



Mackenzie Brown: Sharing culture through art and business

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Mackenzie Brown is a multi-talented Cree artist from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation with a degree in Childcare.

She is also the lead of Industry Development at Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA). Her role at ITA is one of helping its members grow their businesses. “We do one on one business coaching, helping them apply for funding, website development and helping navigate across the barriers that they are facing,” said Brown.

Outside of her roles at ITA, Brown is an international Indigenous drummer, singer, storyteller, knowledge seeker, artist, and songwriter.

Her creative gifts earned her a Top 30 Under 30 by the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation. Her artwork has been featured at the Pump House Gallery, Arts Commons Calgary, the Edson Gallery Museum, and the Gray Gallery of MacEwan University.

Mackenzie Brown’s love of art and creative expression was fostered by her mother, Matricia Brown, a singer, songwriter, musician, drummer and artist. Recently, Matricia Brown was selected to



Mackenzie Brown

participate as 1 of 18 businesses chosen across Canada to compete in Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN’s) newest show, “Bear’s Lair.”

Talent runs in the family and Mackenzie and her mother perform together as part of an acclaimed drumming group called Warrior Women. “I have been singing since I was 12 years old,” said Brown.

According to Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA), Warrior Women, is a Women’s collective, a drumming group, a mother, and a daughter who are rooted in tradition, and ambassadors of their knowledge.

The mother-daughter duo has traveled internationally to perform and educate others on their Cree heritage through song and dance.

“My mom and I have traveled to Africa, New York, and San Diego. So, I’ve spent a large part of my life traveling the world and singing and dancing with my mother,” said Brown. “I have also drummed and taught in many schools around Alberta, for many events including the Northern Alberta Teachers Conference, Silver Skate Festival, the annual Jasper Dark Skies Festival, Youth Dreamcatchers Conference, Canada Day, Indigenous Day festivities, and International Women’s Day.”

“Drumming and singing are a huge part of my identity.”

Mackenzie and her mother share a very close bond and provide each other with unconditional support. “It’s amazing because my mother and I have a very close relationship. We are best friends,” she said.

Brown shared that her mother is part of Canada’s sixties scoop and that she used singing and drumming



to reclaim her identity as an indigenous Cree woman. “So, for me, growing up, drumming and singing were a way to create my identity as a Cree woman,” said Brown.

Growing up with strong and creative women helped form my identity,” she added.

When Brown is not performing, she is creating art. On her website kamamak.ca, she describes what inspires her artwork.

“My art reflects âtayôhkan- spirit guides or animals. Drawing from inspirational people in my life and the teachings of various animals.”

“I create paintings that represent a loved one’s essence. The thing that I love about my art is that everyone sees something different. Animals remind us of people, and I am happy

that my art can create emotions and remembrance for others. My pieces have movement and are meant to feel alive, just like the spirit animal reflected in each painting.”

The multitasking artist added, “I love to teach about my culture authentically and beautifully, and I love telling the stories of my ancestors and keeping our traditions strong, passing them on to the many generations to come. So, I infuse stories and songs within my performances, taking participants on a journey with the drum.”

Most recently, Brown performed at the ATB Arts Barns in “Ayita” which was written by Teneil Whiskeyjack from Saddlelake Cree Nation.

“I was live drumming and singing,” Brown explained. “It was a play about Indigenous women who were not victims. In fact, they are celebrated, it’s all about women’s sovereignty and [sharing] women’s stories. The performance was rooted in the ceremony.”

For more information on Brown, check out her website at kamamak.ca.



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The Pope’s apology is just a start

By Terry Lusty, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Indigenous delegation returned from Rome following a highly emotional weeklong dialogue with Pope Francis about the horrors of Indian Residential Schools. The dialogue was intense for Indigenous people who follow the Catholic faith and also for those who express no love whatsoever for the church or its clergymen.

For those expecting and desiring an apology, their prayers were finally answered.

Pope Francis reassured the delegation that he felt badly "for the deplorable conduct of members of the Catholic Church" in relation to the residential schools in Canada. In so doing, he stated, "I ask for God's forgiveness, I want to say to you with all my heart: I am very sorry."

And, so, April 1st of 2022 will likely go down in history as the day of contrition, the day the world stood still for residential school survivors, their families and supporters.

For many devout Catholics it was truly a momentous occasion. But it’s not the case for the entire Native population of Canada. There are many who feel otherwise – that it is too little, too late.

Put the matter in perspective.

The Catholic Church operated a majority of the residential schools in Canada - 60 per cent or more, and yet they were the longest holdout in terms of the various religious bodies offering an apology. The other major denominations who did so much earlier were the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches. The Catholic Church might never have done so were it not for the continued pressure from survivors, their supporters and around-the-globe human rights activists, including the United Nations. It took the discovery of unmarked graves, and the realization of murder, rape and enslavement to get a response from the Vatican.

Most people, including Canada's Prime Minister

Justin Trudeau, say the apology was "a step forward," that will also, "resurface strong emotions of hurt and trauma for many."

Former Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine who's been an important leader in residential school matters over the years, surmised that this apology doesn't necessarily spell the end to the "long, tragic story about residential schools."

At stake, additionally, has been the promise of the church to extend some financial compensation that could vary anywhere from 30 to 60 million dollars to assist the healing process in Canada. The Catholic Church has amassed a fortune (which they hesitate to make known) from the suffering of others including Indigenous children and families in Canada. It’s literally blood money.

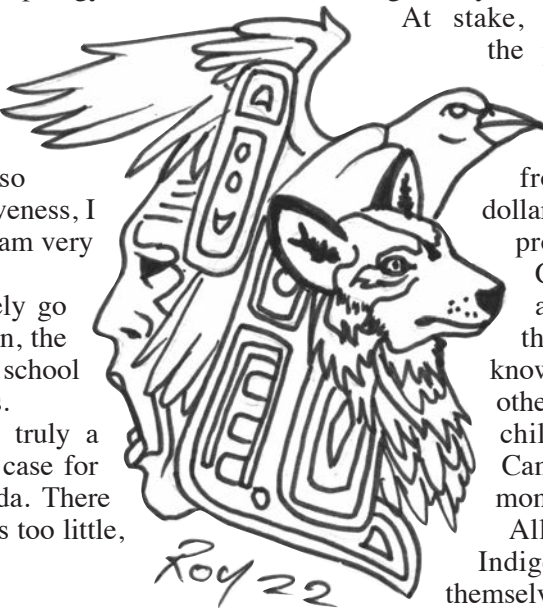
All this said, many Indigenous people consider themselves to be Catholic but many have rejected the church based on their shared history. This translates into the areas of trauma experienced by the children - loss of family, loss of language and culture, loss of lands and personal possessions, isolation, medical and educational neglect, broken bones and eardrums, medical experimentations, physical and sexual abuse, abortions, deaths, intimidation, racial slurs, shaming, child labour and more.

Considering all of this, is it any wonder that Indigenous people are so upset with government and the church? It’s been well documented that the trauma resulted in addictions, crime, suicide and a cycle of intergenerational abuse.

In the words of SNAP, the survivors’ network, “We admire the brave delegation who stood stoic this week in Rome. We are glad they heard the apology that they deserved, but we also recognize that words of apology are meaningless without action. True apologies are followed by true amends, a concept the church does not seem to be able to grasp. We believe a true apology for the horrors of the residential schools would be full transparency from church officials, not only in Canada but around the globe.”

Would you be willing to accept the church's apology today? Would it bring you comfort and closure of all you endured? Be honest and push for more.

Journalist Terry Lusty is an eight-year survivor of a residential school in Manitoba. He has attended and participated at numerous survivor and TRC gatherings across Canada over the past 25 years.



RCMP charge Oblate Priest for sexual abuse

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Mounties have pressed a new charge against an Oblate priest living in France who faces multiple allegations sexual abuse from when he lived in Nunavut.

The RCMP issued a Canada-wide warrant for Johannes Rivoire, who resides in Lyon and is in his 90s, on March 28, The Canadian Press reports.

Nunavut RCMP said officers received complaints last year for repeated instances of sexual abuse that are alleged to have occurred 47 years ago, leading to him being charged with sexual assault a month ago.

The warrant was issued a day after Inuit leaders met with Pope Francis at the Vatican, where they asked for His Holiness’s intervention in the case.

Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami,

Continued on page 5



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Indigenous fashion designers gather at Banff Centre for the Arts

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Canada’s top Indigenous Fashion Designers were invited to Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity (BCAC) to participate in the first-ever Indigenous Haute Couture Fashion Residency. In total, 10 of Canada’s best and brightest Fashion Designers attended the programs.

Alberta Native News reporter Chevi Rabbit spoke with Yolonda (Loni) Skelton, a textile artist from the Gitxsan Nation and the House of Hax-be-gwoo-txw of the Fireweed Clan.

Skelton’s traditional name is Sug-ii-t Looks and it is the name of her company which means “When the Whales Crest.” Her fashion designs are inspired and created from the traditional oral stories of her late maternal grandmother Lily Jackson (Na-gwa).

The three-week Indigenous Haute Couture Fashion Residency offered Indigenous textile-based artists with traditional and contemporary practices the opportunity to develop their design and pattern development skills, traditional, and digital embellishments all at the haute couture level.

Yolonda is a self-taught designer who has been in the fashion industry since 2017. She sees her experience at the BCAC as the evolution of her skills as an Indigenous Fashion Designer but most of all she cherishes the friendships she made with the other nine Indigenous Designers – each with their own unique Indigenous lens.

“There are nine incredible designers who joined me, and we’re learning from and about each other,” said Yolonda. “Learning new skills ...and feeding this creativity.”

“That is what’s so beautiful about it... each of us brings something unique to what we’re doing.”

“It’s so incredible to be in the presence of such

talented women and they’re just so generous of heart, from within the same industry,” added Yolonda. “Each of us participates in this resurgence and reclamation of our cultures.”

“It’s just been such a beautiful thing to see how we lift each other up. We inspire each other. It’s so special that everybody is here to support, it’s such a safe place to learn.”

Yolonda uses her fashion to teach others about her culture. “I’ve always taken things that I’ve learned from my culture and brought them to school because our kids need to learn all of these different things that our ancestors held onto since time immemorial.”

She explained that through her fashion she is also a storyteller. Her fashion speaks to her heritage and many of the designs tell a story.

“Reconciliation is such a huge part of who I am, finding ways to use reconciliation in a really gentle way where people are educated and become allies,” said Yolonda.

“It’s a form of storytelling through fashion. When you look at what I’ve created over the years they have been my way of storytelling.”

On Yolonda’s website she talked about the stories behind her Blanket Making,

“The blanket “Grandfather Sun” was my first attempt at making a button blanket. At this point I did not know how to create a design. I asked my uncle Gitxsan Artist Robert Jackson if I could use his sun design for my blanket, as I’d had a dream about a woman riding on the back of a killer whale and the sun was shining down on her and smiling.

She said, “My uncle told me the story about “Grandfather Sun” who watched over his people and then told me the story of the kidnapping of Gooch-



Fashion by Yolonda Skelton, Sugiit Lukxs

nach-nes-emgit’s wife by Goe-smess-nech the White Killer Whale. That was the inspiration for my next feature blanket.”

“I kept thinking I need to be able to tell my story to a broader audience or when people ask about my culture have something that I’m able to utilize from my fashion.”

She explained, “Our traditional Gitxsan teachings are passed on from our ancestors, the people of The Sky Clan who through their wisdom, time and patience have held onto and passed on traditional knowledge through stories, songs and dances.”

“These teachings have been passed down through the generations since time immemorial, through our oral traditions (Adawaks), so that we would use them wisely and share them with our people, and yours,” said Yolonda.

“The teachings I will be sharing belong to The House of Haxbegwootxw of The Fireweed Clan and are the inspiration for many of my designs,” she added.

“What we learn from these lessons, teaches us wisdom, builds our character and teaches us the true meaning of caring for one another.”

Check out Yolonda’s Instagram account <https://www.instagram.com/yolondaskelton/>

Indigenous leaders respond to the federal budget

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Indigenous leaders have mixed responses to the 2022 federal budget tabled this month in Ottawa by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland.

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief RoseAnne Archibald said the 2022 federal budget falls short in addressing the urgent and long-term needs identified by First Nations and that First Nations must share in the wealth derived from the land and resources of Canada.

“First Nations require economic reconciliation and a path forward that supports a process where First Nations benefit from the resources extracted from their lands and waters,” said the AFN National Chief.

She said all of the wealth in Canada is built on First

Nations land. “Canada derives its wealth from First Nations lands, while First Nations seek investments from budget cycle to budget cycle.”

When First Nations are in a position to build their economies and have access to the wealth derived from their lands and waters, they won’t need to look to budget cycles for investments, she explained.

“First Nations need to be supported to build their own wealth and have access to the wealth derived from their lands and waters, and we need to build the agreements required to do this,” added National Chief Archibald.

The federal budget identifies \$11 billion over six years (average \$1.8 billion per year) in new investment for Indigenous priorities and includes a \$4 billion investment toward Jordan’s Principle and about \$3 billion for First Nations housing.

Many of the priorities identified in the AFN’s pre-budget submission, such as governance, implementing the MMIWG Calls to Justice and non-water related infrastructure saw no new investments.

“I’m pleased to see investments in housing and to child and family

services, specifically to support the full application of Jordan’s Principle, but overall investments fall short based on well documented research,” said National Chief Archibald.

“I will continue to work to ensure First Nations have the fiscal capacity to exercise rights, title and jurisdiction and that First Nations priorities are supported and advanced at every level. When First Nations people are in a position to thrive, so too will Canada’s economy and its social fabric.”

The AFN conducted thorough analysis of First Nations housing needs, identifying a required investment of \$44 billion over 10 years. The \$2.4 billion over five years for First Nations housing falls short of the AFN’s well-researched identified need.

The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) welcomed Budget 2022’s investment of \$845 million over seven years for housing across Inuit Nunangat, noting that it is three times the Budget 2018 allocation of \$400 million over 10 years and ushers in a new era in housing investment for Inuit.

“There is a housing challenge across Canada, but the Inuit housing crisis is both uniquely acute and long-standing,” said ITK President Natan Obed. “This investment is a significant step in the right direction toward improving deteriorating housing stock and relieving widespread overcrowding across Inuit Nunangat which has contributed to devastating physical, social and mental health challenges.”

ITK is also encouraged by a commitment of \$227.6 million over two years for Indigenous-led mental health services and the co-development of distinctions-based mental health strategies.”

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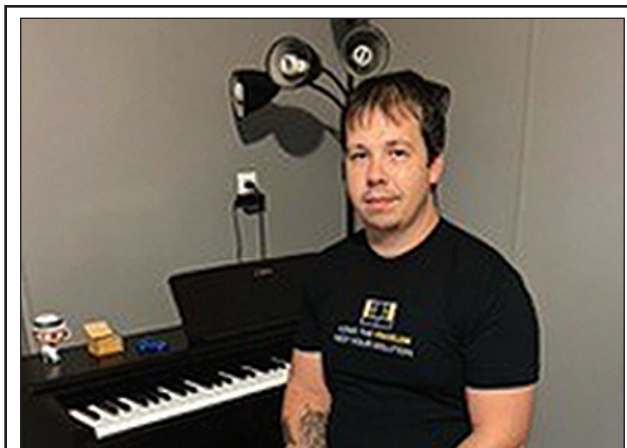
NLC business student attends Entrepreneurial Training

Northern Lakes College Business Administration student, Glen Whitfield, received the opportunity of a lifetime when his instructor nominated him to participate in *90-Day Startup*, a workshop for aspiring entrepreneurs. Participation in the training was made possible through Craig Elias, Entrepreneur-in-Residence at Bow Valley College, who supports business students studying at Alberta post-secondary institutions to become first-time entrepreneurs. The training ran from April to July 2021.

Glen originally began studying business in his twenties, but life happened and, before he knew it, almost ten years had passed. When Glen decided to resume his studies, he had a family to provide for. But his thirties also brought a discipline he hadn't known before. This can-do attitude and ability to organize time and prioritize tasks was of huge benefit during his intensive *90-Day Startup* training. He explains, "It was a lot of learning, but the coaching and materials made me feel very confident when

performing the practical experiments. The greatest benefit for me was the confidence I gained in starting a successful business out of nothing. I now know how to approach potential customers."

Glen's confidence was developed, in part, because of the dedication Northern Lakes College has to the success of students. Glen knew of the NLC reputation for supporting mature students through flexible schedules, and he chose the College so he could continue to work full-time night shifts while earning his certificate. He elaborates, "Northern Lakes College has been phenomenal. Because of their support, I haven't missed a single day of work, except for a few I purposefully took off around finals. I feel like the NLC program is challenging, but at the same time I'm enjoying revisiting subjects for more context and clarity. I also can ask questions I might not be comfortable asking in the workplace. I feel more confident at work and in considering my future." In fact, the experience has been so positive for the



Northern Lakes College Business Administration student Glen Whitfield.

Whitfield family that Glen's wife is considering enrolling in the same program.

While not set in stone, Glen's future might include further studies, as he is considering enrolling in a Bachelor of Finance program and entering the banking industry. His advice to other students is to simply 'take the jump.' He shares, "Ask yourself 'what if?' That was the biggest lesson of all for me. You'll never know what you can do until you do it."

Sexual abuse *cont. from p 3*

told CP he asked the Pope to urge Rivoire to return to Canada to face the charges and to ask France to intervene in the event Rivoire refuses.

The fugitive priest lived in Canada from the early-1960s to 1993, when he returned to France.

The first warrant for his arrest was issued in 1998 for three charges of sexual abuse related to his work in the communities of Arviat, Rankin Inlet and Nauyas, but those charges were stayed in 2019.

"That is so sick," Theresie Tungilik, whose younger brother Marius was one of Rivoire's alleged victims, told the CBC at the time. "I think that they are heartless to be able to do this."

The Public Prosecution Service of Canada said it dropped the charges because France refuses to extradite its citizens.

Inuit leaders and sympathetic politicians' calls for Rivoire to return to Canada to face the charges against him have picked up momentum since the uncovering of unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools in the past year.

Bishop William McGrattan, vice-president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, told CP that the Church needs to address Rivoire's case in an upfront way.

"The church wants to work with the relevant justice authorities, whether they be international or Canadian," he said.

"And if there are allegations that someone has committed these abuses, that they need to be brought to justice and the church should not stand in their way but assist those who have been victims to seek justice and healing."

Piita Irniq, a former commissioner of Nunavut and

past territorial politician, told the *Globe and Mail* that the new charge against Rivoire will hopefully facilitate the healing process for his victims.

Irniq said it's crucial for Rivoire to be extradited so he can see his victims up close.

In a December 2021 interview with the French newspaper *La Monde*, Rivoire denied the allegations against him, insisting that he left Canada to take care of his ailing parents and not to evade justice, the *Globe* reported.

Robert Currie, a Dalhousie University law professor, told *The Globe* that the Vatican is the only entity that can force Rivoire to return to Canada, as the French authorities are unlikely to do so.

"The Pope can tell any priest or bishop to do whatever the Pope wants them to do, and they have to do it," Currie said.

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Thirsty for Change: No more excuses

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A group of graduate students at the University of Alberta launched a campaign on March 22 — World Water Day — to pressure all levels of government to ensure all communities on Turtle Island equitable access to clean drinking water.

The campaign from the group, Student Advocates for Public Health, is dubbed “Thirsty for Change: No More Excuses.”

Although the federal Liberal government promised to end all long-term water advisories on First Nations by March 2021, there remain 29 communities that still don’t have access to clean drinking water, with no firm date for rectification in sight.

“Standing in solidarity today, we, like 97% of Canadians across this country, believe clean drinking water should be recognized as a fundamental human right,” group member Alexa Thompson said at the outset of the event.

“We believe the time for empty promises, failed action plans, and finger pointing has passed, and that the time for action is now.”

Sovereign Nations of Treaty No. 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey placed the issue of water contamination in the context of Indigenous environmental stewardship, borrowing a quote from the nations’ Elders.

“When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught and the last river poisoned, only then will we realize that we cannot eat money,” he said.

Noskey said it’s regrettable that First Nations had to pursue legal action in the form of a class action lawsuit to get the government to compensate them for having to endure contaminated drinking water.

Randal Bell, another student, said even though the

government has lifted 128 water advisories since 2015, many homes in Indigenous communities depend on cisterns — large outdoor water tanks — for their water needs, which can easily get contaminated.

“Many families run out of water long before the water truck can replenish the supply,” said Bell.

Kylie Meguinis, a Tsuut’ina Nation band member, spoke of “how hard it was living with 10 people and having to consistently worry about running out of water.”

She expressed frustration that nothing has changed more than a year after going public about being forced to ration water, because a water truck comes to refill her cistern every four days.

She said she spends hundreds of dollars a week on bottled water and trips to the laundromat.

“Every bottle of water I buy means less food on the table,” Meguinis said.

“It’s hard and it’s not fair, especially when my neighbours in the City of Calgary live less than five kilometres away, have full access to clean drinking water, and never have to worry about running out or telling their children to be mindful of water usage.”

“How is it we can build pipelines across the country for oil access but not five km away for water?”

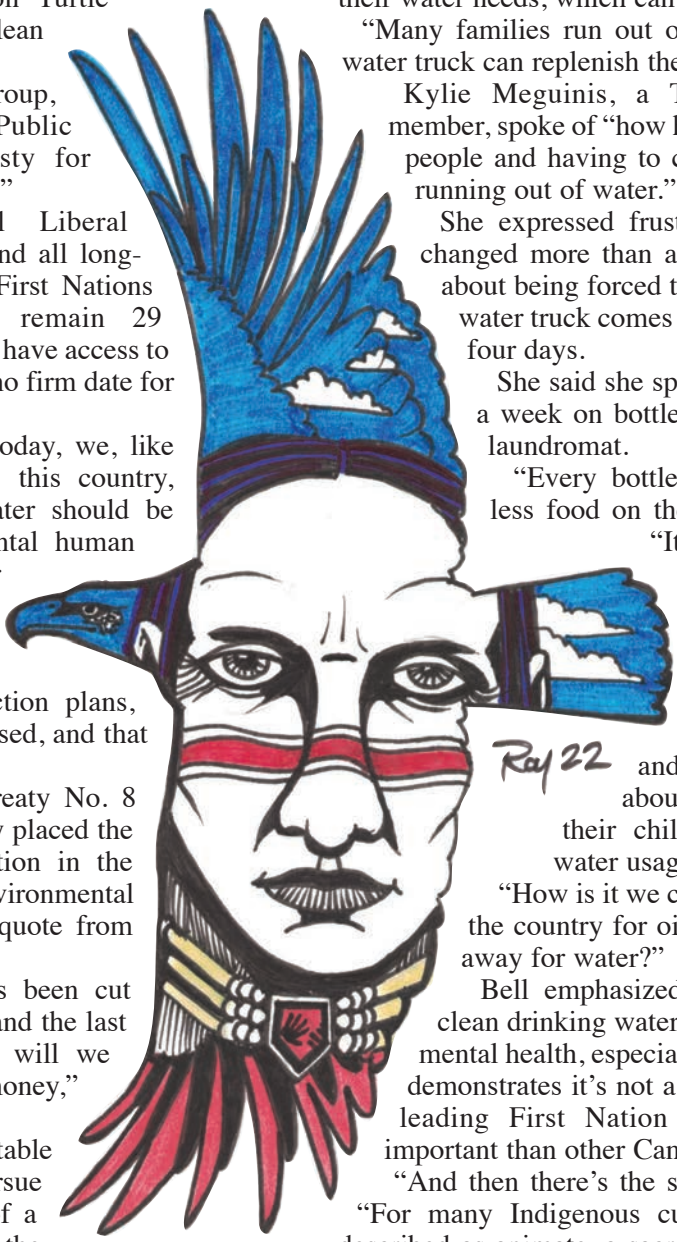
Bell emphasized the impact of lacking clean drinking water on not just physical, but mental health, especially when the government demonstrates it’s not a major priority for them, leading First Nation peoples to feel “less important than other Canadians.”

“And then there’s the spiritual cost,” he added. “For many Indigenous cultures, water has been described as animate, a sacred gift from the Creator. Limited access to this sacred resource can have a profound effect on the culture and spirituality of Indigenous peoples.”

Kerry Black, an engineering professor at the University of Calgary, said for the past 20 years, we’ve known about the major, chronic health risks of contaminated water in First Nations communities, such as Grassy Narrows and Attawapiskat, and little has changed.

She said a “one-size-fits-all approach” to improving water infrastructure on First Nations communities has failed.

“There’s a lack of context and relevant solutions.



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Continued on page 7

Indigenous Marketplace empowers creative prospects of former inmates

By Shelley Mantei

Art training and engagement in the arts is one of the most powerful, culturally appropriate means to inspire Indigenous people with justice system conviction histories. Art instils a sense of purpose and develop self-confidence, esteem, and most importantly, an identity other than as a convict.

Re-entry from prison poses a host of overwhelming problems, such as, finding suitable housing, transportation, and a job that pays a living wage. Making art can provide solace from those challenges and possibly a career, if “returning” artists — a term advocates often use in place of “formerly incarcerated or former inmates,” which carries stigma — find the means, mentorship and money to make and sell their creations.

One social enterprise providing an Indigenous arts platform is the Circle of Eagles Lodge Society. It operates Halfway Houses in Vancouver, BC on the Coast Salish territory to assist Indigenous Brothers and Sisters leaving Canadian federal institutions and those dislocated from society. For over 50 years, they have provided supports to reintegrate their clients into communities by providing men’s and women’s housing, cultural healing, employment readiness, and life skills.

Many of the Lodges’ residents are talented artists and craftspeople, with limited resources who are not well connected with distribution channels and markets. They began thinking of ways to help these artists sell their work as a means of easing re-entry into the community. This gave birth to: Circle of Eagles Trading Post.

“The narrative of people’s lives is destroyed when crime and violence happens,” said Merv Thomas, CEO of the Circle of Eagles Lodge Society and Circle of Eagles Trading Post. “Restorative justice asks us to come together and think about what forgiveness would look like, and art has the redemptive power to enable that.”

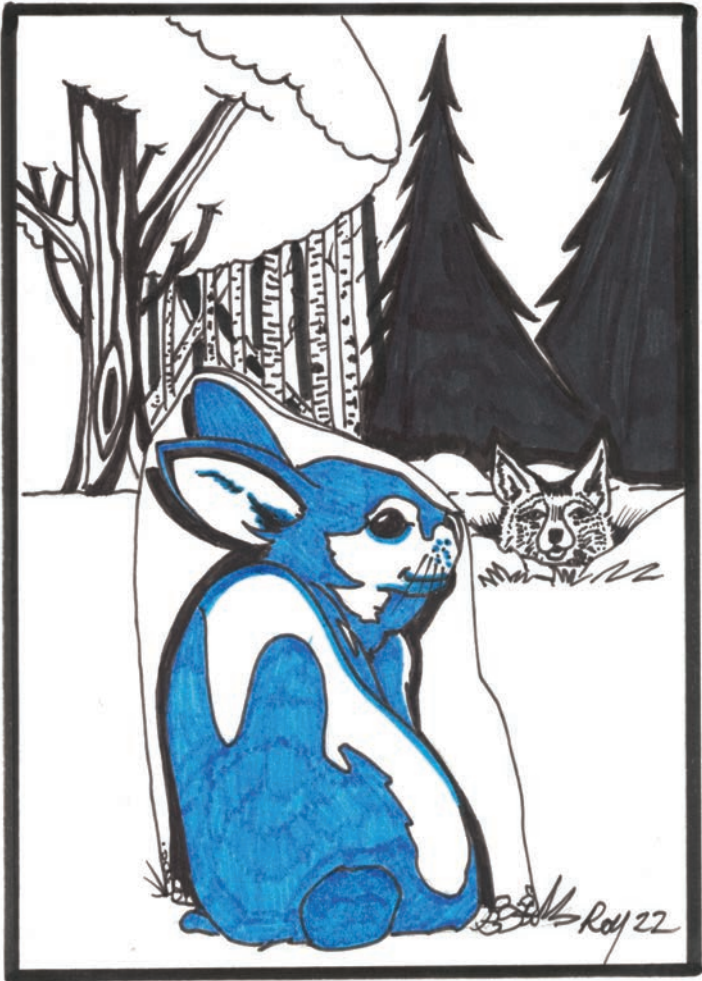
Circle of Eagles Trading Post is an online and retail artisan crafted store operated by the Circle of Eagles

Lodge Society. Together they create career opportunities for their clients to participate in the local economy by introducing their artwork at fair value. The Trading Post acts as an intermediary connecting these artists with the marketplace. It is also a source of fairly priced arts supplies alongside cultural and traditional materials that are difficult to source in the urban environment.

Indigenous people represent approximately 5% of the total population across Canada, yet the portion they represent of federal incarceration has reached new historic highs surpassing 30%. The pace is set for Indigenous people to comprise 33% of the total federal inmate population in the next three years. For women and girls, the figures are even more alarming. 42% of all incarcerated women are Indigenous, and 60% of all girls in custody are Indigenous. (2020). Since April 2010 Indigenous inmate population has increased by 43.4% while non-Indigenous custody has declined by 13.7%. These statistics also represent the ratio of Indigenous people that need the necessary supports to build sustainable careers and develop the networks they lack after leaving prison.

Art helps lessen emotional and financial burdens in order to make re-assimilation much more feasible. To truly break the cycle and see ex-offenders become a part of the community when they are released, they need to have a way to make an income. With the income from selling their art, they are more likely and able to succeed in their new communities.

“The Trading Post’s most important goal is to put money in the hands of artists. Every purchase from our store directly empowers the artisans with a reliable place to sell their work and lift themselves from poverty,” Thomas shares. “In addition, one of the main reasons for reoffending is because former inmates cannot find employment when they are released, but our programs break the cycle



and empowers our Brothers and Sisters with opportunities.”

Many Indigenous incarcerated artists credit art-making as part of their healing and coping inside prisons; this healing is a continued practice in their reintegration. Participating in creative activities such as drawing, painting, and creating other artwork has been shown to improve mental health and proven to help people communicate experiences and traumas.

Many returning artists find success through creative outlets that can help them reclaim mental balance, to heal, gain a sense of purpose, and become well-adjusted adults who can positively contribute to the community.

To learn more about Circle of Eagles Trading Post, visit circleofeaglestradingpost.ca

Thirsty *cont. from p 6*

We have slow approvals. We have misguided priorities for [people] outside of the community. We have a lack of community input, involvement, direction, colonial processes, lack of wraparound supports [and] chronic underfunding,” Black said.

Student Advocates for Public Health is calling on the federal government to update relevant legislation to “enshrine water as a fundamental human right for Canadians,” acknowledge Indigenous peoples as the first users of water in the country, and to collaborate with local, provincial and territorial governments to ensure Indigenous peoples’ water supply is protected.

Bell said he’s optimistic the agreement reached between the federal Liberals and NDP to ensure the government remains in power until 2025 in exchange for movement on some NDP priorities, including

reconciliation, could lead to progress on the file.

“It’s a very promising step in the right direction,” Bell said, citing NDP leader Jagmeet Singh’s past remarks that if there were contaminated drinking water in Toronto, Vancouver or any other major cities, it would have been dealt with immediately.


Black expressed skepticism of the arrangement’s impact.

“I don’t think you’d get a single political party coming forward to say they’re not going to support clean, safe drinking water for all Canadians,” she said. “It’s a huge question of how far they’re willing to go.”

Individual drinking water advisories are often left out of the equation when advisories on First Nations are discussed, with some communities having in excess of 100, she added.

“We are not capturing the true weight of the infrastructure crisis and I’m not sure that any political party can push that forward without collectively, all of us coming together to recognize this is an issue,” Black said.


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March - October 2022

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