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Our cover artist Rick Noname honours MMIWG

The striking image on the cover of the April 2021 edition of *Alberta Native News* is by Rick Noname, a traditional artist who was raised in the Piapot First Nations with traditional values.

The painting is in honour of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls across Turtle Island and their loved ones. The imagery contained in the painting is strong and sombre with the ghostly figure floating in space, the crimes taking place in the light of day, the skull in the grassland signifying death and the great spirit inside a medicine shield overlooking all of North America – both Canada and the United States.

The red hands portray solidarity with the missing and murdered women and their families. The strong images of the horse, the staff, the eagle feathers and the teepee signify the importance of Indigenous culture and values.

May 5 is the National Day for the Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls across Canada. Check your local listings to see what activities are taking place – virtually or in person in your area.

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.”

To contact Rick, email rnoname903@gmail.com.

Report finds that RCMP fueled racial tensions

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After almost five years since the murder of Colten Boushie, an investigation by the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC), has revealed that the RCMP “fuelled racial tensions” in their handling of the case.

On Aug. 9, 2016 Colten Boushie, a 22-year-old Indigenous man, was murdered on the Saskatchewan farm of Gerald Stanley.

Stanley was charged with second-degree murder but was found not guilty after a 2-week trial that sparked national protests and controversy. The outcome of the trial raised tensions between Indigenous people and

the already questionable Canadian justice system.

The RCMP destroyed records of police communications from the night Boushie was murdered and conducted an internal probe into the handling of the case without notifying the CRCC — which is an independent body that investigates public complaints against the police.

In their report released last month, the CRCC also says that the RCMP racially discriminated against Mr. Boushie’s family during the notification of his death. While the CRCC says the case was generally handled professionally, it emphasized some key mis-steps:

The Boushie home was surrounded by 7 police vehicles; police were armed and had their rifles drawn; police searched the house unlawfully; they failed to preserve forensic evidence; they issued press releases which presented the victim in a negative light and enflamed public opinion towards the family; and they mishandled witnesses.

“I did not deserve to be treated the way I was treated,” Debbie Baptiste, Colten’s Mother, said at a news conference hosted by the family.

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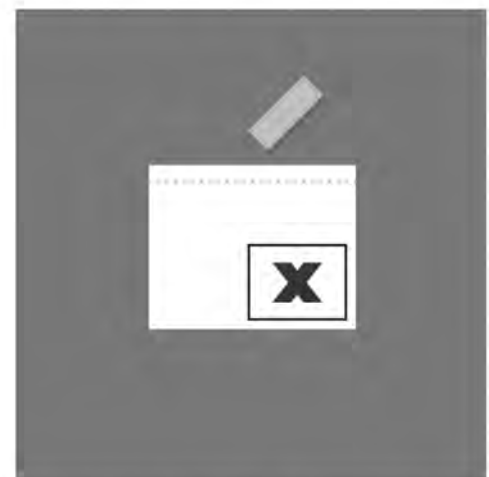
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Indigenous learners continue their educational journeys at Bow Valley College

By Charles Laird

The Indigenous Foundational Learning program at Bow Valley College gives Indigenous learners the opportunity to improve their academic skills and prepare for work or further education. Beyond that, the program supports truth and reconciliation for learners and provides a safe environment for self-discovery and self-identity.

Students come into the program from a variety of backgrounds, different stages in life, and different life experiences, says Jennefer Rousseau, a high school-level humanities instructor at Bow Valley College.

"They have families. They have kids. Some have gone through the Foundational Learning program, and now they're coming to high school. We also get some students who finished high school, took some time off, maybe have decided to change their career, and then realized they didn't have the marks that they needed to get into their programs," she says.

Shoshonie Smith Smith, a student working toward her high school diploma, describes her younger years as turbulent. "I was all over the place. I was held in the child welfare system for quite a while. So, that meant I moved around everywhere, constantly. I just left school completely when I was in about grade ten," she says.

Like Smith Smith, many students' goal is to overcome challenges and hurdles they've experienced in life. "I started drinking alcohol a lot. And I just started noticing that I wasn't going anywhere. I was in the same spot. I did not want to live like that. I want to have a good life. I wanted an education," she says.

Owen Roan, who is close to graduating from the

program, also had a tough life of trauma and addictions. Currently in recovery, he's working toward his high school diploma and a new life for himself. Roan reflects on his own experience and hopes that "other people can go down the same road that I'm on, because I actually learned to love life and learned to love myself."

Roan is using this experience to take his educational journey even further. "I actually want to go into the social work program at Bow Valley College. And then, when I'm done, I want to go back to my community and become a counselor. I can share my journey and inspire others like me that they can overcome their addictions. If I can do it, then they can do it too."

Joanna Tzavaras, an instructor with the Foundational Learning Program for Indigenous upgrading, identifies the goal for her students: "Education is their freedom, their freedom from poverty, their freedom from breaking the stigma of what Indigenous people have experienced, freedom of not being afraid of being out in the world."

Both Rousseau and Tzavaras design their classes to put a heavy emphasis on Indigenous content, which includes Indigenous ways of knowing and being through mentorship from Elders and knowledge keepers. They believe that inviting community members and students to share their stories and experiences is vital to the educational journey.



Iniiikokaan Centre at Bow Valley College.

Tzavaras starts her classes with a sharing circle. Learners can speak their truth and learn about each other's stories. Through the sharing circle, they explore new ways of knowing. The students also speak their truth through class presentations and storytelling, both oral and written. The goal for students is to build and participate in a supportive community.

Rousseau says the Indigenous Learning Program's unique learning environment creates a positive setting. "An environment of giving second chances is an Indigenous way of learning," she says. "We are all about letting students do their best work and being their best self when they are ready."

"It is so important that our Indigenous students speak up and use their own voices, especially when we talk about imperialism, and we talk about residential schools. Speaking out in class and sharing their points of view, and being confident in knowing that they have support. This makes a huge difference."

Shoshonie Smith Smith's education at Bow Valley College has helped her experience her own Indigenous identity in new ways, "I have enjoyed learning about my culture, knowing the things that I know now. I'm still learning to this day. I don't know everything, but I love knowing more about who I am as a Blackfoot person and Nakota Sioux person. It makes me feel very proud," she says.

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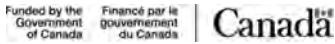
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What happens to Orange Shirt Day in Alberta?

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Government of Alberta has released a draft of their revised kindergarten-to-grade six curriculum and announced that it will be tested in some classrooms starting in September.

It will then be finalized and fully instated in the rest of the province in 2022 after the UCP government collects feedback from Albertans.

The released draft has caused an uproar with the Indigenous population in Alberta.

Much of the flak is coming from the fact that the history of Indian Residential Schools will not be taught until Grade 5 social studies — which the government says was based off the feedback and advice from unnamed advisors.

Orange Shirt Day is currently an important component of teaching awareness about the impacts of Indian Residential Schools to students aged pre-school and up — each at a level appropriate to their age and comprehension. It is an important day for all Indigenous groups (as well as for all Canadians in the mainstream) across the country — including Alberta.

Would this new curriculum eliminate the commemoration of Orange Shirt Day for Alberta students under Grade 5? That would be viewed as a terrible slight to Indigenous people in Alberta and a disservice to all students. And it would make no sense to wear Orange Shirts without a lesson about what it represents.

Elder Betty Letendre, part of a working group formed by the UCP government to review the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit portions of its new curriculum, has spoken out and said she cannot endorse it.

“The work in this curriculum has to continue,” Elder Letendre said.

The group was made up of five elders and they were meant to provide feedback to the UCP.

However, they were not given enough time to do the critical examination needed for this caliber of a project. They were given “about six days of meetings and talking about this review and the changes we thought had to be changed,” said Letendre.

“What we had to do was way too extensive for us to say, okay, now it’s done.”

“It’s not.”

The Edmonton Catholic School District agrees with Elder Letendre and is not committing to piloting the curriculum at this time.

ECSD stated on twitter that they “will spend the next several weeks unpacking the new curriculum. We will be engaging our teachers, administration, Council of Elders, and other stakeholders before providing feedback to the Government. At this time, we will not be committing to piloting the curriculum.”

The new curriculum is supposedly the result of advice and feedback from 19 subject matter experts, 30 academics, and more than 100 current Alberta teachers.

The draft is more than 600 pages long.

The Edmonton Public School Division and the Northland School Division have also announced that they will not pilot this curriculum in September partially due to concerns over “continuity of learning and recovery from the pandemic. There is concern over learning loss and getting all students back into school.”

In addition, the NSD Board of Trustees and Administration reviewed the draft content, outcomes, and measures proposed in the applicable subject areas, and discussed alignment with the vision, commitment, core values, and priorities of the Board. They felt that although “the Board recognizes the importance of redesigning the curriculum for the benefit of student learning, the Indigenous perspectives and experiences that were included in the previous curriculum seem to be omitted.”

“It’s important Northland students, parents/ guardians, staff, and community members have an opportunity to give their input,” said the NSD in a statement. “The communities we serve need to be heard and Northland students must see themselves in the draft curriculum... We will work with our community partners to gather information to share with Alberta Education for possible revisions of the social studies curriculum.”

Edmonton Public School Board Superintendent Darrel Robertson announced on April 1 that “due to the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Division will not be piloting the draft curriculum next school year.”

He cited the need for “continuity of learning and family choice” with in-person instruction and online learning as one reason.

He also stated that “at this time, our Division will take time to thoughtfully review the curriculum materials and provide feedback to Alberta Education.”

The Indigenous leaders were not as measured in expressing their views on the subject.

The Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations outright rejected the government’s proposed curriculum. They referred to it as a “Eurocentric, American-focused, Christian-dominant narrative” and believe that it does not provide a balanced perspective on Treaty 6 First Nations. (see article on page 9).

Meanwhile, Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education said, “The new curriculum delivers on our commitment to Albertans to refocus learning on essential knowledge and skills in order to give our children the best possible chance at success.

“Parents and teachers have waited a long time for this, and I’m pleased to say that we’ve delivered.”

“Another promise made, promise kept,” concluded the minister.



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AU learner a shining star in the nursing community

Athabasca University (AU) learner Melissa Stevenson was the October 2020 featured nurse of the Indigenous Nurses Association of Canada Nominate a Nurse or Midwife Campaign and is nearing completion of her Master of Nursing degree.

Her first spirit name is Bright Shining Star, which perfectly encompasses the impact she has on the nursing community and reclaiming her Indigenous identity.

Melissa is a Registered Nurse and Waashkeshuyaan Unit Coordinator at Anishnawbe Health in Toronto, Ontario - an accredited Indigenous organization using traditional healing methods within a multi-disciplinary health care model. She has been working in health care for over 16 years, with the last 10 years working as a Registered Nurse in Treaty 13 area, Toronto, ON.

Beginning her studies with AU in 2017, Melissa has been working towards earning her Master of Nursing (MN). She is nearing completion of her thesis entitled "Anishnaabek naanadagin: Examining the role of a traditional healer within an intradisciplinary model of diabetes care."

Melissa explained that Anishnaabek naanadagin means "to help the people," which relates to the way her thesis looks at how traditional healing can help the community with their on-going diabetes care. She hopes to defend her thesis and complete the program to earn her MN in early 2021.

"They always say, especially with a thesis, you want to find something that you want to ask a few more questions about," said Stevenson.

"This was a great opportunity for me to meet with clients and ask them about what they thought their role was and also, for me to work with the traditional healers and ask them about their thoughts of how that all comes together."

Discovering her roots

Raised in Newfoundland, away from her family and her cultural roots in Manitoba, Melissa has committed her career to being an advocate for Indigenous health.

"I reclaimed our teachings and integrate them back into health. About a year and a half into my program, I was gifted a sweat lodge ceremony. I started running sweat lodges for our community here at Anishnawbe Health. I was gifted a pipe and given an opportunity to pray with the community in that capacity," she said.

"In 7 years of working on how to integrate traditional ways of knowing into my practice, I was gifted ceremony which gave me the opportunity to give back to my community. I was given the opportunity to reclaim parts of who we were always meant to be and re-integrate our teachings into our everyday life."

Melissa has put considerable effort into learning about her Indigenous culture and has gone on a spiritual journey with Traditional Healers and into sweat lodges, which helped confirm her research and expanded her understanding of her people and history.

"A big part of my story is that I grew up off reserve my entire life - grew up away from family and culture. I grew up in Newfoundland, but when I got older and moved out on my own, I moved to Toronto. I found this organization that served the Indigenous community and got to re-learn culture from healers there. It was almost like I was given the opportunity to reclaim these teachings and my culture. And share it with my kids," she said.

Finding a balance

When asked how she balances being a mother, a registered nurse and working on her masters, Melissa had some wonderful insights.

"Three things: community, family and self. I'm a mother and mothers put ourselves last all the time. I don't know if I'd call it balance, but I get it done in the way that I get it done. It's really about navigating," she said.

"That's what I appreciate about AU, with it being an online school and being considerate about how different things can come up in life. Life is life and you can't change that. I want to do this and pursue this education and it's worked well to allow me to work and provide for my family, and balance family and schoolwork. I wouldn't have been able to do it any other way."

Understanding her spirit names

And, while Melissa has proven to be a shining star in many facets of her life and career, she admits that she hasn't always understood why that spirit name was given to her. She didn't understand the connection to the name and her spirit.

"I remember I went to another healer and when he reaffirmed that my name was 'Bright Shining Star.' I said that I don't get it. I don't understand this name, and so he told me there was second name for me - Red Thunderbird, which I understood," she said.

"I still use both, but I think my work at Athabasca University has helped me understand what that other name meant. The name Bright Shining Star, I get now. I really do, and I think half of it has been my work that I've done while trying to figure out how I operate in other systems, but still maintaining my spiritual ways of knowing and my integrity or maintaining who I am through and through."




To learn more about how the Master of Nursing program at Athabasca University can work with your life, visit the program website.



Melissa Stevenson is a Registered Nurse and Waashkeshuyaan Unit Coordinator at Anishnawbe Health in Toronto, Ontario - an accredited Indigenous organization using traditional healing methods within a multi-disciplinary health care model. Beside her is a love mix of medicines that she uses with care. Melissa is currently completing her Masters of Nursing at Athabasca University, Canada's online university.

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Anger mounts as Alberta enters the online casino industry

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) – Two First Nations located in Southern Alberta — the Tsuut’ina Nation and the Stoney Nakoda Nation — have taken the provincial government to court due to Alberta’s unauthorized entry into the casino and gaming industry.

During the pandemic, Alberta created a provincially-run online gaming site known as “Play Alberta.” This website allows adult Albertans to play virtual slots and table-style games on their devices. It launched in October and is currently the only regulated online gaming site in the province.

Tsuut’ina and Stoney Nakoda believe that the gaming website is an overstep of authority for the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis regulator (AGLC) and the provincial government.

The application for judicial review has alleged that the AGLC exceeded their authority by becoming an operator and vendor of casino and gaming activities. The First Nations believe that because the AGLC is operating the website, it contravenes the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act as an arbitrary use of power and as a direct conflict of interest for the regulator.

The application also says that the AGLC either issued itself a casino licence to operate PlayAlberta.ca — which would violate regulations under the Act — or is illegally operating a casino without a licence.

Tsuut’ina Nation councillor and CEO of Tsuut’ina Nation Gaming, Brent Dodginghorse said, “We’ve had excellent relationships and operating partnerships with previous governments, and all levels of AGLC.

“The decision by this government now to break that understanding and begin a business competing against private companies has significantly damaged that relationship in many ways. They have said ‘thank you for helping establish the gaming sector in Alberta, but we’ll take it over from here.’”

Meanwhile, the AGLC said that they created an advisory committee made up of unnamed representatives from Alberta’s gaming industry “to

support the relationship with existing venues.” This was done to make sure the website’s earnings complemented land-based venues.

However, due to the current pandemic restrictions, all casinos are closed for business. Meaning the AGLC and the Alberta government have essentially created a situation where they are the only gaming provider in the province.

This enterprise can otherwise be described as a government-backed monopoly.

“The province has closed casinos for a prolonged period of time, which also ensures that they are the only option available for those who want to play casino games,” said Dodginghorse.

“We have taken the business risk of building and operating a casino and agreed to share revenue with the province. It is in bad faith for the province to do anything with online revenue other than allocate to existing casinos.”

Play Alberta’s expected earnings for the 2021 fiscal year is \$3.74 million.

Tsuut’ina Chief Roy Whitney said, “Together we have tried to raise our concerns with the provincial government. Unfortunately, those concerns have been ignored as our casinos remain closed during this pandemic.

“This action is important to all Albertans that rely upon charity dollars through casino revenues. By entering online gaming, this government is taking away charity dollars — dollars that charities rely on. For us, these charity dollars are used to support our health, education, housing and social programs.”

What Chief Whitney is referring to is the First Nation Development Fund. Essentially, funds made by the five First Nation owned-and-operated casinos in Alberta are distributed to each and every First Nation in the province — there are 48.

These funds are used to operate the Nations.



The Confederacy of Treaty No. 6 Chiefs iterate their support for the Tsuut’ina and Stoney Nakoda First Nations, and in a press release they remind the provincial government that the AGLC’s role is to regulate the gaming industry and not actively participate in it. They agree that the launch of Play Alberta places the AGLC in a conflict of interest.

According to the Treaty 6 Chiefs, as much as \$50 million will be diverted away by the Play Alberta site within five years.

The Chiefs “urge the provincial government and AGLC to pause Play Alberta until fulsome consultations with affected First Nations can occur.”

So, what happens when the casinos remain closed, and the government money runs out? Some people think that the province is gradually trying to force First Nations to sell off their land in order to survive. Meanwhile, others think that the UCP provincial government is just greedy and taking advantage of a “found” opportunity.

It could very well be that both are true.

NDP Critic blasts Alberta Budget for Indigenous funding cuts

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



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The NDP’s Indigenous relations critic says the 2021-22 UCP budget has done nothing to improve the lives of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples in Alberta.

“They have consistently cut,” says Richard Feehan. “There have been some changes — some things are up and down — but they aren’t sections of the budget that are provincial dollars.”

He pointed to the First Nations Development Fund, which consists of revenue from casinos. That budget item is an estimate of how much money will be raised, rather than an allocation of provincial dollars.

“If you eliminate the money that isn’t provincial dollars, then what you see is nothing but cuts — no additional dollars for anything at all,” said Feehan.

While the First Nations Development Fund had \$135,000,000 allocated towards it in 2020-21, only \$80,000,000 was spent and the 2021-22 budget allocated \$127,000,000 towards it.

This is “in spite of the fact that employment was really hard hit this year, so they’re not helping in any way with the community,” Feehan added.

Cuts that were made in the 2019-2020 budget have been maintained, he says.

“We still have none of the urban initiatives that were in the department that they cut out two years ago. They’re all still gone,” said Feehan. “Many of the community groups, like for example the Calgary Metis Family Service, just lost all of their money. The friendship centres, and so on, have all lost money.”

He says he would like to see a greater emphasis on funding for urban services for Indigenous peoples, as more than half live in cities, rather than reserves.

Feehan says the budget demonstrates that FNMI peoples are not a priority for the UCP.

“It really is, truly, a budget of neglect,” he said. “They just decided not to do anything.”

The budget for land-related negotiations and consultations was cut to \$15,098,000, less than half of what it was in 2019-2020.

“The only time (the UCP) care is if Indigenous

Continued on page 9

MRU launches Bachelor of Social Work degree as Albertans cope with pandemic challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed cracks in our society as vulnerable populations face profound challenges involving health, grief, loss, finances, housing and child care.

In the midst of this upheaval, and as we mark World Social Work Day (March 16), Mount Royal University is excited to announce that the Government of Alberta has approved a four-year Bachelor of Social Work degree at MRU.

“The Faculty of Health, Community and Education encompasses a wide range of disciplines but at the heart of them all is a desire to help people, families and communities,” Dr. Stephen Price, PhD, dean of the Faculty of Health, Community and Education.

“Social work embodies this and it’s why we are so proud to bring this degree opportunity to our students and have our graduates work with and in communities where they may help.”

Community partners have shown they agree, stepping up to provide practicums to MRU social work students and recommending focuses within the degree to make sure it meets the needs of people and communities.

Mount Royal has been providing social work education for more than 60 years with a two-year social work diploma. The new degree was built in consultation with government, non-government organizations, a program advisory committee, alumni and students. Courses in social work practice, theory, policy, and research are grounded within contemporary theoretical frameworks, including decolonization, Indigenous ways of knowing, anti-oppressive practice, and strengths perspectives. The BSW will prepare students for practice with individuals, children and families, groups and communities in complex social settings.

“Social workers are essential workers and this pandemic above all else has demonstrated that social workers are positioned to help develop and strengthen

connections between people. The BSW degree is something our employment community and our students have all asked for,” said Dr. Yasmin Dean, PhD., chair of the Department of Child Studies and Social Work at MRU.

Elder Roy Bear Chief of Siksika Nation graduated from Mount Royal with a social work diploma in 1994 and joined the MRU Child Studies and Social Work department in 2018 as Espoom taah (which is Blackfoot for helper).

“The new degree is important because it allows Indigenous MRU social work students to easily transition into the BSW program,” Bear Chief says.

“It’s about acclimating to an environment that is conducive to the feeling of being home since MRU is small enough to provide that small-town feeling. Some of the students come from various reserves and are already dealing with culture shock. Transitioning and providing an environment with a small-town feeling is already provided by MRU. You don’t want to disrupt the process of succeeding at MRU and this is part of the reason that I am excited about the new BSW program.”

MRU’s BSW, which has been awarded pre-accreditation status from the Canadian Association for



Applications are now open for MRU's BSW program.

Social Work Education, is unique in that it permits direct entry to a four-year degree program, an option that does not currently exist in Alberta. It will also be the first program in Alberta to offer a child intervention concentration, joining B.C. and Ontario that have similar specializations.

“Thousands of families a year are involved with child intervention in Alberta. Having social workers that are specifically trained to support this population, facing some of the most difficult challenges families can face, is a unique pathway and it’s one we know

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Covid infection rates surge following Easter holiday

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) – There is no doubt that Canada is currently being hit by the third wave of COVID-19 as Alberta cases and hospitalizations have spiked in recent days.

Variant cases continue to surge and are now the dominant strains of the virus — accounting for 45.5 per cent of total active cases. In order to combat this, Alberta Premier Jason Kenney announced earlier this month that the province would be regressing back to phase 1 of their re-opening plan:

- Indoor dining at restaurants is forbidden, with delivery and pick-up service still continuing.
- Indoor social gatherings are still banned and outdoor gatherings are now limited to 10 people only.
- Retail store capacity has been lowered to 15 per cent.

The full list of restrictions can be found on www.alberta.ca.

The announcement is more polarizing as ever.

Many health care experts have criticized the announcement, believing that the province should go back into a full lockdown. Dr. Shazma Mithani, an ER physician in Edmonton said, “All levels of government need to take action to prevent a higher peak in this third wave. What we are recommending today is an immediate lockdown, or circuit breaker.

“We are asking that people only leave their homes for essential services, they only have contact with members of their own household or their cohort.”

However, 17 United Conservative Party MLAs — part of the Alberta Government — spoke out against the new restrictions. “We believe that yesterday’s announcement to move our province backwards, effectively abandoning the plan that Albertans had worked diligently over the past months to follow, is the wrong decision,” they said in a letter released on Wednesday April 7.

Alberta Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief, Marlene Poitras, spoke on the rising number of COVID cases in the province.

“The COVID-19 third wave is upon us across the country... Variant strains are now the dominant mode of transmission in the province — over 50% of new cases are now variants of concern. 86 cases of the variants were identified among First Nations.”

“This is a very troubling and worrisome development,” continued the regional chief, who then emphasized that the new cases are outpacing Alberta’s

ability to vaccinate. “It’s more important than ever that we follow the public health guidelines. The new strains are more contagious and more deadly, and we are seeing increased hospitalizations and severe outcomes in younger populations.

“I, like all of you, am feeling COVID fatigue. I know we are tired and this has gone on for so long, but this truly is the pivotal point in our fight, where our actions as individuals will determine the path the virus takes.

“In the short term, we need to continue to physically distance, sanitize, and practice good health measures. In the medium and long term, we need to vaccinate — please, get educated, and get vaccinated. The vaccines approved for use in Canada are safe and effective,” concluded Chief Poitras.

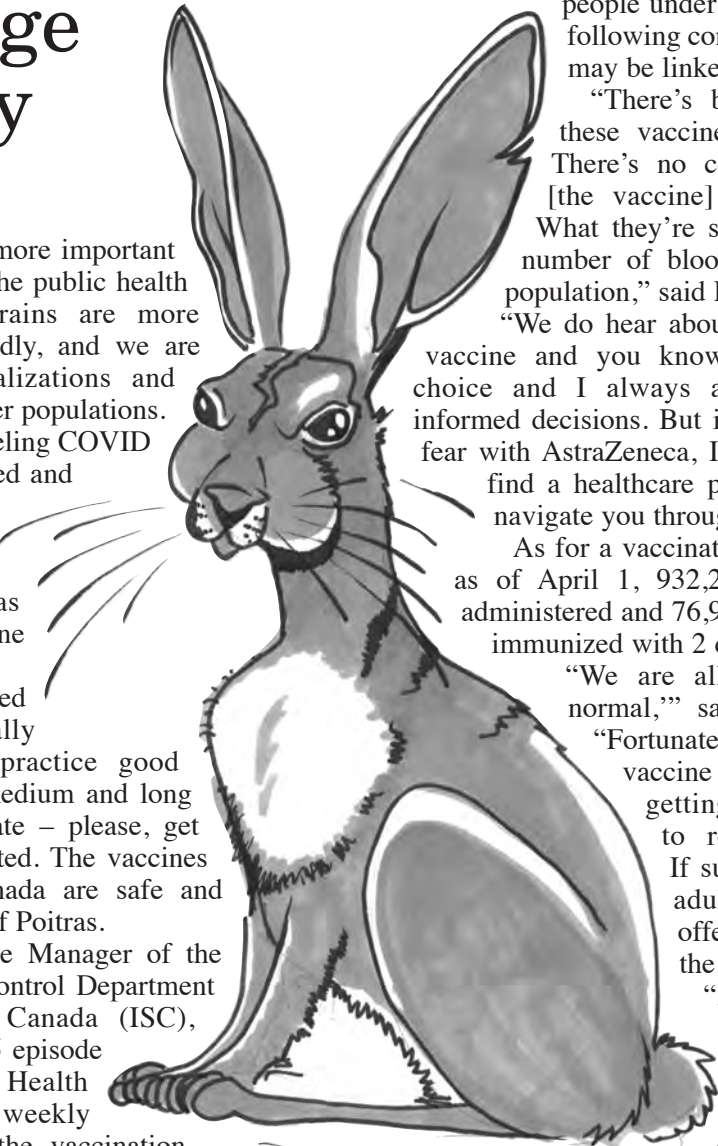
Kim Daly, Senior Nurse Manager of the Communicable Disease Control Department at Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), appeared on the March 25 episode of the First Nation Health Managers Association weekly podcast to speak about the vaccination roll-out in Canada.

“If you’re watching a lot of media, there’s a lot of focus on the negative. But really, provinces and territories appear to be doing really good — it’s pretty smooth with getting things out. I’ve heard people have some glitches with booking things but... it does take some persistence to get in there and do that,” said Daly.

“If you have older people who are trying book [a vaccination], that’s your role there... to get in there and help them with that. That’s what we can do to help get people vaccinated — I feel very strongly about that.”

She then went on to talk about the AstraZeneca vaccine and the rumours that it causes blood clots. “There isn’t any evidence that we’ve found so far,” said Daly.

Daly is referring to the announcement that the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has recommended a pause on the AstraZeneca vaccine for



people under the age of 55. This is following concerns that the vaccine may be linked to rare blood clots.

“There’s been quite a few of these vaccines given in the UK. There’s no correlation between it [the vaccine] and the bloodclots. What they’re seeing is the expected number of bloodclots in the general population,” said Daly.

“We do hear about people refusing the vaccine and you know what? That’s their choice and I always ask people to make informed decisions. But if it’s because of your fear with AstraZeneca, I ask that you try and find a healthcare provider that can help navigate you through.”

As for a vaccination update in Alberta, as of April 1, 932,258 doses have been administered and 76,941 Albertans are fully immunized with 2 doses.

“We are all tired of the ‘new normal,’” said Minister Shandro.

“Fortunately, with every single vaccine administered we are getting closer and closer to returning to normal. If supply keeps up, every adult Albertan will be offered a vaccination by the end of June.”

“Alberta’s vaccine rollout is one of the best in the country, with among the highest percentage of doses administered.”

“When it’s your turn, please sign up for your shot, show up for your appointment, and follow up with your second dose. Vaccines save lives, protect our health system and help us safely ease restrictions as soon as possible.”

On First Nations, as of April 8 Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is aware of: 25,393 confirmed positive COVID-19; 629 active cases; 1,146 hospitalizations; 24,468 recovered cases; and 296 deaths.

Of the 25,393 cases, 7299 are in Alberta, giving it the highest Indigenous infection rate in Canada.

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.

The podcast has recently switched days (from Thursdays) to Wednesdays at 11 am MDT at ihtoday.com and it can also be viewed at Alberta Native News Facebook page and on APTN TV, broadcast on Saturdays at 3 pm MDT.

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Treaty 6 Nations & MNA call for curriculum re-write

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

(ANNews) – The Métis Nation of Alberta and Treaty 6 First Nations have denounced the province’s proposed K-6 curriculum due to its erasure of Indigenous history.

The Métis Nation of Alberta, citing “monumental concerns about the Euro-American colonial undertones,” called on the government to re-write the curriculum with input from them and other Indigenous communities, a call echoed by the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations.

The nation says its input on the curriculum, as well as that of their affiliated Rupertsland Institute, was mostly ignored.

“For there to be true inclusivity in the curriculum, representation from many voices must exist at every level of the curriculum-making process and that includes Métis voices,” MNA president Audrey Poitras said in a statement.

“Our citizens were shocked, and we are disheartened, to see our input and collaboration reduced to nothing more than a side-note in the draft that was presented to the public. The tone of the curriculum carries a Eurocentric-American point of view that effectively eliminates the voice and history of the Métis Peoples in Alberta.”

Poitras wrote a letter to Education Minister Adriana LaGrange dated March 30 expressing these concerns, as well as dismay at a lack of transparency on the ministry’s part.

“This is another example of Alberta’s continued colonial practice over Métis peoples,” she says. “The secretive approach under which this process was taken undermines the collective approach valued by our communities and it is unacceptable.”

The Confederacy of Treaty 6 Nations says the curriculum upgrade was a missed reconciliation opportunity, calling its contents a “Eurocentric, American-focused, Christian-dominant narrative that perpetuates rather than addresses systemic racism and falls far short of providing a balanced, nuanced perspective on Treaty 6 First Nations history and culture.”

Treaty 6 leaders say there’s much work to be done to bring the curriculum in line with the tenets of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

“A history of Alberta that does not begin with the rich and deep histories of the Treaty First Nations and does not accurately portray how we have survived and thrived to this day, is a faulty and incomplete one,” said Treaty 6 Grand Chief Watchmaker in a statement.

Elder Richard Lighting of the Ermineskin Tribe, a residential school survivor, says the curriculum demonstrates “dominant society doesn’t have a clue about us and our history and that needs to change.”

“Change is brought on with education,” said Lighting. “Our history needs to be a part of this curriculum, it needs to be inclusive so we understand one another.”

Justin Marshall, a spokesperson for Education Minister Adriana Lagrange, told the Edmonton Journal that Indigenous leaders’ feedback was welcome and that the curriculum includes the oral traditions and stories of the Métis people, in addition to units on topics like the travois, traditional knowledge, the fur trade, Louis Riel, and the Red River and North West resistance.

The curriculum incorrectly states the last residential school in Canada was closed in the 1970s. This was in fact when the last residential school in Alberta was closed, while the country’s last residential school was shut down in 1996.

Marshall told the Journal this error will be fixed in the final version.

As far back as 2018, Premier Jason Kenney promised to put the curriculum update that was written while the NDP was in power “through the shredder,” accusing it without evidence of political bias.

In addition to its alleged anti-Indigenous bent, Kenney’s curriculum has been criticized for plagiarizing Wikipedia and depending on outdated education methods that emphasize memorization over critical thinking.

On social media,



opposition leader Rachel Notley agreed with the Indigenous communities that the new curriculum “openly violates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission”.

“Clearly, the Premier needs to pump the brakes on this awful work immediately and get back to the table with Indigenous leaders,” said Notley.

The curriculum is slated to be piloted in select schools this fall, with a goal for full implementation in all classrooms by September 2022.

As of April 14, Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools and the Northland School Division have announced that they will not be piloting the new curriculum this fall. (See article on page 4).

Funding cuts *cont. from p 6*

people are investing in their agenda, around oil and gas,” Feehan said. “They’re not interested in anything else that’s going on with the Indigenous community.”

In a statement to the *Alberta Native News*, a spokesperson for Indigenous Relations Minister Rick Wilson pointed to grant funding that hasn’t been cut.

“Funding is intact for Indigenous women’s initiatives, protocol agreements, economic development through the Aboriginal Business Investment Fund and the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation,” said Joseph Dow.

The budget lists Indigenous women’s initiatives funding as \$1,237,000 for 2021-22, compared to \$1,355,000 for 2020-21. The same is true of the Indigenous Policing Services grant, which is \$13,576,000 for 2021-22, rather than \$13,582,000 for the year prior.

“Changes to the Indi-genous Relations budget come from spending dollars carefully while keeping our focus on Indigenous people. We have been able to trim spending internally, so we can keep dollars where they are needed most to support Indigenous communities,” wrote Dow.

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Explore Edmonton signs MOU with Indigenous Tourism Alberta

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Explore Edmonton and Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) have announced a recently signed memorandum of understanding (MOU).

The memorandum between the two tourism organizations was created to support the development and marketing of Indigenous tourism businesses within the Edmonton region. The ultimate goal of the initiative is to increase Indigenous tourism in Alberta's capital region through supporting businesses "that provide authentic Indigenous cultural experiences."

Indigenous Tourism Alberta focuses on creating and nurturing partnerships between associations, organizations, governments and industry leaders from across Alberta to support the stability and growth of Indigenous tourism

"This is an historic agreement and one that we are very excited about," said Shae Bird, Chief Executive Officer of Indigenous Tourism Alberta. "What's most important about this agreement is the positive effect it will have on Indigenous tourism businesses in Treaty 6 Territory and Metis Nation of Alberta's Region 4 and 2, and we hope it will be an inspiration for other provinces and cities across Canada."

"[It provides] a little bit of accountability on both partners to ensure that there's a line vision and to ensure not only the survival of indigenous tourism, but the growth and prosperity of it as we move forward."

"We know right now that there is incredible demand," Bird said. "We're in very much the infancy stages of the industry."

The memorandum secures support at the regional level for those new businesses and the sector's representation during familiarization tours for tour operators, media products and promotional missions elsewhere.

Explore Edmonton is the city's visitor economy and venue management organization whose purpose is to increase Edmonton's tourism. "This is an exciting milestone for Explore Edmonton," said Maggie Davison, Interim CEO of Explore Edmonton.

"We are proud to work closely with Indigenous tourism business operators to be able to learn and share their history and culture with both locals and visitors. We are committed to promoting Indigenous tourism experiences rooted in the Edmonton region and look forward to many years of partnership with Indigenous Tourism Alberta."

Brenda Holder Chair of the Indigenous Tourism Alberta Board of Directors added, "This memorandum of understanding with Explore Edmonton is a fantastic opportunity to continue to grow the Indigenous tourism industry here in Alberta."

"Our goal at ITA is to help Indigenous tourism and our industry as a whole, remain competitive and help contribute to the diversification of our provincial economy."

Protesters trespass, vandalize Enoch Nation

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On April 11, 2020 approximately 400 protestors gathered outside of GraceLife church after it was shut down for violating COVID-19 health orders.

The Church — which is off Highway 657, about five kilometres west of Edmonton — is located directly adjacent Enoch Cree Nation land.

According to the First Nation, protestors trespassed onto Enoch property at 10 am and parked their vehicles on a private Enoch road in violation of Enoch's sovereignty on its southern border.

Enoch Chief Billy Morin said, "Although I respect GraceLife protestors' right to protest, right to worship, and right to free speech, I strongly condemn their illegal trespassing on our land, their vandalization of a nation member's vehicle, and their blatant disrespect of our sovereignty as a proud First Nation."

"This is our sovereign land and we protect it strongly and swiftly."

Enoch's government and the RCMP informed the protestors that they were trespassing.

Later that day, the RCMP arrested one trespasser for allegedly trying to assault an Enoch councillor and arrested another trespasser for vandalizing Chief Morin's vehicle.

Then Enoch Cree Nation members entered the situation by creating a safe road blockade and the trespassers were gone by 4 pm.

In response to the event, Enoch Cree Nation has set-up a 24/7 checkpoint on its southern border for the next two weeks in order to protect Nation members and ensure that the First Nation sovereignty is ensured.

"We are a very welcoming and friendly people, but relationships require a foundation of trust and respect that was not shown by the trespassers today. This incident demonstrates the need for more public understanding and recognition of First Nations sovereignty and treaty rights," said Chief Morin.

The Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations announced their support of the Enoch Nation and condemnation of the trespassers by saying they, "wholly and unreservedly condemn the acts of trespass, vandalism and violence perpetuated against the sovereign Enoch Cree Nation during demonstrations nearby with the Gracelife Church."

The Confederacy also said they affirm Enoch's "inherent rights to nationhood



Alberta's colleges adapt

As Alberta's economy recovers and moves forward, Alberta's colleges are ready to lead the way, providing real world experience and cutting-edge research to support Albertans and the communities where they live.

Alberta's colleges are teaching skills to students that prepare them to enter the provincial workforce and are working closely with partners to ensure programs offer the hands-on, comprehensive training that meets industry needs. And Alberta's colleges are providing research that keeps local businesses on the leading edge, contributing to the health of the provincial economy.

"Our colleges are committed to providing accessible, community-based learning opportunities, and to finding collaborative ways to increase student engagement in post-secondary education," says Glenn Mitchell, President and CEO, Northern Lakes College.

The efforts of Alberta's 11 Comprehensive Community Colleges to engage students span far beyond the borders of their campuses. Work-integrated learning opportunities exist in the majority of programs offered by Alberta's colleges, taking students to worksites throughout the province, including hospitals, farms, restaurant kitchens, environmentally-sensitive wildlife areas, automotive shops, hair salons and many other industry workplaces that align with college programming. Having students working alongside experienced industry members ensures they're equipped with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need to succeed.

"We are always looking for opportunities to innovate, grow and provide value for our learners, our industry partners and our community," says Dr. Misheck Mwaba, President and CEO, Bow Valley College.

Alberta's colleges are quick to respond to the needs of the labour market by updating curriculum, adopting emerging technologies or creating new programs to meet industry demand. Medicine Hat, NorQuest, Red

Deer, Grande Prairie and Lakeland are among the colleges launching new programs in Fall 2021, in areas as varied as health care, science, agriculture, accounting and humanities. New technologies – such as Bow Valley College's adoption of virtual reality technology into its Practical Nurse program, and Red Deer College's High Fidelity Simulation Lab, which creates complex and realistic scenarios for health care students, give students the skills needed to excel in industry.

In addition to training workers, Alberta's colleges also play a key role in solving industry challenges through applied research and innovative partnerships. Lethbridge College, Olds College and Bow Valley College are all ranked among Canada's top 50 research colleges, with Bow Valley and Lethbridge both placing in the top three nationally for fastest growing research colleges in 2020.

Lethbridge College's Integrated Agriculture Technology Centre connects small- and medium-sized agriculture enterprises with technologies and research expertise at the college, while Olds College's Centre for Innovation and Smart Farm play a leadership role in industry-led agriculture technology applied research activities. Grande Prairie Regional College recently celebrated the establishment of the Evaskevich Centre for Health Research and Innovation, which provides work-integrated learning opportunities integral to advancing rural, northern and Indigenous health research.

Alberta's colleges are committed to ensuring education is accessible to all Albertans. Portage College is collaborating with Indigenous communities to support Cenovus Energy Inc.'s Indigenous Housing Initiative through a 24-week Construction and Trades Readiness program; it is also partnering with Conestoga College and the Government of Canada to offer tuition-free programming aimed at developing tradespeople. Meanwhile, Northern Lakes College supports a vast region of northern Alberta through its Supported Distance Learning delivery model, which is about meeting every student need, wherever the



student may be.

These colleges meet the needs not just of domestic students but also of a growing international student base who sees opportunity in Alberta. International students at Medicine Hat College are well-supported through various initiatives, while Intercultural Development Training and the certificate in Global and Intercultural Studies are offered to all MHC students to encourage intercultural skills development. Meanwhile, NorQuest College is one of four post-secondary institutions in Canada participating in a two-year pilot program that integrates English language learning with health-care aide training, enabling Albertans with English language barriers to access specialized and comprehensive education. And Keyano College offers Caucuses, which are open, safe, equitable and inclusive spaces for marginalized voices.

Through these many varied activities, and countless other initiatives, Alberta's CCCs are ensuring they remain active and relevant to meet the needs of learners and the provincial economy.

Alberta's 11 Comprehensive Community Colleges (Bow Valley College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge College, Medicine Hat College, NorQuest College, Northern Lakes College, Olds College, Portage College and Red Deer College) meet the needs of more than 55,000 learners across the entire province, providing relevant, high-quality programs that benefit both local and provincial economies.



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New partnership facilitates real estate and development opportunities

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A new strategic partnership has been formed that will support Indigenous communities in pursuing real estate and development opportunities.

Calgary-based Steel River Group, an Indigenous-owned diversified management and construction consortium, has announced a strategic partnership with PBA Group of Companies, a real-estate company also based in Calgary. The two companies bring together decades of commercial and residential land development experience.

This partnership has been made to enhance Indigenous investment and production opportunities while also allowing for community consultation in the planning, production, and ownership processes.

Steel River Group will work with PBA on a diverse scope of projects, including several developments and expansions in British Columbia using Steel River's People-Public-Private-Partnership (P4) Model, which enhances Indigenous ownership on major projects.

Trent Fequet, Founder and CEO of Steel River Group, said, "A key focus for our relationship with PBA was around our P4 model. A lot of our Indigenous community partners are looking for additional resource development, building out some community concepts, industrial parks, commercial infrastructure — that's all part of our P4 model."

"If you look at a lot of major projects — it could be resort projects, hotel projects, pipeline projects, solar fields — any major infrastructure," said Fequet. "When you look at the characters involved with the project, it's the private sector and the major

developers always in front."

"Then in turn, they look back at Indigenous communities after the projects are already conceptual, all the terms of the deal are already put together, they've got all the support from the Government they think they're going to get, and the [Indigenous] community is the last group that they look at to support these projects."

Steel River Group decided to create the P4 model to allow communities the opportunity to organically grow projects alongside the developers. "The minute you have an idea — you want to build a pipeline or a major highway — why don't you ask the local communities to become owners? To sit at the 'big boy table' from day one, not after the fact."

"Through the lens of Indigenous communities: they can go ahead and take an ownership stake in these projects. We help support the early fund development capital; we help with raising the money on behalf of Indigenous communities. We've developed an integrated consultation approach," said Fequet. "We can lead the dialogue on consultation and ensure that the public sectors and the private sectors need to adapt to Indigenous communities."

"We lead the dialogue and through that, I believe, the P4 model will make a lot of these major projects a lot more successful," concluded Fequet.

As for the real estate company, PBA Group, CEO Patricia Phillips said, "Shared values are the foundation of great partnerships."

"We are honoured to partner with Trent and the



Steel River Group CEO Trent Fequet

amazing team he has assembled at Steel River Group to build community-oriented, environmentally-friendly developments in the Steel River Ecosystem and beyond."

Fequet said of the partnership, "A big part of our alignment with them [PBA] was their core values. They're devoted to women, they're devoted to giving back to communities, and they really have a mandate to help and support Indigenous communities going forward."

For more information about Steel River Group, visit www.steelrivergroup.com

CRCC report *cont. from p 2*

When the RCMP were notifying Baptiste of her son's death, they asked her if she was drunk and smelled her breath because she collapsed when they told her the news. They also had their rifles drawn because they allegedly believed Boushie had an armed accomplice in the house.

Eleanore Sunchild, a lawyer representing the family said, "When she fell to the floor, after they told her her son was dead, they had the nerve to smell her breath."

Sunchild then mentioned that when Baptiste told the officers Boushie's dinner was in the microwave, they "checked the microwave where she had put her son's dinner to make sure that she was telling the truth."

"If that doesn't speak of discrimination and racism, I don't know what does."

The CRCC also believes that the officers acted on insufficient information when they surrounded Boushie's house with their weapons drawn — they also did not have the family's consent to search the house.

Finally, the CRCC recommends that a change already adopted by the Saskatchewan RCMP — having Indigenous officers review media releases discussing serious incidents involving Indigenous people — be made nation-wide.

The media releases by the RCMP, which were subsequently picked up by major news outlets across the country, were found to have disproportionately focused on the property offences linked to Boushie's friends and made it seem like his murder was deserved.

RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki agrees saying, "There are lessons to be learned from how these media releases were written and perceived."

As for Lucki, she had the CRCC's report for over an entire year before she responded to it. Her response was needed to make the report public.

Baptiste said it was "pure torture" waiting for the results of the CRCC's investigation. "[It] felt like we were swept under the carpet," she said.

Meanwhile, after all the findings were released, Brian Sauvé, president of the National Police Federation said, "It is clear that the CRCC relied more

heavily on Ms. Baptiste's version — demonstrating a bias against our members' accounts, despite their handwritten notes made contemporaneously and a written report.

"These broad-brush findings about our members — simply because they are police officers — are not constructive to reconciliation."

Chris Murphy, another lawyer representing Boushie's family, defended the family and the report by saying, "There is no way that a mother who has just lost her son makes up a story about police officers searching a microwave for a plate of food."

"Yet in the face of the CRCC's decision, the RCMP union is still asking people in this country not to believe this woman. Shame on them."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau even spoke on the matter during an unrelated announcement in Quebec, "The way they were treated was unacceptable."

"We have seen, unfortunately, examples of systemic racism within the RCMP, within many of our institutions, and we need to do better."

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Treaty 8 Chiefs call for suspension of Bill 40

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta are calling on the Alberta Government to suspend new forestry legislation until concerns about impacts on “inherent and treaty rights are addressed.”

Alberta enacted Bill 40 in December 2020, which amends the provincial forests act.

The Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta said that “the new legislation includes provisions which reduce ministerial oversight, streamlines the licensing process, and increases the amount of timber that can be harvested annually.”

Treaty 8 includes 40 First Nations and is the largest treaty territory in Canada by area at 840,000 square kilometres — larger than France. It spreads into British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories and has about 40,000 members in Alberta.

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta Grand Chief Arthur Noskey said, “Bill 40 will have a direct impact on our territories and on our Inherent and Treaty rights.”

“The Province should have consulted with us from the outset on a government-to-government basis to make sure that our rights were protected. Instead, it went ahead and passed the bill into law without talking to us.”

Treaty 8 First Nations in Alberta holds Inherent and Treaty rights in relation to lands and waters in Treaty No.8 territory, recognized and affirmed under Canadian law.

“We entered into Treaty No. 8 based on the Crown’s promise that we would be able to continue to hunt and fish as we had before the treaty,” said Grand Chief Noskey. “The Province is responsible for fulfilling those promises and upholding the honour of the Crown. It is not honourable to blindside us by enacting new laws without open and sincere consultation with our nations.”

“We will make every effort to protect our territories and our rights,” said Grand Chief Noskey. “That includes holding the Province accountable for ignoring the direction of the Supreme Court and disrespecting our Treaty.”

“We expect the Province to suspend the new Forest Act immediately, and to meet with the Treaty 8 Chief’s to address how the province intends to uphold their obligations under Treaty. Until that happens, no further steps should be taken under this legislation.”

“The forest is being overharvested. There’s a chain reaction to everything that’s done,” said Grand Chief Noskey.

The Alberta United Conservatives passed the act and it is expected to come into effect May 1.

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry spokesman Justin Laurence said that the government did not speak with First Nations, instead, the government spoke with Indigenous-owned companies.

“The department took part in meaningful, ongoing conversations with the forestry companies and industrial partners, which included six companies owned by Indigenous communities,” he wrote in an email.

Treaty 6 Outreach helps those in need



Treaty 6 Outreach assists unhoused and less fortunate people in Edmonton by providing snacks, clothing, bedding supplies and harm reduction products on Thursdays at Beaver Hills Park (Jasper Ave and 105 St.) and on Fridays at McIntyre Park (83 Ave. and 104 St.) Photo by Terry Lusty

However, Grand Chief Noskey believes that consultation must happen on a government-to-government basis and that the government can’t relegate First Nations consultations to companies doing the work.

“It seems like we have to force the government to the table,” he added.

“We are for the economy, but we want to do it in a way that respects the land,” Noskey said. “It seems with this UCP government nobody cares about the environment.”

“It’s a free-for-all.”

BSW degree *cont. from p 7*

that there is a significant and ongoing need,” said Dr. Peter Choate, PhD., program coordinator for social work at MRU.

In Fall 2021, the BSW will admit 35 students into the first year. Students possessing a completed Social Work diploma from Mount Royal University or from an accredited post-secondary institution within Alberta may apply through the post-diploma entrance option.

The BSW, which allows students to participate in practical learning right away, will build over four years to admit 60 students annually. Demand is high. Between 2015 and 2019, there were an average of 6.5 applicants for every one seat in the diploma program.

“Alberta’s always been this unusual mix of

advantage and disadvantage and social work has some unique opportunities and obligations in this province. Having another perspective, the Mount Royal BSW perspective in social work education, is a tremendous accomplishment,” says Dr. Gaye Warthe, PhD., Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning, in the Faculty of Health, Community and Education.

“Mount Royal attracts so many non-traditional learners because of our small class sizes and our unique style of personalized learning. The learners we attract should have the opportunity to complete their education at Mount Royal where they started.”

Krista Andrews graduated from MRU in 2008 with the social work diploma and now supervises and provides support and leadership to a team of social workers.

“There is a saying amongst social workers that you

don’t pick social work, social work picks you. I believe this is true for me,” said Andrews. “Social justice, social action and community development are the foundation of what we do, and advocacy is sometimes the toughest and most fulfilling part of the role.”

Tim Hilton, a current MRU social work student, says many of the attributes of MRU as a whole also make it an excellent place to study social work.

“At MRU, the faculty know who you are,” says Hilton. “You’re not a number and you’re not another unfamiliar face. They believe in you, in your education and in your future.”

Applications for the Bachelor of Social Work Degree open on October 1, 2021. To apply visit mru.ca/apply.



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“PROUDLY SERVING ALBERTA’S FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES FOR OVER A DECADE”

Red Skirt MMIWG project seeking volunteers

By Terry Lusty

Advocating for a worthy cause does not always come fast or easy, especially in the case of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Such has never been truer, as many of their survivors allude to, despite the federal government inquiry into the matter. Don't believe it? Just ask the thousands of impacted families and individuals across Canada who've been left in the wake of such horrible acts against humanity.

Sadly, it took many, many years, broken hearts, broken spirits and broken dreams for some degree of closure and reconciliation to occur. Time rolled by with no resolution whatsoever, not even on the part of government or law enforcement.

It took many years of protest to get any kind of attention to deal with the pressing issue as the number of missing and murdered steadily climbed. It took such hideous instances as those of a Vancouver-based serial killer who attracted international attention to help the cause of MMIWG to move forward, as many of the killer's victims were among the most vulnerable individuals of society - Indigenous women.

Still, the problem and reality of MMIWG reared its ugly head over and over again, with no concrete resolution in sight, as disappearances, violence and losses of life continued uncontrollably.

The National Inquiry on MMIWG took place between 2016 and 2018 but there are still many unsolved cases – and women continue to disappear.

As a result, marches and protests supporting the MMIWG cause have escalated throughout the nation and the "red dress" movement has gained momentum with numerous walks and protests and outcries for justice and human rights. Those traumatized and living with the loss of loved ones for so many decades are speaking out.

More recently, a new movement has emerged in Edmonton to help commemorate May 5, the National Day for the Awareness of MMIWG. A small but concerned group of Indigenous women in Edmonton came together and have been working diligently as part of a project designed to supply handmade red ribbon skirts and shirts to help outfit individuals involved and participating in the May 5 MMIWG march.

The project, entitled Red Skirts for National MMIWG Day March, aims to produce up to 150 skirts

plus up to 100 men's shirts by the end of April. So not much time is left and the project could certainly use a shot in the arm as it reaches out to the community-at-large to jump on board and help out. They want volunteers to step forward to help with the sewing involved in the production of the garments. The assistance would be really welcome, states Jo Swampy, the project's instructor and seamstress who has worked on various cultural programs for many years.

Swampy explains that the idea for the project initially came from Vancouver-based Jamie Smallboy who is active with the national MMIWG movement. Edmonton's Creating Hope Society saw the merit of the idea to produce the skirts and suggested the group of Edmonton women approach Rev. Travis Enright, a local Indigenous pastor at St. Faith's Anglican Church. The rest is history. Enright kicked in \$500 plus operating space for the project.

Enright, a grounded, sincere individual who assists community projects such as meals for the homeless and less privileged, and operates facilities for the recently-established Tee Pee Treats Indigenous Cuisine project out of the church's hall area, is delighted with the Red Skirt project. He says it is a multi-generational project for "girls and women remembering lost souls of those murdered... to finding a sacred space for the generations that were and are to come. We're allowing space for powerful women" to do what's important to them."

Other considerate donors soon jumped on board. The Salvation Army graciously offered another \$500 plus a loan of five sewing machines. Additional finances came forward from Saddle Lake First Nation, Go Fund Me, and at least a dozen or more donations from private individuals including \$500 from an Ontario resident. Still other donors include Food Not Bombs, Radio CFCW and Radio K 97. Suddenly, it was all coming together, and the project was shifting gears!

Still there is a real need for volunteer sewers, even if they don't know how to make the garments; Swampy will teach them. She has a strong cultural background and has been freelancing cultural programs and projects including The Canadian Native Friendship Centre's "Wonder Woman" project as well as projects in various communities and schools.



Instructor Jo Swampy (left) and Brenda Virta are two of Edmonton's Red Skirt seamstresses operating from St. Faith's Church.

With the pressure of time upon them, the Red Skirt project people could use volunteers onsite at the church located at 11725 - 93 Street in Edmonton. They can also contact Swampy at 587-537-2935 to offer help or contribute any donations to the project. Swampy points out that any surplus materials or donations will be forwarded to other MMIWG project (i.e. Stolen Sisters Walk) and/or next year's national march. The current project operates Mondays through Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Thursdays through Saturdays 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.

So, if you've ever wondered how you might contribute to the MMIWG movement, this is your opportunity to do so. The March will be held on May 5.

Protesters trespass *cont. from p 10*

and self-determination, including the right to determine entry to is sovereign territory, the right to call for eviction of any individuals or groups in violation of that right, and the right to levy penalties, fines" for violations of their lands.

Edmonton-Rutherford MLA Richard Feehan also declared his support of Enoch by addressing the legislature during Question Period and asking the Minister of Indigenous Relations Rick Wilson if he supported the First Nation. The minister said that he does.

The event started out as a protest of pandemic restrictions, but at the end of the day it was just about the rights of entitled people here in Alberta who believe that everything needs to go their way forever. Whether that means by putting themselves in danger by protesting; trespassing onto illegal territory; disregarding the authority of a First Nation; or tearing

down fences made by health-care professionals.

Billy Morin spoke on the issue in a Facebook post saying, "What if it was the other way around; no doubt we would have another Colten Boushie type incident on our hands."

Colten Boushie — a young First Nations man living in Saskatchewan — was executed on the farm of Gerald Stanley some time ago — for trespassing. The man who shot Boushie in the back of the head, Gerald Stanley, was acquitted of all charges despite National backlash.



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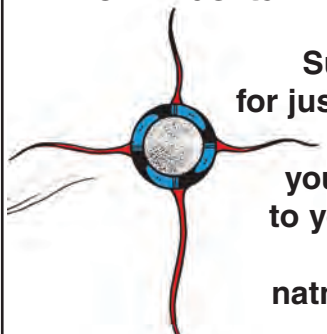
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AWA joins First Nations' call to assess Tent Mine Coal Project

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Alberta Wilderness Association has joined southern Alberta's two largest First Nations' call for the federal government to step in and halt coal mining in the Rockies.

Last month, the Kainai and Siksika Nations called on the feds to impose a federal impact assessment on the Tent Mountain Coal Mine Project.

They argued Australian-based company Montem Resources is exploiting a loophole that requires 5,000 tonnage production capacity required for a federal impact assessment, which the project falls just 75 tonnes under, an argument the AWA agrees with.

"The distinction between a coal mine producing 4,925 tonnes per day and one producing 5,000 tonnes per day is a distinction without a difference," AWA conservation director Ian Urquhart said in a March 31 statement expressing support for the Kainai and Siksika position. "It amounts to only one-quarter of one truckload of coal."

Kainai Chief Roy Fox told *Global News* a review of the project from the Alberta Energy Regulator is "insufficient to appropriately identify the impacts to areas of federal jurisdiction, including on Kainai's rights," because it's not authorized to consider constitutional questions in its deliberations.

Siksika Chief Ouray Crowfoot said the project's proximity to the federal assessment threshold and increase of coal projects along the Alberta-B.C. border are sufficient reasons for the feds to get involved.

Both leaders said the encroachment of resource extraction on their traditional lands makes it increasingly difficult for them to conduct their spiritual practices.

An AWA news release notes the government has the ability to order an assessment under the federal Impact Assessment Act if the project could "cause adverse effects within federal jurisdiction or adverse direct or incidental effects," there is major public concern about the project, or if it would negatively

impact Indigenous peoples, arguing the Tent project meets all three criteria.

Climate considerations and the impact of mining on several species at risk, including grizzly bear, whitebark pine, and westslope cutthroat trout — are adverse effects that fall under federal jurisdiction, the AWA argues.

"This reality will not be considered adequately in a provincial assessment process," said Urquhart. "The wildlife and water quality effects of this project also are transboundary; they affect more than just the province of Alberta."

Earlier in the month, NDP MP Heather McPherson — Alberta's sole non-Conservative MP — tabled a petition with more than 18,000 signatures in the House of Commons calling in part on the governing Liberals to freeze new coal developments, arguing the provincial government has failed in its Charter duty to consult with First Nations.

The petition, which was launched by Latasha Calf Robe of Niitsitapi Water Protectors, frames opposition in terms of Treaty rights and the duty to consult with Indigenous communities.

"It's Canada's duty to ensure that resource exploration and development proposals meet the highest standards of consultation and involvement with Indigenous peoples in accordance with section 35 of the Constitution Act," it says.

"Alberta failed its duty to consult. Coal exploration and development on land formerly protected under the Policy threatens the environment, species at risk,

water quality and infringes upon Aboriginal and Treaty rights of First Nations from Treaties 6, 7 & 8."

While much of the coal conversation has focused on the Alberta government's since-backtracked removal of the province's long standing coal policy, McPherson says there are other projects which fall outside its scope that ought to be scrutinized, such as the Grassy Mountain project.

"These Canadians are urging the environment minister to ensure that there is a fulsome assessment of the impacts of all proposed coal developments and exploration activities in the Rocky Mountains," said McPherson in an APTN interview.

The feds should pause the Grassy Mountain project "until the cumulative impacts of all mining activity in the region have been adequately considered," she added.

The federal government needs to step in and commit to a regional assessment of coal projects because the province has already made up its mind, said Calf Robe.

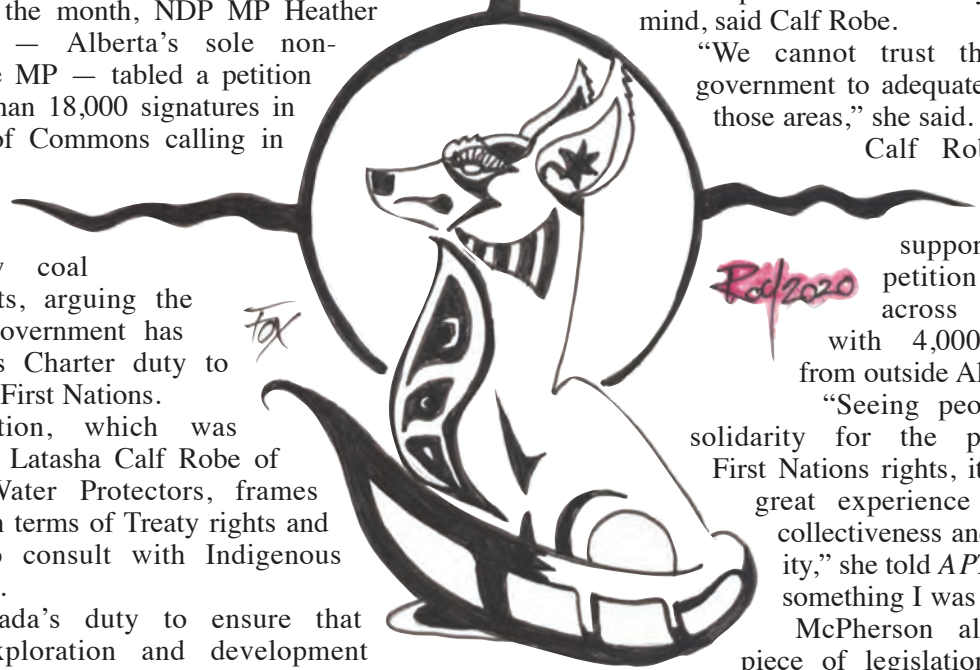
"We cannot trust the provincial government to adequately look at all those areas," she said.

Calf Robe says it's heartening to see support for the petition resonate across the country, with 4,000 signatories from outside Alberta.

"Seeing people stand in solidarity for the protection of First Nations rights, it really was a great experience to see that collectiveness and that solidarity," she told APTN. "It wasn't something I was expecting."

McPherson also tabled a piece of legislation that would require assessments for all coal projects, rather than just those whose emissions surpass a certain threshold.

"Grassy Mountain is the thin edge of the knife," she told the *Canadian Press*.



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