





# Edmonton groups collaborate with vaccination support

By Dale Ladouceur, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On September 29, the Edmonton Covid Rapid Response Collaborative (ECRRC) held their first event – a Sharing/Talking Circle whose sole purpose was to strategize ways to increase vaccination rates in Edmonton’s Indigenous communities.

Verna Fisher and Gabrielle Chabot are ECRRC’s Indigenous community outreach workers and the event organizers. They saw first-hand how Covid was ravaging Indigenous communities and wanted to come up with solutions on how to get more of their Indigenous community vaccinated.

“With First Nations, Metis and Inuit (people), it is very hard (to overcome) past experience with the government,” explained Verna. “We’ve held pop-ups, BBQ’s and other things to help them get vaccinated but it’s still not enough.”

The Sharing Circle event brought together different non-profit leaders, front line workers, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to discuss how to get the message out about how important vaccines are, to more Indigenous community members.

When asked how the Sharing Circle came about, Verna’s response was immediate: “I’m 58 years old and I’ve been living our ways for a while. I know quite a few Elders and Knowledge Keepers and the first thing I thought about was asking our wise ones.” She added, “Gabby and I have both worked as frontline workers and knew we needed to find new ways on how to [get the message out]. Having Elders, frontline workers and others all sharing – that’s a whole lot of experience and education in one spot.”

ECRRC is a collaboration of 11 Edmonton social services agencies, coming together to build a framework plan to collectively respond to positive Covid cases. The overall goal of the collaborative is to flatten the curve and increase well-being by providing dignified cultural exchange, timely and relevant supports, and information to the disproportionately affected communities.

When discussing the importance of getting vaccinated, Lisa De Gara, Manager with Action for Healthy Communities said, “I’m very passionate about promoting vaccines across the different communities in Edmonton. I want to make sure everyone has the best information to make a healthy decision to get vaccinated. We [want to focus] on the impact community leaders can have and how much influence they hold. To understand that having a conversation with someone they have a meaningful relationship with can really change peoples’ minds about getting vaccinated.”

Bernadette Iahtail Executive Director of Creating Hope Society of Alberta agreed. She said, “I’m vaccinated myself and my whole family is and my hope is there are more people getting vaccinated. Part of [the challenge] is that we need to think about our fear and ask why we are afraid. I was nervous because of the unknown but I [now] feel safer and feel the freedom.”

Carola Cunningham, CEO of Niginan Housing Venture said that she hopes that this collaboration has a resounding impact on our community. “That it encourages our young people, our old people, our in-between people to get vaccinated to save lives. Natural medicines, which we rely on for many things, weren’t enough to deal with polio, Spanish Flu, or small pox, and they aren’t enough to deal with Covid-19.”

Lorette Goulet from Creating Hope Society said that she had Covid earlier this year, (before vaccines were available) and she just about didn’t survive. “The message we need to get across (tearfully), is please just take care of yourself,” she implored. “I’m double vaccinated now, I got it as soon as I got out of the hospital. I tell everybody I know that they need to be protected. In our communities there are a lot of people that are fearful. So, if we can get the message out and help them, that’s what I would like to see.”



ECRRC Sharing Circle event organizers Verna Fisher and Gabrielle Chabot

Tricia Smith, Executive Director of Boyle, McCauley Health Centre explained that since March, her organization has had a vaccination campaign operating out of their clinic and they have been conducting outreach with their mobile clinic. “The populations that we serve are marginalized,” she said. “A good percentage of them are Indigenous, many of them are homeless/houseless. So, we are going to all the emergency shelters and all the encampments, trying to have those conversations and build those relationships of trust.”

Smith said that since the Boyle McCauley Health Centre initiative started, they have given over 3000 doses of vaccine, which is probably about 2000 people.

“We certainly have had our share of conversations with individuals who are hesitant or outright refusing,” she noted. “Some of the ways we move people from ‘I don’t want to get vaccinated’ to ‘sure, I’ll get the shot’ is by building a relationship. Frankly the relationship that we have with the population we serve on a day-to-day basis has been key as well as presenting the facts on a repeated basis and having those facts updated.”

There were so many myths about the vaccine in the beginning and it was really scary, said Elder Fernie Marty. “I was one of those doubters. I went to my

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# National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with Tk’emlúps Te Secwépemc

By Rob Houle, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As the rain fell on a somber and chilly morning, the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc welcomed Canada, and the world, back to their territory. Traditional song and jingle dancers welcomed the orange clad crowd to the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. A fitting continuance of the journey started in May 2021 when the world learned of the remains of 215 children lost to the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

This announcement, which was part of a slow progression of over two decades, would serve to awaken Canada to the truths Indigenous people had always known. As Kúkpí7 Rosanne Casimir told the crowd, “Non-Indigenous people are actually listening... and it is the [lost] children that will bring us through this.” Kúkpí7 Casimir was the first of a number of speakers that took time to reflect on the day’s meaning.

Video presentations, with song and discussion serving as interludes, helped to fill a packed agenda for this day formerly referred to as Orange Shirt Day. Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief RoseAnne Archibald shared a personal story regarding her own sister, Euphamie, who was a victim of the notoriously brutal St. Anne’s Indian Residential School. A truth that was lost to the National Chief during the early years of her life, a story that hits home for many Indigenous people.

Chief Archibald continued, “100% of Indigenous people in Canada are survivors of intergenerational trauma...It is the First Nations survivors that should take the lead on healing through a trauma informed approach.”

She called on the federal government, and allies, to ensure that every dollar pledged be spent on healing from these traumas.

Speaker after speaker shared difficult truths and connections to the horrors of a system designed to

“kill the Indian in the child.” But with each truth, came the hope and dedication to making sure these atrocities never happen again. AFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee reminded the attendees of the “...culpability on behalf of the government, parish and RCMP,” and the need for all parties to take tangible actions moving forward.

Included in the other delegates invited were Kamloops Mayor Ken Christian, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Murray Rankin and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth. Mayor Christian announced the City of Kamloops would be installing banners designed by Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc members celebrating the areas’ shared heritage as well as his intention to sign a protocol agreement later in the Fall.

Noticeably missing, from an event held at the epicentre of Residential School truth telling, was any representative from the Federal Government. Those in attendance, who braved the cold morning, were informed that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had been invited, and should have attended. These declined invitations were made all the more relevant when it



National Truth and Reconciliation Day event in Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc. (Photo by Rob Houle).

was learned that the Prime Minister was in the province, but vacationing in Tofino, BC.

The day’s events closed with a moment of silence at 2:14 pm and a drum song at 2:15 pm. A time chosen to reflect the 215 children found. A discovery that has not only shaken Canada to its core, but helped remind Indigenous people of how much they have had to endure. With the nation once again focused on Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc, Indigenous people ask Canadians, will we have to endure much more?



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# Leaders slam Trudeau’s Sept. 30 vacation

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Indigenous leaders are criticizing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s decision to take a family vacation on the inaugural National Truth and Reconciliation Day.

Rather than attend memorials for residential school survivors in-person on Sept. 30, Trudeau and his family travelled to Tofino, B.C. However, he did attend a ceremony in Ottawa the previous night and spoke with eight residential school survivors over the phone the day of.

Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc Kukpi7 (Chief) Rosanne Casimir twice invited Trudeau to attend a Sept. 30 ceremony honouring the 215 children whose bodies were found at the nearby site of the former Kamloops Residential School, but says she received no response.

Trudeau reportedly phoned Casimir to apologize on Oct. 2, but has not explained why he didn’t respond to her requests to attend the event.

Video obtained by *Global News* showed Trudeau walking on a beach on Sept. 30.

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation’s Truth and Reconciliation walk began Thursday morning at the Nation’s Tin Wis resort on the former site of the Christie Residential School — just a kilometre north of the \$18.8-million beachfront property the Trudeaus stayed at, the *Globe and Mail* reported.

Mariah Charleson, the vice president of Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, which Tla-o-qui-aht belongs to, said Trudeau gave them no indication he would be in the area.

“When we finally saw Canada respond to the call to action to make this a national holiday we thought maybe Trudeau is getting it,” she told the *Toronto Star*. “But to hear that he has shown up unannounced, it shows that he didn’t take this day seriously.”

The prime minister will be visiting Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc “in the near future,” Trudeau spokesperson Alex Wellstead told the *Globe*.

Assembly of First Nations Chief RoseAnne Archibald said in an Oct. 3 statement that Trudeau “must demonstrate through actions that he is committed to the healing path forward.”

“As I stated to the Catholic church, hollow apologies will no longer be accepted,” Archibald wrote.

She also requested media give as much attention to the stories of survivors as it did to Trudeau’s vacation.

On Sept. 30, newly-elected Edmonton-Griesbach MP Blake Desjarlais, who is Metis and Two-Spirit called on Trudeau to “apologize to the millions of Canadians who actually did the hard work of remembering, listening & learning today.”

Native Women’s Association of Canada CEO Lynne Groulx said the prime minister’s words in support of reconciliation “ring incredibly hollow when Mr. Trudeau could not take the time that his own government set aside to reflect upon the tragedy of the Indian residential schools and instead chose to flit off to Tofino for a holiday.”

The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs called Trudeau’s vacation an “arrogant dismissal” and “slap in the face” to residential school survivors. “If this event was before the election; Trudeau would be there on both knees,” it said in a statement.

Timmins — James Bay NDP MP Charlie Angus asked if anyone could imagine the prime minister going on a beach vacation on Remembrance Day, telling the *Globe* that Trudeau’s decision shows “very bad judgment.”

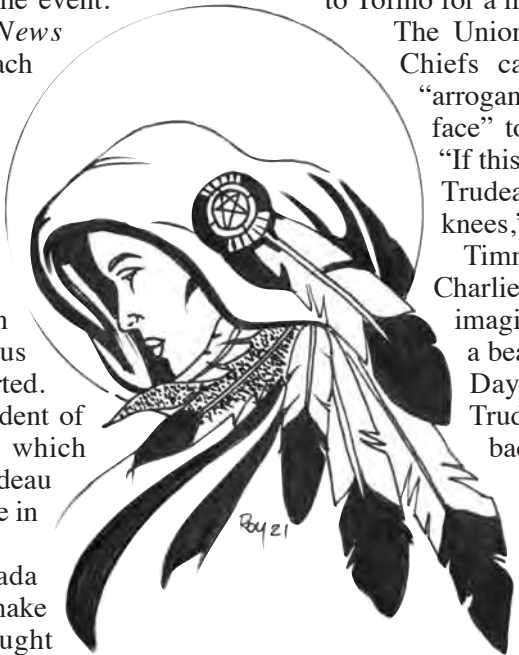
Evelyn Korkmaz, a survivor of St. Anne’s residential school in Fort Albany, Ont., told the *CBC* that Trudeau’s attendance at the Sept. 29 Ottawa ceremony is akin to “reflecting on Remembrance

Day on November the 10th rather than November the 11th.”

She added, “this just shows us survivors that he doesn’t actually want to meet with us. He’s just hoping that we will just disappear into the sunset.”

Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson defended Trudeau’s “track record” on reconciliation.

“I find it very unfortunate that people are questioning that commitment,” Wilkinson told the *Globe*.



# Federal election was a distraction that sidelined Indigenous issues

By UBCIC Chiefs

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and other Indigenous leaders are disappointed but unsurprised that the most expensive federal election to date led to low voter turnout and another minority Liberal Government. The misplaced arrogance of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did not result in the majority he wanted – instead an under-performance at the polls maintained the status quo and proved that voters, who are already preoccupied and burdened with the challenges of a pandemic, are dissatisfied and exhausted by unnecessary political powerplays.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, UBCIC President stated, “Unfortunately, the lackluster federal election

not only marked Prime Minister Trudeau’s failure to fulfill key commitments to Indigenous peoples, including his promise to bring clean drinking water to all Indigenous communities during his first five years in office, but highlighted d the continued sidelining of many important Indigenous issues and the devastating forced departure of Jody Wilson-Raybould as a result of the sordid SNC-Lavalin affair.”

Grand Chief Phillip continued, “It is 2021 and Indigenous peoples have seen enough symbolism and two-faced, empty talk. The time is now for our basic rights to be fulfilled – for Indigenous peoples to have

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# Sacred Fire was lit in commemoration on Sept. 30

By Terry Lusty, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For the Indigenous population of Turtle Island (Canada), September 30, 2021 was not your typical day like any other day. On the contrary.

Across Canada, from coast to coast to coast, there was listening, learning and commemoration as Indigenous and non-Indigenous supporters rallied around the flag of reconciliation, to acknowledge and honour residential school survivors, those who never made it home and those who were victimized and traumatized - in many instances severely for the duration of their lives.

Particularly significant about September 30 is the fact that it has become Canada's most recent federal statutory holiday, now known as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

It is, according to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, "a day to reflect on the impact of residential schools, their families, their communities and all of those who never made it home."

And although Alberta's premier, Jason Kenny did not declare the national holiday a provincial one, the City of Edmonton and the City of Calgary did so for all of their employees, including police and libraries.

Parliament to its credit, followed through with recommendation #80 of the 94 Calls to Action that were part of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Senator Murray Sinclair. The report was presented to the feds in 2015 at the Closing Ceremonies of the seven TRC National Gatherings across Canada. And, thus, recommendation #80 was duly enacted on June 3rd, 2021, by parliament as Bill C - 5.

Throughout the country there were ceremonies, sacred fires, smudges, and other gatherings – both live and virtual - to help make the day meaningful.

In Edmonton, a Sacred Fire was held at 10 a.m. at City Hall Plaza with Elders Jerry and Joanne Saddleback officiating by the log fire. Also in attendance were other Elders, community members, civic leaders and staff, and Mayor Don Iveson, along with his two children.



**Nehiyaw (Cree) Elders Jerry and Joanne Saddleback served as ceremonial facilitators at the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Edmonton on Sept.30. They offered prayers, guidance and a drum song, and described some of the issues affecting residential school survivors and their families. Other speakers at the event were Elder Tom Snow from Morley, Emile Desrocher and Mayor Don Iveson, who is in his final month as mayor of Edmonton. Photos by Terry Lusty.**

Following Elder Jerry's opening prayer, he, and dozens of those in attendance "fed the fire," depositing offerings of tobacco while young children on the sidelines drafted words of "reconciliation" onto large sheets of construction paper.

Following the fire ceremony, a few of the Elders shared brief stories about residential school experiences. Mayor Iveson greeted the crowd warmly, expressing his ongoing support for survivors and

commitment to the reconciliation process which he, as an 'honourary witness' at TRC gatherings, promised to continue.

The event concluded at approximately 1:30 p.m. at which time the crowd dispersed, many to make their way to one or more other Orange Shirt Day events scheduled to happen at numerous other locations throughout the city and elsewhere.

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# A conversation with filmmaker Courtney Montour

By Dale Ladouceur, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Award winning filmmaker Courtney Montour has already had an enviable career as a documentarian, let alone as an Indigenous woman working in a white, male dominated industry. But her latest work, *Mary Two-Axe Earley: I Am Indian Again*, may be her most historically poignant film to date. The National Film Board of Canada agreed, adding Montour’s latest offering to their stable of content.

It must have been a remarkable moment in the filmmaker’s career, focusing her lens on a fellow Kahnawake, Mohawk woman who impacted so many Indigenous Canadian women’s lives. The other remarkable point is that those people whose lives were changed, will only now be able to learn the magnitude of Mary’s tireless efforts in the Canadian women’s rights movement.

Using never-before-seen archival footage and rare audio recordings, Montour was able to foster a deeply personal, albeit one-sided relationship with her subject in a way only two strong Indigenous women could. Combined with stellar research and powerful editing, this is a jewel of a film whose historical significance cannot be exaggerated.

*Mary Two-Axe Earley: I Am Indian Again* screened at the recent Edmonton International Film Festival, along with four other features, and the audience response to Montour’s project was overwhelming.

ANNews connected with Courtney Montour the following morning to deep dive into the person behind this remarkable work.

**When did you know that being a filmmaker was what you wanted?**

CM: Back in 2008, someone recommended Mushkeg Media Inc, to me (mushkeg.ca), out of Montreal. They’re a Cree production company that was hiring Indigenous people interested in film to learn all the various aspects and that was where I started. What a great, supportive production company! I had the chance to do everything, from sound, a little bit of editing, production manager, all those kinds of things. I think it’s really important to have those mentorship mechanisms in place so that everybody, including Indigenous artists have the opportunity to figure out what they want to do. From there, I continued and directed with them as

well as with other production companies.

**Your films are mostly documentary in nature. Do you see yourself ever broadening into fiction?**

CM: Of course, that’s a possibility but I’m really drawn to documentary; to be able to share our Indigenous stories and histories through real life, first-person accounts. It’s always amazing to be able to learn, and so honouring to meet so many people across this country and learn about their stories.

**What do you think is the percentage of the audience that hadn’t known Mary Two-Axe Earley’s story?**

CM: Many people don’t know. I’ve even spoken to people in Indigenous Studies programs in universities who haven’t heard of her (laughs), and that says a lot. She’s just so important because [Mary’s] one of these pivotal people who really sparked a movement for change against sex discrimination. And there are so many women after her who were so important and that’s why I listed them at the end [in the credits]. I wanted people to have a starting off point to go and learn more once they got to the end of the film.

**It must have been so powerful to hear, for the first time, the audio tapes that had never seen the light of day.**

CM: This particular project would not have been possible without Alanis Obomsawin. That is where this project started - with the gift of the recordings she offered me. [Obomsawin] has been creating film on our Indigenous issues for over 50 years and she sat down with Mary in 1984 in Mary’s home in Kahnawake [and recorded the audio tapes].

It was four years ago, back in 2017 when I was gifted those recordings. Having that chance to listen to Mary was very emotional. Especially when I got to the end of the recordings; knowing there wasn’t more there. I just felt a close connection to her after listening to the recordings and, (as I said in the film), I wanted the audience to have that same experience. That is why it’s so important that everything came from Mary’s voice and Mary’s perspective for this first-ever film on her. It’s her guiding us and we get to connect with her.



Writer and Director Courtney Montour

**It’s such a vital piece of Canadian history.**

CM: Yes, these laws are so incredibly complex and it’s challenging to fit that into a 30-minute film (laughs). So, it was important to show the personal experience and how it impacted women and how women like Mary have dedicated their lives to make these changes.

Full sex equality hasn’t been reached for First Nations women and that’s something not known. So, for me, it was really important to bring the present day into this film, to bring in Jodi Calahoo-Stonehouse and her daughter Isabella. It’s to show there are women today that have been positively impacted by Mary’s work but have not heard her name, like many people. It’s because the history is not that easily accessible, and so we know that the work continues. There are still thousands of women still fighting in the courts to be recognized by the Canadian government to have Indian status.

**Your work is also being added to curriculums across the country.**

CM: For me, education and building those bridges in understanding, also between non-Indigenous audiences and Indigenous peoples is incredibly important. I’ve always worked in the educational field, and I continue to do that. I think film is such a wonderful way to complement education and learning and for it to be that personal, emotional experience to complement lectures and reading.

*To learn more about Courtney Montour’s work, follow her on Instagram at courtneymontour.*

# Alberta’s COVID situation goes from bad to worse

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

About three months after Premier Jason Kenney exclaimed that Alberta was “open for summer,” COVID case counts in the province began an upward trajectory.

While Ontario cautiously kept many of its public health measures in place, Alberta’s government ended all COVID restrictions, including a province-wide mask mandate, on July 1.



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# Explore a new career path with Women Building Futures

Submitted by the WBF team

Women Building Futures (WBF) is an Alberta based non-profit that offers employment training and support services to women. Our programs are tailored to introduce hands-on skills, workplace safety, financial literacy, and best practices to begin a career in the construction, driving, maintenance industry.

Since our early days, we have been committed to supporting Indigenous women on their path to economic security. Approximately 30% of our graduates are Indigenous women and over the last 20 years, we've supported thousands of women through the process of entering careers that pay above a living wage. Indigenous women have historically been the backbone of their communities, passing on traditional teachings and skills. Today, more and more Indigenous women are recognizing these skills and teachings are transferable to the construction, trades, and driving industries. Many of our graduates are now working in careers that provide them with higher earnings and a rewarding, fulfilling future that positively impacts their families and communities.

Karma Hunter is one of our first graduates and is now co-owner of Cree-Con Construction. Since completing her WBF program more than 18 years ago she's become financially independent, started her own construction company, and mentored many other people to consider a career in the field.

We spoke to Karma Hunter about her success in the construction trades since finishing the program.

## What class did you graduate from?

"I took Journeywoman Start and I believe we were the first ever class. Early on it was more basic than it is now, we learned how to cut wood, did basic math, and learned a few things about each trade. The biggest part of the program was working on ourselves and growing as individuals."

## How did you hear about Women Building Futures?

"I was riding the transit in Edmonton, and I saw a sign that said Women Building Futures and I was like, I think I can do that, I know I can do that! I went to an open house, applied, and eventually got the call. That was 18 years ago now."

## What is your current job?

"I created and own Cree-Con construction with my husband. We employ over 25 people and do major

high rise concrete projects all over Edmonton. We are Aboriginal owned and employ about 95% Aboriginal employees. That's something I am super proud of. Our quality of work is so high and the people we hire are incredible at their jobs."

## What would you be doing if you hadn't taken our program?

"I don't where I would be without Women Building Futures and the trades, I would be lost, I probably wouldn't even be here to be honest. I was working in bars and nightclubs for a really long time, I had some serious ghosts behind me, and I don't know if I would have made it."

## What advice would you have for other women looking to enter the trades?

"Love what you do. You have to absolutely love what you do, or you aren't going to make it. You must draw from that and really know that you can do this job."

Success stories like Karma's inspire other women to explore new opportunities. At WBF, we know exploring a new career path can be an intimidating process and over the years, we've learned that this process can take a while before someone is able to make such a major decision. Understanding this, we've dedicated an entire team to support with readiness, preparation, and decision making. Our free workshops are hosted monthly and offer an opportunity for women to learn about different career opportunities, assess their interests and job fit, and receive support for their application to one of our training programs. Our Tools for Success workshop has incorporated the Indigenous medicine wheel to focus on getting participants ready to launch or recharge their personal potential.

To further support Indigenous women, we've recently partnered with Congress for Aboriginal Peoples to offer a Class 3 Driver training program in Calgary for Indigenous women. This program is 4 weeks long and will prepare women with the driving skills and safety certifications required to begin a career as a Class 3 driver. Applications are currently open for this program and will be accepted until November 1, 2021. The program will be offered in Spring 2022.



WBF graduate Karma Hunter

We are committed to continuous learning about the diversity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples to better understand how we can fully support Indigenous women and communities year-round. We are committed to helping Indigenous women achieve their goals supporting them along the way. We value our relationships with Indigenous communities across Alberta. To show our ongoing commitment, we have started the Progressive Aboriginal Relations certification with Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business and recently completed level one of the program. Over the last year, we've incorporated regular weekly traditional Indigenous learning moments and incorporated a land acknowledgement into all our team meetings.

On September 30, we honoured the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation by sharing resources, learnings, and community events to encourage staff to participate in reflection and learning. We are always taking steps to further our connection to Indigenous history and cultures for our students and staff. We are engaging Indigenous Elders and community members on a consistent basis to support traditional teachings and WBF Programs.

Our continued learning supports our understanding of how our work can respond to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 94 Calls to Action. We are all Treaty People with Treaty obligations and are committed to continue living in accordance with the spirit of intent of peace and friendship that is foundational to the treaty relationship.

To learn more about our programs and support services, visit [womenbuildingfutures.com](http://womenbuildingfutures.com).

## Indigenous issues *cont. from p 4*

clean drinking water and to exercise their jurisdiction and care over their children. While the discovery of the remains of former Indigenous students in unmarked graves at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in May renewed conversation around reconciliation, UBCIC is disappointed to see that this conversation did not continue into the election. We would like to remind Trudeau that not only has he yet to visit Kamloops and the former residential school site, but BC wildfire ravaged communities and homes still need the attention that was diverted to an unnecessary election. Ultimately, the election represents a colossal waste of taxpayer's money that could have been invested in Indigenous health and childcare, housing and homelessness, and emergency management equipment and infrastructure."

"In a day that was mired by long lines, missing voter cards, wrong polling stations and added COVID-19 protocols, election day proved frustrating and fruitless for many members of the public. UBCIC also notes that many election stations were not readily available to First Nation communities who stand to be greatly impacted by any shifts in political leadership,"

stated Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice-President.

"Although the election proved to be an unwanted distraction, UBCIC would like to sincerely congratulate and recognize all Indigenous candidates – a record 77 – who ran in this election. Indigenous leadership is necessary and foundational for a country that has promised reconciliation and committed to the implementation of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. To recognize their invaluable leadership, UBCIC will be hosting Indigenous candidates from B.C. at UBCIC's AGA on September 29, 2021, who will reflect upon their campaigns and elections."

"While the federal election maintained the status quo, Indigenous peoples will not be content with status quo progress and change; the Liberals will need to work with the NDP and other political parties to ensure they translate voter dissatisfaction and frustration into immediate, substantive action," concluded Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secre-

tary-Treasurer.

"It is well known that Indigenous peoples have the lowest voter turnout in Canada due in part to feeling that their voices don't matter. After only being granted the right to vote in 1960, Indigenous people do not want to support a system that has oppressed them for centuries and rightly feel that they are irrelevant to local and national politics. This couldn't be further from the truth however, and it is Prime Minister Trudeau's continued duty to ensure Indigenous peoples are given equal opportunities to exercise their powerful and empowering self-determination and Title and Rights."



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# BBMA celebrates 20 years with a virtual gala

The Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards (BBMA) marks its 20th anniversary this year, and with the program’s massive success, there are many reasons to celebrate. In two decades, more than \$9 million has been disbursed to over 1,500 Métis Albertans studying at post-secondary institutions across Alberta. The initial investment of \$13 million in the BBMA endowment fund has grown to \$20.5 million. While the fund is growing, the demand by students applying for support has also increased. This year is a record year for applications received, with more than 400 students requesting funding for the 2021–22 academic year.

When Dr. Herb Belcourt, his cousin, Orval Belcourt, and friend, Georges R. Brosseau, Q.C., first established the endowment fund at the Edmonton Community Foundation to support Métis education, people told them they would fail. They were undeterred. Together, they had already succeeded at tackling another big issue in their community when they had partnered in 1971 to form Canative Housing Corporation, a non-profit organization with the mission to provide affordable housing for Métis people in Alberta.

For the past twenty years, the Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards have provided financial assistance through the endowment to help Métis Albertans realize self-sufficiency through post-secondary education and skills development.

This perpetual legacy fund has created opportunities, broken barriers, and grown a sense of pride in Métis culture. Over time, the BBMA annual celebration has become a must-attend Métis gathering, acknowledging award recipients, and fostering a sense of belonging, community support, and pride. The event has been integral to the ongoing success of BBMA, recognizing award recipients’ accomplishments through the Sash Ceremony, symbolizing a connection to the Métis community, past, present, and future.

The BBMA celebration, encompassing Métis culture and history, is a community event celebrating the achievement of Métis students. Longstanding Métis traditions and culture are embodied in those who lived in the 1600s through to today. The hope is

that the Métis graduates accessing BBMA support will take the community to new heights in the future. For this milestone anniversary, rather than cancel the event due to the COVID pandemic, a virtual celebration was webcast on September 18, 2021.

Since its inception, the BBMA endowment has received contributions from individuals and corporate donors alike. That includes Syncrude, a company that first became involved over ten years ago, donating funds earmarked to support students from the Wood Buffalo Region. This year, in celebration of the milestone anniversary, Syncrude donated another \$200,000 to the BBMA fund.

Syncrude’s Vice President of Government & Public Affairs, Kara Flynn said, “It is great to see such success being created with these students, and Syncrude is proud to be a contributor to this fund that is making a difference in people’s lives and communities.”

Previously BBMA funded students like Naomi (Rau) Withers inspire others to give a hand up, not a handout. She has donated to the BBMA endowment, creating a fund to help Métis students to follow in her footsteps. Other BBMA donors include Enbridge Pipelines Inc., Shell, and the A.T. Brosseau Family.

The BBMA is one of Canada’s largest non-governmental sources of post-secondary funding for Métis students. Georges Brosseau Q.C. and Orval Belcourt, the founders, are proud of the Métis students and continue to be involved in the awards, guiding the program and reviewing award applications. Herb Belcourt did the same until he passed away in 2017, a day before his 86th birthday. “When we created the BBMA in 2001, we had an endless date in mind,” says Orval Belcourt.



BBMA founders Georges Brosseau and Orval Belcourt. (Photo supplied).

Over the past 20 years, the awards have had an incredible impact on the Métis community in Alberta. The BBMA has been life-changing for student recipients, helping them begin careers, support families, and give back to their communities. Past award recipients are now advancing in their careers and becoming key decision-makers within corporations and the Métis Nation.

“In this new age of virtual and technical communication, education is vital, and I am so pleased to see our Métis people placing a higher priority on learning,” says Theresa Majeran, BBMA coordinator.

The BBMA Founders and selection panel are looking forward to charting new paths and creating possibilities for Métis people. “It is through our collective abilities and efforts that Métis people will continue to achieve success and grow to meet new challenges in our ever-changing world,” says Georges Brosseau. “Education is how you measure the wealth of a country, and that is the way you develop optimism and hope in our Métis people.”

To apply for an award, visit [www.bbma.ca](http://www.bbma.ca). The deadline each year is March 31.

Questions about these awards, the BBMA celebration or the application process can be directed to Communications Coordinator, Theresa Majeran at 780-977-5515 or by email to [communications@bbma.ca](mailto:communications@bbma.ca).

## Alberta’s COVID *cont. from p 6*

about triple the population of Alberta — had a seven-day-average of 597 cases.

On Sept. 29, Alberta hit its highest number of ICU admissions throughout the pandemic with 264 patients, with the Canadian Red Cross and Canadian Armed Forces coming to assist overburdened hospital staff. Ontario hasn’t logged more than 169 ICU admissions since Sept. 3.

The only province with a greater percentage of its population dying of COVID over the past two weeks is Saskatchewan.

University of Alberta infectious diseases professor

Dr. Ilan Schwartz says Alberta’s government has “completely abdicated its responsibility” to keep the public safe from COVID.

“Alberta was reckless in dropping all restrictions and declaring the pandemic over. Jason Kenney infamously declared that we were in the post-pandemic era, that COVID was no longer a risk and basically threw caution to the wind — that was a grave misstep,” he told the *CBC*.

“But what made things much, much worse is the inability to respond to the data that demonstrated a rising number of cases.”

At this point, Alberta’s healthcare system has “completely collapsed,” Schwartz added.

“It’s not just that we’re on the verge of collapse, I think that’s misleading at this point — we’ve completely collapsed,” he said.

Schwartz says overcrowded ICU units have created a “completely dysfunctional healthcare system.”

“People might think that they’re vaccinated, and so they don’t need to worry about this. But the fact is that if we can’t provide safe ICU care, period, then everybody is at risk,” said Schwartz.

“Every time people get on a tractor, or get in a car, and go on the highway — there’s always been risk associated with that — but now there’s no safety net.”



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# First Orange Shirt Day Run/Walk a success

By Terry Lusty, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With September 30, 2021 on the books as the first-ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, events of all kinds were held across the country, especially in First Nation, Metis, and Inuit communities but also in hamlets, towns, cities and rural locations.

You name it, it happened – rallies, songs, dances, art exhibits, music, films/videos, speeches, and storytelling. Huge gatherings of supporters of the reconciliation process joined forces in solidarity, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, en masse by the hundreds, even thousands, at major centres like Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Vancouver.

In Edmonton, this is a time of year when students generally don their bright orange 'Every Child Matters' t-shirts and march to City Hall to observe Orange Shirt Day and then gather indoors for speeches about residential schools, survivors and reconciliation. There was a noticeable difference this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With far greater numbers of Albertans contracting the virus, requiring hospitalization, and needing treatment in intensive care units and with more fatalities occurring as well, a variety of outdoor activities were held where better safety measures were possible.

One of the highly successful outdoor events in Edmonton was the Orange Shirt Day Run/Walk: Every Child Matters.

With principal organizers, law student Anita Cardinal-Stewart and Adam Erasmus at the helm, the run/walk registered just over 400 participants to complete distances of 2.15 kms, 5 kms or 10 kms

through the beautiful YEG river valley trails that wind their way from Kinsmen Park to Hawrelak Park.

The wide, well-groomed trails allowed for fast and easy maneuvering for almost all participants, regardless of their ability and/or mobility. The take-off point from Kinsmen Park was below the east side of the High Level Bridge and proceeded west to Hawrelak Park, then back to Kinsmen.

At this year's event, the young children started the first leg of the course by travelling the 2.15 kms distance. They were then followed by the adults in two separate shifts – depending on whether they'd chosen the five kms or the ten kms distance.

Attendance was diverse with an approximate 50/50 split of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants who were accompanied by pets, carriages, and baby strollers, and supported when needed by walkers, canes, and wheelchairs.



Co-organizer Anita Cardinal-Stewart addresses the sea of orange-shirted participants at this year's Orange Shirt Day Run/Walk Every Child Matters event held in Edmonton on Sept. 30. Photos by Terry Lusty.

They started with determination and returned with smiles on their faces under a canopy of warm golden sunshine.

As each participant arrived back at their original take-off point, they were gifted a wood-carved

*Continued on page 10*

## MNC Elects President Cassidy Caron

SASKATOON/CNW/ – Cassidy Caron has been elected president of the Métis National Council (MNC), with a mandate to restore accountability and trust in the MNC. Caron, who previously served for four years as a provincially elected representative of the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), as the Provincial Métis Youth Chair and MNBC's Minister Responsible for Youth, is driven by her family and community values of respect, honesty, and responsibility.

"I want to thank the Assembly for placing their trust in me," said Caron. "I am grateful for this opportunity to serve the Métis Nation. I have fought and will continue to fight for our people and for our inherent rights. I look forward to working with all governing members of MNC, our provincial partners and Canada to continue to advance Métis self-determination."

Caron, who has roots in the historic Métis communities of Batoche and St. Louis, Saskatchewan, grew up closely connected to her Métis traditions, heritage and culture. Caron has focused her career on community development and relationship building, recently as a consultant supporting Indigenous peoples and communities. She is a strong advocate for the Métis Nation and brings with her years of professional research and policy development experience.

After the previous MNC administration delayed holding an election for more than a year past the expiry of their mandate, today's election represents a welcomed return to democratic governance for the Métis National Council.

"President Caron's election is historic for both being the first woman elected National President, and the first MNC President from British Columbia," said Acting President of the Métis Nation British Columbia Lissa Smith. "I am confident she will represent the governments of the Métis Nation well on the national stage and will be a strong advocate with the federal government when it comes to advancing our rights as a Nation."

Métis Nation of Ontario President Froh added, "On behalf of the Métis citizens and communities in Ontario we look ahead with great excitement to working with President Caron and all Métis Governments on moving the MNC forward into an era of transparency and accountability. It is truly a new day for the Métis National Council and for the Métis Nation."

Caron has already chaired her first meeting of the MNC Board of Governors, where she reaffirmed her commitment to accountability, good-governance, and nation building that supports the dream of Louis Riel.

President of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Audrey Poitras, stated, "President Caron's election is monumental. Not only is she an amazing young woman, and the first woman to be elected as the President of the Métis National Council, she brings a fresh perspective, and we are confident that she will



Newly elected MNC President Cassidy Caron

restore trust and integrity in the Métis National Council."

"My most sincere congratulations to President Caron on her election," said Métis Nation-Saskatchewan President Glen McCallum, "I know that she will do great things for our people across the Métis Homeland. Her election marks an important turning point for our Nation."

### Owner Retiring

After nearly 40 years of publishing the Alberta Native News, the owners wish to retire.

We are hoping some enterprising individual(s) with a passion for communicating Indigenous issues will carry on with publishing the newspaper.

It is not easy in this day and age to produce a print media with a supporting digital presence but it is something that serves a vital interest for the Indigenous communities across Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories.

Expressions of interest from serious individuals are welcome. Please contact Deborah Shatz, nativeads@gmail.com

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Run/walk a success *cont. from p 9*

medallion bearing this year’s art image used to adorn the orange shirts they received in addition to an orange ball cap.

There were 50 volunteers helping with the event including several medics and fortunately there were no reported injuries.

Prior to take-off, participants were invited to gather at the nearby Indigenous Art Park where Elder Elaine Fox from Little Pine First Nation, Saskatchewan performed a smudging ceremony and shared prayers for strength, safety and success of the participants as well as for the event itself.

The goal was to “connect, support and foster the relationships of Indigenous peoples and the advancement of programs and initiatives that advocate for the maintenance of Indigenous identity through spiritual, cultural, and traditional practices,” said the organizers.

"This will be an annual event," boasted Cardinal-Stewart. "We are already planning for next year."

Because it was a trial first-year event, organizers capped attendance at 400 but are aiming for much greater involvement in future. "Next year we want to have 1500 participants," quipped Cardinal-Stewart.

She said they'll need "the support of communities and organizations for the 2021-2022 year." One of their principal objectives is to raise funds to support “the interests of residential school survivors and the painful but necessary locating of the remains of those children who did not come home," she added.

With over one thousand unmarked gravesites near residential schools in Kamloops, BC, Cowessess Nation in Saskatchewan and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation in Manitoba, expert opinions figure these numbers are just the tip of the iceberg with far more to come as communities discover additional sites.

"We join all those who mourn our lost relatives, and we condemn the injustices inflicted upon them, and voice our recurring outrage," the organizers said.

Cardinal-Stewart said that the day was a success and she heard from a lot of “people that there was a feeling of love” at the event. Organizing the walk/run required a "balancing" act to do so much advance work given the demands of her studies at university, meeting her family needs and simply allowing time frames for the details. "It was quite the learning curve," she said in relation to getting sponsors and

operating the event - but definitely a successful one. She loves running and the "healing" it provides, in addition to its value of bringing people together.

Anita Cardinal-Stewart is a Nehiyaw (Cree) member of the Woodland Cree First Nation in Peace River country. She is an ultra-trail runner and the founder of Indigenous Runner Yeg, as well as a wife, mother and kokum who is on her way (3rd year) to becoming a lawyer. She is president of the Indigenous Law Students Association at U of A and president of the National Indigenous Law Students Association.

Adam Erasmus hails from the Goodfish Lake First Nation and is also an avid track and trail runner who partners with a running group associated with drug and alcohol recovery. He's been connecting to his cultural roots and works to bring awareness to Indigenous residential school harms and healing.

Sponsors included: Clean Harbors, Eng-Con, Indigenous Law Students Associatio., Alberta Screw Piles Ltd., Native Women Running, 7 Summit Snacks, Willows Construction Ltd., Law Students Association and Faculty of Law - U of A, First Nations Bank (Enoch FN), Trans Mountain, Edmonton Trail Community, and Canadian River Valley Revenge.



Be sure to go online in early September 2022 for the next listing of Orange Shirt Day activities. In the interim, "we are planning a Canada Day half marathon called, Run for Reconciliation," said Cardinal-Stewart.

To keep informed, follow her on Facebook / Indigenous Runner YEG.



Hundreds of Orange Shirt Day supporters gathered in Edmonton's river valley for the first-ever Run/Walk Every Child Matters event on Sept. 30, the inaugural National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The atmosphere was warm and full of love as participants made their way from Kinsmen Park to Hawrelak Park and back. They were then awarded wood carved medallions as well as the orange-coloured ball caps and t-shirts they received prior to the start time. Photos by Terry Lusty.



# Huge win for First Nations kids and families

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief RoseAnne Archibald acknowledges the victory for children and families with the Federal Court of Canada’s decision to uphold the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal’s (CHRT) compensation award to First Nations children and families that were apprehended under the First Nations child and family services program. The Federal Court also upheld the CHRT’s ruling regarding the application of Jordan’s Principle to all First Nations children who are recognized by their Nation as citizens, regardless of their Indian Act status or where they live. This is the result of a years-long dispute between Canada and the AFN and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society.

“This is justice in action for First Nations children and families, however, nothing can replace the childhoods and connections to languages, lands and loved ones stolen by Canada’s discrimination. We have repeatedly made a reasonable and fair request that Canada stop fighting our kids in court not only for the sake of truth and reconciliation but also for the healing path forward,” said National Chief RoseAnne Archibald.

In 2007, the AFN and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society launched a complaint at the CHRT alleging discrimination against First Nations children and families in Canada’s provision of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) and Jordan’s Principle. In January 2016, the CHRT found that Canada was in fact discriminating against First Nations children and families in its provision and funding of the FNCFS Program and narrow application of Jordan’s Principle, and ordered Canada to completely reform its FNCFS Program and fully implement Jordan’s Principle.

In September 2019, the CHRT ordered Canada to pay compensation to eligible First Nations children

and their parents and/or grandparents affected by Canada’s discrimination; in October 2019, Canada filed for a Judicial Review of this order. Then, in July 2020, the CHRT issued a ruling clarifying who is eligible for consideration under Jordan’s Principle, and confirmed this in November 2020; Canada filed for Judicial Review of this order in December 2020. The Honourable Justice Paul Favel heard arguments from the parties to the CHRT regarding the compensation order and Jordan’s Principle eligibility in June 2021.

This decision acknowledges the harm caused by Canada’s discrimination and affirms that First Nations children and families deserve justice. This monumental decision came one day before Orange Shirt Day, now also known as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

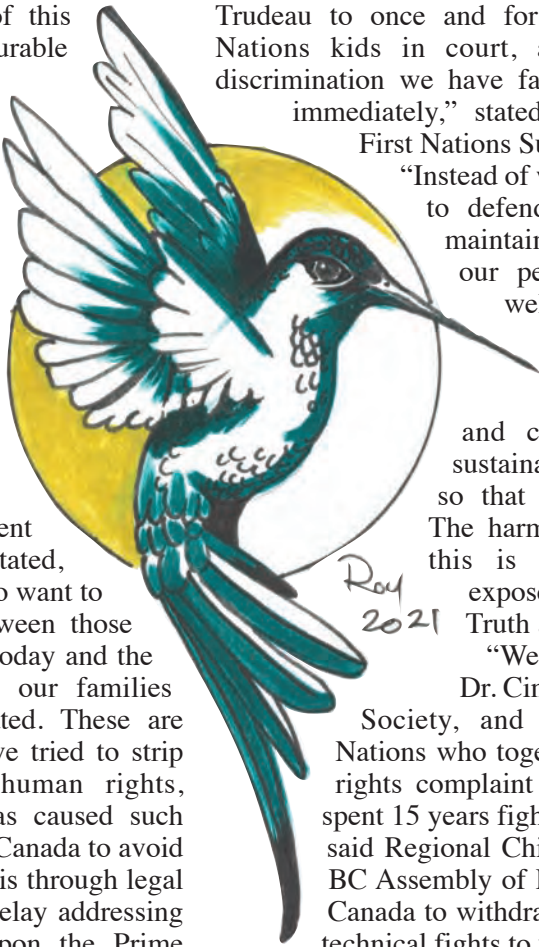
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, stated, “As we celebrate this decision, we also want to acknowledge all the connection between those who are in the child welfare system today and the residential school system that saw our families broken up and abused and mistreated. These are connected because these systems have tried to strip our people of our fundamental human rights, discriminate against us, and this has caused such horrific suffering. We must not allow Canada to avoid accountability or evade the truth of this through legal manoeuvres where they appeal and delay addressing these wrongs. The UBCIC calls upon the Prime Minister to stop fighting us and our children, get off your colonial high horse and fix what was done to our

people. It is time for the Prime Minister to apologize for his government’s repeated attempts to fight First Nations kids in court and to put substance behind his sycophantic discourse on reconciliation.”

“This decision from the Federal Court sends a strong message to Canadians and Prime Minister Trudeau to once and for all cease fighting First Nations kids in court, and to ensure that the discrimination we have faced for generations ends immediately,” stated Cheryl Casimer of the First Nations Summit Political Executive.

“Instead of wasting millions of dollars to defend a broken system, and maintaining an approach that sees our people entangled in child welfare due to underfunding, racism and colonialism, I hope they act now to end this discrimination, and collab-orate with us on sustainable needs based funding so that no child is left behind. The harm they do every day that this is not resolved, must be exposed on this first National Truth and Reconciliation Day.”

“We want to acknowledge Dr. Cindy Blackstock, the Caring Society, and the Assembly of First Nations who together advanced the human rights complaint in 2006, and since have spent 15 years fighting for justice and truth,” said Regional Chief Terry Teegee from the BC Assembly of First Nations. “We call on Canada to withdraw all of their appeals and technical fights to undermine settlement, and immediately resolve this complaint, build the needed changes, and work with us.”



## Vaccination support

cont. from p 2

Elders and they told me ‘When you pick medicines, you first put the tobacco down before you even pick the medicine. That vaccine is a medicine, put your tobacco, pray and go get that needle.’ So that’s what I did for both needles, and you know, nothing happened, I’m still here! And I’m grateful my family followed behind me, my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

“This Sweetgrass I have here today is from a funeral that I attended yesterday in Frog Lake of one of my relatives. It was so sad to see that he died because he did not believe in this medicine.”

“Some people say, ‘they are blue-chipping you with that needle.’ Well, it must be a pretty small chip because that needle is pretty small that went into my arm,” laughed Marty. “The medicine we pick is sacred but we don’t have medicine to protect us from diseases from other countries. When they gave us blankets that had small pox, we had no defense.”

Verna and Gabrielle have arranged video responses from all the participants including what they would



(L to R): Shanell Twan, Elder Fernie Marty, Carola Cunningham and Lorette Goulet.

say to a family member or loved one to convince them to get a vaccine. Once they pool all those responses, they will use that for strategy content.

“I want to send a letter and poster to every First Nations, reserve, Metis settlement, and every other Indigenous community in Alberta,” enthused Verna. It’s an

ambitious goal but it’s likely no match for the passion and compassion of these community leaders.

For more information visit [ECRRC.ca](http://ECRRC.ca).

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