in the *Declaration*, as well as to develop an

action plan to achieve its objectives.

“Each and every one of us has a responsibility to build a stronger, fairer and more just society for today and for future generations,” stated Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada David Lametti.

“Bill C-15 represents an important step forward in our collective reconciliation journey- rooted in the recognition of Indigenous rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. Working in full partnership with Indigenous peoples, the bill will chart the course to full and effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the inherent rights that it protects and promotes. Once passed, this will bring us another step closer to a brighter future for Canada, one where all our children and grandchildren can prosper and thrive.”

This legislation responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 43, which calls on all orders of government to fully adopt and implement the *Declaration* as the framework for reconciliation. It also responds to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls’ Calls for Justice.

“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples affirms the human rights of Indigenous peoples and provides all of us with an important roadmap for advancing reconciliation in Canada,” stated Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett.

“The implementation of the *Declaration* will accelerate progress in addressing our colonial legacy and moving to an approach that affirms Indigenous Peoples’ inherent rights. Building on the work of the former Member of Parliament, Romeo Saganash, the proposed legislation will help us to further implement the *Declaration* in partnership with First Nation, Inuit and Métis partners. Today is another step forward as we continue to chart a new path together toward a renewed relationship and a better, more inclusive future based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.”

Bill C-15 is about protecting and promoting the rights of Indigenous peoples including rights to equality and non-discrimination, self-government and the inherent right to self-determination. It also highlights the importance



of respecting and promoting the rights in treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between the Crown and Indigenous peoples.

“If passed, this Bill will represent another important step forward in our collective reconciliation journey - one that would open the way to greater opportunities for lasting relationships with Indigenous peoples, closing socio-economic gaps and promoting greater prosperity for today and for future generations,” notes a Government of Canada press release.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas

MLA David Hanson
Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul



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And wandering hunters heard the hymn:

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Colouring books share culture and help relieve stress

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With the cold weather upon us and the holidays right around the corner, it is the ideal time to relax with colouring books that are both beautiful and culturally relevant. Covid is also keeping us at home these days and colouring has proven to be an excellent stress reducer for people of ages. Colouring it Forward colouring books, the brainchild of Algonquin Metis artist Diana Frost, are a great way to learn more about Indigenous cultures and spend quality time at home.

Colouring It Forward is actually a social enterprise - it is part business (Colouring It Forward Inc) and part not-for-profit organization (CIF Reconciliation Society) that is aimed at facilitating Indigenous education and awareness and promoting reconciliation.

"Colouring It Forward began as a series of colouring books," explained Frost, who launched the enterprise about four years ago. "I worked with two Indigenous artists and an Elder. The intent was to share the beautiful things, to create books that heal and books that teach, books that highlight Indigenous culture, pay respect to traditional values and honour the wisdom, words and teachings by the Elders."

The company has been growing steadily but this year, in 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, has impacted the way the enterprise is being run.

"We're doing a lot of partnerships and collaborations with different organizations," explained Frost, "webinars and networking with Indigenous tourism Alberta - and another organization called *How She Hustles*. Those have been pretty neat opportunities because they were able to put my project in front of some new people that I wouldn't have otherwise met."

"And then this year we got into 12 Staples stores in Ontario. We're in a number of other stores in Ontario as well, but that was kind of nice."

The company began with a simple dream - a literal dream. Just as Frost was winding down in her career in Engineering, she had a dream one night that she was going to sell Indigenous-made colouring books. Then a few months later she was let go from her work which caused her to do some soul searching and take initiative.

The rest is history.

Although the process for the colouring books varies book to book, each one is created out of heavy collaboration between Frost, artists, and Elders in order to create something fresh, beautiful, and educational. "Usually I meet with one artist, who then guides me to other artists and Elders," Frost said. "For the future books, because I'm going to be making more, the process might change to something like a call-for-artists."

This year, a calendar has been built in collaboration with 13 different Indigenous artists from all around Turtle Island and features a message from Blackfoot Elder Joyce Healy. Months have been translated into the Indigenous language of the artists, along with recommendations of actions to take for reconciliation, and of course, colouring images.

The calendar, as well as the other products created by Colouring It Forward, is available for purchase online now at colouringitforward.com.

Every book, calendar or other item also includes a donation to a grassroots project. Some current projects that Frost and her company donate to are the Orange Shirt Day Society; Awo Taan Healing Lodge, an emergency shelter for women and children in Calgary; and Indspire, an Indigenous-led registered charity that invests in the education of Indigenous people for the long-term benefit of these individuals, their families and communities, and Canada.

Diana has generously provided two images for *Alberta Native News* readers to enjoy. Get your colouring pencils, markers or crayons, take a deep cleansing breath and relax with these beautiful images. Send us a copy of your finished product to our facebook page @ Alberta Native News.

For more information visit colouringitforward.com.



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Colouring it Forward promotes reconciliation through art, participation, and education.



Through a series of colouring books, calendars, and other products, Colouring it Forward has created a gathering place for Canada's Indigenous people to share their stories and their art, and to build a community based on mutual love and respect.

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To advertise your business or community event, call Dan at Alberta Native News: 780-421-7966 or email natnews@shaw.ca

Senator Murray Sinclair will retire from the Senate next month

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Senator Murray Sinclair, the first Indigenous judge to serve on the bench in Manitoba and only the second Indigenous judge appointed in Canada, has announced that he will officially leave the Red Chamber on Jan. 31, 2021.

He was appointed to the Senate on April 2, 2016 and has been working in the justice system in Manitoba for more than 25 years, serving as the co-chair of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba and as chief commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

“Since working on the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission], we have seen a shift in how our country understands and speaks of residential schools and Indigenous issues in Canada,” Sinclair said in a media statement.

“I leave the Senate feeling happy with how things are progressing and knowing that reconciliation will take a long time. I will continue to work on this for the rest of my life.”

“My tenure as senator has been a remarkable opportunity to serve the people of Manitoba, which I have striven to do with pride and humility for the last five years,” Sinclair wrote in a letter to Gov. Gen. Julie Payette last week.

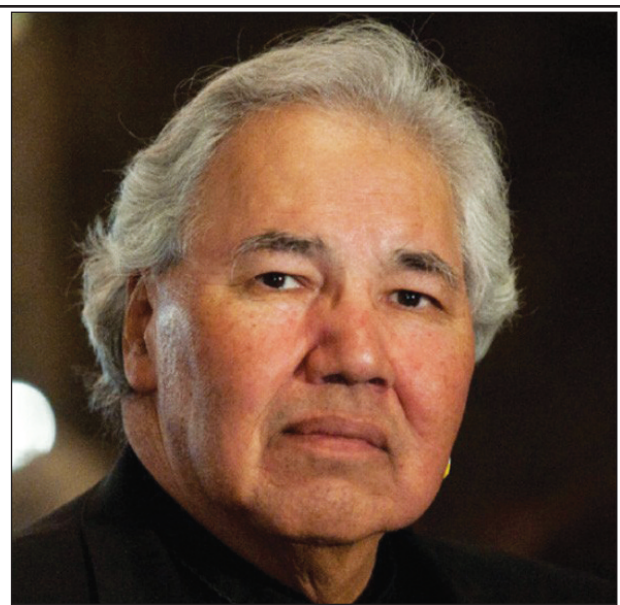
In an interview with CBC radio, Sinclair said of his decision to focus his time on writing his memoir that, “The year before my granddaughter was born, I had suffered a minor stroke.”

“It took about a year to get back to normal,” continued Sinclair. “When she was born, I was visiting with her and with her parents and I remember thinking that I may not be around when she grows up. My granddaughter may have questions that only I can answer. She doesn’t know my family — my grandmother, my grandfather, my father — or where we came from. I decided I was going to start writing things down for her.”

Sinclair has already announced a significant book deal with McClelland & Stewart, an imprint of Penguin Random House Canada. The book will be titled *Who We Are*, and it will look at his vision for reconciliation in Canada and how his experiences and the experiences of his family have shaped his perspective on the matter.

The Senator also revealed that he will be joining Cochrane Saxberg LLP, which is Manitoba’s largest Indigenous law firm, in order to mentor up-and-coming Indigenous lawyers.

“The challenge of the courts is going to be to figure



Senator Murray Sinclair.

out a way to reconcile the current laws of Canada with the pre-existing legal rights of Indigenous Peoples,” he said in an interview with the Canadian Press.

“Everybody’s now scrambling to figure all this out.” Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Perry Bellegarde said, “To my friend, Senator Murray Sinclair (@SenSincmurr), thank you for your service to Canada. With your retirement announced today, I know that you’ll go on to do great things. Thank you for being a beacon of hope for First Nations and a champion for humanity.”

FNHMA honours Indigenous healthcare workers

Featuring an exciting group of renowned guests including the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief, the Prime Minister, and others, Marion Crowe from the First Nations Health Managers Association (FNHMA) hosted a virtual celebration that honoured, thanked, and celebrated health care workers and the new certified First Nations Health Managers (CFNHM).

Marion Crowe - who has been CEO of FNHMA since the organization opened its doors over ten years ago - provided top-rate emceeing as the virtual celebration’s host of the inspiring 3-hour celebration on November 4, 2020. Elder Pat Green kicked off the event with an opening prayer and comment, and the festivities continued with guest speakers including AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Former Prime Ministers, Federal Ministers, and professional hockey player Carey Price. Each of whom shared their appreciation of health workers who have helped steer Indigenous communities through not only the COVID-19 crisis but also many of the problems that have been exacerbated by the global pandemic.

tributes to healthcare workers and featured musical guests like Crystal Shawnda, Adrian Sutherland, and Logan Staats, culminating in the exclusive presentation of the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI) Leadership Award to Bella Petawabano who works with the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay in Quebec.

As the event neared its end, the most recent CFNHM graduates were honoured with a touching ceremony.

For those who strive every day to make a difference in healthcare, especially during the recent pandemic, the virtual ceremony was a moving reminder of just how much the community and the country admires and thanks them for their hard work and sacrifice.

The sponsors of the celebration included the

Canadian Red Cross, CFHI, Indigenous Health Today (IHToday), the Canadian Patient Safety Institute, Emergent Biosolutions, Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, NationTalk, TC Energy, MNP, Bank of Montreal, Canada Health Infoway, Canadian Institute for Health Information, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay and others.

Watch the virtual celebration in its entirety at give.ihtoday.ca/fnhmacelebrates.

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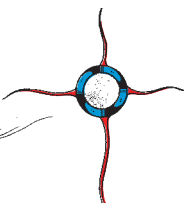


Best Wishes and many thanks from all of us

In these difficult economic times, we have truly appreciated your continued patronage of the Alberta Native News.

This holiday season may look completely different than any other, but if we stay the course, we can look forward to future holidays spent together with family and friends.

Wishing you a Happy & Healthy Holiday season from our quaran-team to yours. Here is to a much better 2021!



Daniel Moser,
Jake Cardinal,
Sandy Fayerman,
Marcia Mckall,
Sandra Edwards
and Deborah Shatz



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**Wishing everyone a safe, healthy
and happy holiday season!**



All the best in the new year.

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on the lands of Treaty No. 6 territory.

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Marvel’s Indigenous Voices *cont. from p 9*

overcome the negative impact of the pandemic situation that has been plaguing so many other retail operations.

Additionally, he says, "We're very lucky, we're the largest comic book retailer in Canada." He states that, "about 75 percent" of his customers are local Edmontonians with the other 25 percent from other places. One more drawing card for his business is that clients can sit around and read, indulge in games, sip coffee or simply relax and socialize.

Down the road, "I'd like to offer art classes with the Indigenous community," said Joyall, whose background is Metis and Abenaki from Quebec. He is inspired to "give back" to his (Indigenous) community and working with Charles may help create more opportunities for mentoring other aspiring artists.

Charles has always enjoyed art, creating characters and images as a child and so, it came as no small surprise to him or his classmates that someday his dream would come to fruition.

However, it was no smooth road to achieve his dream. As recently as five years ago he was just one of hundreds of Edmonton's homeless people living on the streets and not knowing where or when his next meal or bed may come from. As it was, back then he was crashing in a park area very close to present-day Wonder Harbour.

With hard work and some lucky breaks, Charles managed to turn his life around and pursue his dream of illustrating comic books and graphic novels. His life experience is one of the reasons he now shares his talents teaching comic art to students and at-risk youth.

Initially, Charles was in disbelief when he received an e-mail from Marvel Entertainment. He thought it was a hoax but after a while, it clicked in when he recognized the editor's signature at the bottom of the letter.

Getting his foot in the door like this is "huge," says the artist. He appreciates the opportunity to share his talents and his voice with the industry.

In the past, comic writers and artists have been non-Indigenous people. "We've seen a lot of Indigenous stories or characters," explains Kyle, "but a lot of the time they aren't told by Indigenous people."

More recently, that has changed as the industry has come to recognize the important voice that Indigenous artists can offer to the industry, particularly their own knowledge and experiences derived from living their culture and customs, practicing their own traditions, language, art, storytelling, legends, and more.

Charles spent about two months developing his material for Marvel during the early fall. It included his own creation of a new character - Dani Moonstar, a Cheyenne heroine. For Charles, he hopes it is one of many more to come.

One thing he feels strongly about is that Indigenous people will see something of themselves in and through his characters which inspires him all the more to continue on his present journey.

In addition to the Marvel project, Charles has contributed to some major publications such as: 'Image Comics '68:Hallowed Ground'; 'Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection'; 'This Place: 150 Years Retold'; in addition to 'Heavy Metal', and 'onSpec' magazines.

He is the first of only a few Indigenous illustrators brought on board by Marvel and the first Indigenous person to create a new Marvel character.

Christmas at Moonstone Creation



The Covid pandemic has hit some students harder than others – especially those without laptops at home. The Moonstone Creation's family is helping to level the playing field by donating laptops to Indigenous students in need at Ian Bazalgette School and at AE Cross School in Calgary. Their donations are much appreciated. Visit moonstonecreation.ca to view the beautiful items that are available for purchase and to sign up for virtual classes or call 403-261-2650.

He's now worked at comic illustrating for about ten years and his future is looking very bright. With this project now behind him, he is turning his focus to the approaching spring of 2021 and the release of 'Wheetago Warrior' which he has illustrated.

*Our very best wishes
for a Merry Christmas
and good health & safety in 2021.*

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Best wishes to everyone
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Pandemic Christmas 2020

By Xavier Kataquapit

(underthenorthernsky.com) - Christmas has never been a normal affair for me my entire life. This year it seems that no one will be able to call this a normal Christmas.

I was born and raised in Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast and my family's ideas of Christmas were very far removed from the norm. From the perspective of a young boy who was born into all this, Christmas was a confusing mixture of Catholic ideas, mass media marketing and commercialization all served to us by our traditionally minded Cree parents who were doing the best they could. We celebrated the birth of Jesus at church, sang praises to a guy in a big red suit at school and decorated a tree in our living room for some reason. No one ever asked why, we just followed what the rest of the country was doing and that was fine by us.

The best thing that I recall from the holidays was the never ending spread of food that my mom Susan produced for all of us. My dad Marius worked tirelessly to keep the kitchen stocked, the house warm, the kids busy and he helped with the cooking when he could. We had European foods like turkey, ham, beef, pastas, salads and gravies mixed in with traditional foods like Canada goose, snow goose, moose stew and caribou.

While it looked like we were having a Disney like Christmas, we were also living through some dark periods of chaos and confusion brought about by alcoholism and addictions. Mom and dad did the best they could to keep these demons at bay but the chaos was never far away.

Christmas in 1990 represents the most terrible tragedy for myself and my family. We lost my older brother Philip Kataquapit, who was only 16 at the time. On Christmas day through a series of unfortunate events he became stranded and alone on the winter road between Attawapiskat and Kashechewan. He died alone on the Kapiskau River in the freezing cold and it took me, my siblings and our parents many Christmases before we could feel like celebrating the holidays again. What should be a

festive time of the year for me is mired in the memory of my beautiful, witty, humorous and intelligent brother's passing.

This year, a pandemic Christmas has added another cloud to the holidays. Everyone had hoped that our northern region could be spared from the infections but positive cases for Covid19 have been slowly creeping into every community. My home community of Attawapiskat, as remote as it is, has now identified positive cases in the population and that is cause for concern for everyone. In a remote northern reserve like Attawapiskat, where many families are forced to live in overcrowded homes, an outbreak is far too easy to occur. Local leadership and medical personnel are doing their best to test and trace cases and trying to convince everyone to quarantine at home and to contain the risks of further spread.

Throughout northern Ontario, we consider ourselves lucky that we are not as densely populated as our southern neighbours in the cities and larger towns but we all still have to be careful. We have to continue practicing safe distancing, staying at home as much as possible, washing hands and wearing masks in public. Hope is on the horizon with the continued announcements of vaccines and we may get them in early spring. Thankfully the federal government is relying on their medical and science experts to ensure the vaccines are safe and that they can be distributed across the country.

Cases in Canada are increasing at an alarming rate as are deaths and after Christmas it is expected there will be a considerable surge. Governments and public health organizations have claimed from the beginning of this pandemic that the key to managing it was to test and trace. However, this has not been done to a great extent. I am hopeful that testing in schools,



colleges and universities will become the norm after Christmas so we understand just how many cases we are dealing with and conduct the necessary tracing to manage Covid 19 while vaccines arrive.

The trick is stay healthy for as long as possible and we can all avoid the worst of this pandemic. Stay well and you can tell your children, your grandchildren and even great grandchildren what this Christmas was like years from now. Stay well and mindful to protect those elders around you so that they can share the same stories as well.

I wish you all a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. If we follow the rules, stay two meters apart, wear masks in public buildings and wash hands often we can all enjoy Christmas next year.

For more columns by Xavier Kataquapit visit underthenorthernsky.com.

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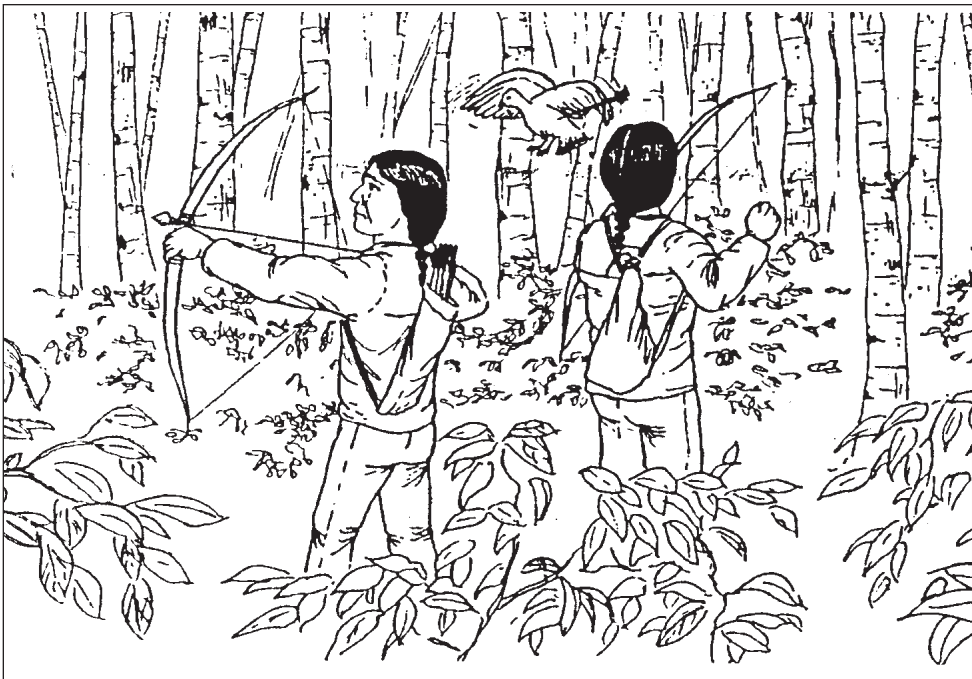


LEGEND

The Sacred Rock is provided by the Lac La Ronge Band, Curriculum Resource Unit who are dedicated to providing quality educational resources to all the people of the First Nations.

The Sacred Rock

Collected and illustrated by James Ratt; told by Jean Roberts



Long ago, there lived a widow who had two small boys. She made two small bows with arrows and taught them how to use them.

One day, she told them to go out and shoot some birds to eat. “Later, I will make you stronger bows so that you can shoot bigger game,” she told them.

She put some ready cooked meat in a bag and told them to sit on a large rock when they got hungry and wanted to eat.

One day while the boys were eating their lunch on a large rock, they heard a voice saying, “I’d like to tell you boys a story.”

They looked all around but did not see anyone so they kept on eating.

“Shall I tell you some stories?” the voice asked again. It was coming from the rock they were sitting on.

“What kind of stories do you tell?” the boys asked then. The rock said he told stories of things that happened a long time ago. He said, “If you will give me your birds, I will tell you many stories.”

Continued on page 19

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The Sacred Rock *cont. from p 18*



The two brothers laid their ducks and geese beside the rock and sat close to it as it told them strange stories and legends. It was almost sunset when the voice from the rock said, “You have to go home now, but come back tomorrow and I will tell you more stories.”

On their way home, the boys shot three birds each. When their mother asked why they didn’t have more, they said the ducks and geese were getting scarce. The same thing happened the next day and also the day after.

The mother knew that her children were not telling the truth. So, she went to the Chief and told him the problem.

The Chief said, “I will send two men tomorrow to follow your sons to see what they are doing with their catch.”

This was done and the two men watched the boys shoot ten birds each. The boys then laid them down beside the rock.

As the men watched, they were surprised to hear a voice coming from the rock saying, “Bring all the people from your village here tomorrow. Tell them to bring some food or a gift and I will tell them many stories.”

The Chief and all the people were astonished to hear what the braves had to tell. The Chief said, “We will do as the rock says.”

Everyone took gifts or some food and went to the talking rock.

When the people had all made their offerings, they sat down around the stone and the voice began to speak. It told wonderful stories of beautiful lands and



strange creatures. It told of animals that could talk to one another and of people yet to come to this land.

When it was almost sundown, the rock said, “I have told you many stories and it is up to you to keep them as long as the world lasts. Tell them to your children and grandchildren but make sure they always place tobacco or a little food before the story tellers.”

The rock never spoke again, but for many years the people visited the sacred stone. Today, some old people still remember those legends and stories.

When you visit old people, you should always carry a gift. The old person will never refuse it.

Conservation coalition challenges Edmonton solar plant

(Edmonton) - Local grassroots non-profit Edmonton River Valley Conservation Coalition has filed a request for judicial review regarding the City of Edmonton’s rezoning of 99 acres of river valley parkland for an Epcor industrial solar plant.

“We have a river valley bylaw precisely to protect our river valley from commercial, industrial, and public utilities threats,” said Kristine Kowalchuk, the chair of the ERVCC.

“Solar energy is, of course, good in the right location – like on rooftops, landfills, and brownfield sites. But this is rare aspen parkland habitat that is heavily used by wildlife, and a regionally significant wildlife corridor; it is not an essential, nor appropriate, location for an industrial solar power plant.”

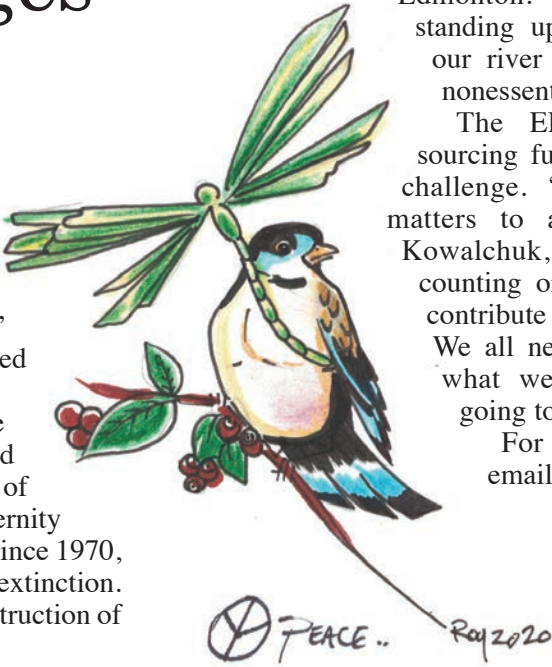
As the ERVCC website states, this land is already sequestering carbon, as well as purifying the air, cooling the city, preventing flooding and drought, and providing habitat.

The project would disturb the plants and soil with pilings for 45,000 solar panels, preventing the land’s

functioning as a carbon sink. It would also include the cutting of trees. The panels would be located behind a security fence, meaning that an area the size of 26 football fields would be lost as habitat, and a pinch-point “alley” approximately 1.5 km long would be created in the wildlife corridor.

“The city has an obligation to respect the river valley bylaw,” Kowalchuk adds. “And that respect is now critical in this time of climate crisis and biodiversity crisis. Modernity has wiped out 60% of wildlife populations since 1970, and one million species are now at risk of extinction. The greatest cause for these losses is the destruction of natural habitat.

By simply locating the solar panels elsewhere, we can work toward our city’s climate goals and preserve our river valley, which is so valuable



ecologically and to the people of Edmonton. The ERVCC is standing up for protection of our river valley against this nonessential industrial use.”

The ERVCC is crowd-sourcing funding for the legal challenge. “The river valley matters to all of us,” notes Kowalchuk, “and so we are counting on Edmontonians to contribute to our campaign. We all need to stand up for what we love, or we are going to lose it.”

For more information email info@ervcc.com.

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