

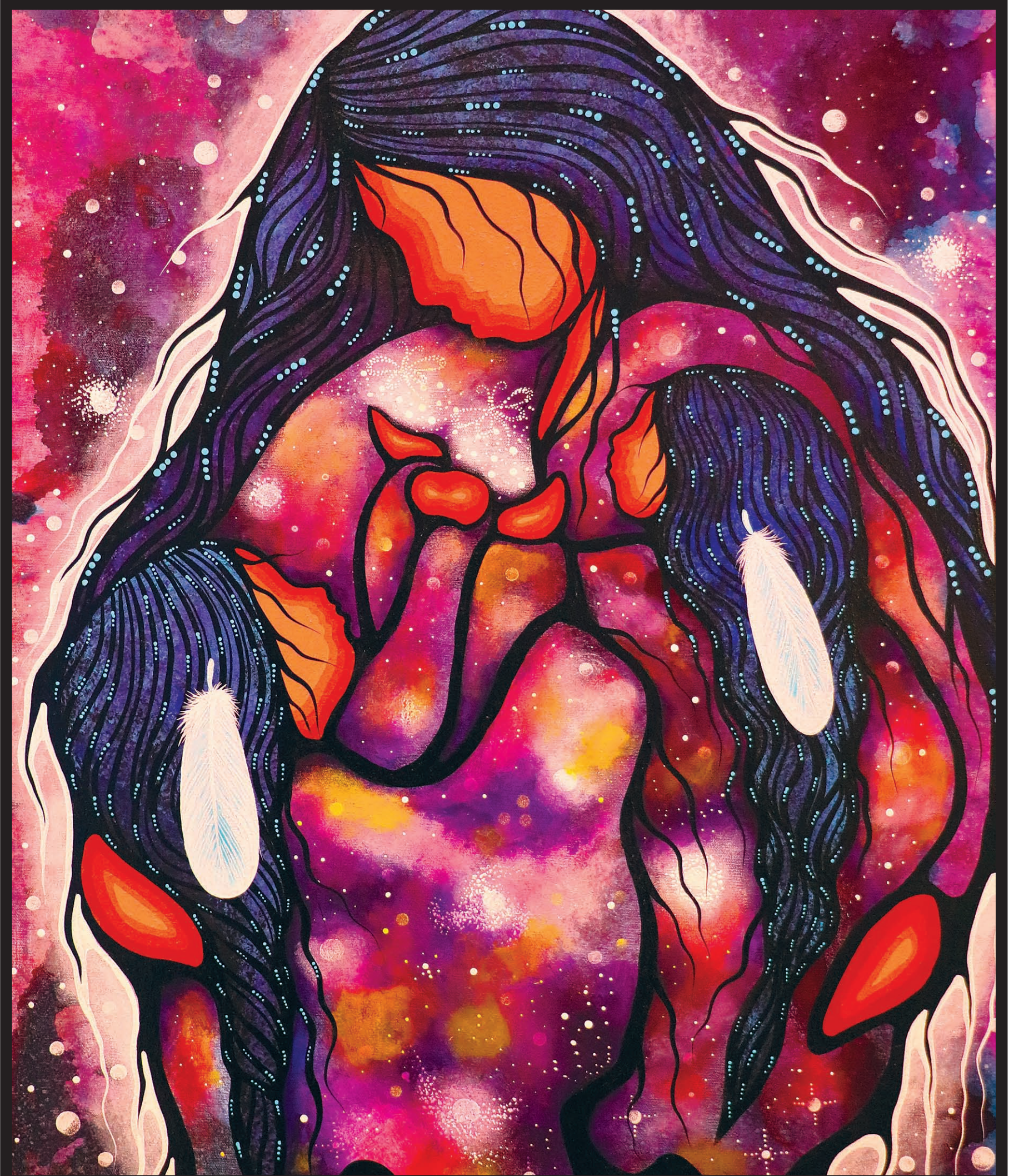
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## AU healing garden honours IRS Survivors and families

A new memorial garden at Athabasca University's (AU) campus offers a space for quiet contemplation and reflection to remember the lives lost and Survivors of Canada's residential school system.

AU's Indigenous unit, Nukskahtowin, which means meeting place in Cree, opened the Linda Bull Memorial Garden earlier this fall. The garden honours the legacy of the late Linda Bull, O.C., who was Cree and one of AU's first Indigenous academics.

Priscilla Campeau, Nukskahtowin chair and program administrator, said the idea for the memorial garden arose from the tragedy of the 215 Indigenous children whose remains are buried near the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory. AU lowered its flags to half-mast

for 215 days following the tragic news, but wanted a more permanent memorial.

"We decided that we needed to create a memorial garden, a place of reflection for both AU staff and the Athabasca community, where people could come together and to remember the lives lost in those residential schools," Campeau said, "to reflect on what mistakes were made in the past to make amends in our own lives and to work towards what we call reconciliation—or what we at Nukskahtowin call conciliation."

The garden embodies the shape of a Medicine Wheel with four benches that represent each season, direction, the four winds, and the four races.

AU Elder in Residence Maria Campbell said the first circle in the garden represents the children, "They represent our future." The second circle represents grandparents, she added. "They represent our past. They carry all of our knowledge and our teachings. Those are the two we should really honour and take care of."

To help celebrate its opening, attendees, including children from the town of Athabasca, placed stones to mark the garden's perimeter and to make an offering to the Creator. The stones represent the Rock People, "our oldest ancestors," who will surround the garden and protect it for us. "The stones are really

special because they heal us, they've provided us with tools, they doctor us, they have the oldest stories," Campbell explained.

Bull's nephew, Gary, called his aunt's academic career an inspiration for the family to "follow in those footsteps to go into university." He recalled fondly working with her on weekends at Morley First Nation for the 1999 International Institute on Peace Education, which Bull helped host. He also credited her work for bringing light to hidden truths of the residential school system in the Edmonton and St. Paul areas.

"A lot of the truths were hidden, and they were hidden behind a wall that most of us as Native people put up, in terms of the way we dealt with our emotions and all those kinds of things that go along with your trauma," Gary said.

"As she brought those traumas to the forefront, when it came to the residential schools, she brought that to light. And I think in a roundabout way, it was teaching us to face those fears, to face those demons that haunted us throughout our own academics, to our own school years. It takes a strong voice to do that."

The healing garden opening coincided with the opening of the Bertha Clark-Jones O.C. Art Gallery, also on campus. The gallery honours the legacy of the late Bertha Clark-Jones, O.C., a Cree-Métis who devoted her life to advocacy, in particular for Indigenous women and children.

The first exhibit in the space featured an installation by Métis artist Terry Lusty, who took photographs throughout hearings for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

"To me, these images are all very, very important," said Lusty, himself a residential school Survivor. "They've always been critical in the Aboriginal community. They say a picture's worth a thousand words. For every picture in there I can give you a thousand words."

Learn more about Nukskahtowin and how Athabasca University supports Indigenous learners, staff, alumni and community members at [athabascau.ca](http://athabascau.ca).



AU healing garden. Photo Athabasca University



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# MNA votes for new Constitution

Citizens of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) have overwhelmingly adopted a new Constitution as the missing piece in their centuries long struggle to have their self-government solidified and recognized by other levels of government in Canada.

"The results from the MNA vote represent the largest ratification vote ever undertaken by an Indigenous nation in Canadian history. That is an incredible achievement," said Del Graff, Chief Electoral Officer, Metis Nation of Alberta.

More eligible electors cast a ballot in this ratification vote than for any other self-government or modern-day land claim agreement that has been approved in Canada to date.

In a province-wide ratification vote held throughout the month of November, which included an extensive public awareness campaign as well as mail-in, online and in-person voting, a total of 15,729 MNA citizens cast their ballots with 15,241 voting "Yes" to adopting the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution (96.89% voting in support).

"Our people have a long and proud history of declaring and asserting our inherent right to self-government. From our resistances in what is now Western Canada in 1869/70 and 1885 through to our success in ensuring the Métis people were expressly included in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, we have always fought to have our unique self-government recognized in this country," stated MNA President Audrey Poitras.

"Today, the Métis Nation within Alberta has unequivocally confirmed our inherent right to self-government—yet again. Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont and the many Métis women and men who tirelessly built the MNA over the last 94 years would be very proud of these ratification results.

"With our Constitution, we are one step closer to fully implementing our nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada as well as Alberta. I want to thank all the MNA citizens who took the time out of their busy schedules to vote over the last month as well as our Chief Electoral Officer, Del Graff. This is a historic milestone for Alberta Métis. It provides us a solid foundation to guide our self-government for generations to come."

In 2019, the MNA signed a self-government agreement with Canada, along with other recognized Métis governments in Saskatchewan and Ontario. This agreement recognized the MNA represents the Métis Nation within Alberta, which holds the right to self-government protected by Canada's Constitution. The agreement also commits to Canada introducing federal legislation to support the MNA's self-government recognition.

While 25 self-government agreements or modern treaties have been implemented across Canada involving 43 Indigenous communities, none are currently finalized in Alberta. This ratification vote is an essential step towards becoming the first to be implemented in the province.

The MNA's constitution will open doors with both Canada and Alberta, including: a new fiscal relationship with Canada to finally provide Métis-designed supports to MNA citizens in health, housing, language, education, training, economic development, and justice; and improving the services MNA provides to Métis in Alberta including mental health, supporting those with disabilities, delivering culturally appropriate child and family services, and caring for elders when they can no longer take care of themselves.

"The MNA Constitution is so incredibly important, something that many of our elders and leaders have been working towards for generations," stated Cassidy Caron, President of the Metis National Council. "I want to recognize the hard work and dedication of President Poitras, the MNA Provincial leadership, community leaders, youth, elders, and all Métis citizens who have contributed to the conversations that have shaped the development of this Constitution. You are all leaders in building a bright, prosperous, and strong future for the Métis Nation. Today, and every day, I am so proud to be Métis."

The Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution will come into force and effect in September 2023. Beginning in January 2023, the MNA will also be working with MNA Regions and its Local Councils to prepare for self-government under the new Constitution.

Currently, the MNA has over 56,000 registered citizens, residing in every part of Alberta.



# Warmest Wishes

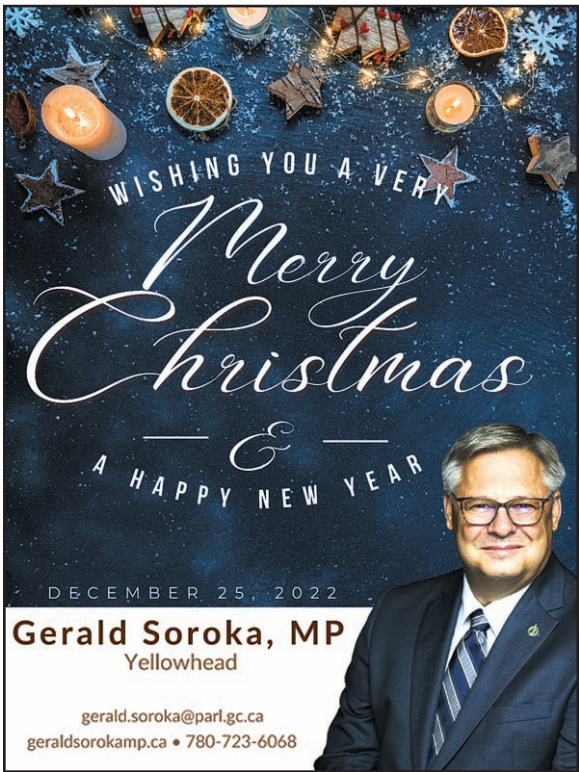
**December is a month full of celebrations, generosity and family time.**

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**On behalf of the AFCC Board and staff we would like to wish everyone a safe and healthy Christmas and New Year!**

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DECEMBER 25, 2022

**Gerald Soroka, MP**  
Yellowhead

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# Treaty Chiefs slam Sovereignty Act

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, the G4 in Treaty 7 Territory and the Sovereign Nation Chiefs of Treaty No. 8 are slamming Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's signature Sovereignty Act, calling it yet another colonial imposition on Indigenous peoples.

They say that the Act is an infringement on treaty rights, and according to the *Edmonton Journal*, they are asking Lt. Gov. Salma Lakhani to step in and reject it.

They have also joined with Vice Chief Aly Bear of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations to put forward an emergency resolution at the Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa – rejecting both the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act and the Saskatchewan First Act.

"This isn't a First Nation issue – this impacts everyone in Canada" says Chief Tony Alexis of Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation. "If this law goes forward in Alberta, it will set a dangerous precedent – that laws can be made behind closed doors. What would keep other provinces from following suit? We have seen similar attempts in Quebec and Saskatchewan and have very good reason to be deeply concerned when three provinces are trying to extend their jurisdiction."

"We will not give up our Treaty rights to our land, resources, and water," says Stoney Nakota Tsuut'ina Tribal Council representative and Bears paw First Nation Chief Darcy Dixon. "We have never relinquished, ceded, nor surrendered the rights to our natural resources. Through Treaty, we agreed to share the land, not give exclusive jurisdiction to the Government of Alberta or the Government of Saskatchewan. We will not allow these provinces to assert their control over Treaty lands."

The Chiefs emphasize that "both of these Acts are without rigour and alarmingly open for interpretation - their uncertainty may have harmful, permanent and widespread impacts.

There has been no consultation or dialog with First Nations Peoples to discuss these Acts, their details and implications. This lack of transparency runs against the ideals of respectful relations and Reconciliation."

An open letter from Nov. 29 points out that the rights of Treaty No. 8 date back to an agreement signed with the Crown in 1899, predating the existence of the Province of Alberta, which was established in 1905.

"As signatories to Treaty No. 8, We are Sovereign Peoples," the letter says.

It proceeds to call the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, or Bill 1, "another unlawful attempt to continue the province's deliberate abuse and exploitation of our peoples, lands, territories, and resources."

Smith's claim the legislation will protect Alberta's "prosperity and constitutional jurisdiction" is nonsensical, "given that the province is a creature of the Canadian Constitution and more importantly, we are the land title holders of Treaty No. 8, and this province has prospered enough," the letter says.

"The problem here Albertans is, this prosperity has been grossly mismanaged by your governments just like they have mismanaged our lands, waters, environment, and territories."

The Alberta Sovereignty Act, in its original inception, would allow cabinet to forbid provincial agencies from enforcing federal legislation it deems unconstitutional or unfair to Alberta. It has been panned by most legal experts for subverting the will of the legislature.

A Nov. 23 news release from the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations calls the proposed legislation a "dangerous and damaging plan to undermine democracy and abandon the rule of law."

"By using the word 'sovereignty' in the name of this proposed Act, Premier Smith should not pretend to have authority over sovereign First Nations," the release says, calling on Albertans

*Continued on page 13*

Merry Christmas to everyone  
& best wishes for a happy,  
healthy New Year!

**MLA Adriana LaGrange**  
Red Deer-North

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# Apply now for First Nations Drinking Water Settlement

The First Nations Drinking Water Settlement provides compensation for First Nations impacted by long-term drinking water advisories that lasted continuously for at least one year between November 20, 1995 and June 20, 2021. The settlement includes compensation for Impacted First Nations and eligible individuals as well as commitments to fund the construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure needed to provide regular access to clean, safe drinking water in their homes in a quantity sufficient for everyday use.

Compensation is available for individuals and includes additional compensation for health harms (Specified Injuries) sustained by those following drinking water advisories. Personal representatives can claim on behalf of eligible minors, those with mental incapacity (under disability) and those who passed away on or after November 20, 2017. The deadline for individuals to submit a claim is March 7, 2023. Resources are available to help navigate the claims process and submit a claim before March 7, 2023.

There is an online claims assessment tool that helps individuals understand if they are eligible by answering a few quick questions. To be eligible for compensation individuals must: not have passed away before November 20, 2017; be a member of a First Nation; and have been impacted by a long-term drinking water advisory (boil water, do not consume or do not use) that lasted at least a year between November 20, 1995 and June 20, 2021.

A list and map of the Impacted First Nations are available at [firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca](http://firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca).

Individuals can also apply for Specified Injuries compensation for injuries they experienced as a result of drinking water advisories. Any individuals seeking compensation for Specified Injuries must submit a Claim Form. Only those who are eligible will receive Specified Injuries compensation.

"We are encouraging individuals to submit a claim for compensation as soon as possible and are offering real support to help them in the process," says Darian Baskatawang from Class Counsel. "Claimants can ask us as Class Counsel questions related to this settlement and for assistance making a claim for Specified Injuries. Claimants can also contact the Administrator to understand how they may apply for compensation and access free support completing their Claim Form. There are on-demand webinars and other community resources on the website to provide additional information."

Impacted First Nations who want to participate in the settlement must submit a Band Council Acceptance Resolution to receive \$500,000 from the settlement. The deadline for this submission has been extended to March 7, 2023. They can also submit a Band Council Confirmation List on behalf of their community members, so they do not have to fill out a Claim Form, unless they want to make a claim for Specified Injuries. There is support and funding available for Band Councils to complete and submit this list by March 7, 2023. Band Councils wishing to

participate can visit the website for additional information and/or call the Administrator or Class Counsel.

For questions about the claims process and assistance with the Claim Form, contact the Administrator toll-free at 1-833-252-4220.

For legal questions related to the settlement or assistance with making a claim for Specified Injuries, contact Class Counsel at no cost: [counsel@firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca](mailto:counsel@firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca) and toll-free at 1-833-265-7589.

Emotional support is available through Hope for Wellness toll-free at 1-855-242-3310, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or by online chat at [hopeforwellness.ca](http://hopeforwellness.ca).

Additional information on this settlement as well as the interactive guides and webinars can be found at [firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca](http://firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca), and individuals can use the online claim assessment tool to guide them through the claim process journey.

## Peace Hills Trust Grand Entry



The Peace Hills Trust gala began with a Grand Entry that included Chiefs, government officials and dignitaries from Peace Hills Trust. (Photo by Terry Lusty)



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## Celebrating the innovation of Indigenous tourism

Indigenous Tourism Alberta has announced the winners of its second annual awards gala at the ITA Gathering held at River Cree Resort and Casino on Enoch Cree Nation, Treaty 6 territory and Metis Region 4.

The awards gala celebrated Indigenous tourism excellence and best practices in four categories including Most Improved Business, which recognizes an Indigenous tourism business that has significantly improved its market readiness; Best Marketing Initiatives, awarded to an Indigenous tourism business or organization that has planned and activated an effective marketing campaign or program showing real results towards specific goals; the Leadership Award, recognizing a representative of an Indigenous business or organization who inspires those around them in the way they represent their culture with visitors; Partnership/Allyship Award, jointly awarded to an Indigenous tourism business or organization and an ally tourism business that has developed a new partnership approach toward a tourism experience and has demonstrated impact and influence within the Indigenous tourism industry that has led to the growth of Indigenous Tourism.

The full list of winners are:

Curtis Cardinal was born and raised in Northern Alberta, is a member of A Whitefish Lake First Nations, and is the owner of **Tee Pee Treats**. After a temporary closure, Curtis reopened in July 2022 to offer not only a take-out and delivery services, but a unique dining experience inside Edmonton's new multidisciplinary art and music venue, CO\*LAB. Teepee Treats has rebranded, built a new website, and developed new producers like their dry bannock and tea products, and has become a symbol of resilience within the Indigenous community.

**Nightrise** is the result of a collaboration between the Stoney Nakoda Nations, Pursuit Collection and Moment Factory. Nightrise is a multimedia, multi-sensory storytelling experience that shines the spotlight on the rich cultural history of the Stoney Nakoda Peoples. This experience takes place at the Banff Gondola,

allowing guests from all across the country and other countries to authentically experience Stoney culture.

Nightrise tells the story of the mountain and its traditional name, as well as presenting words in the Stoney language to describe its wonders. The Stoney Nation, Pursuit Collection and Moment Factory signed a Memorandum of Understanding to commemorate their partnership in bringing the Nightrise experience to life, and Niterise will be expanding to welcome guests for 2022-23.

**Mother Earth Essentials** was founded in order to share the nature-inspired teachings rooted in the plants of the Medicine Wheel. Over the past year, Mother Earth Essentials has rebranded their products, focused on new asset photography, completed website upgrades, and has worked with partners to help amplify their marketing efforts. Mother Earth Essentials opened their Edmonton location storefront, and has worked tirelessly on the rebrand of the company, to ensure the awareness of the new location.

In late 2020, Carrie published her book *Mother Earth Plants for Health & Beauty: Indigenous Plants, Traditions and Recipes* with Eschia Books. It features recipes for teas, soap, bath products, balms, and lotions—all of which use wild edible and medicinal plants that can be collected on the prairies. Since publishing, her book has made it on the Bestseller list on Read Alberta and was a finalist in the Trade Non-Fiction category for the Alberta Book Publishing Awards.

Diana Frost is the leader of a social enterprise including an Indigenous business called **Colouring It Forward Inc.** and a not-for-profit organization called CIF Reconciliation Society (CIFRS). Diana collaborates with Indigenous Artists and Elders to produce authentic books, cards, gift boxes and journals to tell the other side of the story of Indigenous people — of



Diana Frost of Colouring it Forward accepts the Leadership Award from awards sponsor Carmelle Hunka from YYC Calgary International Airport and event host Lance Cardinal at the CITE Awards Gala.

hope and of a different future. Colouring It Forward makes donations from their sales to Indigenous social projects, while CIF Reconciliation Society has organized an annual Orange Shirt Day Walk and arts event since 2018, and also has collaborated with numerous non-Indigenous organizations on Indigenous art exhibits to share artists' views on truth and reconciliation. In the past year, Diana partnered with the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth for its annual Pokaiks The Children Orange Shirt Day event which had its largest attendance yet of 6000+ people.

"All of our nominees are people and businesses that inspire, lead and educate. They're powerful examples of the strength of Indigenous tourism in Alberta and they represent their culture to visitors and guests in authentic and passionate ways," said CEO of Indigenous Tourism Alberta Shae Bird. "Over the last year we have seen significant interest from industry partners looking to expand their knowledge of Indigenous culture. This year's CITE Award nominees are members who are not only committed to excellence in their own business, but are enthusiastic about educating guests, partners, allies and the industry as a whole."

The three-day event provided an opportunity for attendees to build meaningful relationships with more than 300 delegates including Indigenous tourism leaders, tourism operators, travel trade, media and other key organizations. Together attendees shared their collective knowledge and continued to contribute to the success of Alberta's rapidly growing Indigenous tourism industry.

### First Nations Educator's Conference

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**Dr. Pam Palmater**

**Dr. Dwayne Donald**  
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**Dr. Leroy Little Bear**

**Kerrie Moore**  
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**Michael Redhead Champagne**  
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**Youth Panel**  
Treaty 6, Treaty 7 & Treaty 8

**Daryl Kootenay**

For more information contact: [fnec@ikwc.org](mailto:fnec@ikwc.org) [ikwc.org](http://ikwc.org) [stoneyeducation.ca](http://stoneyeducation.ca)

Co-Hosted by Stoney Education Authority and The Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom Centre (IKWC)

*Wishing you Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for a Happy New Year!*

**Heather McPherson**  
Member of Parliament  
Edmonton Strathcona

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[www.heathermcpherson.ndp.ca](http://www.heathermcpherson.ndp.ca)

Follow on





# Jingle all the way

By Xavier Kataquapit, Under the Northern Sky



It is hard to believe that Christmas 2022 and the holiday season is right around the corner. There are Christmas parades happening in most cities and towns right across the country. For many this is the first time since 2019 before the wretched Covid-19 Pandemic hit the world and stopped us all in our tracks. It is good to see Santa back on his sleigh running around the streets and greeting all the kids. We all need that idea of the goodness of Christmas and Santa this year.

We have dealt with being sick with Covid-19, lock downs, wearing masks, getting vaccines and more or less having our lives turned upside down with all kinds of restrictions. Many businesses have gone bust and in particular those in the retail, tourism, entertainment and restaurant sectors of the economy. We have lost many loved ones to this pandemic and we continue to lose people as Covid-19 keeps coming back in new variants. We know so many people who have been sick, hospitalized and are dealing with long Covid and trying to get their lives back to normal.

Christmas and the holiday season is certainly welcomed by all of us. This is that nostalgic return to some kind of joy and magic. It is also of course the time to spend, spend and spend to make sure we shower our young ones and those we love with all kinds of wonderful gifts. It is also the time of gatherings to celebrate the season and a little later to welcome in 2023. People will be travelling from remote First Nations to cities and towns all over the country to purchase gifts and to enjoy the holiday season break.

This Christmas and holiday season should come with a warning. While we are running around and spending a lot of time indoors without masks we will certainly be catching Covid-19, flus, colds and other infectious diseases. We have to keep in mind that we are in the middle of a severe sick season again this year and although we want to believe things are back to normal all the experts tell us that is not the case. So, if you want to protect your Elders and the very young

from severe sickness and possibly death you should really try to remember where and when you are in history. Get the latest vaccine to protect yourself from serious sickness, get the flu shot and for goodness sake wear masks when you are heading anywhere indoors. This is not the time to be caught off guard during the circulation of so much sickness.

Also, you might want to consider the warnings from all of the financial experts that we are entering into a time of severe recession and possibly depression. That means if you are like most Canadians and living from paycheque to paycheque and maxing out your credit cards, you just might be in for a big surprise if the economy fails to the point where you end up jobless and way over your head in debt. So, while you are spending your way to happiness this Christmas perhaps you might want to remember to try to put a little cash aside for the possible rainy days that are forecast for the next year or two.

As we head into Christmas and the holiday season with 2023 on the horizon we also have to be aware that the world's superpowers are madly sabre rattling with each other and for the first time since the Cuban Missile Crisis there is talk of nuclear war. This seems to be very unreal and all of the above considered feels like we are watching a very bad movie. Still, we are human. We are hopeful and we trust that most of the world leaders are somewhat sane and working towards a better life for all of us. Still that is a bit of a gamble.

Our people have already suffered from poverty, starvation, racism and the tragic violence of colonization. This life experience has prepared us for whatever is coming that might not be all about pretty gifts under the tree and Christmas cake. We are survivors and we can cope with just about anything. However, global nuclear war is something none of us can deal with. Hopefully the upcoming year 2023 will bring more sense to our world leaders and those few filthy rich billionaires, the end of the Covid-19 Pandemic and a goose in every pot for us all. The alternatives are dire.

MERRY Christmas

**BLAINE CALKINS MP**  
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Our very best wishes to you all during this holiday season! May 2023 bring you many wonderful memories and good health.

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# More emerging authors benefit from Indigenous Writers Circle

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Audible's Indigenous Writers Circle program, which connects up-and-coming Indigenous writers with mentors, is back with a new crop of students and some new mentors.

Participants have the opportunity to work with renowned writers, such as Richard Van Camp, Angela Sterritt, Reneltta Arluk, January Rogers, Dr. Jas M. Morgan and Clayton Thomas-Muller, who assist them through the writing process and walk them through finding a publisher.

Jessie Conrad, a Dene speculative fiction writer who lives in Edmonton, is working alongside Richard Van Camp.

'Speculative fiction,' Conrad explained, is an umbrella term for various well-known subgenres, such as fantasy, science fiction and magical realism, each with their own set of subgenres.

Conrad, who said writing has always been a "steadfast hobby" of hers, first met Van Camp after their short stories were featured in the same 2011 anthology, *Coming Home: Stories of the Northwest Territories*.

Van Camp encouraged her to apply to the program, "because it would be a good step for me to take in order to keep on exploring my own writing."

Conrad is in the process of writing a novel, *Fish Bait*, which she describes as a "dark coming of age story."

The protagonist is an orphan girl, who develops a personal relationship with the Great Slave Lake, or Tucho. This relationship "helps her overcome many barriers, but with a cost," Conrad said.

"I heavily rely on a lot of magical realism tropes for that story, in addition to the lived experiences of my peers and family, and some oral histories I've heard from my Elders pertaining to the lake and all of its inhabitants," she said.

Conrad's Dene heritage is "the roots from which my stories come from," she added.

She said she's drawn to her people's stories "because they contain so many important life lessons and values, and fantastical characters and creatures."

Conrad said she values the writers circle for giving her the "space to create and relate to my peers, and to foster an Indigenous writing community."

Shelley Willier, who lives in High Prairie, is being mentored by Angela Sterritt.

Willier is writing a story about her father, who was sent to the St. Bruno Indian Residential School on the shores of Lesser Slave Lake, when he was seven years old.

She said Sterritt was a "perfect matchup" for her, since Sterritt is in the process of publishing a book that is semi-autobiographical. "Her perspective and insight are priceless," Willier said.

For Willier, "storytelling is about creating space and reclaiming space."

As a mother and educator, she has a penchant for writing children's literature, but this book is "sitting in a different genre," since it tells her father's story from childhood to adulthood.

The book is split into three sections, with each section introduced by poetry. Its purpose is to recount the horrors her father witnessed while at the same time charting a path forward to forgiveness.

"When we're looking at the social landscape today, we are spending a lot of time talking about reconciliation. In order to have a strong relationship and move forward ... the truth has to be told," Willier said.

"When the crushing weight of history lands on you, what do you do to get through? That's the question that's central to this piece."



Justin Buffalo, who hails from Samson Cree Nation, is working with Clayton Thomas-Muller, who is also Cree.

Buffalo is writing what he calls a "pseudo memoir," which is based on aspects of his life.

Thomas-Muller chose Buffalo to be his student, which Buffalo said makes sense to him from reading Thomas-Muller's work, given their shared focus on urban Indigenous stories.

The story is about a man who is in fact a bear and his attempts to attend his late brother's wake. Once he reaches the wake, the perspective shifts to his brother's children, as they hear other people's stories about their father.

There's a scene with a so-called starlight tour, when police drive an Indigenous person to the edge of town and leave them there in the freezing cold.

Buffalo was a victim of this practice in Edmonton when he was younger.

He was working at a drug rehabilitation centre in northern Alberta when he received a message from his grandmother who suggested he apply to the writers circle.

Buffalo had no expectation of being accepted into the program, since he'd never been published as a writer, describing himself as a "scribbler" who reads a lot.

"I was a dirty little res kid from the outskirts of Maskwacis... so I didn't think much about it until I got in," he said.



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# Steven Thomas wins PHT art contest

By Terry Lusty, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

This year's winner of the Peace Hills art competition – Steven Thomas - was formally acknowledged during a reception at Edmonton's west end Doubletree Hotel last month, surrounded by fellow artists, Peace Hills Trust staff, board members and clients, in addition to an array of art pieces submitted by Indigenous artists from across Canada.

The celebration, which garnered Thomas a cool five thousand dollars in prize money, kicked off with a grand entry, several Indigenous dance performances, an opening prayer, and introductions.

In addition to Thomas' first place win was runner up Jason Sasakamoose and third place winner, Linus Woods, who received \$3,000 and \$2,000 in prize money respectively.

Competition organizer Erin Buffalo explained that the art pieces on display were, with some exceptions, for sale to people on hand with 100 percent of the proceeds going to the artists.

After all, the company prides itself in living up to its "support of Native culture and tradition," and views the annual event as an "integral part of shaping our proud history and will remain an ongoing contribution" to achieving this goal.

All considered, Thomas' win was actually quite a feat if one factors in the fact that he has only worked at art professionally for one year. And, he's never taken any formal classes in art nor been tutored by any art mentor. While many artists develop themselves from an early age, not so for the 41-year-old Thomas. He explains that he never really aspired to art as a career and, generally speaking, earned his income from working in the construction industry prior to recent times.

Thomas was largely influenced culturally by his grandparents, especially his grandmother, he

explained in a recent interview with *Alberta Native News*. Despite coming from a deprived upbringing, his granny instilled good values, ethics, traditions and lifestyles, he said. For Thomas, these special gifts are ones he continues to treasure.

It is those blessings and ideologies that Thomas attempts to infuse into his art. As he states, most of his art pieces are not necessarily pre-planned. Rather, they are the result of specific customers' orders and he respects the sentimental attachments individuals have to the representations he creates. Whatever his clientele desires, he tries to build it into his work. It may be something that has personal or private sentiments or it could be an event or occurrence, an honouring, a celebration, or something else.

Thomas does his utmost to create art that is memorable and lends respect for his client and subject matter. "I try to put as much meaning as possible in my art," he explains, though he points out, "some art is quite private." He also aims to provide art that "gives hope, and joy" to people.

Looking down the road he'd like to "start an art group" in his local community. "Even an art gallery would be nice," he expressed.

Thomas currently works from home and both his brothers are into some form of art; his older brother is a tattoo artist while his other sibling is a woodworker.

As a young child, Thomas dabbled in art with no particular longings or vision to becoming an artist. He would knock off some sketchings and doodle with pencil and paper, but the pursuit of art as a career was always quite foreign to his thought patterns, he says. As for working with oil paints, which is his desired medium today, he never really attempted oils until he was well into his more senior years of high school.



Steven Thomas signing his award winning art. (Photo by Terry Lusty)

Most artists have someone they admire or whose work inspires them. Thomas admires the artwork of Michael Lonechild, one of Saskatchewan's most accomplished and respected Cree artists.

On a more global plain, he always thought highly of the late veteran artist, originally from Canada's eastern woodlands, Norval Morrisseau who achieved international acclaim and was one of the more prominent members of the original Indian "Group of Seven."

Thomas is now starting to be on the receiving end of more demands for his art, including some commissions. This is keeping him busy and doing what has become an enjoyable and fruitful element in his life. At this point, he does not see himself going in any other direction and people are likely to see more of his work in the future.

Steven Thomas' winning piece is now the visual subject for the 2023 Peace Hills Trust calendar.

A stylized winter landscape with a dark blue night sky filled with white snowflakes. In the foreground, there are two stylized evergreen trees, one yellow and one blue, both decorated with white snowflakes. In the background, a series of yellow power lines stretch across the horizon. The ground is a light blue gradient.

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# NDP Indigenous Relations Critic slams lack of consultation on Bill 1

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Alberta's NDP Opposition has joined a chorus of Indigenous leaders in calling Premier Danielle Smith's signature Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act a blatant violation of Treaty rights.

The legislation, also known as Bill 1, was passed in the early hours of Dec. 8. It gives the provincial government authority to ignore federal laws it deems to be in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or provincial jurisdiction.

Chief Tony Alexis of Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation in Treaty 6 told the *Calgary Herald* the legislation is "alarmingly open for interpretation, it is too uncertain and its impacts potentially too harmful and widespread."

Multiple First Nations leaders have said they weren't consulted in any capacity on the bill.

Richard Feehan, the NDP's Indigenous relations critic, told *Alberta Native News* the fact that the UCP government didn't consult with any Indigenous leaders before drafting the legislation is a "fairly clear violation of the duty to consult on behalf of the Crown, because [Bill 1] clearly affects Treaty rights."

Despite Sec. 2(C) of the Bill saying it will not violate Treaty rights, Feehan said the "rest of the bill goes on to do exactly that."

"It's like when somebody says to you, 'I don't mean to be insulting, but you're kind of ugly.' Saying this is not what you think it is, and then doing it does not change the nature of the assault," he said.

But it's not just a lack of consultation that makes the bill illegitimate from an Indigenous relations perspective, "it's the issue of all of the

work that's been done over 100 years by First Nations to protect their control over their sovereign land — over the air, land and water," Feehan added.

Treaty agreements were made with the Crown, which is represented by the federal government, so Bill 1 subjects these rights to interference from another level of government, he said.

"You've made all of your contractual arrangements with the Crown through the Treaties and all the subsequent enactments of that, and all the many hundreds of court cases that have helped to define what it means and where it applies," Feehan said.

"All of that now is suspect from the provincial government's point of view. And so that's literally 100 years worth of work by the First Nations that has now been brought into question."

Responding to widespread criticism of the legislation, the Smith government partially backtracked, amending the act to remove expanded law-making powers it gave to the cabinet, which would have allowed it to subvert the legislature.

"The changes are just inadequate, and they don't address any of the concerns of First Nations people," Feehan said. "They weren't even

intended to."

Feehan spoke at a Dec. 9 press conference alongside Indigenous NDP candidates Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse and Brooks Arcand-Paul to reaffirm the party's commitment to consult Indigenous peoples on future legislation.

Arcand-Paul, who's running for the party in Edmonton-West Henday, said the UCP's lack of consultation with First Nations was "either done through incompetence or malice."

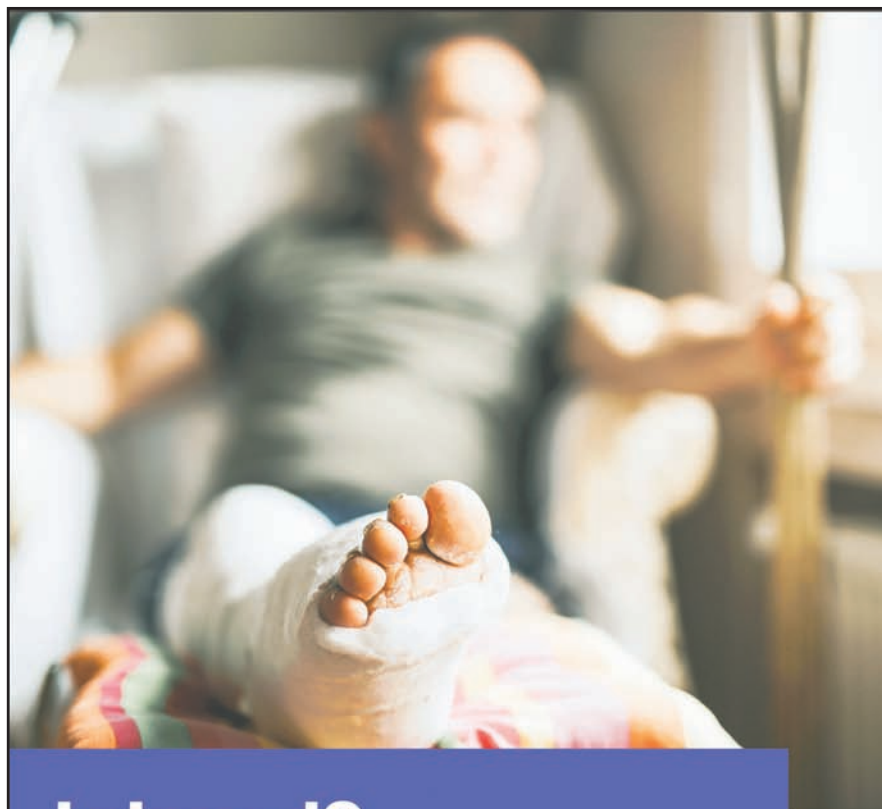
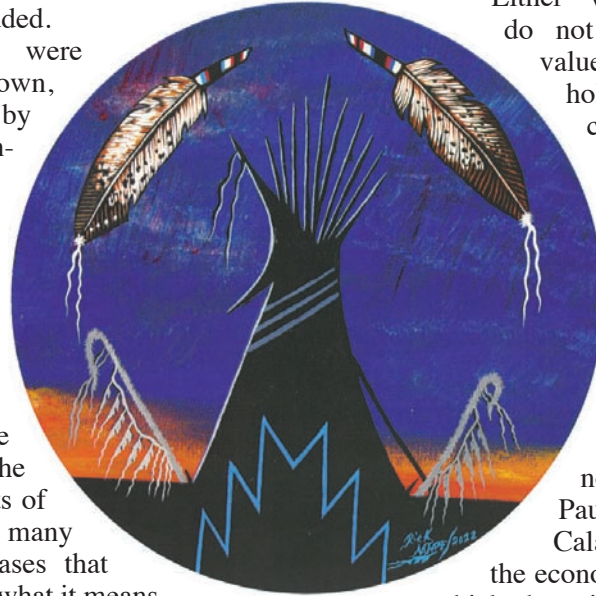
"Either way, it's clear that they do not respect First Nations or value the inherent rights that we hold," he said, warning of a costly judicial review process, which will force Indigenous peoples "to choose between essential programming or their legal bills."

"Danielle Smith and [Indigenous Relations Minister] Rick Wilson are ramming this bill down our throats. This is not reconciliation," Arcand-Paul added.

Calahoo Stonehouse highlighted the economic consequences of Bill 1, which she said will impact Albertans and First Nations alike.

"If you have a provincial government fighting with the federal government, who is not including our First Nations, with a lot of disrespect within, it will not be easy to bring investment to Alberta," Calahoo Stonehouse said. "It will hurt the economic fabric of our commerce in all regions of our province."

Calahoo Stonehouse said Premier Smith's "willingness to wipe out, ignore and desecrate Indigenous rights for her political fortune should terrify each one of us."



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# New scholarship available for Indigenous students – apply today

By ANNews staff

A new scholarship has been launched that will help prepare Indigenous youth for the future. Students from the Indigenous community face unique challenges and systemic barriers that can make getting a post-secondary education difficult.

TD has considered these barriers and partnered with AFOA Canada (Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada) to build a scholarship program that helps meet the unique needs of students from the Indigenous community.

The program will offer 25 scholarships to deserving high school and university students, and will cover \$15,000 per year, for up to 4 years. In addition, successful students will have the opportunity to join TD for a summer internship experience and will have the opportunity to build their network through mentorship and career development programs.

This scholarship will be one of the largest of its

kind among Canada’s major banks. Applications are now being accepted and the deadline is January 23, 2022.

Through TD’s scholarship program, the goal is to ensure more students from Indigenous communities have the financial freedom and stability to explore and have the benefit of a post-secondary education and work experience. The scholarships provide funds for tuition and living expenses, as well as employment opportunities.

Who is eligible? Regardless of field of study, scholarships are open to First Nations, Metis and Inuit who are members / citizens of a First Nation, Metis or Inuit community who have applied for a full-time minimum 2-year program with an approved post-secondary institution for the next year of study; or are enrolled in, or accepted to, a full-time minimum two-year program with an approved post-secondary institution for the next year of study.

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essay is needed. You can apply online, by mail or fax.

To learn more about TD’s new Scholarship Program for Indigenous Peoples, how to apply, or to speak directly with a TD representative to learn more, visit [afoa.ca/td](http://afoa.ca/td).

# AFN pushes Ottawa on compensation for families

(Ottawa, ON) – The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) passed two crucial resolutions this month directing the AFN on a path forward on compensation and long-term reform. One resolution advances the AFN’s priorities on securing compensation for First Nations children and families who experienced egregious harms caused by the Government of Canada’s discriminatory funding of the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Program and narrow application of Jordan’s Principle, and the other outlines the path forward for the AFN’s ongoing participation in negotiations on long-term reforms.

During the Special Chiefs Assembly, Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse, First Nation Chiefs, lawyers, technicians, and other representatives, including Dr. Cindy Blackstock of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, with the guidance of the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, collaborated on Draft Resolution 16&17/2022 and Draft Resolution

19&20/2022. The resolutions, both carried unanimously by Chiefs and Proxies, uniting First Nations on the direction for continued negotiations to finalize the approach to compensation and long-term reform to the FNCFS Program and Jordan’s Principle.

“The most important thing about what’s happening here is unity,” said Chair Khelsilem of Squamish Nation, mover of the resolution. “We are coming together as First Nations leaders. Because united, we can do anything we want and take on this government and get the full compensation for all the children, the full dignity for all our families. That’s what happens when we come together and work together.”

On December 8, the First Nations-in-Assembly passed a second resolution mandating the parameters needed for a final settlement agreement on long-term reforms to the FNCFS Program and Jordan’s Principle. The resolution directs the AFN to press Canada to increase funding commitments above the currently

allocated \$19.087 billion, over five years and beyond, in keeping with the principles of sovereignty, inherent jurisdiction, and nation building.

AFN Manitoba Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse, lead negotiator and Social Development portfolio holder, spoke to the First Nations-in-Assembly during the passing of the resolutions. “First Nations have come together in unity to stand up for our children who were impacted by the biased child and family welfare system and Jordan’s Principle,” she said.

“Now we look to Canada to do what’s necessary to fulfill these requirements for providing adequate and rapid compensation and work with First Nations communities to reform the system so that families are no longer torn apart. We as First Nations are clearly focused on the best interests of our children and families that give them the full dignity they deserve, and we’re ready to resolve these issues. It’s time for Canada to come back to the table with us.”

Merry Christmas

Wishing you a happy holiday season and all the best for the New Year!

**United Conservative**  
*caucus*

Merry Christmas

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy and healthy holiday season!  
I am looking forward to another year of representing the people of our wonderful communities and hearing about all of your holiday celebrations.

**Our offices will be closed from December 23, 2022- January 3, 2023**

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# Our cover artist: Jackie Traverse

The beautiful painting on the cover of *Alberta Native News* December edition – titled ‘Mama’s Little Stars’ - is by Jacqueline “Jackie” Traverse. She was born in Winnipeg, and is Ojibway from the Lake St. Martin First Nation. Jackie began drawing as a child and was inspired from a field trip to the Wahsa Gallery when she was 13 years old. It wasn’t until she was 32 years old that she decided to submit a portfolio of her works to the University of Manitoba where she studied Fine Arts and graduated with a diploma in May of 2009.

Jackie is a multi-disciplined Indigenous artist who works in several mediums from oil and acrylic paintings to mixed media, stop-motion animation and sculpture. She draws her inspiration from her Indigenous culture and her experiences as a Native woman living in Winnipeg. Today, as an artist, Jackie does a lot

of work in the community. Her work is very women centered.

“I can be inspired by ceremony, prayer, as well as kind and moving words. I love the culture of my people and this is where most of my inspiration comes from.”

Jackie Traverse is widely known in art communities across Canada. Her paintings, drawings, documentaries, and sculptures speak to realities of being an Indigenous woman. She has created stop-motion animation on missing and murdered women in Canada, another on the sixties scoop titled “Two Scoops” and “Empty” a tribute to her estranged mother. Jackie is deeply moved by the injustices faced by First Nations people.

Through her art she expresses her ideas and opinions while striving to inspire dialogue on addressing her people’s social issues. To Jackie



(Detail of) *Grandmothers* © by Jackie Traverse, submitted to the 2022 Peace Hills Trust Art Contest. (Photo by Terry Lusty).

painting is truly where her heart lies. Her happiest moments are when she is painting.

View Jackie’s art visit [jackietraverse.com](http://jackietraverse.com) and on Facebook at [artofjackietraverse](https://www.facebook.com/artofjackietraverse).

## Sovereignty Act *cont. from p 4*

and Indigenous peoples to “come together to oppose this move from the Alberta government.”

“Being humble, listening and continuing to learn does not seem to be on Premier Danielle Smith’s agenda,” it said.

Chief Alexis noted that the Smith government only reached out to First Nations leaders *after* the leadership of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 jointly denounced the act, which was drafted without their consultation, on Nov. 18.

“It was like we are not important enough to be spoken to... It was only after our press conference that they decided they were going to reach out,” Alexis said.

While the bill says none of its contents can infringe on Indigenous rights, Alexis says this doesn’t go far enough.

“The area that talks about Indigenous people... it should be crossed out, and in its place, it should say it will not violate treaty and inherent rights,” he said. “We are at the point now where it has become political football.”

As a result of the backlash against her proposed legislation, Smith announced amendments on Dec. 5, which include legislative oversight for every step of the process and a narrowing of the scope of federal legislation that can be challenged under the bill.

“The measures must be unconstitutional, according to MLAs, interfere with provincial jurisdiction, or violate the charter rights of Albertans,” Michelle Bellefontaine of CBC News wrote.

But NDP Leader Rachel Notley said her party won’t support any tweaks to this bill, which she described as being damaged beyond repair.

“It is a mess. There are so many elements of it that create uncertainty. It needs to be withdrawn and they need to go right back to the drawing board,” Notley said.

Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey isn’t looking for changes. He told post media news, “We’re asking that the Saskatchewan and Alberta sovereignty acts be withdrawn.”

### Season's Greetings




Best wishes to everyone for a Merry Christmas and looking forward to good health, success and happiness throughout 2023.

**Heather Sweet**  
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# PhD grad brings Metis literary history to light

By Geoff McMaster, Folio.com

As a young francophone Métis man growing up in Manitoba, Matthew Tétreault was surprised to see the name of one of his ancestors appear in a history book about Sir George Simpson, a 19th-century Hudson Bay Company governor.

“I talked to my mom and some other people in the family, and no one knew what her story really was,” says Tétreault of Simpson’s “country wife” Margaret Taylor.

“It got me thinking about how history was written. Where are the Métis stories?”

Today Tétreault celebrates his PhD graduation with a dissertation that goes a long way towards tracking those stories. His thesis in English and film studies is the first literary history of the Red River Métis, garnering him the Governor General’s Gold Medal for academic excellence at the graduate level. Two are awarded at the U of A every year at fall convocation.

Tétreault is also about to release his first novel through NeWest Press, called *Hold Your Tongue*, submitted for his U of A creative writing master’s degree six years ago and subsequently revised in light of what he learned researching his doctorate.

He first tried his hand at writing fiction when he was just out of high school, but says, “it didn’t really go anywhere.” He then studied creative writing at the University of Winnipeg, where he also took on an oral history project exploring his francophone and Métis heritage.

After graduating he was ready to attempt his first novel, one that would embrace francophone Métis identity in 20th-century Manitoba at the intersection of French, English and French Michif (an Indigenous language that mixes elements of French with Cree or Ojibwe).

The best place to do that, he decided, would be the U of A, with its wealth of Métis expertise but

also situated on Treaty 6 territory, providing a wider perspective on the “broader homeland” of the Métis in Western Canada, says Tétreault.

He began his creative writing master’s degree in 2014. Two years later he had finished and successfully defended his novel, but it left him unsatisfied.

“I realized I didn’t have the depth of knowledge required to properly represent what I was trying to represent,” he says. The novel needed to better reflect “the context, history and evolution of Métis culture, and the loss of language from French to English.”

So it was back to the drawing board. First, however, Tétreault wanted to fill a knowledge gap far wider than just his own. As a novelist determined to ground his work in a literary tradition, there was no survey to turn to.

So he ambitiously attempted to produce his own “comprehensive overview of Métis writing in French and English over the last two centuries,” under the supervision of Albert Braz.

“There was no handy guide, so I went about making one,” says Tétreault.

“*Red River Poetics: Toward a Métis Literary History* is a major contribution not only to Métis and Indigenous studies, but also to Canadian literary studies and to literary history in general,” says Braz.

“Not the least of Matt’s achievements is the way he has early Métis writers speak to later ones, and vice versa, illustrating what is remembered and what is forgotten and thus how literature can both celebrate and trouble the nation.”

Included in Tétreault’s survey are the songs of Pierre Falcon, the writing career of Louis



PhD grad Matthew Tétreault stands on the banks of the Red River in Winnipeg. His groundbreaking thesis is the first literary history of the Red River Métis, and he is also about to release his first novel, which began as his master’s thesis in creative writing. (Photo: Supplied)

Riel, and texts by Alexander Kennedy Isbister, Alexandre DeLaronde, Marie-Thérèse Goulet-Courchaine, as well as contemporary writers Joanne Arnott, Gregory Scofield and Marilyn Dumont.

Tétreault connects their writing to, among other thematic currents, major Métis resistance movements, such as the 1816 Battle of Seven Oaks, the Red River Resistance and the Northwest Resistance of 1885. But he also aims to shed light on “Métis literary production through its rise, ruptures — linguistic and cultural shifts — and resurgence.”


Tétreault locates Maria Campbell’s classic 1973 memoir *Halfbreed* as marking “a re-emergence of Métis literature” in the late 20th century. An honest and harsh account of Campbell’s struggles with alcoholism and addiction, the book recounts her experience as a single mother caught between Indigenous and anglophone identities.

The memoir also reflects a literary tradition “altered by the traumas of the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries,” writes Tétreault, “one preoccupied with efforts of cultural recovery and decolonization that diverged from historical Métis writing in important ways.”


In addition to publishing his debut novel, Tétreault’s comprehensive survey has already caught the attention of several publishers who recognize its value to Métis literary culture.

“It’s kind of crazy how both are peaking at the same time,” he says, acutely aware that he is

Continued on page 15



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**Blake Desjarlais, MP**  
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## School Bus Drivers

Northland School Division offers:

- Free training
- Competitive Wages
- Medical Benefits
- Pay all summer
- Long service recognition
- Comprehensive sick and personal leave
- Access to the Employee Assistance Program
- Take your pre-school children with you
- Reimburse drivers medicals
- Reimburse drivers license renewals

## 1-800-362-1360

Do you enjoy working with children? Do you want to contribute to your community? Would you appreciate a consistent source of income? Do you want to be part of a dedicated team of professionals?

If you answered “YES” to any of these questions, then bus driving may be the career for you.



**Northland**  
SCHOOL DIVISION

### Spare Bus Drivers

We are looking for spare bus drivers in all of our communities.



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shaping the future of energy

JUNE 13-15, 2023 | CALGARY, CANADA

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