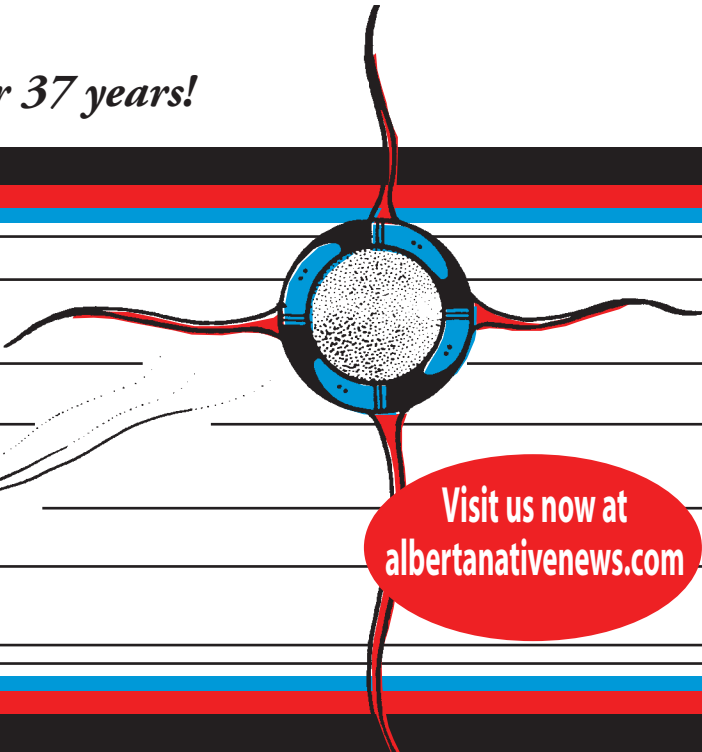





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Women of the Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt movement with the Oilers mascot at the Kingsway Parade in Edmonton on Nov. 28. (Photo Chevi Rabbit).

# Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt is a grassroots movement to educate Canadians on the cultural significance of Indigenous and two spirit women wearing ribbon skirts. The movement is having a positive impact in Alberta. This year marks the second annual Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt – highlighting the beauty, resilience, and female empowerment in wearing ribbon skirts.

In addition to their own event this fall, the group participated in the annual Kingsway Parade in Edmonton on Nov 28. They joined other prominent organizations such as the Edmonton Oilers, Edmonton Elks and Edmonton Police Organization.

The Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt group is made of a rotating group of women and gender diverse folxs who support the cause such as Samson Cree Nation Councilwoman Katherine Swampy, Stolen Brothers and Sisters Movement founder and community organizers April Eve P. Wiberg, Teen Activist Ceejay Currie, Rachel Manichoose, Jacqueline Buffalo and myself (ANNews writer Chevi Rabbit).

Each year we change things up based on the availability of organizers and volunteers. Yours truly (reporter Chevi Rabbit) and teen activist Ceejay Currie, a resident of Montana Cree but has membership with Sunchild Cree Nation, came up with the original idea of “Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt” and we further developed the idea with April Eve P. Wiberg and Katherine Swampy.

Here are a few statements from women who continue to be involved in the overall development of Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt.

Ceejay Currie, co-founder of Walk a Mile in A Ribbon Skirt and teen activist said, “Back in 2020, I wanted to educate others on the beauty and resilience of ribbon skirts. I didn’t like that my family members experienced racism in Edmonton. My aunt asked for ideas on what we should do about it. We brainstormed ideas and thought of ways to make sure everyone is included. We came up with “Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt” and then chatted about how to make it a community event in Edmonton with other ladies.”

“My Ribbon Skirt was made to honour my late mother and female family members. It’s called a three-generation dress. It has images of women in braids that represent myself, my late mother

and my grandmother.”

Currie explained, “I’m working on my anxiety issues but I love coming up with neat ideas for my aunty and she will join them into events, fashion shows and social causes. Anxiety is a huge issue for people my age. I think having role models who show us that we can overcome our shyness and do things we didn’t know we could, is needed. We also need to be more supportive of each other.”

“In the new year, I have lots of ideas for “Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt” and I hope more will join the cause – together we can be the voice of the future,” concluded Currie.

Katherine Swampy is a co-organizer and fellow founder of “Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt.” She said, “It’s about visible inclusion. The ribbon skirts are considered traditional attire, but with Indigenous Pride and people feeling more comfortable with their identity they want to wear ribbon skirts casually as well. And I too wear them casually.”

She explained, “I believe that my ribbon skirt represents respect, protection, and it’s like my ancestors walk with me when I wear them. For the last few centuries Indigenous people have been oppressed and denied their identity, with the recent exposure of genocide from residential schools, 60’s scoop, and systematic racism towards Indigenous people, they are feeling confident and reclaiming their heritage.”

Swampy further noted, “With the youth learning what their parents and grandparents were denied, many are learning the languages, traditions, ceremonies, and with that they are also wearing ribbon skirts. Many are far fancier than the ribbon skirts of the past, as Indigenous designers are adding beautiful applications. These ribbon skirts are not just beautiful but are a visual representation of acceptance and inclusion into society that has been denied to them for a very long time.”

April Eve P. Wiberg Founder of Stolen Sisters & Brothers Action Movement (SSBAM) and a co-organizer of Walk a Mile in A Ribbon Skirt said, “Since the inception of Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt in 2020, I have been very blessed and grateful to have been asked to help organize, support, promote, and educate on ribbon skirt awareness and what it means for me to wear a ribbon skirt.”

She explained. “This is more than an event, it’s a ceremony and holds deep meaning to many people including our Indigenous men and boys who proudly wear their ribbon shirts. I didn’t always wear a ribbon skirt nor did I feel I had the right to adorn one.”

“Like many Indigenous people, I grew up in a Caucasian dominated society and my mother, an Indian residential school survivor, was not brought up with traditional teachings and ways of doing as she lost her own mother at a very young age and was taken away to be assimilated into settler ways. I was also sexually exploited as a youth and young adult; I felt I was tarnished and not “pure” enough nor did I have the traditional upbringing to wear a ribbon skirt.”

Wiberg further noted, “In 2014, a fellow grassroots MMEIP (Missing or Murdered and Exploited Indigenous Peoples) family member, survivor and

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# Speaking Out: Toxicity

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

I don't know what I'm doing out here on the west coast. I made this journey with the hopes of finding some kind of God-given path. And all I got were smiley, old men with beer-guts and closet drug-addicts telling me how great Vancouver was going to be when the summer finally hit. But they never speak about the terrible sense of doom hovering above the city — the dense, foul-smelling smog that's blocking the sun.

The city is in the grips of a feeling I know all too well. It reminds me of my days romping around in places that could turn innocence into righteousness; righteousness into cynicism; cynicism into recklessness; or recklessness into hopelessness.

Or maybe I'm just projecting. Being surrounded by opioid-related information and death statistics cannot be good for anyone's mental well-being. But in B.C. I have a higher chance of dying from a toxic drug supply than a vehicle collision, so it pays to be aware — especially for First Nations.

From January to June 2021, First Nations were dying at 4.8 times the rate of other B.C. residents from toxic batches, according to the First Nations Health Authority. And despite making up just 3.3 per cent of the province's population, First Nations represent 14 per cent of all toxic drug poisoning deaths.

Paranoia doesn't exist anymore, you're either

prepared or not. The grand hopelessness is echoed by many news outlets as well, I believe. During my research, I saw a headline from the Globe and Mail, a news outlet that I've always held to high esteem due to their subscription-based business-model, that read:

**BC has a Drug Overdose Crisis. At Least Try to Pretend You Care.**

A little harsh, I thought as I clicked on the link, but was unable to read the article due to an issue with my account. However the headline was good enough for me. Because how else are you to cover such a tragic, hydra-headed issue that is seemingly here to stay? When the world is falling apart, and the 24-hour news cycle is reporting on every single broken shard — it's hard to care for most things.

Gunman Kills Four in a Denver-Area Shooting Spree; Should Investors be worried about COVID in 2022; Vancouver Cancels Annual Homeless Count for 2nd Straight Year; Did We Just Blow our Last Chance to Tackle Climate Change; Iran Launches Rocket into Space amid Nuclear Talks.

A headline is all anyone really needs. And so, the issue of trying to cover the opioid-epidemic in any kind traditional journalistic sense is increasingly prominent. When I read articles by media outlets reporting on the deaths of these addicts, most of



whom I would imagine were just trying to have a good time, the statistics become too much to read, and I can barely finish an article without getting overwhelmed. And I think everyone's overwhelmed.

So, to tell the truth, I don't actually know why I care about the opioid epidemic so much. Perhaps it was just seeing all those poor tweakers twitching on the streets of Vancouver in broad daylight; or maybe my Indigenous upbringing has made me accustomed to drug-abusers? Because despite not being a hard-drug user myself, I've come to understand and co-exist with these types of people — I feel comfortable with them. I've slept in the same room as Rez gangstas, drug mules, cocaine dealers, coke heads, acid heads, pint heads, a-holes, speed freaks, and angry alcoholics — many people I would consider close friends of mine.

*But I suppose there's no sympathy for the Devil if you don't know it exists.*

# Ottawa's AIP is a step forward for Indigenous children

By Jake Cardinal, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On January 4, 2022 the government of Canada announced that a settlement has been reached *in-principle* with First Nations after a decades-long court battle over the country's child welfare system.

Last year, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) ruled that Canada had discriminated against First Nations by forcibly removing children via the child welfare system and ordered the feds to pay \$40,000 to each affected child.

The government initially appealed the ruling, while continuing negotiations for an agreement with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and other Indigenous entities.

The agreements in-principle concluded on Dec. 31. The settlement also includes compensation for Indigenous people who were denied access to services under Jordan's Principle's "narrow" definition between Dec. 12, 2007 and Nov. 2, 2017.

Minister of Indigenous Relations, Marc Miller, said that "you can want reconciliation all you want, but it ain't free.

"There's a cost to it, but it's an important one. And in this case, it's an important step towards some sort

of equality." The term in-principle means that while a general plan has been agreed upon between each party, the exact details of the settlement have yet to be established. "This is the largest settlement in Canadian history, but no amount of money can reverse the harms experienced by First Nations children," said Miller. "However, historic injustices require historic reparations." "Equally important," continued Miller, "the agreement on long term reform addresses the factors that lead to children being taken into care in the first place and makes sure that First Nations and child and family services agencies have stable and predictable funding to deliver the supports that are essential to keeping children with their families and communities." "The agreements in-principle we have signed today will support First Nations children so that they can



have the same opportunities to grow up with their families and communities, thriving through their cultures and languages," concluded Miller.

While the exact amount of money is yet to be determined, the Government earmarked \$40 billion in their fall economic statement to cover the settlement — \$20B for compensation and \$20B to reform the current on-reserve child welfare system.

It is estimated that possibly 200,000 people are eligible for compensation. However, the deal is subject to approval by the CHRT and the Federal Court.

Cindy Blackstock, executive director at the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, said that while the agreement in-principle is important, "These are simply words on paper."

"We need to commit ourselves to keeping watch on the government of Canada and holding it accountable until it lands some of these things," she said.

The Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, along with the AFN, filed the initial 2007 human rights complaint that began the talks of compensation and reparation.

The final decisions for the specifics of the agreement are going to be negotiated in the coming months, said the government.



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# Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane wins top children's book award

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

We are in the early stages of an Indigenous literacy renaissance, correcting Canadian history through informed and fact-based historical material that includes Indigenous voices or books written by Indigenous writers. Adding to this narrative is a children's book by Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane called *Powwow: A Celebration Through Song and Dance*. It is a book that will make a great addition to any classroom in Canada.

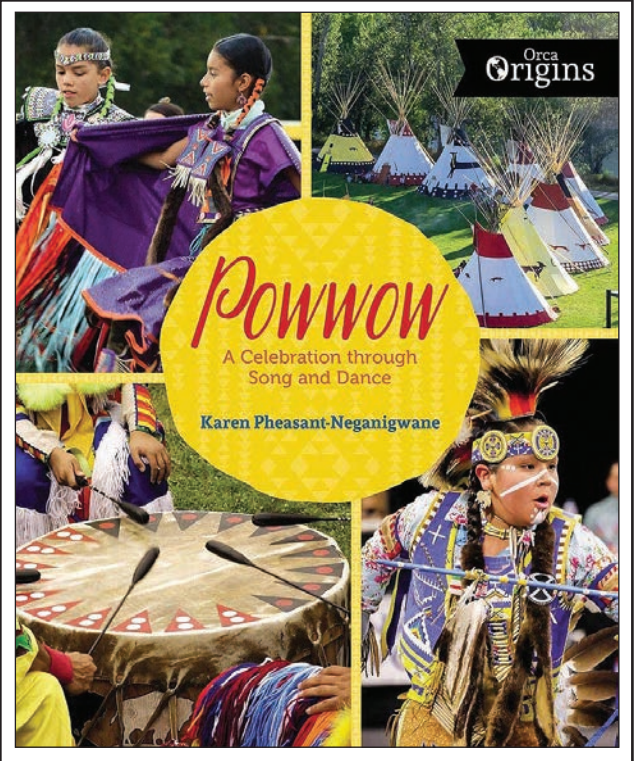
Pheasant-Neganigwane is a grandmother, an Anishinaabe dancer, educator, writer, artist, and orator from Wiikwemkoong on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Back in October 2021, her new book was awarded the 2021 Norma Fleck Award for Children's Non-fiction - considered to be one of Canada's most prestigious awards for children's books.

Pheasant-Neganigwane said her book is semi-autobiographical of her life as a powwow dancer, traveling through North America; it is told using a first-person narrative.

The book sold out during its first print run and in the first three months of the book's release.

Pheasant-Neganigwane is an instructor at Mount Royal University in Calgary. She previously taught at the University of Alberta for many years.

The accomplished writer's education includes being mentored by iconic Indigenous scholars from the



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Great Lakes of her people to those in Treaty Three, Treaty Six, and currently in Treaty Seven territory.

Her western education includes a B.A. in Political Science and English Literature, and graduate studies in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Alberta. Karen is currently working on her doctorate, on the topic of Indigenous pedagogy and higher learning.

*Powwow: A Celebration through Song and Dance* was published in April, 2020 and it has garnered praise from the literacy world in Canada and the United States.

Pheasant-Neganigwane said that as an alternate to Indigenous History through a European perspective, her book offers an authentic perspective on powwow culture. "It's a story on resurgence and survival of powwow culture," noted the author. The book also features beautiful images by notable photographers such as Bert Crowfoot and others.

Karen explained that her community has had a powwow for 60 years.

"Here in Alberta, Smoke Dance is not our common practice," she said. "Whereas if you go east to the Great Lakes, Ontario and New York State - that is where the Smoke Dance originates. The dance is from the Iroquois people."

There are other regional differences and cultural differences among North American First People, added Karen. One example can be seen in the traditional women dancers in Southern British Columbia - where they wear cedar hats.

One of the chapters in the book is dedicated to the variances among the Indigenous North American Tribes and the distinct uniqueness of each group.

"Non-Indigenous people sometimes romanticize the splendor of colours and the cute little children dancing. Society fails to understand that our powwow dance is a mode, a vehicle, an expression of political activism and empowerment," said Pheasant-Neganigwane.

Historically the governments in the United States and Canada outlawed Indigenous culture and traditions. This is now very well-known among the mainstream public, but they don't realize the extent, she added.

"Most of society doesn't understand the concept that we are different tribes and different people," said Pheasant-Neganigwane.

"In my classes, [many] students think Indigenous [people] speak one language and that we are one people. There are hundreds and hundreds of tribes with different languages and customs."

Another chapter is devoted to colonialism.



Author Karen Pheasant-Neganigwane with Elder Jeannette Corbierre

In a conversation with the Calgary Public Library - that's available on Youtube. Pheasant-Neganigwane said, "Regardless of the distinctness, skills, knowledge, uniqueness, and expertise - the policies of Canada and the United States were to disseminate and dissolve us. Turn us into egalitarian people - make farmers out of us. As much as they wanted us to be farmers, they had unjust rules for our Indigenous farming communities. However, they allowed Indigenous us to dress Indian and have Indian days if we were showing how we have become successful farmers. Especially in Alberta and Saskatchewan, we became cowboys."

Within the colonialism chapter, Pheasant-Neganigwane highlighted Buffalo Bill, The Wild West Show, and Sitting Bull. "Buffalo Bill saw a market to exploit, with capitalism, and greed," she said. "There was an interest in watching the wild Indian."

Europeans of that era thought all Indigenous people of North America would become extinct.

"It was only during the Wild West Shows - Indigenous songs and dances were permitted. Everywhere else in North America, Indigenous song and dance were outlawed."

In her book, Pheasant-Neganigwane talked about the pass system and the impacts of racist policies that suppressed the Indigenous way of life.

The Indian Act was created in Canada and allowed First Nations to practice their culture without being criminalized. Then the Civil Rights era in the 1960s and '70s furthered indigenous rights.

"I am the first generation allowed to leave the reservation without a pass," said Pheasant-Neganigwane.

"In the 1970s, when I went to the city, I was silent and abided, conforming and trying to survive... Today, there are a lot of us. We kept our languages and ceremonies..."

"We go and we celebrate powwow," said Pheasant-Neganigwane.



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# Helping a loved one recover from a serious injury

By Bill Hendsbee, Q.C.

When a loved one has been severely injured, the stress of managing everything all at once can be overwhelming. Coping with pain, mobility loss, and income loss can lead to fear and frustration. Handling basic daily tasks can be exhausting, never mind dealing with necessary medical appointments. Add the stress of dealing with insurance companies and legal claims, and most people need extra support.

If you are caring for an injured person, you can take some proactive steps.

**Help navigate the medical system and buffer information overload**

Talking to doctors can be intimidating. It can also be challenging for an injured person to focus and understand what their doctor has said. Having a loved one there will take some of the fear and stress out of the situation. Help with scheduling and transportation for medical appointments and simple things like writing down instructions provided by doctors or specialists can ease the strain. Starting a file folder to store medical information, like important phone numbers, paperwork, and receipts is another good idea.

It can be difficult to understand the legal system and options to recover compensation. Caregivers can help by gathering information and reading resources like the CAM LLP Injury Law Handbook at [camllp.com](http://camllp.com) and passing on the important knowledge.

**Help find the right lawyer**

Choosing the right personal injury lawyer is critical to protecting a person's legal rights and getting fair

compensation. But it can be hard to know where to start. Help by doing the research to make a list of lawyers with expertise handling a wide variety of personal injury claims, including serious injuries. You can also help interview firms that look promising. Don't hesitate to interview more than one lawyer to find the right fit and DO ask questions. Questions to consider are: Do they have specific experience handling cases involving the injuries your loved one has suffered? Is the lawyer easy to talk to, and do you feel like they listen? Do they take the time to explain things clearly and answer all your questions? Will they handle the case themselves or pass you off to a less experienced lawyer? Is this the person your loved one wants speaking for them and their family?

Once a lawyer is hired, you can continue to offer support by accompanying the injured person to meetings with lawyers and doctors and other appointments if you have their permission to do so. Again, the presence of a familiar face will help the injured person relax; they'll be able to answer questions more thoroughly if they aren't worried about writing things down or forgetting to provide critical information.

If a claim has been started, your loved one's lawyer will need a lot of information and paperwork from the

injured person, including information about doctors, physiotherapists, massage therapists, and any other specialists the injured person is seeing. Receipts for prescriptions, treatments, medical aids, house cleaning, yard work assistance, and other expenses should be collected. These receipts are essential to ensure that the injured person is fully compensated for their injuries. Organizing paperwork, keeping track of appointments, and gathering information they are asked to provide will be a huge help.

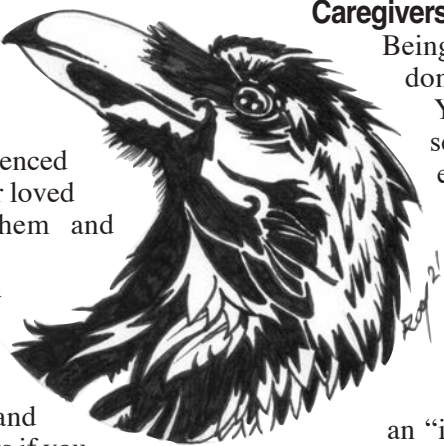
**Caregivers need care too**

Being a caregiver is emotionally exhausting – don't forget to take care of yourself! Your feelings are valid, and self-care is not selfish. A caregiver who is well-rested and emotionally healthy is better able to take care of someone else. There are many free support groups for caregivers in Alberta. Speak to your doctor for a referral or list of local resources. You may find helpful information at [caregiversalberta.ca](http://caregiversalberta.ca).

You should also know that caregivers may be entitled to compensation through an "in trust" claim. In trust claims are usually made by spouses or parents seeking monetary damages for the time and money spent helping a loved one recover from injuries.

The basic principle is that a parent or spouse should not have to devote their lives to caring for an injured person without some amount of compensation. The services have to be outside the normal duties

*Continued on page 6*



## Brook Arcand-Paul participates in Canadian Leadership Conference

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Brook Arcand-Paul

Brook Arcand-Paul, born and raised on Alexander First Nation is currently the in-house legal counsel for his home community and vice president of Indigenous Bar Association. Arcand-Paul was selected to participate in a study

Arcand-Paul. He said his study tour will focus on Nunavut along with thirteen others within his study group.

"There are different study groups focusing on different areas of Canada but the group is focusing on Nunavut," said Arcand-Paul.

He explained, "One of the main elements of getting into the conference was focusing on how systemic racism operates in Canada and how we can dismantle that system because that is what we as Indigenous folks struggle with, in these spaces. We don't really

have the opportunity to talk about the systems that perpetuate racism."

Arcand-Paul added that part of the conference was held virtually due to the pandemic. According to the conference website, "As each study group works together to explore first-hand the relationships between leadership and community, the individual members will find their own beliefs, values and preconceptions are challenged. The multi-sectoral and multi-cultural composition of each study group compels members to widen their perspective. After nine days of travel, observation and debate, the study groups reconvene at the Closing Plenary where reports will be presented to the Governor General of Canada."

The current leadership conference will meet in June 2022 and present their findings to Mary Simon, Canada's first Indigenous Governor General.

group which is part of The Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference.

"I am really hoping to look at the role industry plays within Indigenous communities but also the role we have as potential leaders to work with our communities and expand our experiences," said




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# First Nations Educators virtual conference: Register today!

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Registration is now open for this year’s virtual First Nations Educators’ Conference, which will be held on Feb. 2 and 3. It is a joint production from Bigstone Education Authority and the Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre and it is sure to be a stellar event. The conference has an amazing lineup of knowledgeable and engaging keynote speakers and it will convene educators and leaders from Treaties 6, 7 and 8 territories to discuss a wide range of topics surrounding the education of Indigenous children. Keynote speakers are Former Grand Chief of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and Commissioner for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Dr. Wilton Littlechild; Mi’kmaq lawyer,

professor, author, and social justice activist Dr. Pam Palmater; and Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi. Motivational speaker and mental health advocate Robb Nash, NHL defenceman for the Carolina Hurricanes Ethan Bear, and author lecturer Sharon Venne will also be speaking. Comedian Howie Miller and Social Workers, podcasters 2 Crees in a Pod will also be presenting as well as a panel of Treaty 6, 7 and 8 Elders. The event’s theme this year is reconciliation and treaty, and it is being emceed by Stanley Isadore. Given today’s climate on the importance of Indigenous education it will be a landmark conference!



Register at <https://forms.gle/3uM3aZbne54RLRRt9>. The deadline for registration is Jan. 25.

## Walk a Mile *cont. from p 2*

advocate made and gave me my first ribbon skirt. It was during the Edmonton Sisters in Spirit Walk and Vigil that we had organized. I was so overcome with love and gratitude to have received one as I felt that I had been accepted into the community. Although I am still humbled and honoured to have received this precious gift, I am aware of those in our community that do not have and do not share the same access, support, and privilege that I do to our traditional ways.”

“My goal is to continue supporting Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt, watch it grow as we find ways to help support those in our community who would like to learn more about ribbon skirt/shirts and help them find ways to use and even design and create one of their own,” concluded Wiberg. “My dream is for this type of awareness to help dismantle the systemic racism against Indigenous people and build a safer society for all people, regardless of age, gender identity, race, culture, or faith.” As a writer for *Alberta Native News* and a community advocate I am honoured to be part of

Walk a Mile in A Ribbon Skirt but I see my role as a support of youth and women who have not had the privilege to participate in Cree culture. I grew up in a loving community rich in culture. My idea is to advance women and two spirit identity in all my community initiatives. I would also like to announce through *Alberta Native News* that the city of Edmonton plans to work with our group of ladies and two spirits of “Walk a Mile in a Ribbon Skirt” in the new year. Thank you all for allowing me to create ideas that empower our communities in an inclusive way and the ability to share with you all.

## Helping a loved one *cont. from p 5*

expected of a spouse or family member to receive compensation. For example, simply accompanying the injured person to medical or legal appointments is likely not enough to permit caregiver compensation. However, the caregiver’s mileage in driving to and from appointments has been recoverable in past cases, as have housekeeping expenses.

For more on compensation for caregivers, see our blog post: Compensation for Helping your Injured Loved One at [camllp.ca](http://camllp.ca). **What CAM LLP, Personal Injury Lawyers offer** We are highly experienced lawyers who focus solely on personal injury law. We are compassionate people with the skills and expertise to handle complex cases, including brain and spinal cord injuries and injuries that cause temporary or permanent disabilities. We work to take the stress out of dealing with

the claims process so that our clients can focus on getting better. There are no upfront legal costs to CAM LLP clients. You only pay if we succeed on your behalf. Meetings can be conducted over Zoom, at the hospital, or at home, depending on the client’s needs and local health and safety guidelines. If you have been caring for an injured person and have questions about what actions you can take to help them or about in trust claims, please contact [camllp.ca](http://camllp.ca) for a free consultation. We are here to help. *Bill) Hendsbee, Q.C. is a partner at Cummings Andrew Mackay LLP in Edmonton.*

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# A conversation with rising star Crystle Lightning

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Crystle Lightning is from Treaty 6 Territory, Maskekosak (Enoch Cree Nation) and is the Great-Great Granddaughter of Chief Alexis; her Great Grandfather was Chief William Morin of Enoch Cree Nation.

The rising starlet, also from an acting family dynasty, is set to tour the United States with her hit musical called “Bear Grease.”

Lightning lived most of her life in Los Angeles developing her skills in acting and music. She moved back to Alberta two years ago, gave birth to her son and changed her life completely. Since being back, Lightning says her life has become full, has purpose, and her dreams of being a successful working actress have come alive.

“I don’t know if it was my ancestors who called me back here or if it was just Divine timing. Either way, I am so grateful,” said Lightning.

She describes her private life as a loving mother to her only son, Kisik Lightning-Cloud, and happy wife to her husband MC RedCloud. The talented couple most recently created a musical called *Bear Grease* which has been receiving accolades all year.

Lightning said that *Bear Grease* is a hilarious Indigenous twist on the movie and musical *Grease*, – a 1978 American musical romantic comedy film based on the 1971 musical of the same name by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey.

According to Lightning, “It was the first performance to completely sell out at this year’s Fringe [Festival in Edmonton]. We then sold out the Garneau four times and we just finished another four shows at the Westbury Theatre. We are set to tour the States March and April 2022.”

The wife and husband duo are very talented and have mastered the art of following their passion and raising a young family. That pattern of hard work, family life and pursuing their passion was likely passed down from Lightning’s mother Georgina Lightning.

Crystle says when she was nine years old her mother made the choice to move her family from Edmonton to Los Angeles to pursue her passion in theatre, film and television while raising her family. That move would change the direction for the entire Lightning family. Georgina’s gamble paid off; by investing in her children and professional life she has become one of Canada’s top actors, film directors and most recently an Indigenous advocate as she has spoken at many of Edmonton’s Hate to Hope community initiatives.

Crystle Lightning in her own right has been developing her talent for years at top Hollywood Schools such as The Beverly Hills Playhouse which is one of LA’s oldest and most respected acting schools.

“I got my first movie role at nine years old in the movie 3 Ninjas Knuckle Up and I have been acting ever since!” she said.

“At 22, I decided to really start working on strengthening my skills and discipline as an actor.”

Crystle explained that she attended many acting classes in Hollywood and even joined the Beverly Hills Playhouse.

“Many breakthroughs happened at the Beverly Hills Playhouse, which helped me in my personal life as well as my acting journey,” she said. “It was a safe place to learn, be raw, express yourself and grow. There is so much I didn’t know. The business side of things, politics, administration, audition etiquette etc. I credit the playhouse for teaching me about all these things. For also giving me the tools and the willpower, I needed to build my career – and not give up!

“This industry can be cruel and unjust, so prepare your heart, mind and soul and don’t take anything personally – as hard as that is.”

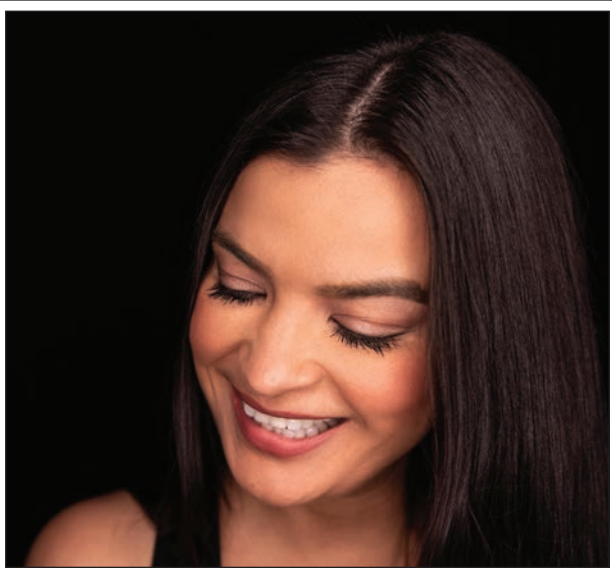
When her acting career slowed down, Crystle decided to invest in a music career. The move paid off for the talented star. It was during this time she met her now husband and developed a huge name in Hollywood for her DJ abilities.

She explained, “I always loved music. Nothing exciting was happening in my acting “career” at this time so I needed to find other creative outlets. I took an interest in DJ-ing. After saving up from bartending gigs, I bought my first pair of turntables. I had a few DJ friends that would teach me how to mix. I started getting good and that was when I met Christi. We started a female DJ crew called “Ladies of the House” and played house music on turntables – which was rare for females to be doing this at the time. We DJ’d at some of the biggest clubs in Hollywood and threw the most amazing Masquerade New Years’ parties every year. We developed a pretty big name for ourselves in the LA house music scene.”

She said, “I met RedCloud through music. I DJ’d for him on a tour and that is how LightningCloud was born. We made a song together, people loved it, so we made more! Two albums in, we won “Best New Artists” and “Best Hip Hop album” at the Indigenous Music awards.”

“I have also put out solo music as *Crystle Lightning* and with the supergroup *Brown Fist Emoji* which consists of Artson, PJ Vegas, RedCloud and myself. We won the 2021 Indigenous Music Award for Best music Video for *It’s Like That*,” said Lightning.

“Two years ago, I booked the role that would change my life. I was sitting in the neonatal intensive care unit with my 8-day old son, when I received a call from my agent. Three months later I was on a plane with my new baby to go film my first series lead. I was so determined to prove to the world and myself that I could juggle playing this multi-dimensional, emotionally demanding woman while being a new breastfeeding mom. I honestly think the sleepless nights and the emotional chaos I was going through helped my performance. Put it all in my acting toolbox.



Crystle Lightning. (Photo supplied).

What an incredible experience that was.”

Lightning said, “In May 2021 I won a Canadian Screen Award for Best Actress in a Drama series for my role as Maggie Moody in *Trickster*.

“You really never know when your time is going to hit. As I look back on my life, I realize that every time I thought I was being rejected from something good, I was actually being redirected to something better.”

When giving advice to aspiring Indigenous actors she said, “Study the people you admire and love whether they are dead or alive. Take only what works for you and leave the rest behind. Take classes! Be active. Read books. Learn as much as humanly possible about the craft you are pursuing. And always remember someone out there wants it just as much as you do or even more.”

She said, “There’s a quote that says, “Show me who your friends are, and I will show you your character”... Surround yourself with like-minded people, with positive friends, with people who show kindness and who support your dream! With goal setters, movers and shakers. You should feel good when in their presence. Most importantly, with friends and family who won’t enable you and tell you what you want to hear, but the ones who tell you what you need to hear (and vice versa). That’s love.”

“So work hard,” concluded Lightning. “Be open to constructive criticism and use those notes to make you better!”



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