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Journalist Creeson Agecoutay offers advice on adjusting to urban life

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The rising rental costs, inflation, and overall cost of living can be hard for Indigenous people. Transitioning from a rural First Nation to an urban setting can be particularly difficult, and at times dangerous. In an interview with ANNews, based on his lived experience, one of Canada’s leading Indigenous journalists, Creeson Agecoutay, offers advice on how to minimize risk and navigate the city landscape.

Agecoutay is 34 years old, a proud Cree man (Nehiyaw Plains Cree) from the Cowessess First Nation in Treaty 4 Territory. When he moved from his rural community of Cowessess First Nation he had to learn some lessons the hard way. He says he often made mistakes but is thankful he persevered and earned a Degree from the University of Regina’s School of Journalism and graduated from the First Nations University of Canada in Regina. He is currently the Atlantic Bureau Chief for CTV National News.

Before joining CTV’s national news team, Agecoutay worked for CTV News Regina as a video journalist in 2008, and in 2013 he was named Host of CTV Saskatchewan’s multiple national and regional RTDNA award-winning series, Indigenous Circle. He became part of CTV’s National News team in 2020.

Mentorship is essential to Agecoutay, and he believes Canada should continue supporting Indigenous journalism. He credits much of his success to Nelson Bird, the former Indigenous Circle and assignment editor for CTV Regina.

And most importantly, he credits his supportive mother for his success as a journalist, Claudia Agecoutay.

Creeson grew up in his home territory of Cowessess First Nation and attended his First

Nation School from 1995 to 2005, from grade 2 to grade 12.

“When I graduated high school, I loaded up my car and moved in with my sister in Regina and went to the First Nations University and studied Indian Communications and Arts,” said Agecoutay.

The latest Canadian statistics highlight the growing migration of Canada’s First People to urban cities. Indigenous people began migrating to cities in large numbers in the 1950s. Today, the urban Indigenous population continues to grow. For example, between 2006 and 2016, the number of Indigenous people living in metropolitan areas increased by nearly 60%.

Agecoutay says he did make plenty of mistakes and, at times, put himself in some difficult situations, but he quickly learned to stick to his education to be safe.

To support himself, he acquired a part-time job and took a bus to his classes. “I worked a part-time job at McDonald’s,” said Agecoutay, “and bus passes are a great money saver when going to school.” In addition, cities across Canada have increased public safety on transit due to an increased danger related to substance abuse disorders.

Initially, he lived with his sister, but as soon as his comfort level increased and he got comfortable in his new urban city, he moved into a new place with a roommate. For free furniture or cheap furniture, he recommends sites like Facebook marketplace.

“Facebook marketplace is a great place to start to build your home from scratch,” said Agecoutay.



Creeson Agecoutay

Indigenous families and young adults also need to educate themselves on tenant rights. Here in Alberta, visit the Landlords and tenants – Rights and responsibilities government website.

“Pay close attention to your landlord; if there are any red flags at all, move on and find another landlord who will appreciate you,” said Agecoutay. “Always check reviews for apartments, and if they have bedbugs, do not move in; bedbugs can be so stressful.”

The stress can ruin your mental health and the rest that you need to stay focused on your goals.

“Living with roommates can save you a lot of money, but you must also put up with their lifestyles,” said Agecoutay. “Choose your roommate wisely.” When you’re in school, a good roommate is one who has the same goals that you have.

A roommate agreement can help clear up any miscommunication. It is a document used when two or more people are moving into a shared space and would like to outline the rights and

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Tricia McNab: You belong there as much as anybody

Northern Lakes College welding instructor, Tricia McNab, has come a long way since starting her welding journey. Full circle, in fact. Tricia is not only an employee of Northern Lakes College, but she is also an alumni.

Remembering that first day, Tricia was nervous when she started the Welder Apprenticeship program. As a young woman who'd had only one prior experience holding a welding torch, she worried she might not fit into the male-dominated industry.

"Showing up to that first day of class, I was intimidated, for sure," remarked Tricia. "But then I realized that there were a couple other girls in the program. In fact, it turned out there were three of us ladies, and only two guys. I couldn't believe we outnumbered them! That alone made me feel a little more confident."

At the time, NLC's Welder program was brand new at the Slave Lake Campus. "The teachers were really supportive," noted Tricia. "They

wanted you to succeed and put in extra effort to ensure you did. It was a great experience. It showed me how NLC really puts in the effort to help their students succeed."

Tricia reports that it was difficult to break into the industry at first. "It wasn't easy being the only woman in the field, working with men who didn't expect you to be there. It was hard. Very hard. I worked my butt off so my employer and every guy I worked with knew I wasn't going anywhere. I proved to everyone I was there to work."

While Tricia believes the industry's culture has become more welcoming to women in the almost 20 years since she entered it, her advice to other tradeswomen is to stay the course. "Don't quit," she advised. "If someone tries to knock you down or says you can't do something, just put your head down and do the work. Show everyone you can do it. Just keep going. You belong there as much as anybody."



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NCSA urges bear spray restrictions

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) is calling for enhanced restrictions on the sale of bear spray, a position echoed by Edmonton Mayor Amarjeet Sohi.

Marlene Orr, the CEO of Edmonton-based NCSA, told *Alberta Native News* that her call for tightened regulations is rooted in her work in the inner city, where she "had a lot of experience in working with people who had been robbed or assaulted or home and baited using bear spray."

A couple of years ago, a woman came to NCSA's offices to complain that bear spray, which is commonly sold at camping goods stores, as well as Canadian Tire and WalMart, is freely available at drug paraphernalia shops, which Orr says is a recipe for disaster.

Orr did her due diligence to see where the spray was being sold downtown and she found out the woman's information was accurate.

"You can walk into drug paraphernalia stores

and see pipes for methamphetamines, for crack cocaine, and sold beside them is bear spray and knives," Orr said, adding that it sends a message akin to "here's what you need to use illegal drugs and then here's how you make the money to get your drugs."

NCSA began raising this issue whenever it was able with the city, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) and provincial government.

And the city is listening. At council's Feb. 7 community and public services committee meeting, Mayor Sohi called tighter restrictions on the sale of bear spray "common sense changes" for the city to make.

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Alberta lawyers uphold mandatory Indigenous cultural training

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

By a wide margin, the Law Society of Alberta has upheld a rule allowing it to impose mandatory professional development requirements, which has been used just once since its inception.

Rule 67.4, which was introduced by the society's benchers, or board of directors, in 2020 has been used to require lawyers in the province take a free five-hour Indigenous cultural competency course, The Path, by October 2022, or risk suspension.

On Feb. 6, an online special meeting of the society attracted more than 3,473 lawyers, 2,609, or 75 percent, of whom voted in favour of keeping the rule while 864 voted against it.

A petition from 50 lawyers had asked the requirement be revoked. While it didn't mention the course specifically, some of its signatories have been vocal in their opposition to it.

A group of 400 lawyers launched a petition of their own in defence of the rule, calling the mandatory course "an important step towards reconciliation and represented the culmination of years of hard work by Law Society staff and relevant experts, including Indigenous lawyers."

The society had itself urged members to vote in favour of the rule, citing the "privilege of self-regulation [and] the expectations that come with self-governance."

The Canadian Bar Association also supported the rule, maintaining regulatory bodies "should have the authority to determine which learning activities are necessary to maintain a high professional standard and the integrity of the legal profession as one that serves the public interest."

Alexis Nakota Chief Tony Alexis said in a statement that he was heartened by the decision, but he was concerned that over 800 members voted against the mandatory program.

"I would like to acknowledge the positive

outcome of the Law Society of Alberta's vote to continue requiring Indigenous cultural training for lawyers practicing in Alberta. I am glad to see that this mandatory training will continue," wrote Chief Alexis.

"This is an incredibly important requirement and a fulfillment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 27 to "ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training." I am happy to know that a large majority of members of the Law Society participating in the vote recommended continuing this critical cultural awareness training.

"I'm disappointed to see that the need to have better knowledge about this land's First Peoples seems to have been called into question by over 800 members of the Law Society who voted to remove the training. There continues to be a widespread lack of awareness regarding the culture, history, traditions and rights of Indigenous Peoples and it should be addressed at every opportunity.

"Every place our People encounter this ignorance negatively impacts relations and outcomes, and in the court room this can have dire consequences for individuals, families and communities. Increasing this cultural understanding within the practice of law can also open doors for Indigenous People to take up the profession. It is important that people understand the law, but it is equally important that the law understands our People.

"Awareness of Indigenous culture, history, Treaty and Inherent Rights are all essential parts of the evolution of all professions on Turtle Island. Opportunities to increase that awareness should be welcomed with open arms as we work to build better relations, and an honorable and more inclusive world."



Louis Bull signs child welfare deal

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Louis Bull Tribe has signed a two-year agreement with the federal government allowing the First Nation to operate its own child welfare system.

This is the first child welfare agreement between a First Nation in Alberta and the feds, following similar arrangements with Cowessess First Nation in Saskatchewan, Wabaseemoong Independent Nations in Ontario and Peguis First Nation in Manitoba.

"This is an important day for Louis Bull Tribe," Chief Desmond Bull said during the Feb. 1 signing ceremony. "Our children are sacred. This law seeks to bring them home."

Notably, the agreement is between Louis Bull

Tribe, which is located in Maskwacis, just south of Edmonton, and the federal government. The province wasn't formally involved, despite child welfare systems being provincially-administered.

Under federal legislation, if a First Nation cannot reach an agreement with the provincial government after a year, it can go through the federal government. Last year, the tribe's Asikiw Mostos O'pikinawasiwin (AMO) Society for child welfare said the province was being uncooperative, so the tribe announced AMO would assume control in accordance with the federal law.

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Enbridge takes 'next step' on its reconciliation journey

By David Coll

Enbridge’s first Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan has articulated 22 measurable and publicly reportable commitments.

With energy pipelines and infrastructure that spans North America, Enbridge regularly engages with hundreds of Indigenous Nations, Governments, Groups, Treaty Organizations and federally recognized Native American Tribes across North America.

“We recognize that Indigenous people across North America have been systemically excluded from the social and economic landscape,” says Kim Brenneis, Director of Community & Indigenous Engagement for Enbridge in Canada. “Acknowledging this truth — and pledging to address it with concrete action — are the first steps toward reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and broader society.”

Over the past several years, Enbridge has been on its own reconciliation journey that continues to guide its approach to Indigenous engagement, relationship-building and inclusion.

“We’ve worked hard to build and maintain respectful relationships, to maximize economic inclusion, and to meaningfully engage Indigenous Nations, Tribes, governments and groups over the full lifecycle of our energy assets – not just when we have a project to build,” Brenneis explains. “But until recently, we had not fully articulated or shared a set of formal commitments to Indigenous groups.”

That all changed in September 2022 with the release of Enbridge’s first Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan (IRAP). One of the first such plans to focus on reconciliation from a North American perspective, the IRAP articulates 22 tangible, measurable and publicly reportable commitments that support Enbridge’s transition

towards a cleaner energy future – in partnership and collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

Examples of some IRAP commitments include: Increasing Indigenous representation in Enbridge’s workforce; providing more opportunities for Indigenous economic participation such as procurement and financial partnerships; continuing to advance Indigenous inclusion in environmental fieldwork; and, establishing an Indigenous Advisory Group reporting to senior management.

“The IRAP is a key next step for us,” Brenneis says, “because we now have a mechanism to gauge our progress as we continue to evolve and remain accountable for executing on our commitments to Indigenous peoples.”

The 22 commitments are organized into six categories, or “pillars,” that include: People, employment and education; Community engagement and relationships; Economic inclusion and partnerships; Environmental stewardship and safety; Sustainability, reporting and energy transition; and, Governance and leadership.

Early input and insights from 50 individuals from Indigenous groups in Canada and the U.S. helped form the basis of the Enbridge plan, Brenneis says, adding that it was also developed in recognition of Indigenous rights and title, treaties, and sovereignty, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Canadian Truth and



Enbridge is making progress on its IRAP commitments, including the establishment of new Indigenous financial partnerships. In September 2022, 23 First Nation and Métis communities in northern Alberta became 11.57% equity owners in seven Enbridge-operated pipelines that run from the Athabasca oilsands region to Edmonton and Hardisty. A newly created entity, Athabasca Indigenous Investments, will steward this investment, which represents the largest energy-related Indigenous economic partnership transaction in North America to date. Pictured is Chief Greg Desjarlais of Frog Lake First Nation signing the historical partnership agreement in Edmonton.

Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action #92.

The IRAP covers the 2022-2023 timeframe and will be reported on annually in Enbridge sustainability reports. Future IRAPs will be published every two years, the next in 2024.

David Coll is the Senior Communications Advisor at ENBRIDGE INC.

Attention students: BBMA deadline is March 31

The scholarship application deadline for a Belcourt Brosseau Métis Award (BBMA), is March 31. The Award financially assists students of Metis ancestry by covering between \$1,000 and \$10,000 of tuition and fees.

To qualify for an award, BBMA applicants must be an Alberta Métis (any age), have a financial need that prevents them from attaining a post-secondary education on their own, and have a connection to their Métis community.

“Awards,” explains BBMA co-founder Georges Brosseau, “can be as little as \$1,000 and as high as \$10,000. Recipients are selected on an individual basis; awards are not based on marks alone. We look at the overall individual, providing they meet the criteria of the Awards Panel, which is made up of Métis people. Sometimes an individual is selected because we see that he or she has struggled through difficult times, but remains dedicated to achieving both an education and a successful life.”

“People aren’t refused because they don’t have high marks; we base our decisions on the whole person and are very cognizant that they sometimes don’t have opportunities. We try to provide the opportunity that many of our young students need – what they do with it will determine their future.”

The awards, he adds, were created “to uplift our people so they can succeed in the world; to do this they need to be educated. Education is the key to success and therefore we are pushing as hard as we can to give out as many awards as we can each year.”

Last year, BBMA announced their Million Dollar Milestone, approving over \$1 million in scholarships to Alberta Métis Students, a first since their 2001 inception.

The BBMA was established as an endowment fund through the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) and is the largest non-governmental source of funding for Métis students in Canada. Each year, the BBMA supports Métis Albertans with scholarships for post-secondary education. This is the first time the BBMA has approved over 1 million dollars in awards in a single year.

Tina Thomas, Edmonton Community Foundation’s CEO, had the opportunity to announce the Million Dollar Milestone during the BBMA celebration on September 17. “This milestone will have a tremendous impact, not only on the nearly 300 Métis students receiving the awards this

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New Metis Nation book puts a spotlight on reconciliation

A new book released by the Métis Nation of Alberta chronicles the challenges and achievements of the Métis since their rights were recognized in the Constitution Act of 1982.

The True Canadians: Forgotten Nevermore reflects on the Métis lineage to the original inhabitants of this land, and the Métis struggle for acceptance as a proud, independent people.

"This book is an earnest re-telling of the history of the Métis people, a version most Canadians have never seen," stated co-author David Wylynko. "Readers are introduced to a sweeping narrative depicting the strength, pride, and independence of the true Canadians."

The book provides a history of the Métis that is often at odds with traditional colonial accounts, presenting Canadians with a more accurate and clear understanding of the role the Métis played in the economic and cultural development of the nation.

"*The True Canadians* is an account of our Métis Nation's deep and longstanding connection to the west," added co-author Patricia Russell. "We can proudly trace our Métis families back to the fur trade of the 1700s when our traditional homeland extended from the Great Lakes, across the prairies to Rocky Mountains, into the

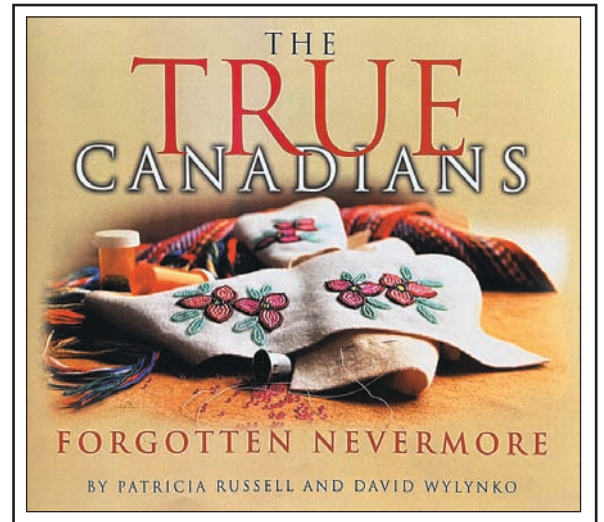
Northwest Territories, and even south of the American border, long before the Dominion of Canada existed."

The book was published by the Métis Nation of Alberta. The title was inspired by the Métis Nation's anthem and is intended to generate passionate conversation. The book is being distributed by Sandhill Book Marketing Ltd., the most recognized supplier of non-fiction single titles and independently published Canadian books in the industry.

"Truth is the first element of reconciliation," said MNA President Audrey Poitras. "I hope *The True Canadians* encourages Canadians to engage in conversation about reconciliation-in-action for the Métis Nation. The Métis experience will no longer be overlooked or ignored."

The True Canadians details the history of the Métis extending back hundreds of years to their ethnogenesis, and the status they enjoyed as a proud and independent people before becoming dispossessed by European colonialism.

With a particular focus on Alberta, the book describes the rise of the MNA since its founding early in the 20th century. It also details the Métis pursuit of reconciliation and the recent agreement with the federal government recognizing the right



of the Métis Nation within Alberta to self-government, and especially the work leading up to the ratification, in 2022, of their own Constitution.

The passage of the MNA Constitution, with more than 96% of the Métis vote, represented the final step for the Métis of Alberta to becoming a fully recognized order of government within Canada, with increased authority to manage their own affairs and strengthening their position to negotiate rights and claims.

"With *The True Canadians*, the record is set straight and ensures Métis rights are forgotten nevermore," concluded the authors.

Learn more at www.thetruecanadians.com.

Star Blanket Cree Nation finds 2,000 anomalies at former Residential School

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Star Blanket Cree Nation in Saskatchewan has found 2,000 anomalies through ground penetrating radar at the site of the former Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School, but the nation's leadership cautions not all of these are necessarily unmarked graves.

Sheldon Poitras, who led the nation's ground search, told CTV News some anomalies could be stones, soil or pieces of wood, but the team found a jaw bone fragment believed to be 125 years old from a child who was five or six years old at the time.

"This is physical proof of an unmarked grave,"

he said, adding that it was confirmed to be a jaw bone by Fire Hills Police Service and the Saskatchewan Coroner's Office.

The search team also found a series of underground tunnels and rooms, Poitras added.

"A lot of those pieces are starting to come together, the data and the stories are matching up and we find that very interesting, very overwhelming, and motivates us to continue with the searching," he said.

These findings are the result of the first phase of the search for unmarked graves, conducted by AXIOM Exploration Group, which began in

November 2021 and will cover 55 acres once completed.

It covered the school's grounds, located about 80 km northeast of Regina in the Village of Lebreton, as well as the flat area surrounding it.

"Our hearts are heavy today, this has been a very emotional journey for all of us," Star Blanket Cree Nation Chief Michael Starr said.

Starr added that finding the bone fragment "has changed everything, it's changed the things that we're going to do, it's changed our mindset, it's changed our way of life in a way."

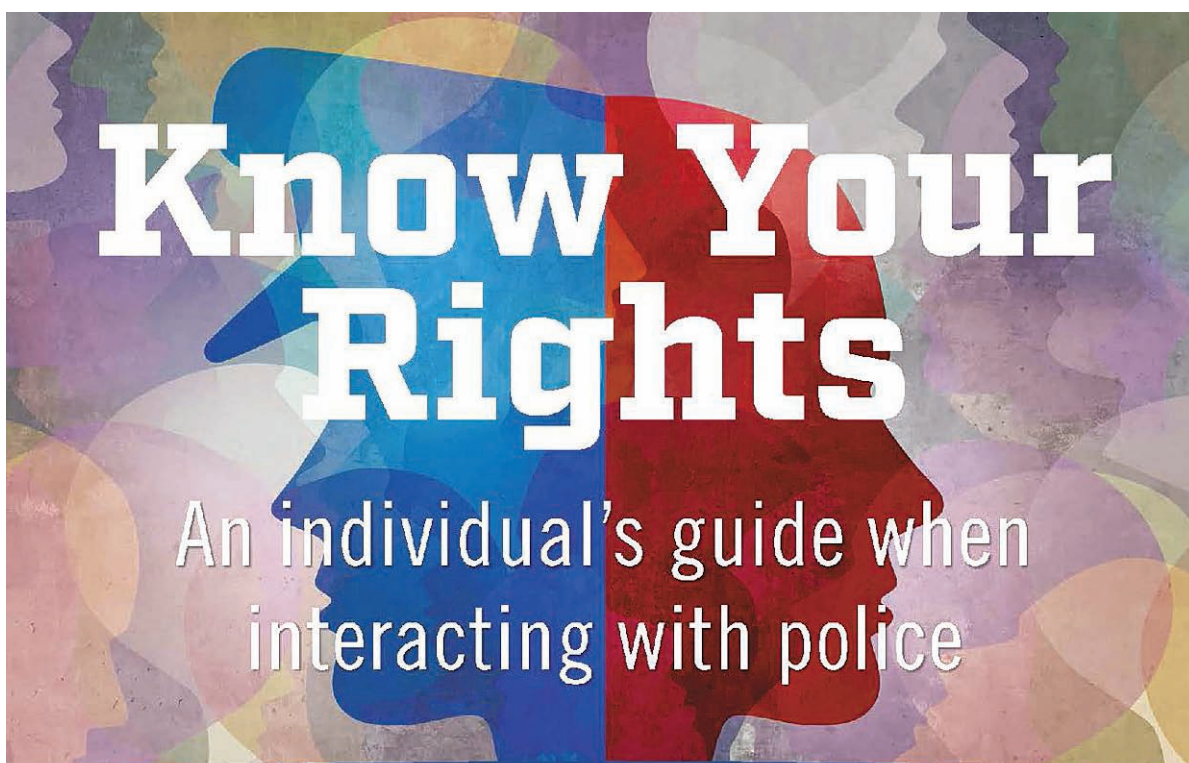
"We are moving with what we found and we will bring honour to the remains, that of a young child," he said.

Poitras said AXIOM will assist the nation in excavating the site to determine the nature of the anomalies.

"There's been discussions with AXIOM about doing miniature core drilling," he said. "We'll pick an area of interest, we'll send a core drill down, collect a sample, bring it up, and test that sample for DNA."

The next phase of the search will look offsite, but Poitras said they only have the support of half the landowners in the vicinity.

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Saddle Lake Cree Nation confirms unreported mass grave

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A new report from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation-based Acimowin Opaspiw Society non-profit says it's found evidence of "undocumented mass graves" at the former site of Blue Quills Indian Residential School.

The report, which was released Jan. 24, found that the majority of the student deaths occurred as a result of tuberculosis contracted from unpasteurized raw cow milk the students were given to drink.

One of the mass graves was accidentally uncovered in 2004. It took until 2022 to confirm it was an unmarked grave through ground penetrating radar, the report notes, adding that there are suspected to be two others.

The Blue Quills school moved three times over the duration of its existence. From 1890 to 1898 it was located in Lac La Biche, from 1898 to 1932 it was on Saddle Lake Cree Nation, and then from 1932 to 1970 it operated out of St. Paul County.

AOS executive director Leah Redcrow's family has a long history with the school, as outlined in the report's preface. Three generations of her family were imprisoned at the school at each of its locations, starting with her great grandfather Edward Redcrow in Lac La Biche.

Her grandparents, Stanley and Ruby Redcrow were married at the Saddle Lake location in 1928, and then her parents, Alex and Sheila Redcrow wed in St. Paul in 1974, after her grandfather had taken over administration of the school.

She said prior to the summer of 2021, when members started inquiring about unmarked graves, she had no idea there was a residential school on reserve, which included the Sacred Heart Cemetery.

"Once I found out there was an actual residential school there, we got more disclosures from our community members about them finding body parts of children while excavating, because it's used as a graveyard still," Redcrow told the *Alberta Native News*.

The residential school on reserve was essentially a Catholic colony, with its own church, sawmill and rectory, in addition to the cemetery, she explained.

She said they are mass graves, rather than unmarked graves, because there are multiple people buried in one grave.

"There's a bunch of clandestine graves of children," said Redcrow. "We don't know the exact amount yet because we're still sifting through all the burial records."

The grave that's been uncovered is located about 200 metres north of the school grounds, she added.

Even when the school moved to St. Paul, bodies of dead children would be transferred back to the reserve, without their parents' knowledge.

The Archdiocese of St. Paul provided AOS with

its documents from the residential school, which is how they were able to determine the cause of death, Redcrow said.

She said these children entered the school with a clean bill of health, according to the records, and then would contract TB within a month.

"We discovered that the cause of that would be drinking unpasteurized raw milk from cattle. It's quite dangerous to drink unpasteurized milk, because none of the bacteria is killed in the milk. The cattle were also not being tested for tuberculosis or any other diseases, and the children were required to drink three glasses of milk a day with their meal," Redcrow explained.

She said AOS and the Archdiocese have collaborated closely to get an accurate picture of what occurred at Blue Quills.

"Without them, we would just be like everybody else and we would be totally lost. We wouldn't have known who died. We wouldn't have had a clue who any of these children's bodies are that we're finding in our cemetery," Redcrow said, referring to the Archdiocese's documentation as the "most vital piece of the investigation."

She said collaborating with Church officials is an example of what reconciliation looks like in practice.

"The people who are there today are not responsible. It's the people who are alive at that time period who are responsible, and they're dead," Redcrow said.





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Alberta Minor Injury Cap Update 2023

By Ronald Jewitt, CAM LLP, Injury Lawyers

If you sustain minor injuries in a car accident you may have heard reference to the minor injury cap or been told by an insurance company representative that your injury is “caught by the cap.” This means that the amount you can recover for damages for non-pecuniary loss (aka general damages for pain and suffering) for minor injuries is limited, i.e., capped, at an amount set each year under Alberta’s *Minor Injury Regulation*.

The “cap” is updated annually to reflect inflation. Effective January 1, 2023, the maximum minor cap was set at \$5,817. The new amount applies to minor injuries resulting from automobile accidents that occur in Alberta on or after January 1, 2023.

Source: Alberta Superintendent of Insurance Interpretation Bulletin 09-2022

We often get questions about what kinds of injuries are considered minor such that damages for pain and suffering will be capped.

What you should know about Alberta’s Minor Injury Cap

Since 2004, total damages recoverable for minor soft tissue injuries have been limited by the government through the *Minor Injury Regulation* (MIR). The intent of the MIR was to cap the amount of damages for pain and suffering payable for minor injuries. Minor injuries were initially defined as a sprain, strain, or “whiplash-associated disorder (WAD)” that does not result in serious impairment. People often call these “soft tissue injuries.”

In 2004, the minor injury cap was set at \$4,000 and has increased year over year to reflect inflation.

Soft Tissue Injuries in Plain Language

A soft tissue injury (minor injury) is damage to

tissue, ligaments, muscles, or tendons that does not cause long-term problems with work, leisure, or other regular activities.

Expansion of the Cap

A further development took place effective November 1, 2020, when the meaning of “minor injury” was redefined as sprains, strains or whiplash-associated disorder (WAD) injuries, “caused by the accident that does not result in a serious impairment and includes, in respect of a sprain, strain or WAD injury that occurs on or after November 1, 2020, any clinically associated sequelae of the sprain, strain or WAD injury, whether physical or psychological in nature, caused by the accident that do not result in a serious impairment.”

So, what does that mean?

A sequelae means a condition which is the consequence of a previous disease or injury. So, the definition was expanded to include not only sprains, strains or WAD injuries caused by an accident that did not result in “serious impairment,” but also conditions that were a consequence of those sprains, strains, or WAD injuries. For example, plaintiff’s personal injury lawyers believe that the legislation was intended to catch things like psychological distress, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression of a short-term nature that does not cause serious impairment. However, there have been few cases, if any, that have confirmed if the November 2020 changes have had any impact on the definition of minor injury.

While the intention may have been to significantly increase the types of injuries caught by the cap, this doesn’t change the fact that not all soft tissue injuries are minor. The same goes for any injuries or conditions that flow from those injuries.

The Minor Injury Cap Does NOT Always Apply

It is important to know that not all damages for minor injuries are capped. The key is whether the injuries end up resulting in a “serious impairment” to the injured person, such



that they can no longer perform the essential tasks of their job, or of an education or training program, or other normal activities of daily life, and that this has been ongoing since the accident, and is not expected to improve substantially.

Whether an injury is considered “minor” and caught by the cap depends on the evidence related to your injury. An injury that initially appears minor, may well turn out to cause you long term problems.

Understanding whether your injuries fall within or outside the cap is one of many good reasons to talk to a personal injury lawyer about your case. When it comes to your well-being and your rights, getting full information about your options is always helpful.

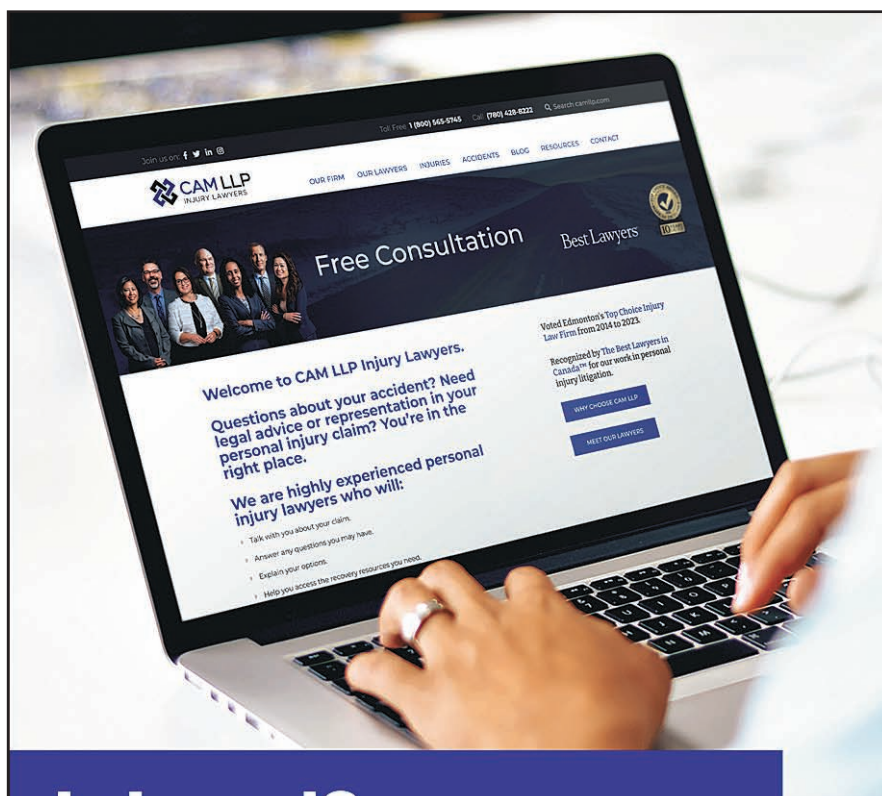
The Minor Injury Cap does not cap other damages

It’s also important to understand that the minor injury cap does not limit your ability to claim other types of damages such as loss of income, cost of care, loss of housekeeping capacity or out of pocket expenses.

Questions about the Minor Injury Cap and how it affects you?

If you have questions about the Minor Injury Cap and if it applies in your case, we encourage you to talk to us or another a personal injury lawyer.

No two injury claims are the same. The facts always affect how the law applies. We are happy to help people understand if the cap applies and explain their options. Contact us if you would like a free consultation to get answers about your specific situation.




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ATTENTION READERS:

This edition of Alberta Native News deals with topics that may cause trauma invoked by memories of past abuse. A National Indian Residential School Crisis Line has been set up to provide support for former Residential School students to minimize the risk associated with triggering. You can access emotional and crisis referral services. You can also get information on how to get other health supports.

Please call the Crisis Line at 1-866-925-4419 if you or someone you know is triggered while reading the content of this newspaper.

The spiritual world of a fertility shaman

By Regan Treewater, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Since her spirit first entered her body at the age of five, “I remember it so clearly,” Cindy Simpson Jurado, a Calgary-based Metis, from the Treaty 8 Mikisew Cree First Nations band, a fertility shaman, has always had a deep natural connection with Mother Earth.

“For as long as I can remember I have had a very strong understanding of the emotional wellbeing of those around me, and energies that often can go unnoticed,” explained Simpson in a recent phone interview. As a child, Simpson would bring these observations and supernatural insights to her mother’s attention: “She would tell me to just pray.”

Cindy’s mother, Marguerite Simpson, a survivor of the Holy Angels residential school was traumatized by her experiences, and after liberation was left with the haunting influence of Catholic indoctrination, while still possessing a deep spirituality of her own roots. As a child, aware of the worlds both seen and unseen, Simpson began to see her multidimensional awareness as a gift after her very own spiritual healing encounter.

“I believe my mother had this ability as well, but that because of all she had endured, unfortunately, she had learned to suppress it,” she noted. Simpson’s maternal grandmother, Pauline Simpson was known as a healer, and this tradition of spiritual caregiving seems to be passed down as a family tradition.

“In the time to come we will see intense shifts in energy and how this cultural medicine manifests in our environment,” Simpson explained. After the loss of three family members in 2014, Simpson underwent a spiritual awakening; her spiritual gifts catalyzed where she discovered her capacity for healing, prophecy, and tapping into the heavenly realms of manifestation not of her own. This led her on an entirely unexpected path, setting her off course from the one she had previously been pursuing as a certified Hospital Unit Clerk. Despite struggling to accept her rare talent, Simpson is gaining international recognition to help facilitate journeys in support of infertility.

This was highlighted with her very first encounter. “My husband and I went to a friend’s home for an evening get-together,” she said. “The guys went off to the kitchen and were

playing cards, while us women got chatting in the living room adjacent. The hostess happened to mention that she had been trying for some time to conceive and seemed stressed. That night, after leaving, I felt guided to pray on her behalf and passed along her hopes to the spirit world,” Simpson explained.

Several months later Simpson would receive the news that this woman was in fact pregnant with her first child. “The babies that come into this world choose their parents,” according to Simpson, and this woman’s unborn child could not wait to meet her mother and father. In communication with Simpson through visions within dreams, the pre-born baby girl wanted her mother to know how much she enjoyed the peanut butter that was feeding the soon-to-be parent’s cravings, and that she wanted lots of pictures of her grand entrance into the world. “When I contacted this woman to pass on the message, along with other details shared with me right before her due date, she was amazed yet pleased by the accuracy of it all.”

Since then, Simpson’s healing space has been a place of emotional and spiritual restoration and purification for many women. Each road to greater balance is different. Simpson explained: “We are to take action aligned with Spirit at this time, a soul walk led by our ancestors into the unknown. We should not dwell on the past hardships but use them to our advantage to help better ourselves. All the hardships, challenges and even blessings have been designed to support us in the journey ahead.”

Fertility challenges are a reality for so many couples and have created a multimillion-dollar industry. Simpson is very clear with her guests that the healing she guides is intended to complement and highlight the virtues of modern medicine – not replace it. Yet, with so many success stories from women who have worked with this fertility whisperer, the need for greater spiritual balance - while removing the blockages and healing the root causes of suppressed emotions, childhood trauma and pressures of



Medicine Woman Cindy Simpson Jurado: I love choosing to pour love and personal power back into people's lives. (Photo supplied)

society - should certainly become a consideration in the conception journey.

“Given all their reproductive organs are well intact, these mothers-to-be can experience meeting and greeting their pre-born baby or babies in the spirit world themselves during their fertility session(s),” said Simpson. “They usually come with a healing message.”

Before Simpson’s mother passed in November of 2022, she had an occasion to undergo her very first guided spiritual voyage of healing. She awoke after her session and announced that she had reunited with Cindy’s grandmother, who spoke their mother tongue, in Dene and referred to her granddaughter as “ananatia” – medicine woman.

“In the near future I hope to see more collaborative cooperation between traditional healers and trained medical professionals,” Simpson elaborated.

What Cindy Simpson Jurado does is an act of loving spiritual rebalancing and healing separation. Sometimes, as she is very quick to explain, this can be an emotionally yet satisfying committed process, but one that will improve the guests internally, leading to physical manifestations as well. She is the go-to and highly recommended First Nations fertility shaman and life coach with a sincere desire to help those she comes in contact with on a soul level. Her testimonials speak for themselves. Those wishing to explore support for their less invasive fertility journeys, or even those just wishing to achieve harmony between their spiritual self and physical well-being should contact Cindy without delay. Her treatments are centred at Soul Sanctuary Blessings, located in Calgary but she also offers remote sessions globally at 403-630-2297 or via email: soulsanctuaryblessings@gmail.com

Creeson Agecoutay

cont. from p 2

responsibilities of each person moving in. While a lease agreement covers the rights and responsibilities of the tenants concerning the landlord, it often does not cover the relationships between the roommates themselves.

Agecoutay offers some additional safety tips for successful urban living.

He said, “Don’t put yourself in scary or unnecessary situations by going to parties where you don’t know anyone. If you are going out, make sure you always go out with trusted friends; always watch or protect your drink no matter what.”

Also, likely the most critical warning anyone

can ever give a newcomer to an urban city.

“Cab drivers and Uber drivers can’t be trusted with Indigenous customers, so always take pictures of the car you’re getting into, send it to friends or family, and put your fingerprint on the car outside. Cab and Uber drivers have also been known to take advantage of you when you’re under the influence.”

“Make sure to tell them the address, and if they’re going the wrong way, get on the phone

with someone, so they turn around or record them and send the video to friends or family.”

Author’s note: We hope these safety tips help you navigate the social landscape in larger cities. Avoid dangerous situations. Be safe, be wise and speak up. The more we share our experiences, the more we are heard and believed. Thank you to Creeson Agecoutay for sharing this advice, based on his lived Indigenous experience. His comments are his alone and do not represent the views of CTV.

To advertise your business or community event, call Dan at Alberta Native News: 780-421-7966 or email natnews@shaw.ca

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Cree Fancy Dancer Patrick Mitsuing delighted fans at Super Bowl LVII

(Treaty 6 Territory) – This month, Patrick Mitsuing, a member of the Cree Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nations, shone a spotlight on Indigenous culture through a series of performances leading up to and during Super Bowl LVI. He was one of several Indigenous dancers and the sole dancer representing Canada during the event’s programming. The National Football League’s (NFL) decision to recognize the Indigenous land on which the games take place, for the first time in 56 Super Bowls, presented Mitsuing with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

As the president of Powwow Times, the production company behind Canada’s largest competitive Powwow, and a member of Indigenous Tourism Alberta, Mitsuing is used to putting on showstopping performances for large audiences, but not at this capacity. “I couldn’t believe it, at the beginning,” explains Mitsuing, “This [was] my biggest show ever.”

Along with a number of other talented First Nation dancers, Mitsuing put on a captivating welcome showcase at the State Farm Stadium for over 70,000 fans at the Super Bowl on Sunday February 12.

The engagement of cultural partnerships with Indigenous communities during major events is becoming a part of a cultural shift and a sign of progress towards reconciliation. The NFL’s efforts going beyond a land acknowledgement and weaving in Indigenous storytelling during

official programming shows a commitment to genuine representation. The league featuring Indigenous artwork from a local artist on this year’s tickets design and organizing entertainment performances such as the one that Mitsuing took part in, are all hopeful signs for the future.

These actions not only raise awareness of Indigenous cultures, histories and perspectives but also set an example for other mainstream organizations to build meaningful, long-term relationships with Indigenous communities.

From a societal perspective, it’s a small step in the right direction; however, for Mitsuing personally, it was a moment of great excitement for his Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation community located about 300 kilometers northwest of Saskatoon.

Capturing the attention of the youth and leaving a legacy of empowerment for the younger generation is at the forefront of his mind during this monumental accomplishment. Through his past world champion dancing travels, Mitsuing has had a goal to inspire youth to dream big and celebrate their own unique cultures through art.

“When I was young, my elders told me to take care of my outfit, because it will take care of me.” said Patrick, “They told me it will take me places. I could never fully wrap my mind of what that meant, until now. It took me to amazing opportunities like this. I put my heart and soul



Fancy Dancer Patrick Mitsuing. (Photo supplied)

into Powwow dancing and it’s been taking care of me and my family for so long, and I just can’t believe that it’s been getting better and better.”

Patrick documented his Super Bowl journey on the Powwow Times social channels: YouTube, Instagram and Facebook and is inviting audiences to follow along.

Louis Bull *cont. from p 4*

The two-year agreement, which the feds are funding to the tune of \$124.8 million, is intended to give the tribe sovereignty over its child welfare services while it works out an agreement with the province.

“The Creator has given sovereignty to govern ourselves,” Bull said, adding that the agreement will hopefully “ensure those generations are brought up immersed in culture.”

Bull said the agreement provides “the base and the foundation for us to look forward to developing something stronger, something more permanent, something that will allow that bilateral agreement to continue.”

Elder Henry Rain, who opened the press conference with a prayer, said it was “a long struggle to get where we are,” but now the nation is ready “to bring our children home.”

Compared to the province’s child welfare

services, the AMO emphasizes prevention and early intervention while ensuring children are able to retain Treaty, language, custom and sovereign rights, APTN News reported.

The AMO Society works with parents to find an approach that’s suitable towards their unique needs.

“Our laws are preventative. We don’t have legal authorities for temporary guardianship. We focus on less destructive measures,” explained Cayla Laroque-Wolf, the AMO Society’s interim children’s commissioner.

The society provides services to more than 335 children, not all of whom are in care.

“Today, we can teach our children our culture, language history and everything that we believe in ... our faith and medicines,” AMO Society chair and Louis Bull tribal councillor Barbara Laroque said.

Alberta children’s services ministry spokesperson Chinenye Anokwuru told Global

News the province has “worked collaboratively with the Louis Bull Tribe to support transition to their law.”

Anokwuru added that the government provided the tribe with transition funding after it announced the AMO Society would assume control child welfare services, although that funding ran out in September.

“We also continued to fund the cost of placement for some children and youth, as needed, and made sure they had staff for six months, with after-hour services, office space and equipment at no cost to the Louis Bull Tribe,” she added.

Although the agreement bypassed the provincial government, the ministry “continues to work with the Louis Bull Tribe where necessary, as part of our commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children and youth in care,” Anokwuru said.

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Upper Deck releases Indigenous player hockey cards

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Leading trading card manufacturer Upper Deck has released a “First Peoples Rookie Card Set,” featuring eight Indigenous hockey players who have yet to be featured on hockey cards.

The eight-card set, which was released Jan. 13, is only available at 3Nolans First Nation Hockey School, Hockey Indigenous Development Camp and the Indigenous-owned hobby store First Row Collectibles in Winnipeg, according to a news release from Upper Deck.

The cards were also distributed at games where Indigenous NHL alumni played in different Indigenous communities, such as St. Paul and Tallcree First Nation, on Jan. 13 and 15.

They will be handed out again at the Mushkegowuk Cup, an annual minor hockey tournament that brings together First Nations teams and fans, from Feb. 17 to 19, and the Little Native Hockey League Tournament from March 13-18.

Jacob Alexis, an Indigenous artist from the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation in Alberta, designed the cards, and Tallcree band member and Indigenous card collector Naim Cardinal wrote the information on their backs.

The set features rookie cards for Dan Frawley of the Pittsburgh Penguins, Johnny Harms of the Chicago Blackhawks, Danny Hodgson of the Toronto Maple Leafs, Victor Mercredi of the Atlanta Flames, Rocky Trottier of the New Jersey Devils, William LeCaine of the Pittsburgh Penguins, Ted Nolan of the Detroit Red Wings, and Jason Simon of the Phoenix Coyotes.

“I’m honoured to work with Upper Deck to help shine a spotlight on Indigenous hockey legends and be a part of bringing these cards to life,” Cardinal told Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation.

Upper Deck contacted Cardinal, who resides in Kelowna, B.C., a few years ago about collaborating on this project after a Facebook livestream where Cardinal mentioned how there are no hockey cards of Indigenous NHL players, CBC reported.

He told the public broadcaster he is enthusiastic about “bringing attention to the careers of all of the hockey players in the set.”

Upper Deck president Jason Masherah said it was “paramount” that Indigenous people be involved in the cards’ creation at every step of the process.

“We really focused on creating a set that is for the community, by the community... that would positively reflect their community,” Upper Deck senior marketing manager Paul Nguyen told *The Hockey News*.

Ted Nolan, who in addition to the Red Wings played for the Penguins and coached the Buffalo Sabres and New York Islanders, told the CBC he was inspired by other Indigenous players who played before him “because they looked like me.”

“I’m hoping with the same process here I can inspire some kid in northern Ontario, sitting on a small reserve” who has NHL ambitions, Nolan added.

“And they look at this card and say, ‘Man, if that little skinny Ojibwe kid from Garden River First Nation could make it, maybe I have a chance too.’”

In an interview with *Sportsnet*, Nolan likened seeing the card to “somebody calling you 40 years after your 18th birthday and saying, ‘Hey, you’re turning 18.’”

“We had a lot of our elders and a lot of our chiefs that showed the way for us, and especially the survivors of the residential schools and how hard they fought to maintain who we are,” he added.

“I’m just another part of that, trying to build on that legacy of our forefathers and make the next generation even stronger than this generation.”

Nolan’s sons also played in the NHL. His eldest son, Brandon, played for the Carolina Hurricanes and his



youngest son, Jordan, played with the Sabres, Los Angeles Kings and the St. Louis Blues, winning the Stanley Cup twice.

“To have a card with my two sons, where Jordan has his rookie card, Brandon has his rookie card, and now I have a rookie card — even though it’s 40 years later — to have a rookie card with them is special,” Nolan told *CTV News*.

Jason Simon, who played five games for the Coyotes in the 1990s, got emotional when he saw his card for the first time.

“You know, really, it’s just a card, right? But for that little boy inside me, it meant so much,” he told the CBC.

Those interested can view the cards and find out about any additional opportunities to take home a pack at upperdeckblog.com.

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

BBMA deadline *cont. from p 5*

year but also on the communities they are connected to,” Thomas says. “What an amazing investment that will last for generations to come.”

Jeff Glover is one of the students who qualified for a BBMA last year. “When I found out I had qualified for this funding, it resolved a huge weight from my life that at times had felt physically oppressive,” he said. “I knew then that I’d get through my second year, things would be ok for me and my girls.”

Since 2001, the BBMA has provided more than \$11 million in over 2,000 awards to over 1,500 Métis Albertans. The fund, which had an initial endowment of \$13 million, continues to grow thanks to contributions from individual and corporate donors and the investment strategies of ECF.

“Today, our principal investment is over \$20 million, and our student awards average is increasing,” BBMA co-founder Orval Belcourt says. “Education is vital, and I am so pleased to see our Métis people placing a higher priority on learning.”

Cole Burns, a 2014 BBMA recipient, spoke about the scholarship’s impact on his career as a horticulturalist and his connection to the Métis community during the celebration. “It wouldn’t have been possible without the support of BBMA,” he says.

“Knowledge is a fire of education,” adds Georges Brosseau. “We would like all members of the Métis family to be able to light their candles against that fire, so all can have a brighter future.”

The deadline to apply for the 2023 BBMA is March 31, 2023. Students can apply at www.bbma.ca.

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University of Alberta hosts Indigenous Celebration Week

By Deena Goodrunning, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

From January 23-28, 2023 the University of Alberta hosted its second annual Indigenous Celebration Week (ICW). The week was a collaboration between various University of Alberta organisations and members from the Students' Union (UASU), Faculty of Native Studies, Indigenous Student Union (ISU), First People's House (FPH), the ICW Advisory Committee and Supporting Indigenous Language Revitalization (SILR). Planning for ICW began in October 2022.

The first three days of ICW were organised by Danni Okemaw and took place at the University's North Campus. Okemaw is the FNMI (First Nations Métis Inuit) Initiatives Specialist for UASU.

Okemaw said that the inspiration and motivation for ICW was to acknowledge and honour Indigenous cultures, languages and teachings. Many tragedies have happened and are still happening to Indigenous peoples, and Okemaw thinks it's beautiful that despite everything they've been through, Indigenous cultures, languages and teachings have survived. While time is still needed for Indigenous peoples to heal, Okemaw thinks that Indigenous people should also be experiencing the joy that comes from the beauty of their culture, languages and teachings.

"It was my priority to bring good spirit, light, energy, happiness on the campus for that. That was my priority. That's what I wanted to do," Okemaw said.

The first day focused on celebrating Indigenous languages. The day started with a pipe ceremony at the Education Building. Then in the Orion room of the Student's Union Building (SUB) opening speeches were held and various speakers and knowledge keepers presented workshops on Indigenous languages. There were language immersion hours where Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers - such as Francis Whiskeyjack, Rudy Okemaw, Sharlene Alook, Elmer Ghostkeeper, and Mary Cardinal Collins - spoke entirely in Cree.

After the immersion hours, U of A student Levi Wolfe gave a workshop where he provided an introduction on the Cree language. The final workshop of the day was an introduction to the Michif language led by Kimberly Fraser-Airhart from the Rupertsland Institute.

The second day was focused on celebrating Indigenous youth. An Honouring our Youth Night event took place at the Dinwoodie Lounge. Starting at 5 pm and ending at 8 pm there were

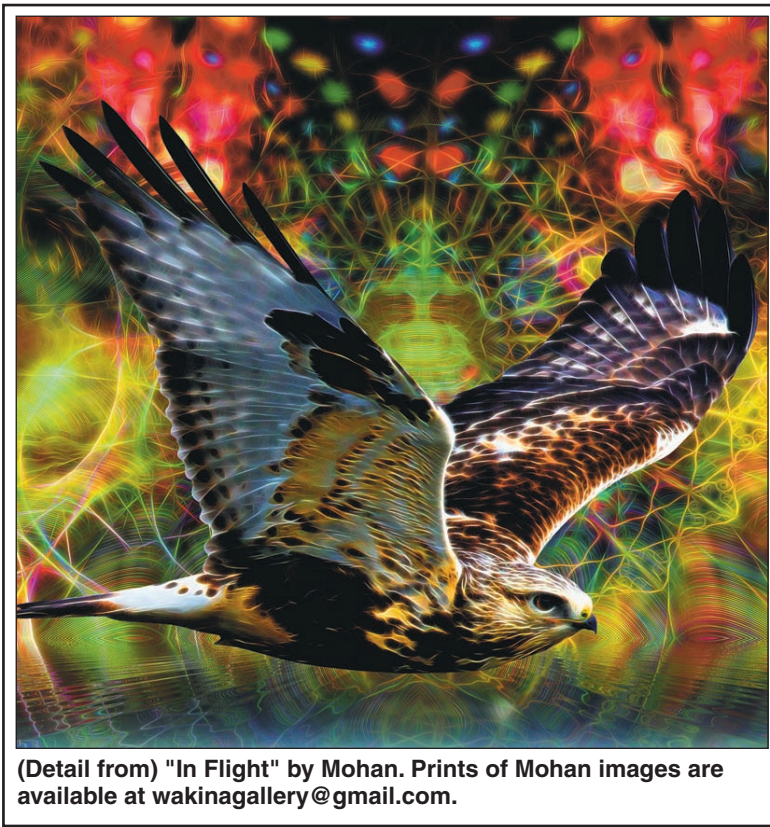
speeches and presentations given by U of A students Anika Kuharic and Casey Caines, and Elder Elsey Gauthier and Dr. Lillian Gadwa. Roberta Alook and Marc Jr. Doire, also U of A students, emceed the event. The night ended with drumming and performances by young Indigenous powwow dancers. There were also fiddling and jigging performances.

The third day focused on celebrating Indigenous art and artisans. An Indigenous Artisan Market was held with various Indigenous vendors, including many students, showcasing their art on the lower level of SUB.

On January 26-27, Semaine de Celebration des Cultures Autochtones was held at Campus Saint Jean. It marked the first time that Campus Saint-Jean has hosted ICW events and those events were organised by Francophone student Gloria Livingston, Vice-President external of *Association Universitaire de la Faculté Saint-Jean* (AUFSJ). Livingston said she'd been planning the events since October after Okemaw had reached out to her about having ICW events at Campus Saint-Jean. Since then, she and Okemaw were in constant communication about planning ICW.

The events at Campus Saint-Jean on January 26th were focused on Indigenous traditions and ceremonies. The day started with a teepee set up, a smudge ceremony and opening speeches. Livingston gave a land acknowledgement in French and Okemaw gave a land acknowledgement in English. Elder Bill Bertschy and his group - the Standing Bear Community group - were invited to share their culture and knowledge. There was drumming and singing. Lunch that day was catered by Tee Pee Treats Indigenous Cuisine.

The fifth day of ICW was more focused on learning about Indigenous matriarchy, intersectionality and colonialism. Métis and Francophone student Celina Yellowbird gave a presentation on matriarchy. Zakary-Georges Gagné, a Cree and Francophone transgender woman, gave a zoom webinar presentation from Ontario on identity intersectionality. Attendees also participated in a blanket exercise and the day ended with an evening performance



(Detail from) "In Flight" by Mohan. Prints of Mohan images are available at wakinagallery@gmail.com.

by Indigenous artist Melody McArthur. Livingston said she was happy to provide a space for Indigenous peoples to share their culture and experiences with the Francophone and English-speaking community, and to participate where possible in planning the events. The final event for ICW was the 13th Annual Round Dance hosted by FPH. Held at the Van Vliet Centre, the theme for this year's Round Dance was "Honouring Our Grads." A Round Dance is a traditional wintertime ceremonial dance where community members gather to dance in a circle around a group of drummers. This year's Round Dance was attended by hundreds of people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. FPH worked together to plan the Round Dance; the lead organiser was Shana Dion who is Assistant Dean, First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. In a blog post for The Quad titled "The sacred circle of the Round Dance" she wrote: "To me, the Round Dance ceremony is the spirit of equity, diversity and inclusion that speaks to the *heartwork* of reconciliation on campus." As early as 10 am U of A student volunteers helped set-up and prepare for the Round Dance. The first dance which started around 6 pm honoured the organisers and volunteers. Free bologna sandwiches which had been prepared by volunteers were handed out to community members. The Round Dance went on for several hours and ended with a give-away ceremony. Through the hard work and collaboration of many people, ICW was a success. The week truly honoured, acknowledged and celebrated Indigenous peoples and their cultures, histories, and languages.



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Our cover artist: Rick Noname

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

The strong images in his art reflect the importance of his Indigenous culture and values.

The stunning scene shows Rick’s connection to his spirituality with respect to the clear blue sky,



"Bison Spirit" by Rick Noname.

the soaring eagle, the tipi, the feather and the sun as a medicine shield. The sun represents life but it also typifies energy, clarity and positivity and the eagle represents honesty, truth and endurance. The tipi shows the importance of being grounded while still reaching for the sky.

Rick’s use of colour, movement and brushwork in this image are calming and reflective.

Rick says that his artistic abilities allow him to express his understanding of the spiritual aspects of his culture. “Through imagery,” he says, “I can give some of what was lost in my culture, back to all generations to share.”

Rick has been a contributing artist to the pages of *Alberta Native News* for 40 years. In fact, he was one of the first artists to help shape the newspaper.

Each of his paintings is an expression of his philosophy. “I put an Eagle Feather in every one of my paintings,” explains Rick. “The power of the eagle feather can be felt when it’s gently resting in your hand, gliding slowly through the air. The eagle feather is just as powerful as the eyes. Hold the eagle feather in front of yourself and feel the delicate balance that the feather creates as it cuts through the air. Look at the eagle



"Eagle at Sunset" by Rick Noname

feather and let your mind soar.”

Native Spirituality strikes interest in people all over the world, notes Noname, who has paintings in Europe, Japan and the Philippines, as well as Canada and the U.S. “The beauty of the spiritual way is that there is great beauty in the Native way of life.”

Rick wants to share his culture and artistic knowledge with the younger generation to ensure “that it is not lost, like so many of our teachings. Today we have freedom to express our views about our culture, and I express myself best through art.”

Contact Rick at rnoname903@gmail.com.

Select prints by Rick Noname are available at Wakina Gallery. Contact by email at wakinagallery@gmail.com

Star Blanket *cont. from p 6*

“There’s a lot of areas off site where we have to work with the landowners moving forward in the different phases off the reserve. We have to meet with these landowners and gain their permission to search the area and see what we can find,” he said.

The landowners are divided into two camps — those willing to do whatever they can to assist the search and those who would rather not get involved, Poitras explained.

“Both these extremes have land that we are interested in [searching],” Poitras said. “It’s going to take some tactics and some diplomacy to get everyone on the same page in the coming days,” he added.

Sharon Strongarm, a community knowledge keeper, told CTV in a separate story that the findings provide a sense of validation for local residential school survivors.

“People didn’t believe what we went through as survivors. I think it’s a good thing that people know now — know the truth,” Strongarm said.

She added that while it’s difficult to forgive the horrors of colonization, it’s an important step in moving forward.

Alex Keewatin, another band member, told CTV she attended the school for a year in the 1980s, where she was sexually abused.

“I know I wasn’t the only person who endured that ... it was pretty tough,” she said.

The Star Blanket reserve is located across the highway from the former forced assimilation institution, so nation members have to constantly relive their traumas, Poitras said.

“They see it every day. It’s there, everyday,” he said.

“It’s really tough to do, when it’s here, and they know the stories, and they understand what has happened here. Maybe, some of them have had personal experience. Others have stories of loved ones’ experiences.”

The Qu’Appelle Indian Residential School opened in 1884, was expanded 1887, 1889 and 1895, and then shut down in 1995.

In its early years of operation, the school permitted Indigenous languages and in 1951

became one of the first residential schools to offer high school education, CTV reported.

The school had a high death rate, according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 71 deaths out of 174 students discharged in its first nine years of operation.

Saskatchewan’s premier and leader of Opposition both expressed their condolences towards the nation.

Premier Scott Moe tweeted that he was “saddened to learn of the remains of a child at the site of a former residential school in Lebret,” adding that “the Star Blanket Cree Nation has the full support of the government at this difficult

time.”

“Residential schools represent a dark period in Canada’s history – friends, neighbours, and family members attended the schools, and many of these folks and the ones they love are hurting today,” Moe wrote. “We need to stand by them and help in every way we can.”

Saskatchewan NDP leader Carla Beck offered support “to the community and to all survivors and their families who must relive this pain and trauma, a wound that is reopened with every new discovery.”

“There are many emotions but we cannot allow ourselves to become numb,” she added.

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Warm weather welcomes thousands to Edmonton winter festival

By Terry Lusty

January, usually noted as the coldest of winter months, greeted thousands of Edmontonians and out-of-town visitors to this year’s annual 16th Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival, with unseasonably mild temperatures ranging as high as plus 4 to 6 degrees.

As a result, folks from all over the city - and Alberta as well - turned out in droves to mix, mingle and enjoy dozens of alluring events, ranging from outdoor bannock baking by Vera Poc and Sharon Larose, to hotdog roasts and horse-drawn wagon rides and giant snow slides. Other highlights included fiddling frenzies, drumming and singing, intricate hoop dancing by Lakota Tootoosis - so often a true-blue crowd pleaser - and Indigenous craft making and sales by Donna Robilard, Anna Muskego, Joanna Halcrow, and others.

At the conclusion of his skillful performance, Tootoosis had all sorts of youngsters scrambling to take a trial run at the difficult task.

The Jan. 21 - 22 event, blessed with warm weather and sunshine, attracted all sorts of people to the 118th Avenue district where events featured ice sculptures and demonstrations in addition to a giant snow slide that had kids lined up by the dozens to take their turn.

There was no shortage of something for everyone - music, songs, storytelling, warmth, maple syrup, and more! All this in addition to a Saturday night round dance that invited all people to join in and experience Indigenous culture at its finest.

Most of the Native components of the festival transpired at the Pipon Village on 118th Avenue and 92nd Street where tipis and wall tents had been erected to accommodate the happenings. A partnering community organization, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, was also on site to offer traditional, cultural and language

activities that provided a totally new experience for many of the visitors.

Craftswoman Celina Loyer was busy in one of the tipis as she demonstrated the centuries-old art of finger weaving in the creation of colourful, attractive Metis and First Nation sashes and availed herself to answer many questions regarding the colours and designs employed in her creations. In most instances it was a craft that was handed down in families from one generation to the next. Sadly, there is a dwindling number of artisans that continue the artform in this day and age.

There were several fiddle players performing this year but a few of those who return every year included the ever-so-popular and versatile veteran champion, Calvin Vollrath, who takes such delight in entertaining the visitors, as well as Daniel Gervais, Brianna Lizotte and newcomer Zach Willier.

Some of the outdoor activities drew sizeable crowds to witness talltilt walkers, snow princesses, axe throwing and log sawing demonstrations and oldtime basket weaving from willows. In addition, there was also the opportunity to take in short films at St. Faiths Anglican Church and the Carrot Coffeehouse, or mosey about in the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts where the works of professional and emerging artists were on display and for sale.

This year’s festival was dedicated to the memory of one of its longtime, devoted organizers and tireless workers - Gaetan Benoit, 43,



Hoop Dancer Lakota Tootoosis.

who passed away before his time due to brain cancer. He was known to especially work at films and video productions, recipes, and the development of the Kitchen Party event.



A Round Dance at the Edmonton Winter Festival.

NCSA *cont. from p 3*

“This will not end up harming anyone, this will actually end up improving public safety and public places for people to enjoy,” he said.

The meeting heard from EPS officials, who requested council update its bylaw on the sale, and use of “oleoresin capsicum”— the chili pepper-based key ingredient in bear spray, dog spray and, of course, pepper spray.

Police presented a report to committee, which showed that the spray has been used or seized in double the incidents police and firefighters responded to than in 2015.

It’s already illegal for these sprays to be used

against humans, but first responders have found it at transit stations and schools, rather than green spaces where wild animals could appear, suggesting it’s being used illegally.

The EPS asked council to make it a bylaw infraction to have bear spray with its safety removed or tampered, or have its label removed or concealed, a new nuisance offence for negligently using it in a public place, and consistent rules for businesses selling the product.

The committee asked city bureaucrats to incorporate these changes into updates underway to the public places and business licensing bylaws.

“As an agency, we were really pleased to see the city paying attention and actually working to gather statistics from the city police, and now looking at the development of a bylaw restricting its use,” Orr said.

“It’s not intended for use on people, but in this world today, it’s being used to commit violent offenses. And that’s an issue of community safety.”

She encourages other municipalities in the province to follow Edmonton’s lead in tightening restrictions.

The key issue for Orr is that the spray’s easy availability doesn’t

treat it like the dangerous weapon it is.

“If you’re a hunter, you’re a trapper, you’re a hiker, then you should be able to access bear spray, but also have to register that you purchased it,” she said.

But Edmonton-based criminal defence lawyer Zack Elias told the Edmonton Journal he fears stricter bylaws will be just another weapon in the toolkit of authorities to target unhoused people, who might carry bear spray for self-defence.

“What it’s going to be causing is the police to have an extra tool in their belt to be able to crack down on the homeless. They want to further criminalize the unhoused,” Elias said.

“What happens when they find bear spray (in an encampment)? It’s going to be some sort of ticket violation, it’s going to give them grounds to detain them ... not because they were using it for any improper purpose.”

He pointed out the data the city heard didn’t indicate how often bear spray was being discharged, only that it was being found more frequently.

“They’re inflating these numbers and making it seem like people are getting attacked every day with bear spray,” he said. “Police need to leave creating laws to the legislature and focus on enforcing the laws, not try to create this fearmongering narrative that they’ve been doing in Edmonton.”

Orr said she doesn’t see how making it more difficult to acquire bear spray would negatively impact the safety of unhoused people.

“If there are issues about unhoused people feeling unsafe, then let’s deal with those issues as a city. But giving people illegal weapons to protect themselves doesn’t make anybody safe,” she said.

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Boxer Taylor Bull shares his healing journey

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Taylor Bull, whose Cree name is (Neyewats Musto), is an ex-boxer on a mission to give back to his Maskwacis community and encourage youth to stay away from gang life and violence.

He aims to right any wrongs that he did in the community by guiding youth toward positive lifestyles and away from gang life and crime. He says that participating in Indigenous ceremonies and traditions helps him understand his identity as newiyawak.

"I firmly believe in connecting our young men with cultural experiences because of that belief," said Bull.

He also gives back by volunteering with local initiatives like Wetaskiwin's Hate to Hope, which empowers local people to give back to their communities.

"I am always willing to help a good cause," he added. "I have been doing workshops and hoping to do more public speaking engagements."

Also, Bull is on his way to opening a boxing gym at Samson Mall in March 2023.

Bull grew up with a supportive family and played sports as a youth. But, he said, as a teenager, he began to rebel, leading him to explore gangs, violence, and drugs gradually. In high school, he was pulled into the gang lifestyle.

Pro-boxing saved him from a life of crime and violence. As a result, he was able to change his life around and repair his reputation in his community. "I was offered to compete in Lethbridge on a "Rage in the Ring" show in 2008," he explained.

Early in his career, he began working with Tye Fields as a sparring partner and his coach Kenny Lakusta. Ater gaining some local exposure, Bull was offered an opportunity to fight the Canadian

Cruiserweight Champion, Ryan Henney, at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton.

"My confidence comes from my losses, I was once knocked out in front of 4,000 people at the Shaw Conference Centre, and it never even phased me," he noted.

"I woke up while the nurse was stitching me back in the dressing room, and I jokingly asked her if my modeling career was still intact."

"Although I lost the fight, it drove me to continue and attain my legacy as a champion," said Bull. "Everything I have mentioned above has been an integral part of my healing journey."

At some point in his life, Bull decided that "I could not continue doing bad things and expect good things to happen to me." His story is about redemption and hope and he is using his experiences to help others lead a sober and healthy life.

Currently, Bull excels as an outreach worker with Samson Cree Nation, specifically for those dealing with substance abuse and homelessness. He is enrolled in Sundance College for an online Addictions and Family Counselling diploma.

Bull is thankful to those who helped in his healing journey, such as Samson Cree Nation, for sponsoring his training as a Heal Your Life Workshop facilitator and certified Life Coach.

He added that certifications have provided him with ways of helping heal the four Cree Nations on the front line, and "I will be forever grateful."

"The Kwesi Pimatisi Men's detox camps have been a big part of my role with Samson Community Wellness," said Bull. "The camp's founders, Florence and Frank Large, have been crucial in leading the team and preparing us to handle things as they gradually transition from



Taylor Bull. (Photo supplied).

being lead."

Bull credits his strength to his parents' foundation: "In the end, my parents were my saving grace."

Bull explained, "My father raised me as a Chief's son; my father's lineage goes back to the first chief of the Kisipatnahk nation, and the words of my grandfather echo in my head."

"My mother always taught me to consider other people's feelings, or as the saying goes, put yourself in their shoes," said Bull.

He concludes the interview by saying, "And this foundation is what I stood on when things began to fall apart, so in the end, I thank my parents, for they raised me right, and I wouldn't be where I am today had they not."

"Keep in mind that I am far from perfect," said Bull.

"I have made many mistakes. But in my Cree culture, we say "akamamohk," which means keep going, and I am very grateful that I did."

For more information about Taylor Bull visit theraginbull.com

Two Metis Judges appointed to Alberta court

By Jeremy Appel, LJI Reporter

Two Metis Nation members were among five judges appointed to Alberta's provincial court on Feb. 10.

Lionel R.R. Chartrand received his law degree in 1984 from the University of Manitoba, and was appointed to the Alberta bar in 2008. He's practiced criminal law for the past decade, and will begin hearing cases in the court's criminal division on March 1.

Jordan J. Stuffco received his law degree from the University of Toronto in 2003, and was admitted to the Alberta bar and British Columbia

bar the following year. Since 2012, he's been lead counsel at Stuffco Law, where he focuses on criminal matters in central and northern Alberta. Stuffco will begin hearing cases in the court's regional division on March 13.

The other three appointees are Frank Bosscha, Indra L. Maharaj and Thomas D. Marriott.

"These excellent appointees, from diverse backgrounds, will enhance the court's ability to

provide an accessible and timely system of justice for Albertans," stated Derek G. Redman, chief judge of the provincial court of Alberta.

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