



ALBERTA NATIVE NEWS



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Elder Tom Snow: A healing journey

By Dale Ladouceur, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

I first met Elder Snow a few years ago, jumping at the chance to go Sweetgrass picking for the first time with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. He is a quietly charismatic man who exudes a calm and steady presence. I approached the soft-spoken Elder for guidance and we soon became friends, honouring my family with my daughter’s naming ceremony.

What I find draws most people to Elder Snow is his generosity in sharing his teachings that were born out of a life story of resilience. I recently spoke with Elder Snow, eager to hear his calming voice and wise counsel amid tumultuous times.

“I believe a lot of people may strive to be something they want but because of a lack of natural experience, it is challenging for them to be in that place they want,” remarked Snow. So much of what I wanted to discuss with him was addressed with this response.

Prompting him to share from his history and what he draws strength from, Elder Snow took a long, slow breath and began. “The earliest thing I remember is horses. All the time: sleigh-riding, pulling our wagon or me riding a horse. Most of the time we were camped out in a teepee or tent and when we went home, we lived in a log cabin with no running water. We gathered wood for the stove and for heating, so I was always in touch with nature. I lived this way until I was old enough to go to Residential School. I was there for a year and then my father took me out and put me in the Day School when I was seven.”

Snow, like many Residential School survivors, blocked out much of that experience. He spoke of trauma, abuse and humiliation but luckily his parents intervened. “Because my parents noticed I was not myself, they put me in Day School, and shortly thereafter I began having anxiety attacks at night.

“At night there’s nothing open, no health centres. So my father would put me on the back of the horse, we would ride double and he would take me to a medicine woman. She was very old, I remember the medicine woman smudging me and praying and

talking to my father about traditional things and what was happening to me. Some of [the talk] I didn’t understand because it was a higher form of Nakoda language. I would feel better after this as I was riding home. I don’t remember much else except getting off the horse, walking in and sleeping soundly.”

After grade six, Tom’s father pulled him out of Residential Day School and put him in a public school in Exshaw. “When I left the Residential and Day Schools, I was a real mess: thin, frail, sickly. It was the abuse of what happened there: I couldn’t speak my language, teachers were yelling, throwing stuff at us.”

In Exshaw, the culture shock was reflected in interactive behaviour. “In the Residential Schools it was a bullying atmosphere and, [because of this], my typical reactions were not appropriate for public school. If somebody teased you in the Residential School,” Snow explained, “you would defend yourself. You can’t do that in public school, but that’s what I had learned.”

The other piece of culture shock was in education. “I remember the first time the art teacher came in and said, ‘Ok class we are going to be doing converging lines, so I want all of you to draw a bowling lane.’ I had no idea what a bowling lane looked like! So, I had to look at the other students’ work to see what was going on and mimicked them.”

Tom was a pretty good student but the difference in culture had a negative impact on him, affecting him deeply. By the time he was in grade ten, his self-esteem and self-identity had been “really quashed.”

The death of his father during the first month of grade 11 caused a downward spiral. “I couldn’t face the class or be productive so I dropped out. That started me on my drinking path.” One bright spot during this dark time was “a godsend of a program called the Stony Wilderness Centre.”

The program was 12 days: three days Indigenous culture orientation, three days of horseback riding into



Elder Tom Snow

the mountains and a three day camping backpack trip. Unfortunately the program stopped and Tom’s drinking went from bad to worse, staying that way for ten years. “Alcohol really humbles you.” He confessed, “I ended up in downtown Calgary, at times homeless, in the gutter.” Snow went back to the reserve “...with completely nothing except my mother.”

Luckily Snow’s desire to learn and grow caused him to sober up and self-reflect with a reoccurring question: Why am I like this? He started to research indigenous perspective histories, initially calling his own research *The Effect of Histories*. “It was an investigation into what had affected me to be face down in the gutter with all of my potential.”

His deep-dive research into Intergenerational Trauma, Residential Schools and the Indian Act, taught him that “the way I was; it was not all my fault. I thought I was not good enough, my parents were too poor to help me. I was blaming myself, my parents, my grandparents. The research was a revelation of what had occurred.”

Snow explained that “from 1884 to 1951 practicing traditional beliefs and practices were banned and many had to go underground.” If Tom Snow was going to walk a true, traditional path, he was going to draw from true Nakoda practices he had

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working
conditions
are
learning
conditions

Over the last two years, our universities and colleges have suffered under some of the deepest cuts from the provincial government. These cuts don't just affect students and parents but have a damaging effect on local communities and their economies.

Alberta has post-secondary education institutions all across our province: in 26 communities to be exact, including your hometown. Post-secondary education is a cornerstone of Alberta. Our sector creates hundreds of thousands of jobs and is one of the major employers in the province. It trains the workforce of tomorrow, and works tirelessly to promote the public interest through ground-breaking research, teaching, and community engagement. Provincial funding cuts have led to job losses and hiring freezes across all of these communities. This will affect all of us as job losses mean fewer people going shopping, eating out, and supporting local businesses.

As students, faculty, and support staff, we are calling on the provincial government to restore operating funding that has been cut from our universities, colleges, and polytechnics. The province's books cannot be balanced on the backs of Alberta's students or its workers. Layoffs and salary reductions will hurt the economic recovery of both big cities and small towns, and budget shortfalls addressed by increasing tuition costs on students mean that families are paying more for less.

We support accessible post-secondary education for everyone in Alberta – not just today but into the future as well. It has never been clearer that the working conditions of faculty and staff are the learning conditions of students.

Stop the cuts. Invest in post-secondary education.

stopPSEcuts.ca

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Vaccinations are underway in Alberta First Nations

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The delivery of COVID vaccinations is underway in Alberta and the arrival of the vaccines couldn't be more welcome as many Indigenous Nations in the province have been reporting high COVID numbers and declaring states of emergencies.

The initial 16,900 doses were sent to long-term care facilities in Edmonton, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Fort Saskatchewan and six congregate living facilities on First Nations. Additional doses have now also been delivered to some communities.

Canada's Indigenous communities have been recognized as a priority population for COVID-19 immunization by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

According to information released by the federal government, Alberta's Indigenous communities have been the hardest hit across Canada. As of January 11, Alberta accounted for almost one third of the cases – 3639 out of a total 11229 – identified on First Nations.

Alberta Health says individuals on First Nations reserves aged 65 and up are currently prioritized in Phase 1B of the province's vaccination schedule slated for February.

Stoney Nakoda First Nation has been reporting

high numbers of COVID cases causing the Nation to declare a State of Emergency and Necessary Action on January 12.

An update posted onto their Facebook page reads, "The Director of Emergency Management in conjunction with other members of the Incident Command Team have determined that a state of emergency exists within the Stoney Nakoda towns of Morley, Big Horn and Eden Valley due to the unprecedented increase in positive COVID-19 cases."

In order to combat the spread of the virus, Stoney Nakoda advised anyone who exhibited symptoms to follow a four-step protocol: follow the advice of health professionals (including assisting with contact tracing), self-isolate, wear a mask and practice hand hygiene, and avoid all non-essential travel.

The band council also signed a resolution effectively banning house-to-house visits and instilled a curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. except for work, health or emergency purposes. On-nation funerals and wakes will no longer be allowed either.

As of Sunday, Jan. 10, there were 86 active cases. Sunday there were 13 new cases.

Siksika First Nation in southern Alberta, located about 100 kilometres east of Calgary, has received its



first shipment and the first doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine were distributed to residents and staff at a care facility.

Siksika Health Services (SHS) said that securing the vaccinations was a top priority because they needed to protect their most vulnerable people and their elders.

"Having comprehensive local health services to

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EPS forms a new HELP Unit

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On January 5, 2020 the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) began a new initiative: The Human-centred Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP) Unit.

This new unit was made in collaboration with EPS and Boyle Street Community Services (BSCS), the latter being the trade name of *The Boyle Street Service Society*, an Alberta society and a registered charity which helps homeless and at-risk citizens within Edmonton.

"The goal of HELP is to connect people made vulnerable in Edmonton with supports and services before they become entrenched in the criminal justice system," said BSCS in a Facebook post.

"The HELP unit consists of two leads and eight Boyle Street Navigators and six constables and two sergeants from EPS. Boyle Street navigators work with EPS constables to respond to calls from the community... We are excited to be part of this groundbreaking social policing project."

HELP focuses on those individuals at greatest risk for victimization and offending, and at greatest risk and harm to themselves, others, and the community as a whole.

Despite launching in January 2021, the HELP unit has been working throughout 2020 by forming teams of Constables and Navigators, as well as advocating with numerous agencies for their support in the new initiative.

There are over 15 partnering organizations supporting the Unit.

"We feel that the HELP program will lead the way in social policing for the Edmonton Police Service. We will lead the way through the culture change and the shift in the way we must do business," said Acting Sgt. Kellie Morgan, from EPS HELP Unit.

"We have given community members a monthly bus pass so they could attend appointments because transportation was their major barrier. Other citizens

received assistance completing forms to obtain pensions, housing, medical care, or even obtaining identification because they didn't know who could help them or where to go," explained Morgan.

"Then we have the truly heartwarming stories. We've helped community members gain keys to their own homes; sometimes it's the first roof over their head in decades. Others are reconnected with family members across the country and our team assists in getting the community member to their family so they can be surrounded by those who love them and can support them."

Doug Cooke, Boyle Street Community Services Navigator Manager said, "We kind of cover the gambit — I hope — of some of the ideas and issues that might come along. That we can share the information that we have and be able to support each other, as well as our community."


"We're building relationships between social services and the frontline, as well as the frontline and

the community members they're meeting on a daily basis," said Cooke. "This takes many shapes, like casual conversations, responding in a time of crisis, supporting them in their journey or handing out snacks and water as a simple, yet powerful first step in initiating the building of trust among our vulnerable community members."

The launch of the HELP Unit comes after the announcement that EPS is looking for new recruits for their new Nisohkamakewin Council, which is a revamp of the force's previous Indigenous Liaison Committee. Set to begin in March 2021, the Council is the "Indigenization of a policing institution," said EPS Indigenous equity advisor Andrea Levey.

"It's the reclamation of Indigenous cultures, worldviews (and) perspectives within a colonial institution. It's the way that we engage with police members as Indigenous peoples. It's the way that police engage with Indigenous people out in the community."

Those seeking to volunteer with the council can contact Levey at Nisohkamakewin@edmontonpolice.ca by January 31. Successful candidates will be decided by a panel by mid-February.



**COMMITMENT TO ACTION**

MAKING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

EPS is engaging with Indigenous, Black, racialized and underserved communities to improve policing, and reimagine community safety and well-being.

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- Host your own community event using our toolkit.
- Share your stories and ideas with us at epsinput.ca.



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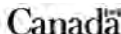
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Indigenous students must see themselves in what they learn

By Karen Bruno and Lloyd Cardinal

The draft recommendations to remove residential schools from the K-4 curriculum and the process for reviewing and approving changes to the Alberta curriculum are in direct violation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action regarding better relations between Indigenous peoples and the provincial government.

The care of our young people is the most important task we have as a people, culture, and a province collectively. What our young people learn in school helps them understand who they are, how they feel about the places they grow up, and how they learn about our connection with one another. What our young people learn can instill a sense of pride in culture, responsibility to the land, and how to stand together so that we all can reach our potential. Children must know where they come from, which starts with nurturing the hearts and minds of our children so they learn our purpose in life and can contribute to this generation and the next seven generations to come.

Schools have a significant role to play in that learning — that is evidenced through the original intention of residential schools. The attempts to force Indigenous people through an educational system that would change our identity is important learning for all children. Understanding where we are now includes learning about our Indigenous history and culture, how Indigenous people have shaped our country and our province, and how colonization has impacted us as Indigenous people, and collectively as a country. It is through curriculum that students are given the tools and knowledge to understand our collective history and current identity, building the foundation for future relationships.

Sadness for children is not knowing who they are or how they came to experience the world. Eliminating opportunities to be acknowledged and valued in educational systems is a reiteration of the role residential schools played in our history. When taught in context of the vital role that Indigenous people have played, and continue to play, in the creation of our country and our beautiful province, this learning is part of celebration of identity and provides hope to future generations. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our young people know the full extent of both the richness of Indigenous culture and history, and the impact that residential schools have had in damaging the continuity of culture and connection.

The TRC’s calls to action on these things are clear:

62. “We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to: Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to Grade 12 students.”

63. “We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including: developing and implementing kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.”

To say the TRC is of value and to follow the current educational direction is a clear conflict. While Education Minister Adriana LaGrange committed in October to keeping residential schools in the curriculum, the current direction disregards a pre-established process meant to ensure meaningful consultation and collaboration with teachers, academics, and all Indigenous people. Meaningful consultation and collaboration takes time; time to build relationships, to understand peoples’ experiences and time to ensure recommendations are integrated into the curriculum in an evidence-based and age-appropriate way.

We need to ensure that we are creating safe and caring schools for all learners. For Indigenous learners that means our history and culture needs to be acknowledged so we can see ourselves in what we learn and how we learn. With graduation rates in Edmonton Public Schools at just over 40 per cent for Indigenous students, we know that our young people are not getting what they need.

They obviously do not feel safe or cared for. Without access to supportive and reflective education, Indigenous people will continue to experience extremely high numbers of our people living in poverty and perpetually subjected to over-involvement in the systems of child welfare, health care, and criminal justice. Valuing the experiences we have had through the government’s educational systems is part of acknowledging our need to work better together, supporting our people to be proud of who we are and what we have to offer.

In the words of Sen. Murray Sinclair “Education is what got us here and education is what will get us out.”

Karen Bruno and Lloyd Cardinal co-chair the EndPoverty Edmonton Indigenous Circle. This article was originally published in the Edmonton Journal.



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Our cover artist: Lance Cardinal

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The vibrant image on the cover of this month’s *Alberta Native News* is “Intergenerational Love” by Lance Cardinal, an acclaimed contemporary artist. Cardinal has worked as an artist in Alberta for over 25 years and has created a large variety of artwork in the region, including set and prop design, live performances, as well as painting, sculpture and drawing.

He has been nominated and won multiple awards in theatre, such as the Jessie Richardson Award for Outstanding Set Design.

Lance sat down with *Alberta Native News* and at the time of the interview, he was at an IKEA to support new prints of a painting by artist Erin Currie -- from Montana First Nation. The prints are selling for \$20 and 100% of the proceeds go to the Bent Arrow Healing Society. Cardinal and IKEA have been in collaboration for “the last year or two to incorporate some new Indigenous elements into their space. (In part) to acknowledge that the land they’re on is in Treaty 6 territory.”

“This was an idea they had to bring representation and authenticity to their store and to have the Indigenous people of Alberta see themselves in these spaces.” In collaboration with IKEA, Cardinal created a huge, 40-foot mural that “represents the seven sacred teachings,” earlier this year. IKEA recently debuted its first-ever indigenous showroom, which was designed by Cardinal.

Lance Cardinal faced many obstacles on his artistic journey. He grew up on Bigstone Cree Nation, Treaty 8. “My home community is Calling Lake, Alberta and my reserve is up near Desmarais, by Wabasca.” “I come from a very small town – about 500 people - an Indigenous community. And I grew up there with a pretty typical Indigenous upbringing.”

Cardinal continued, “Our family, a single-mom-family, was very poor. Didn’t have much money; didn’t have many resources then. I grew up around a lot of alcohol, a lot of crime and those kinds of environments. So, it was a bit of a tough journey growing up.”

“When I was growing up, I didn’t have much of a place to express who I was. I didn’t know it then, but I realized when I was older that I was two-spirited. And there was a lot of identity crises trying to discover who I was. I was also a mixed-blooded Indigenous person - - I’m very light-skinned – so, I faced a lot of discrimination and stereotypes in my small town.” Art was his escape from all the discrimination, name-calling, and bullying that he was facing. “Creativity was my best outlet. It let me escape into a world of imagination where I could be free. I could be important, I could be heard, and that just translated further and further into my career.”

And there was never a plan B; “I absolutely always knew I was going to be an artist. That was something that I wanted to do when I was growing up, something that I focused on in my high school years, something I went to school for in my university and college years; and something that I do full-time and have done professionally full-time for about thirty years.” Cardinal worked as a performer at the beginning of his career and worked on stages all over Western Canada. He then got into set design work and started his own set-building company and ran it for fifteen years,

creating pieces for the mainstages of Vancouver and winning many of the top Vancouver set-design awards.

Then after spending time in the theatre industry he bounced back into the art world by “doing sculpture shows in galleries all over Vancouver for a while. Showcasing my contemporary Indigenous sculpture work.”

Pine Needle is one of his sculptures.

The large, hand-carved sewing needle was made out of pine wood and was placed through an artist plinth, the white-stand common for displaying sculptures. To support the notion that beadwork and sewing are artforms, Cardinal said he used the giant needle to represent “the artisans in Indigenous communities. The sewers, the beaders who are under appreciated - who are not considered artists.”

“I decided to put that needle right through the plinth to talk about how we are breaking through into the world of art and away from the world of artisans and crafts.”

However, Cardinal felt a longing for home, “All that was great and fine, but I was living in Vancouver away from my homeland, and felt like I needed to come home and bring all that knowledge and experience back to Alberta and try to build the Indigenous footprint in Edmonton. My goal now is to try to raise the recognition of our people here in Edmonton through creativity, positivity, conversation. Really using art to tell our story, but in a very accessible way so that all Nations can learn.”

Today, Lance Cardinal is currently hosting a children’s show that he has created, called *Indigenous Art Adventures with Lance Cardinal*.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Cardinal was isolated far away from his family. With experience in children’s workshops, he had the idea to create some children’s videos for families to do with their children at home during isolation. What began as 12 videos produced, written, and directed by himself,

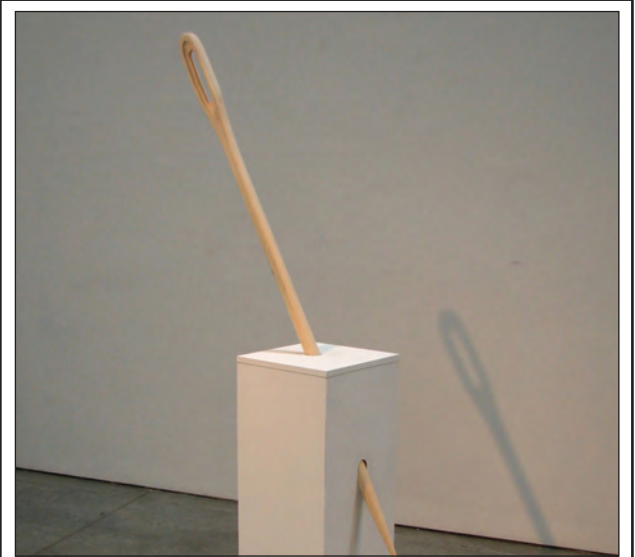


Join artist Lance Cardinal on his monthly family oriented program "Indigenous Art Adventures with Lance Cardinal" - hosted by the Aboriginal Congress of Alberta. It's free on You Tube, Facebook and event brite.

Cardinal is now in a TV studio in Edmonton doing the videos full-time. “It’s sort of like an art tutorial video, but it also has culture in it. I teach Cree words that are associated with the art that I’m sharing and I also talk about Indigenous artists all over Canada as part of the teaching.”

“It’s a fun, Indigenous-style Mr. Dress-up or Mr. Roger’s Neighbourhood but with Cree words and Indigenous art.”

Indigenous Art Adventures is being run through the Aboriginal Congress of Alberta Association’s Facebook page, but you can also check out Lance’s YouTube channel “Family Arts Adventures with Lance Cardinal,” which has all the different episodes available for streaming for free.




Pine Needle by Lance Cardinal

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Natural Resources
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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF HEARING
NRCB APPLICATION NO. 1701

ALBERTA TRANSPORTATION
SPRINGBANK OFF-STREAM RESERVOIR PROJECT

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) will hold a public hearing of the application by Alberta Transportation to construct the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project (the Project) on the Elbow River upstream of the City of Calgary. This notice sets out how to participate in the hearing that will commence at 9:00 a.m. on March 22, 2021.

The application by Alberta Transportation to construct the Project, and all documents filed with the NRCB are available on the NRCB website link. (<https://www.nrcb.ca/natural-resource-projects/natural-resource-projects-listing/83/springbank-off-stream-reservoir-project>)

The NRCB held a virtual Pre-Hearing Conference on December 2, 2020. The Pre-Hearing Conference Decision Report (<https://www.nrcb.ca/public/download/files/167196>) was issued and posted online on December 10, 2020.

TO FILE A SUBMISSION: The NRCB Pre-Hearing Conference Decision Report sets out the specific issues identified for review at the hearing. Written submissions addressing these issues must be filed with the Board by 4:30 p.m., February 26, 2021. Alberta Transportation may file a response submission by 4:30 p.m., March 12, 2021.

Paper filings are not required. All documents must be filed electronically in PDF format (PDF, OCR searchable, and bookmarked). Submissions are to be provided to Laura Friend, Manager, Board Reviews (laura.friend@nrcb.ca) for public posting to the NRCB website to allow parties access to each other's written submissions.

In addition to the submission, an intervener must file a copy of all reports or other material (other than material that summarizes the submission) that the intervener intends to enter into evidence at the hearing. Material not filed by February 26, 2021 in accordance with this requirement may be excluded from the hearing record at the panel's discretion.

The panel is required to give standing to persons who may be directly affected by a reviewable project. Persons, Indigenous groups, and government authorities with standing have the right to review information relevant to any application, to furnish evidence relevant to an application, to cross-examine, and to provide argument during a hearing. Parties that the panel has determined not to be a directly affected party do not have standing to make representations or cross-examine other parties at the hearing. However, the panel has determined that parties that are not directly affected by the Project may file a written submission in advance of the hearing. All parties should review the information available in the NRCB Pre-Hearing Conference Decision Report and in the guides and fact sheets accessible on the NRCB website.

Individuals or groups of individuals who are or may be directly affected by the proposed project may apply to the NRCB for intervener funding to assist in the preparation and presentation of a submission.

In consideration of current and future COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the hearing will be conducted electronically using a virtual platform and live streamed on YouTube. The Board will finalize and distribute virtual hearing details well in advance of the hearing date.

The hearing will adopt a topic-based hearing format as described in the NRCB Pre-Hearing Conference Decision Report. The Board invites, but does not require, all directly affected parties to provide comment and suggestions on how to allocate topics in order to break the hearing into major topic areas, and provide time estimates for presentation of direct evidence and cross-examination. The Board invites Alberta Transportation to state its suggestions by an extended deadline of January 18, 2021 (as the party that is likely to have the most witnesses and be providing evidence under all topic areas); all identified directly affected parties will be invited to comment by January 25, 2021.

For additional information regarding the review procedures, contact Laura Friend (403) 297-8269 or Bill Kennedy (403) 297-4304.

Dated at Calgary, Alberta on December 21, 2020.

Bill Kennedy, General Counsel, NRCB

A business degree designed for Indigenous learners

The Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Alberta (AFOA Alberta) understands that its mission is critical to granting access to educational opportunities. By empowering Indigenous people through education, communities can work towards solving some of the problems facing our world, like social challenges, climate change, political unrest, and growing divisions within society.

“The demands placed on the Indigenous public servants continues to increase, business opportunities are expanding, and partnership opportunities are flourishing,” said Robert Andrews, Executive Director at AFOA Alberta. “However, the positive effects can only be realized with a good grounding in business skills and competencies. In addition, managerial skill augments existing technical skills to improve outcomes for programs in their communities.”

The AFOA Alberta recognized higher education needs reform to address the obstacles facing Indigenous people and strengthen the elements that

increase success.

“Through a number of processes, our organization sought to understand systemic barriers that inhibit learners from pursuing higher education,” said Andrews. “These improved outcomes positively impact people’s lives; indeed, they help to make our world a better place.”

After determining what those barriers were, AFOA Alberta partnered with Athabasca University to create a Bachelor of Commerce degree designed specifically for Indigenous learners.

A custom-designed Bachelor of Commerce program

Following community consultation and research, AFOA identified barriers that prevent Indigenous people from successfully starting or completing post-secondary education. Work and family obligations and social isolation are just some of the challenges facing Indigenous learners. AFOA Alberta’s primary goal is to tackle these barriers.

To make higher education more inclusive, AFOA Alberta and Athabasca University’s Faculty of Business developed a unique Bachelor of Commerce program that pairs mostly online course delivery with face-to-face instruction and one-on-one mentors. In-person classes typically take place on the weekends, so they are easier for students to attend. A peer support network for Indigenous students also connects people going through similar experiences, reinforcing a sense of belonging.

“We take a very individualized, personalized process to learning. The students are placed in small groups or learning communities; they support each other academically as well as professionally and personally,” Andrews explains.

What’s more, the course content is made relevant with immediate, real-world applications. Students can use the knowledge and resources they gain in the classroom to improve their community and generate opportunities for themselves and their neighbours.

“Through this innovative collaboration, Athabasca University may increase the social and economic outcomes for many Indigenous community members, which contributes in a significant way to the betterment of society,” Andrews says.

Making an impact

Through Athabasca University’s Bachelor of Commerce program, students can develop new skills and competencies while staying in their home communities.

“They can synthesize Westernized management practices with their own



Faculty of Business learners cohort (pre-covid)



Deborah Hurst, Dean, Athabasca University Faculty of Business and Gerald Whitford, AFOA Board Member, Director, President.

Indigenous beliefs to support their programs in their organizations. The best of both worlds can be fused together to create something that can be uniquely beneficial to the learner’s community,” says Andrews.

Specifically, graduates will be better equipped to lead businesses and Indigenous organizations and contribute to their local economy. Not only can they create products and services that serve Indigenous people, but they also can develop partnerships and joint ventures as well.

“Indigenous business leaders must have the essential skills to ensure the best value and use of resources for their communities,” Andrews explains. By implementing competitive business strategies, Indigenous business owners help to generate economic growth for all Indigenous people.

What’s more, these learners become role models for future generations. Andrews notes that Athabasca University has grandmothers enrolled in this Bachelor of Commerce program. They say they want their children and grandchildren to see them succeed academically. Setting this precedent proves what is really possible.

Higher education at Athabasca University’s Faculty of Business is about more than just learning business finesse. Graduates are better equipped to solve social problems through economic empowerment.

“Individuals and communities are the direct beneficiaries of a population with higher education; individuals must be technically competent in their discipline, but there is a need to synthesize complex issues, to challenge existing assumptions, and to creatively co-develop solutions,” says Andrews.

The power of remote learning

Combining distance learning with face-to-face cohorts is a promising development for Indigenous communities. In Canada, the United States, and elsewhere, online university programs, like this at AU, make higher education more accessible and inclusive.

“In order to expand programming into non-traditional markets, universities must look at how their programs are delivered and how best to reach those markets, in ways that may challenge the traditional approaches,” Andrews says.

And Athabasca University is responding.

“I’m quite passionate about all of this, as many times in my own life, I might have been derailed without a helping hand from an educator I trusted, a professor who showed me what was possible and supported me in various ways,” says Dr. Deborah Hurst, Athabasca University’s Faculty of Business Dean. “It has become part of my life’s mission to pay it forward and to find ways to help others gain access to the great programs we have. AU has done a lot with the open concept to remove barriers to entry.”

It’s through partnerships like this with AFOA Alberta that these types of programs are possible - empowering learners and enabling their continued growth.

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Dancing in the kitchen

By Xavier Kataquapit

I am happy to report that during this pandemic I am spending a lot of time meditating in my kitchen. I just wrapped up a big breakfast that I made with fried eggs, bacon, toast and a generous helping of air fried home fries. While cooking, I cleaned the pans, soaked some dishes and kept wiping down the counter. All this choreographed dancing in the kitchen was something I learned from my mom Susan who had taught me years ago in a fast-food kitchen. At one time my parents ran a fast food restaurant in Attawapiskat. My mom was the driving force behind this venture due to her years of experience in a hospital kitchen, then later in catering and baking. Although we didn't make much money from that business, myself and my brothers and sisters came away with a whole lot of training and experience and more confidence in our ability to prepare food.

Mom's main teaching for the kitchen implied that if you weren't cooking, you were cleaning, if you weren't cleaning, you were cooking and if you weren't doing any of those things, then it was time to leave the kitchen. To my mom, who was born and raised in the wilderness, this lesson applied to every kitchen, whether it was a fast-food restaurant, a commercial food service, a home kitchen, food prep area in a teepee or a makeshift camp in the woods. She taught us by example and when we were young, whenever we ventured near the kitchen, we were expected to work.

I can remember one of my first tasks she taught me

was washing dishes. We didn't have running water back then in the 1980s, so the work took a long time. I had to heat water over the stove to pour into large bowls as a means to wash the dishes. I then had to drain the grey water into buckets to be taken outside and dumped into a ditch that ran through town.

We had a big family of nine children, two parents and at one point my grandfather James. When I was very young, half of our food came from the wild meat dad gathered from the land in the form of geese, moose, caribou, rabbit, beaver and fish. I watched mom prepare many of the dishes over the years and learned the basics of how to make fried fish, moose fry with onions and caribou stew. Every year during the spring goose hunt, we would all watch as mom prepared Canada goose in a variety of ways. She showed us how to barbecue, skewer, roast over a fire, stew with dumplings, roast in an oven and smoke dozens of these large birds in long stringy strands that looked like jerky. I remember spending days in the family teepee with mom as I helped her clean and cook gizzards and hearts over the fire. These were tasty favourites of mine.

As a young man I took this acquired confidence in the kitchen to experiment in preparing other foods like tomato based sauces, pastas, then later on stews and soups. For special feasts mom taught us how to

prepare turkey, chicken, ham, beef roasts and all the fixings that go with these meals.

When I came to live in the non-Native world, I learned from friends of mine like Emily McGrath to make meals like Irish stew, casseroles and chili. She also passed on her Christmas cake teaching to me and a recipe for her from scratch miracle whip chocolate cake. I also came to learn about authentic Italian cooking from my friend Alana Pierini who taught me that simple was best and to always start with the most fresh and tastiest ingredients I could find.

I'm happy to report that back in Attawapiskat, my siblings continue my mom's teachings and they are all comfortable working in a kitchen. My sister Janie Wesley took up the task of starting a catering business to bake, cook and prepare foods for others and she created the successful April's Coffee Shop, named after her daughter. Her other daughter Marissa studied culinary arts and is a fantastic chef in her own right.

Thanks to my mom and dad I have some important tools and skills to deal with this monumental pandemic through time in my kitchen. At the end of the day, it is all about staying productive, being positive and providing nourishment and comfort for those you love. Stay safe and happy cooking.

For more columns by Xavier Kataquapit visit underthenorthernsky.com.



Combatting Covid Fatigue

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The First Nations Health Managers Association (FNHMA) Weekly Virtual Town Hall is a podcast that features speakers from different organizations who provide credible and reliable information, resources, and updates about what their organizations are doing

to combat COVID-19.

Dr. Brenda Restoule, Chief Executive Officer of the First Peoples' Wellness Circle, appeared on the Jan. 14, podcast and began her talk by saying, "Today I thought I would spend some time talking about the

fact that we have been in this pandemic for ten months."

She mentioned how she recently had conversations "about just how much our workforce and our leaders are doing and how tired and exhausting it's become. Ten months of this – we are concerned about the wellness of our workforce."

As for tiredness and fatigue, Dr. Restoule said,

Continued on page 11

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Moosomin First Nation

FNHMA podcast discusses the importance of getting vaccinated

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The First Nations Health Managers Association (FNHMA) Weekly Virtual Town Hall is a podcast that features speakers from different organizations who provide credible and reliable information, resources, and updates about what their organizations are doing to combat COVID-19.

Leila Gillis RN MN, Indigenous Services Canada’s (ISC) Chief Nursing Officer and Director General of the Office of Primary Healthcare, joined the podcast on January 14, to discuss the vaccine roll-out happening in Canada.

After speaking about the community transmission in “many, many” jurisdictions across the country, Gillis said, “I want to acknowledge that we’re still working hard to prevent COVID spread through our continued and long-standing public health measures and we can’t lose sight of that.”

“We’re also working to organize and support one of the biggest vaccine administrations campaigns in this country’s history,” she added.

However, there is a common distrust from multiple First Nations of the COVID vaccine. The Health Minister of Nunavut mentioned the peoples’ hesitancy to get the vaccine because they didn’t want to be “guinea pigs;” Freddie Louie, director of the Tahltan Central Government’s Emergency Operations Centre, mentioned that First Nations in BC were unsure; Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of the Southern Chiefs’ Organization of Manitoba also said that there is still a

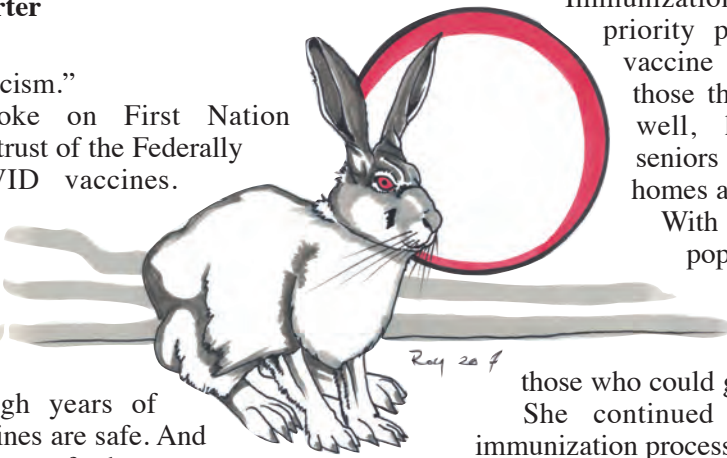
“great deal of skepticism.”

Leila Gillis spoke on First Nation people’s rightful distrust of the Federally administered COVID vaccines.

“I’ve been a nurse for thirty years – and first and foremost: I’m a public health nurse – and what I’ve learned through years of practice is that vaccines are safe. And to ensure vaccines are safe there are so many processes and standards in place and the COVID-19 vaccine has been rigorously tested,” explained Gillis.

“Before a vaccine is offered to anybody in Canada, Health Canada will ensure that it is safe, that it works, that there are consistent, high-quality manufacturing processes, and that the benefits of getting the vaccine out-weigh the risks of not getting it. And there is strong evidence that the vaccines are safe and work for people 18 years and over – including seniors. It is highly effective across age, sex, race, and ethnicity.”

After mentioning a few of her nursing colleagues and friends experiences of getting their shots, Gillis said that there might be some side effects such as low fever or a headache, “it’s not unlike a flu vaccine or others where you have mild symptoms.”



The arrival of the vaccine supply is being staggered over several months. Based on the vaccine’s availability and the roll-out plans within the jurisdictions, “it’s a little different everywhere.”

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that the priority populations for the initial vaccine administrations should be those that are expected to respond well, healthcare workers, and seniors (including long-term care homes and staff).

With regards to the Indigenous populations in Canada, Gillis said that, “First Nations and Inuit Nations have been identified as some of those who could get priority vaccines.”

She continued by speaking about the immunization process itself, mentioning that both the Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine require two doses. “Protection offered by the first dose is lower than the efficiency and effectiveness of the second dose.”

“These are two dose vaccines. And the current research identifies that our peak immune response and our ability to fight COVID occurs after the second dose. So, getting both doses is very important. If you’ve had your first dose, make sure that you make it a priority to get the second dose cause that’s when the highest protection is provided.”

The weekly FNHMA virtual Town Halls are produced in partnership with NationTalk and Indigenous Health Today. Tune in weekly at facebook.com/albertanativenews or at ihtoday.ca on Thursdays at 1 pm EST to listen to it live. To hear previous virtual Town Halls visit fnhma.ca.

Elder Tom Snow *cont. from p 2*

experienced as a child.

“I went searching, all across Nakoda land from Alexis/Nakoda all the way down to Pine Ridge (South Dakota)/Lakoda land, west to Manitoba. I was looking for affirmation about my traditional Nakoda

beliefs.” He found it in Pine Ridge SD. “When I went to Ft. Peck Montana and attended ceremonies, I also found traditional Nakoda teachings.” It rang true and energized him, removing the fear he had felt. “It affirmed my belief and gave me a foundation.”

During this time, he was mentored into ceremonies. Snow found that within the sweat lodge songs were gems. “Because I’m fluent in my language, I found a lot of traditions that were actually hidden within the songs. As time went on, other medicines started coming to me: visions and songs,

dreams and people. “Remember the white buffalo in ’92?” asked Snow. “That was foretold by one of my mentors two weeks before it happened. And I was actually sent there, to Janesville, Connecticut.”

Snow explained that it was not one thing that enabled him to heal. “It was the actual plants, songs, dreams, talking around campfires, sitting around a sacred sweat fire, dancing at a Sundance - all of that is part of healing yourself.”

And now, walking a healthy path and with healthy relationships, Elder Tom Snow spends his days “... along the mountain, (Calgary, Canmore, Cochrane, Banff), helping to heal others,” by practicing pure traditions.

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Charges against Lethbridge ARCHES were unfounded

By Jeremy Appel,
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A coalition promoting harm reduction policies to manage the opioid poisoning crisis is calling on the Alberta government to restore funding for Lethbridge’s supervised consumption site after a police investigation found funds the United Conservatives said were missing.

The AIDS Reduction Community Harm Education and Support Society (ARCHES), which operated the busiest supervised consumption site in North America, was forced to shutter at the end of August after a government-ordered audit reported that \$1.6 million in funding was missing. This resulted in a police investigation, which found the money and no basis for criminal charges.

In light of these developments, Albertans for Ethical Drug Policy — a coalition of advocates, healthcare workers and people who use drugs — has issued a release telling Associate Minister of Addictions and Mental Health Jason Luan to reverse his decision to close the site.

On March 5, 2020, the government issued a report on supervised consumption sites, which was explicitly prohibited from discussing the efficacy of the sites in favour of examining their social and economic impact on surrounding residents and businesses. Its methodology was lambasted by experts.

That same day Luan announced an audit of ARCHES, which the coalition says suggests it was politically motivated.

“In July 2020, Jason Luan used the findings of this audit as a justification to defund and closed down supervised consumption services (SCS) in Lethbridge, a deliberate and ideological approach that led to individual and community harms at an alarming rate,” the release notes.

In just the first three-quarters of 2020, Lethbridge had 42 opioid poisoning deaths, more than double the number in 2019. Additionally, Lethbridge had the highest opioid death rate out of 100,000 people of the province’s seven largest cities at 51.1. Red Deer was the second-highest with 39.1, according to provincial data released in December 2020.

Dr. Susan Adelmann, a physician who works at the Blood Tribe Medical Clinic’s detox facility in Standoff, says Lethbridge’s rate is the country’s highest and possibly North America’s.

“It is so inappropriate for them to have closed that place,” she said.

Adelmann wrote an open letter to Luan, which was signed by three other doctors, prior to the conclusion of the police investigation, calling on the government to reconsider its closure.

The letter cited the inadequacy of the mobile site that replaced it, which operates 20 hours a day and can serve three people at a time. ARCHES, by contrast, was open 24-7, and had 13 injection booths, as well as two inhalation rooms.

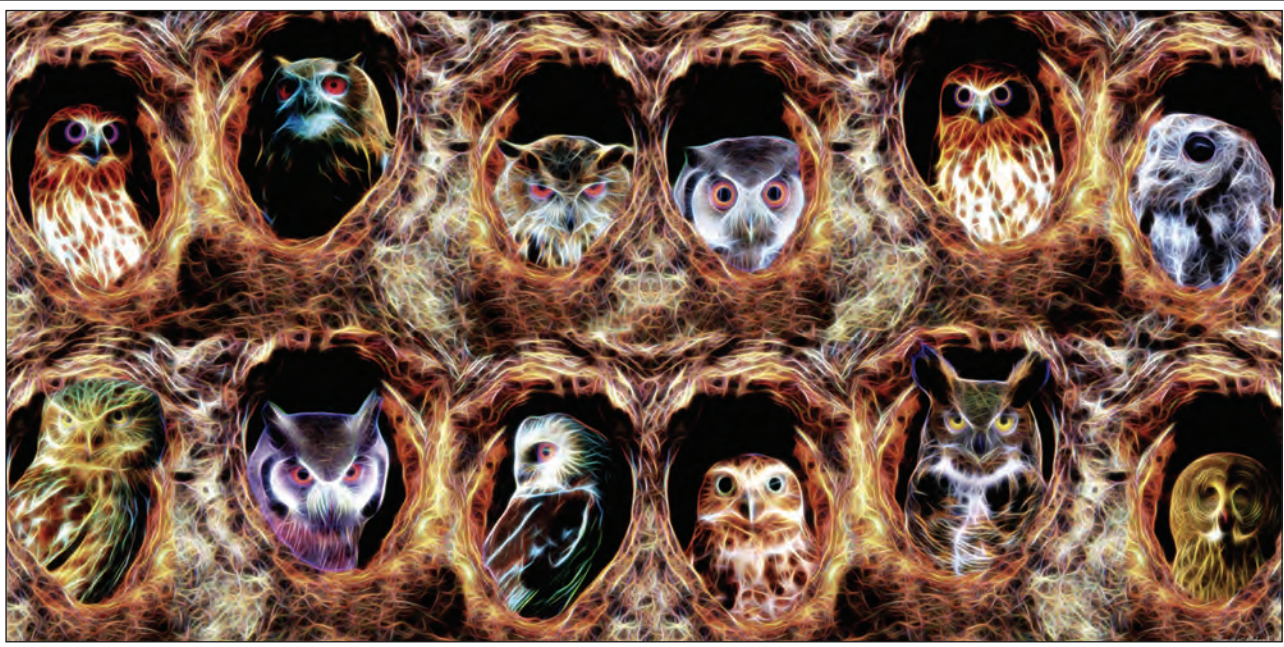
There was an inverse relationship between use of the supervised consumption site on the one hand, and deaths and EMS calls on the other, reported independent journalist Kim Seiver.

And according to a 2017 literature review in Canadian Family Physician, opioid treatment is “far more effective” than abstinence-only recovery. Indeed, Alberta Health Services has an explicit policy in support of harm reduction.

Albertans for Ethical Drug Policy says the COVID-19 pandemic and opioid crisis have exacerbated each other, which makes harm reduction all the more crucial.

“We know that COVID-19 has pushed many at-risk of overdose into isolation and has made the current drug supply more volatile than ever before. Any disruption in existing services across this province is a death sentence to our most vulnerable Albertans,” the group says.

“Lethbridge ARCHES clients have done nothing to deserve being cast out into the street during a dual health crisis.”



Impact Assessment
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d'impact du Canada

Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project Public Comments Invited and Virtual Information Sessions

What is happening?

January 4, 2021 — The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) is conducting a federal environmental assessment of the proposed Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project, located approximately 15 kilometres west of Calgary, Alberta.

The Agency invites the public and Indigenous groups to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment Report, which includes the Agency's conclusions and recommendations regarding the potential environmental effects of the project and their significance, and the proposed mitigation measures and follow-up programs.

The Agency also invites comments on the draft potential conditions for the project. Final conditions would become legally-binding on the proponent if the project is allowed to proceed.

The Agency recognizes 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, adjust consultation activities and provide flexibility as needed in order to prioritize the health and safety of all Canadians and conduct meaningful engagement with interested groups.

How can I participate?

Comments can be submitted online by visiting the project home page on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (reference number 80123). All comments received will be published online as part of the project file.

Written comments in either official language will be accepted **until February 3, 2021**.

To view the draft Environmental Assessment Report or for more information, visit the Agency's website at canada.ca/iaac.

Virtual Information Sessions

The Agency is holding virtual information sessions that will take place on **January 21, 2021 and January 27, 2021**. The virtual information sessions will include a presentation from Agency representatives on the draft environmental assessment report and potential conditions, followed by a question period.

For zoom links, please refer to the Public Notice on the Registry project page or contact the Agency at iaac.springbank.aeic@canada.ca or 780-495-2037.

Will there be more opportunities to participate?

This project has benefited from several public and Indigenous consultation opportunities. This is the final public comment period in the process.

Follow us on Twitter: @IAAC_AEIC #SpringbankReservoir

What is the proposed Project?

Alberta Transportation (the proponent) proposes to construct infrastructure to mitigate flooding on lands in and adjacent to the Elbow River, approximately 15 kilometres west of Calgary, Alberta. As proposed, the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project (the Project) will be located in a floodplain drainage area of the Elbow River and its tributaries, and will divert flood water during extreme flood events from the Elbow River to a temporary reservoir constructed in an adjacent wetland. The flood waters will be stored in the temporary reservoir before being diverted back in to the Elbow River. The purpose of the Project is to prevent and reduce flood damage on infrastructure, water courses, and people in the City of Calgary and downstream communities.

For more information on the Agency's privacy policies, consult the Privacy Notice on its website at canada.ca/iaac.

First Nations seek to intervene in challenge of coal policy removal

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Bears paw, Ermineskin and Whitefish First Nations are among those looking to intervene in a court challenge to the United Conservative government’s rescinding of a policy that placed restrictions on coal mining in Alberta.

The removal of the 1976 coal policy, which expressly forbids open-pit mining over a large area, was done quietly and without consultation in early 2020. It’s come to attention as a result of Australian company Riversdale Resources’ planned open-pit coal mine in Crowsnest Pass’s Grassy Mountain on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

"The eastern slopes, the Rocky Mountains and the foothills, are at the heart of what the Alberta identity is. This policy change threatens that," said Ian Urquhart of the Alberta Wilderness Association, which is also seeking intervenor status.

In another interview, Urquhart said the project will “decapitate” the mountain.

The challenge, which will be heard beginning Jan. 19, was facilitated by southern Alberta ranchers John Smith, Laura Laing, and Mac and Renie Blades.

At issue is the duty to consult with stakeholders who are dependent on the water from the Red Deer, Oldman and South Saskatchewan rivers, all of which flow from the eastern slopes.

Open pit mining already occurs on the British

Columbia side of Crowsnest Pass, courtesy of Teck Resources, which was fined \$1.4 million by the federal government for effluent contamination.

Riversdale Resources boasts letters of support from five Treaty 7 bands — the Piikani, Kainai, Siksika, Stoney Nakoda and Tsuut’ina nations — as well as Alberta’s Métis Nation and the National Coalition of Chiefs.

But Kainai member Latasha Calf Robe, who started Niitsitapi Water Protectors when she found out about the Grassy Mountain project in November, says there’s a major gap between the views of leadership and the people on this project. “No community-level consultation has been done on the Blood Tribe,” she told APTN, “and, as far as I know, has not been done with any of the communities in Treaty 7.

“So those letters of support that were issued were issued without community-level consultation in any of these communities.”

Calf Robe expressed health, environmental and spiritual concerns about Grassy Mountain.

“These coal mines will directly impact our Blackfoot spirituality and ceremonies,” she added. “We will no longer be able to gather the plants, medicines and animals needed to perform our traditional ceremonies. “Our creation stories that are tied to these areas of land will be erased.”

The government is attempting to get the challenge thrown out of court, arguing that the coal policy was implemented by legislative fiat, so it can also be removed by the government.

Cabin Ridge Coal is also seeking to intervene on the government’s side, because it’s already invested in exploration leases.

Since the coal policy’s removal, the government has sold exploration leases on about 1.4 million hectares of land.



Vaccinations are underway

cont. from p 3

support our COVID-19 response has been a top priority of our organization from day one; local access to the COVID-19 vaccine is a hopeful next step in this regard,” Naa Taoyi Piita Wo Taan, Tyler White, corporate executive officer of SHS, was quoted as saying.

“It has not been easy and I commend our health services team for our collective and tireless work in providing necessary services, all the while advocating for equitable access for our Nation members.”

Ouray Crowfoot, chief of Siksika First Nation, was quoted as saying earlier this week, “We are pleased to see that a safe and effective vaccine has been developed so quickly and made available to our most vulnerable nation members and their care providers.”

“Our health services continue to plan for a staged roll-out of additional vaccine to other priority groups in the near future.”

According to its website, Siksika Nation has approximately 7,500 members living on-reserve and as of Dec. 29, there were 12 active cases — totalling 323 cases reported on the First Nation.

In 2020, Siksika closed all of its schools and its homeless shelter as well as enforced a curfew.

Maskwacis and its four First Nations – Samson, Ermineskin, Montana and Louis Bull – have been hit hard by COVID; they are relieved to announce that their first shipment of the Moderna vaccine arrived on Jan. 16.

A state of local emergency has been in place since March and according to Alberta Health (as of Jan. 10) Maskwacis has 645 active cases and eight deaths, with over 2,100 cases to date.

Randy Littlechild, CEO of Maskwacis Health Services, “Our only hope is the vaccine and getting access to that,” he says.

“They have a treaty obligation to provide it to us. There is a clause called the Medicine Chest Clause and it says in cases of famine and pestilence the government or Crown is supposed to provide aid for the First Nations. A pandemic is pestilence.”

Alberta Health Services says it continues to meet regularly with Indigenous communities to support them, “We have an excellent partnership with Maskwacis Health Services and are working closely with local health services, as well as government partners at all levels to support the pandemic response measures in Maskwacis,” a statement reads.

Maskwacis leaders are relieved to have received their first shipment of vaccines and are hopeful that this is the beginning of the end of the pandemic - though they are resolved to be mindful of the health and safety restrictions that are in place.

“The community has established dedicated isolation

trailers to support their residents in self-isolating when they may be unable to do so appropriately at home. AHS has supported the addition of a fourth EMS crew in the community, and AHS Medical Affairs has been recruiting local physicians to help provide medical support to those in the isolation trailers.”

“AHS Public Health is also supporting localized COVID-19 swabbing, helping enhance access,” the statement continues. “AHS Public Health is working closely with our partners in Maskwacis to plan for vaccine distribution. AHS is prepared to provide staffing supports to provide immunizations as needed in collaboration with Maskwacis Health Services and FNIH.”

In anticipation of his Nation receiving the vaccines, Little Red River Cree Nation Chief Conroy Sewepagaham offered this message about a forming a Wall of Protection in his community.

“One of our sacred animals, the Buffalo (Wood Bison), is a strong, brave, and determined animal that we are lucky to share our lands with. They have strong relationships with one another, and one of the Buffalo's teachings is something we should follow and use during this pandemic. When the Buffalo senses danger, the female Buffalo instinctively forms a ring around their young and the vulnerable. Then the bulls will form another circle around the females, creating a Wall of Protection.

“This Is the same teaching our Elders have taught all of us: to protect our young and the vulnerable.

“We can apply this same teaching in protecting our young and the vulnerable against the dangerous COVID-19 disease. In the coming weeks, the vaccine will be here in our communities. It is up to you, and only you can help create this Wall of Protection for our children and elders.”

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Ottawa continues its fight over funding for Indigenous children

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

First Nations leaders are extremely disappointed and angered about Canada’s decision to appeal the most recent Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) Decision, which expands the eligibility criteria of Jordan’s Principle to non-status First Nations children who are recognized by their community, or who have a parent who is eligible for Indian status.

On December 22, 2020, Canada filed notice of its intention to apply for judicial review of the November 25, 2020 CHRT ruling (2020CHRT36). Canada’s stated position is that the tribunal erred in finding Canada’s inclusion of *Indian Act* status provisions as a criterion of eligibility for Jordan’s Principle to be discriminatory and asks that the Federal Court set the decision aside.

In a twitter post, Cindy Blackstock, executive director of the First Nations Caring Society called the move “beyond disappointing” news just before the holidays. The First Nations Leadership Council agreed.

“Canada has been fighting First Nations children in the courts for more than a decade, choosing to funnel millions of dollars into ongoing litigation, rather than taking concrete action to achieve equity for First Nations children,” stated Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive Member of the First Nations Summit.

“Jordan’s Principle was established to ensure all First Nations children have timely and equitable access to services and programs that support their health and well-being. It is incredibly frustrating that we are once again seeing Canada choose to maintain its own discriminatory practices when those resources could be directed toward achieving substantive and

necessary equality for our children and youth.”

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, of the BC Assembly of First Nations, continued: “We are supposedly in a time of change and reconciliation. Canada has recently introduced legislation to bring our federal laws into alignment with the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and this is a direct opportunity to put those commitments to action. We call upon Canada to withdraw its application for judicial review and take immediate, actionable steps to uphold the UN Declaration – which includes leaving it to First Nations people to determine our own citizens, and ensuring our children have full and equitable access to health and social services, regardless of Indian Act status.”

The Government’s issue with the new expanded criteria is that the “Tribunal’s decision was made without broad participation of First Nations communities and is a clear overreach of the Tribunal’s jurisdiction. The legal issues around the scope of the Tribunal’s authority to issue these decisions are important ones on which we seek further guidance from the Federal Court.”

“Deciding who belongs to a First Nation community is complex and Canada will work with



First Nations in making those decisions and implementing the community acceptance aspect of this order,” said the Federal Government in a Dec. 22 press release.

“As First Nations people we have the inherent right of self-determination, which includes the right to determine our own citizens and members in accordance with our laws and traditions,” stated Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs.

“The *Indian Act* was created as a tool of forced assimilation and displacement for our peoples. Continued imposition of Indian Act recognition processes upon our citizens is an ongoing act of genocide by Canada.”

Hadley Friedland, a University of Alberta assistant law professor told *PressProgress* that the government’s argument is a bit confusing.

“It is not clear to me, on its face, how the CHRT decision could potentially interfere with Indigenous communities’ decisions as to who qualifies as a First Nations child,” Friedland told *PressProgress*.

Cindy Blackstock called the government’s statement a “bogus excuse.”

“Days before Christmas, the federal government has decided to take First Nations children living off-reserve to court to overturn a legal order ensuring they can get the public services they need under Jordan’s Principle.”

According to the press release, “the expanded eligibility for Jordan’s Principle for children recognized by their nations will remain in effect regardless of the outcome of the judicial review.”

Covid Fatigue *cont. from p 7*

“We know that our workforce has been working so hard. Our leaders have been working so hard. They are doing more, doing it differently, sometimes they’re doing different things than they did before, or they’re just having to do their work in different ways – whether that’s virtually, at a distance.”

“And they are forever being asked to *think* about *how* to do it differently. And it’s always changing!”

“Burnout is what we consider to be a reaction to a prolonged and chronic job stress... it’s characterized by things like exhaustion; starting to maybe hate your job or dread going to work cause there’s so much to do and not enough time; and feeling like you’re not capable or not satisfied with your work. Burnout is a really big thing.”

She also mentioned how that fatigue and burnout is not only happening at work, as most people are now working from home. “This is happening to us in our homes. We’re worried about our families, about our parents and other homes, our community members and other friends. So it can also be associated with things in our life.”

She then went on to speak about a few different kinds of fatigue that are common. Such as *compassion fatigue*, which is essentially, “the cost of caring;” *pandemic fatigue*: which is when people are “less likely to want to follow” restrictions; and *COVID fatigue*, “the uncertainty and chaos of COVID has really forced us to make additional choices about our lifestyle, our safety in very uncertain times. With more impactful consequences if we don’t make the right decisions.”

Some signs of fatigue are restlessness, irritability, lack of motivation, difficulty with concentration, withdrawing from socializing with others, and physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach pains.

Here are some of Dr. Restoule’s tips for fatigue: Take care of yourself. Practice Mindfulness and meditation. Choose activities that make it easy to follow the public health measures, including creating habits such as applying hand sanitizer or grabbing a mask and appreciating these habits. Focus on things that

you can do differently. “Maybe it’s about eating a little bit healthier or getting outside for a walk.” Reach out for support and find ways to make social connections.

Take notice of whether you’re experiencing fatigue. Most importantly, practice *self-compassion*. “It’s okay if you slip up once in a while and you can’t make a decision. These are hard times... Take a COVID break. Turn things off, don’t listen for a little bit, and recognize that you can only do so much.”

“I’m going to end by saying: have resiliency. We have teachings about being interconnected like trees and teachings about hibernation from the bear. We are much like the trees - our roots our interconnected to each other, we hold each other up, we protect each other.”

Tune in to the FNHMA Town Hall Sessions every Thursday at 1 pm EST on Alberta Native News Facebook page or at ihtoday.ca.

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Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations sign Protocol Agreement

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations – which represents sixteen First Nations within the province such as Enoch, Samson, and Suncild – recently signed an historic agreement with the Alberta government.

The Alberta Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations Protocol Agreement outlines a formal process for ministers, chiefs and councils to meet several times throughout the year with the focus being on six key areas: land and resources, health care, education, justice, economic development, culture and tourism.

The protocol agreement gives Alberta and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations a way to have meaningful discussions, share information and explore issues of mutual concern.

The agreement also commits to an annual meeting between the Chiefs of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and the provincial Premier.

The (former) Treaty Six Confederacy Grand Chief Billy Morin stated that “a protocol agreement is more than a document. It is a promise between governments about communication and collaboration with a focus on shared prosperity, now and for years to come.”

Rick Wilson, Alberta Minister of Indigenous Relations said, “I’m proud to walk a path of reconciliation with Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations. We will work together in a spirit of respect and partnership to move forward our shared social and economic priorities.”

“I couldn’t be more proud to sign the first agreement between Alberta’s government and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations since 2008,” he added.

Alberta Premier Jason Kenney also spoke on the signing, “The recovery we are driving for this province, after unprecedented economic and social challenges, will not be complete without Indigenous involvement.”

“It’s a great moral imperative – ensuring Alberta’s opportunities and prosperity are shared with First

Nations – the first peoples, the first entrepreneurs and the first stewards of this rich land on which we stand. And the protocol agreement we’re signing today is key to making that happen,” concluded the Premier.

Grand Chief Morin explained the significance of signing the protocol with the province. “It’s not enough to say we didn’t sign Treaty with the Province and then wait decades for Canada, their courts, Alberta and the Crown/Queen to do right by us.

“We will never stop movement to uphold Treaty Rights, holding Canada, Alberta and the people who live on these lands accountable to Treaty as long as the sun shines, grass grows and rivers flow. But it doesn’t always have to be in front of a Canadian Judge, or fighting, that we find ways to uphold Treaty.

“Truly the faster way, often times, is to create a leadership table and spaces for anyone... spaces where respectful agreement and (dis)agreement can be had outside lawyers’ rooms. This is why we created this Agreement with Alberta, to have our say as Chiefs of Treaty 6.

“I thank (incoming Confederacy of Treaty Six Grand) Chief Watchmaker, Premier Kenny and Minister Wilson for finalizing this.

“With this agreement, we have another option to make it clear that the Department of Fish and Wildlife have no right to stop hunting for our people; that we have a table to create better resource revenue sharing mechanisms below the depth of a plough; that we have a space to have our say for our kids in the Alberta School system. Alberta can learn more about our right to create our own justice systems for our people... maybe it will be an even better system they learn from and can implement in the Alberta Justice System.

“Realistically the 4,000,000+ citizens of Alberta are here to stay on this Treaty Territory. We have to work with Albertans in some way. Treaty was meant to share.

“While still not letting past wrongs be forgotten and unaddressed, we still honour that spirit and intent to



Grand Chief Verne Watchmaker

share and do right by the land and creator moving forward with all Peoples who call this Treaty Land home.

“We won’t always agree, but I’m willing to focus more time on things we do agree upon, so we can achieve results for First Nations and Albertans in the spirit of the ultimate law of this land... Treaty.”

The Protocol agreement between the Treaty Six Confederacy and the Albertan Government is the latest in a trilogy of protocol agreements created between Alberta and First Nations within the province.

The first Protocol was between the Government of Alberta and the Blackfoot Confederacy. Signed in September 2019 by the Premier, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Chiefs of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the agreement renewed the previous agreement that was signed in 2017.

This agreement sets out ways the Blackfoot Confederacy Chiefs and the government will work together to address topics such as: Education, environment and lands, health, economic development and employment, political and legal.

The second agreement was with the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut’ina Tribal Council, signed in October 2020 by the Premier, the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Chiefs of the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut’ina Tribal Council.

This Protocol acts much like the others, as the agreement commits both parties to engage in mutual government-to-government discussions.

In 2020-21, Alberta will provide the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations with a \$300,000 grant to support the agreement’s implementation.

The agreement will remain in place for as long as both parties wish to keep it active.

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