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MNA achieves official recognition

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) is officially one step closer to being a sovereign nation within Alberta.

On Feb. 24, the MNA, which represents 57,000 Métis people in Alberta, alongside the Métis Nations of Saskatchewan and Ontario, signed an agreement with the federal government putting their status on par with that of First Nations.

“This agreement says: You’re a government,” MNA counsel Jason Madden told *Global News*.

The agreement, which needs to be endorsed by the House of Commons before it goes into effect, gives the three nations sovereignty over core responsibilities, such as citizenship, leadership selection and other government operations. It also brings them under the umbrella of legislation that gives Indigenous Peoples control over child and family welfare.

The Métis Nation of Manitoba was the first to sign this type of agreement, which occurred in 2019. Negotiations are underway with Métis groups in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.

In an *Edmonton Journal* op-ed, MNA president Audrey Poitras placed the agreement in the historical context of the Métis Nation’s quest for self-determination, dating back to Louis Riel’s Red River Rebellion in what is now known as Manitoba from 1869-1870.

“We did what we needed to do to keep our communities and nationhood alive. We built our self-government structures through coming together in assemblies, democratic elections, and by sheer force of will. While we did not have much in those days, we always had each other,” Poitras wrote.

The MNA has long sought recognition “as a distinct order of government in Canada,” she

added.

Last year, the MNA voted in support of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government Constitution, which established a framework for self-government, setting the stage for government recognition.

“This federal recognition legislation will ensure that even as governments may come and go, the recognition of our Métis self-government here in Alberta will not be subject to political whim. Moreover, this legislation will ultimately constitutionally protect the agreement we are currently negotiating with Canada, as a modern-day treaty,” Poitras explained.

The MNA heralded the agreement as a necessary step towards fulfilling the dreams of their ancestors. “While there is more work to be done, the signing of this agreement further acknowledges much of the truth of our past, recognizes our Métis government and sets out a path forward towards meaningful reconciliation,” the nation said in a Facebook post.

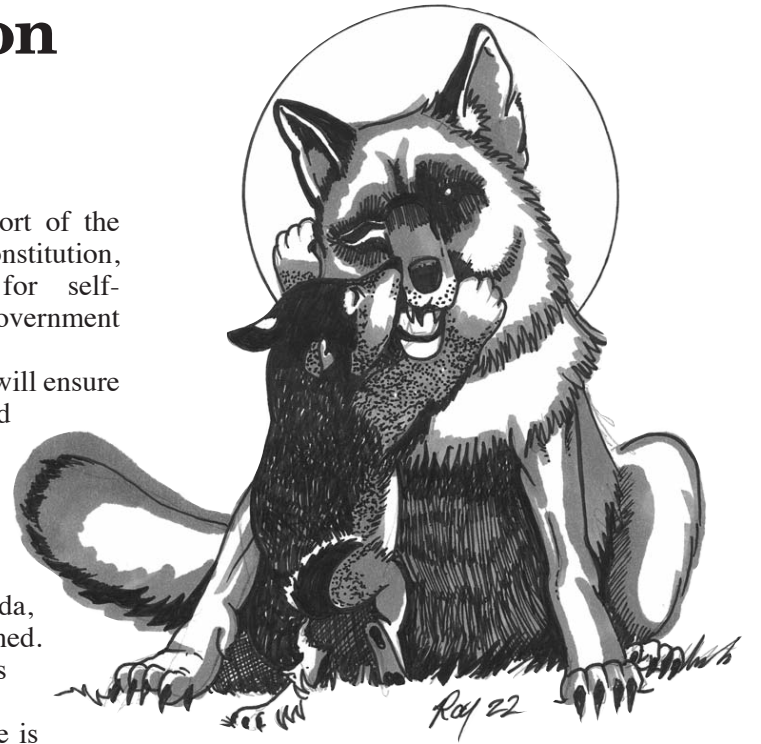
According to a news release from the MNA, this agreement has been in the works for the past six years.

The agreement recognizes that Métis peoples have the right to self-determination outlined in section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act.

It opens the door to further negotiations for a “core self-government treaty,” which will be completed within two years.

Eventually, the plan is for the MNA to negotiate supplemental agreements around more contentious issues, like land and harvesting.

The Feb. 24 agreement allows the MNA to begin negotiations seeking compensation for the



19th-century Métis scrip program, which gave Métis people a coupon to compensate them for relinquishing their lands. But many Métis peoples’ signatures were forged. Those who did sign found their lands sacrificed for pennies on the dollar, leaving them landless.

“Scrip is a sorry legacy in this country,” Poitras told *Global*.

Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Marc Miller said the agreement “will revitalize and transform” the Canadian government’s relationship with the MNA.

“We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Métis Nation of Alberta to co-develop approaches that deliver on our shared priorities for reconciliation and support their vision of a better future for the citizens and communities the Métis government represents,” he said in a statement.

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YEG adopts new civic holiday

The City of Edmonton took another step in its journey of reconciliation by officially declaring September 30, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a civic holiday.

This declaration is part of the City’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Municipal Response Plan, which outlines actions that City Administration will take to remove barriers and enhance inclusion and access to City programs and services. It also supports the TRC Calls to Action. To date, the City has made progress on addressing 21 of the 94 Calls to Action, and this declaration specifically supports Call to Action #80.

“I’m proud to formally recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. I encourage Edmontonians to reflect on the collective traditions and cultures of the diverse First Peoples whose footsteps have marked this territory,” said Amarjeet Sohi, Mayor of Edmonton. “In order to truly honour those contributions, we also have to acknowledge the trauma of residential schools and the ongoing effects of colonization—not just on September 30 but throughout the year.”

“Officially acknowledging September 30 as a civic holiday is a small but significant step in our commitment to supporting and building strong, respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples in Edmonton,” said Andre Corbould, City Manager. “Administration will continue listening, connecting, advocating, and partnering with Indigenous communities to ensure they see themselves included and reflected in the City’s spaces, places, and services. We still have a lot of

Continued on page 5

Tailing pond leaks concealed from First Nations for nine months

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The chief of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation is calling for work on Imperial Oil’s Kearl tar sands mine to be halted until an investigation can be conducted into continuous tailing ponds leaks.

Tailing ponds refer to the toxic sludge coming from oil mines, which are contained in a specific area. But when they leak beyond the area, or pond, the impact can be dire for wildlife, fish and humans.

At a March 2 news conference, Athabasca Chipewyan Chief Allan Adam said the First Nation wasn’t made aware of the leaks until a draining pond overflowed in February, spilling 5.2 million litres of wastewater, despite the Alberta Energy Regulator having been informed of leakages in May 2022.

“The news that these leaks have been ongoing for nine months has caused great anxiety among our people,” Adam said.

In the meantime, band members have been harvesting food from the surrounding areas. “Some of these foods have been shared throughout our community. We have been eating them for months unaware of a potential danger,” Adam noted.

As a result, the nation’s leadership is calling on band members to avoid eating any food or water that was harvested after May 2022, but the human damage has likely already been done.

Athabasca Chipewyan leaders met with Imperial Oil and the AER several times in that nine-month span, yet were never informed of the leakages, he added.

“Each meeting was an opportunity where they could have come clean, but they chose to hide the fact from us over and over again,” the chief noted.

Ultimately, Chief Adam says the lack of

notification stems from “environmental racism.”

“If this was the city of Edmonton or Calgary that this happened in, they would notify the public right away,” said Adam. “For them, dealing with the Indian problem is to poison us and get rid of us eventually.”

The nation’s regulatory advisor for Dene lands and resource management Callie Davies-Flett noted that Imperial Oil was warned this could happen in a joint federal-provincial review of its 2007 environmental impact assessment, which noted the tailing pond was situated in a region with “very permeable deposits.”

“In other words, it was likely to seep,” Davies-Flett explained.

The project was approved under the condition that Imperial Oil install monitoring and seepage control measures, which took the form of pumps that removed the seepage and dumped it back into the pit.

“This is like bailing out the front of a boat by dumping water back into the boat,” said Davies-Flett.

Contrary to Imperial’s assurances there would be no impact on wildlife, representatives of the nation found three moose tracks just metres north of the site in a Feb. 25 flyover of the impacted lands, she added.

Aliénor Rougeot, Environmental Defence Canada’s climate and emergency program manager, told *Alberta Native News* that Imperial Oil’s cover up shows oil and gas companies are not to be trusted, whether it’s their commitment to the environment or Indigenous rights.

“None of this was surprising,” Rougeot said. “This is in line with the rest of the behavior you’re seeing from this industry. Prioritization



of profits above people, both with regards to the climate crisis and the communities that live right there.”

A 2022 report from Environmental Defence and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society notes that tailing ponds occupy more than 300 km2 of territory and counting. The risks of leaking tailing ponds are well-established, Rougeot said.

The AER’s role in facilitating the coverup is especially disturbing, she added. “It doesn’t feel like we have a trusted government source that we can go to when there’s a need for information about the environmental and human health impacts,” said Rougeot.

Jamie Long, Imperial’s vice-president of mining, told The Canadian Press that the company “regret[s]” not having informed the nation of the leakage sooner, promising to take the “necessary steps to improve our communications so this does not happen again in the future.”

The AER told CP that while an investigation is underway, it’s not its responsibility to inform the public about leakages.

“It is the licensee’s responsibility to report fluid releases to affected or potentially affected parties as soon as they become aware of the release,” the regulator said.



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Keith Diakiw offers one of a kind Talking Rock Tours

By Deena Goodrunning, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Edmonton-based Métis citizen Keith Diakiw is the founder of Talking Rock Tours – the first ever geo-educational hiking and sightseeing adventure company that is 100 percent Indigenous owned. It offers tours of various historical and geological locations in Alberta through a scientific and Indigenous lens. It is also one of the original members of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. In an interview, Diakiw shared his story.

Diakiw was born in Saskatchewan, but grew up in Hinton, AB. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Geography from the University of Lethbridge, followed by a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology and Archeology, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Geology from the University of Alberta. Since 2001 he has been a reservist, proudly serving in the Royal Canadian Navy.

Diakiw's Métis ancestors come from the Red River settlement and his fourth-great grandfather was Joseph Ouellette Sr. who fought alongside Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont at the Battle of Batoche in 1885. Ouellette was 93 years old when he fought in the battle and he was killed on the last day. For his bravery during the resistance, Ouellette was the only one given a casket burial of the Métis warriors who had died during the battle.

Diakiw said that whenever he wears his Métis sash he carries his ancestors with him. "With wearing my Batoche sash I still [have] that connection to the past, the connection to my ancestors, giving Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, and Joseph Ouellette Sr. a voice. All their hard work and their fight wasn't for naught. It wasn't in vain. It's very fruitful now. Everyone wants to

be Indigenous. You know that. I know that. It's a great time to be alive for an Indigenous person. And now we need to pave the way for even a better future for our children."

Diakiw said he started Talking Rock Tours after he was laid off from his job in the oilsands industry in 2017. It should have been a stressful day, he said but instead, it felt like he was being given an opportunity to begin something new. He had always wanted to start a business and he saw Indigenous tourism as leading the way for meaningful, memorable types of experiences. He also saw Talking Rock Tours as a legacy piece where he could be doing something more with his life than making money.

Diakiw's love of rocks also influenced his career path. He wanted to share his knowledge and love of rocks with others, not just from a scientific perspective but also an Indigenous perspective.

"It's really cool how different nations have different kinds of creation stories about the little people and how we are from the rocks," Diakiw said. Humans are derived from stardust, he added. The gasses stars produce when they die eventually form a planet, which then creates rock and then eventually life. He spoke about the special Cree star stories told by George Desjarlais.

Diakiw said that scientists are now understanding the value of Indigenous knowledge. "In some ways, science is still behind the oral histories and the way we do things as Indigenous peoples."

Another thing he loves about giving tours is the opportunity to meet so many different people. He learns something new from each person he meets. He said that key takeaways for his tours are science for the mind, stories from the heart and history of the land.

As much as he loves giving tours, the tourism industry doesn't always guarantee financial stability, and times were especially tough during the COVID-19 pandemic, explained Diakiw. With a family to support and bills to pay Diakiw made the decision to sign a Class B contract and work full-time with the Canadian Armed Forces. He now works



Keith Diakiw is the founder of Talking Rock Tours where he combines his love for rocks with his respect for his Metis ancestors.

as the Northern Environmental Coordinator and is also a member of the Defence Advisory Aboriginal Group. He operates Talking Rock Tours on the side, and while he would love to be able to operate it full-time he said he needs to also be realistic.

When asked what he would say to people who might think he is selling out by giving tours that feature Indigenous knowledge, Diakiw said that he doesn't feel like he's selling out. Instead he's trying to give enough information to set the record straight and to also generate interest in Indigenous tourism. He said that he had attended a workshop in Enoch where the topic of monetizing Indigenous knowledge was discussed.

"The biggest fear a lot of people have is that if we don't do it, non-Indigenous people will step in. Because everyone wants to be Indigenous now," Diakiw said. "So if we don't step up and tell our story, then it leaves that opportunity room for non-Indigenous people to make documentaries or write things on the internet or articles that aren't true."

There's a cost to running his business, but Diakiw said he also doesn't want to come across as an infomercial. "You don't want it to be like an infomercial where it's like: *Okay if you want Indigenous knowledge it's \$5.99 a minute. Okay let's begin...* So, I think the biggest thing is to share what we're comfortable sharing, because it's important. Because if we don't, someone else will tell our story."

Diakiw concluded the interview by saying that he still has lots to learn about the tourism industry and running a business. "It's always evolving; you should never claim you know everything and that everything is great, because it's a journey just like life. And there are hard times and good times, and you just kind of have to roll with the ups and downs and enjoy the ride."

More information about Keith Diakiw and Talking Rock Tours can be found online at talkingrocktours.com

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Alberta Native News

Champion Hoop Dancer Dallas Arcand on overcoming obstacles

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Internationally acclaimed Hoop Dancer Dallas Arcand's story highlights the challenges faced by many Indigenous people from poor backgrounds and limited opportunities. It is a reminder that with perseverance, dedication, and passion, we can overcome obstacles and succeed.

The self-described “Multidisciplinary Artist” says he is more than a World Championship Dancer, he is a producer, educator, and motivational speaker.

Arcand acknowledges the challenges Indigenous artists face, such as being undervalued and underpaid for their talents and skills. Early on in his career he was accused of “selling his culture.” But that’s not the case, he says, “I’m not selling culture. I am selling my time, expertise, experience, and the hours spent learning my craft.”

Arcand grew up in poverty, and he needed to find a way to make an income. He felt he had something to prove to his friends and family who, early on in his life had written him off.

In an interview with *Alberta Native News*, Arcand opened up about how hoop dancing offered him an escape from his reality. As a result, he has become one of North America's most prominent trailblazers and is ranked top tier among his peers.

Hoop Dancing gave Arcand a purpose and it helped him successfully turn his life around.

“Hoop dancing was a vehicle for me... It took me to a zone, and I think that is the zone that we all strive towards and to find that happy place,” said Arcand.

“My own family was lateral[ly] violent toward me because of their narrative of me; they didn't understand me, they didn't understand that I was an orphan and I was treated like an orphan, and I was mistreated.

“I got picked on at home and school, and I probably lashed out because of it; I remember a lot of my own family saying I was going to end up in jail or on the streets or dead - that's how my family used to think of me,” said Arcand.

“On top of that I was bullied for being the only light skin with colored eyes on the rez, I got teased and bullied for it, and on top of that, I was poor.”

Despite these obstacles, Arcand found solace in Indigenous Hoop Dancing, which has become a source of inspiration and success for him. Nowadays, Arcand says his family's views of him have changed. But initially, the change has to come from within, he explains.

“Nobody is going to come and save you. So, you must save yourself. You must participate in your rescue because no one is coming to save you,” said Arcand.

“If someone is trying to bring you down, they are only going to bring you down if you allow them to, but if you ignore those narratives and focus on your purpose in life, that will take you farther in life, it's like winning the lottery when you tap into that,” said Arcand.

“I took control of my life, my narrative, it was a combination of my culture, training, and education - deep down inside, I wanted to change my life too.”

Arcand is a three-time World Hoop Dancing Champion. He competed at the 33rd annual World Championship Hoop Dance Contest last month at the Heard Museum in Arizona. He didn’t place this year, but he is planning to compete again next year.

In an online post, Arcand wrote, “I’m now going to dedicate myself to training all this year and in 2024 I will go into the senior adult category with a winning attitude. It’s not always about winning it’s simply just about dancing.”

Arcand says, “In the past, I was sponsored, but I noticed as I get older people don't want to sponsor me because I am an adult. So, they kind of expect you to have your own money, so that's why I fundraise.”

“If I traveled down there to compete, and I won I would only break even. So, it takes the stress out of me when I go down to Arizona to compete in the world hoop dancing championship,” said Arcand.

“I am not competing with other dancers in Arizona, and in fact, we are all friends down there. It's a friendly competition; it is the Indigenous way.”

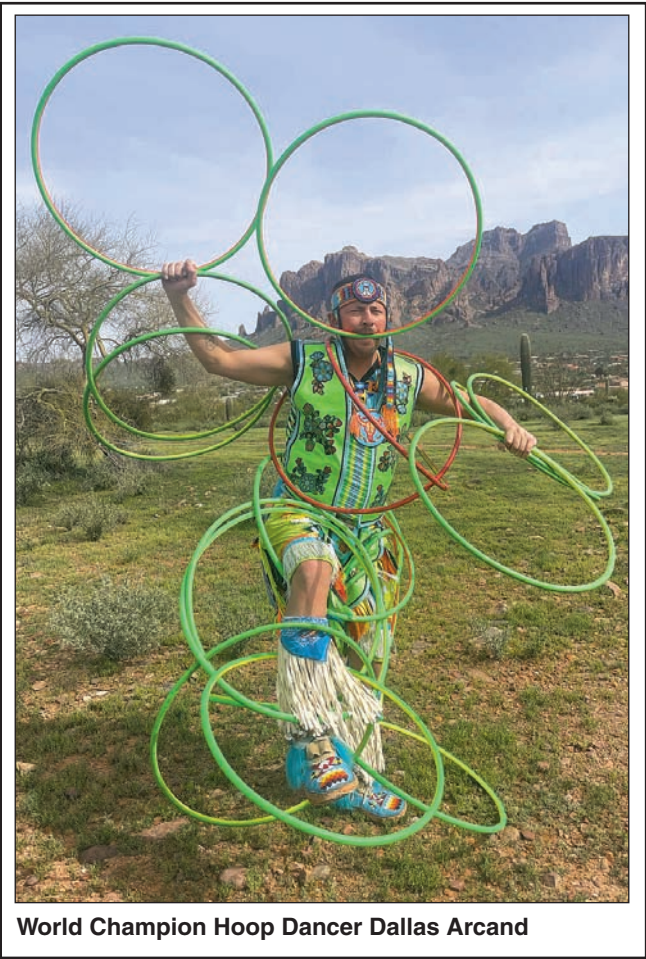
He says Indigenous people traditionally supported one another in each other's winning seasons. And they still do.

Arcand’s body of work that he’s accumulated over the last twenty years adds value to Alberta’s Indigenous community and helps preserve Indigenous culture and promote understanding and appreciation.

He offers advice to Indigenous people who are moving to larger urban cities and metropolises across Canada, “Tap into organizations like the Native Friendship Centers, Bent Arrow Healing Society, and the Red Road Healing Society.”

Use the resources that are available in your community to help Indigenous people get ahead.

“There are a lot of resources for Indigenous people to tap into - that's what they are there for, for



World Champion Hoop Dancer Dallas Arcand

your careers and your goals,” says Arcand.

“Stay away from the bad things, the drugs, and alcohol; it may be appealing because it's a carefree lifestyle, but that lifestyle has no future and could end badly.

“The best thing you can do is stay in the light, stay away from the dark.”

Dallas Arcand can be booked for motivational speaking throughout North America and internationally by contacting Eddie Birkett CMA Entertainment by email at oredie@bookyact.com or by calling 204-982-7664.

New civic holiday *cont. from p 2*

work to do, and we’re dedicated to continually moving forward on our journey of reconciliation.”

Declaring a civic holiday is not equivalent to a provincial declaration of a statutory holiday and does not create any legal obligations for employers or businesses to close their offices or provide stat pay to their employees.

Also known as Orange Shirt Day, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation honours the survivors of residential schools, their families, and communities, as well as the children who never returned home. It is also a day to reflect and engage in dialogue and learning on the lasting impacts of colonization, anti-Indigenous systemic racism, and on the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

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CAREERS: The Next Generation connects students with employers

Like so many high school students, Caleb Alexander was unsure what he wanted to do with his life. He knew he liked working with his hands and enjoyed science classes, but that only led to more questions: What careers fit his interests? Would he be able to make a good living? How could he make it happen? There just didn't seem to be a clear path forward.

Caleb was attending Grade 10 at Holy Trinity high school in Fort McMurray when his future began taking shape. He was introduced to a non-profit organization called CAREERS: The Next Generation. Team members work with schools across Alberta to connect students to employers for paid internships. Students have the opportunity to fast track their training in a skilled trade through the Registered Apprenticeship Program, or get hands-on experience in many different occupations through the Indigenous Youth Internship Program. CAREERS helped Caleb learn about different options that fit his interests and lifestyle. Instrumentation and Controls Technician jumped out at him, so he

decided to take advantage of the opportunity and give it a try. CAREERS matched him with an employer, helped him with his resume, prepared him for the job interview, and before he knew it, he was starting his first day as an apprentice at Syncrude Canada.

"It was a little bit daunting when I went to my safety orientation," explained Caleb. "It was just me, a 16-year-old, in a room full of adults."

It didn't take Caleb long to feel respected and part of the team. He also discovered a passion for what he was doing.

"Not only was I making money, I was also earning credits and fast tracking my training towards something I love," he explained. "Juggling high school with an apprenticeship wasn't always easy, but it was worth it. I was able to push through because I had a goal and a future I was excited about."

Syncrude is one of many Alberta companies that believes in supporting youth through CAREERS: The Next Generation. "Indigenous youth like Caleb are a vital resource for employers like Syncrude, operated by Suncor," said Jerry McPherson, Vice President, Projects & Regional Synergies, Syncrude, operated by Suncor.

"Like everyone else, they just need opportunities to develop their skills and abilities. Syncrude supports the Indigenous Youth Career Pathways program because it is helping us build our future workforce with people who have the skills we need and want to contribute to our success. By every measure, it continues to



Caleb Alexander is achieving success with help from CAREERS: The Next Generation.

be an excellent investment."

"When you provide meaningful employment for Indigenous youth, you are increasing their confidence and skills, which lays the foundation for success and ripples through their communities," added Rebecca Kragnes, Indigenous Business Relations, Bird Construction.

Over the next two years, Caleb continued to gain experience and hours towards his apprenticeship. Now, at 21-years-old, he's already become a certified journeyperson.

"My advice to high school students is, you've got nothing to lose. Just pick something that interests you and give it a try. If I can do it, so can you."

Whether you're a student like Caleb, a parent helping a child navigate their future, or an employer looking to grow your workforce from the ground up, CAREERS: The Next Generation is an excellent resource to get you started. And right now, qualified employers can get up to \$7,500 to help cover the costs. Go to [CAREERSnextgen.ca](https://careersnextgen.ca).



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NSD61 proudly unveils new promotional video

Northland School Division is pleased to share its story in a new promotional video! The purpose of the video is to showcase why Northland School Division is a great place to learn and work.

"The video is just another way we can share the Northland story with families, communities, education partners, staff and potential new students and teachers," said Cathy Wanyandie. "The communities Northland serves are stunning in terms of beauty and is an out-of-this-world learning environment for student learning."

"You will experience the exciting happenings in Northland School Division in this video," said Dr. Nancy Spencer-Poitras, Superintendent of Schools/CEO. "Students are taking learnings from the classroom to out on the land, making connections with the traditional cultural teachings of NSD to the curriculum. Students learn local languages such as Cree and Dene. You will also hear from educators on what it's like to work with Northland and what we do to support them." To view the video visit nsd61.ca.



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Brett Gladue’s NLC Success Story: Turning Hobby into Career

“Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby.” – George Bernard Shaw

A graduate of the first offering of the Northern Lake College Computer Network Specialist program, Brett Gladue had been interested in technology since early childhood. “It started with computer games,” Brett reports, “I started figuring out how to change or upgrade the games I played, or I’d pick apart computer equipment to try to figure out how everything worked.”

But while Brett demonstrated a talent for tech at an early age, lack of access into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields pushed Brett into a common employment industry in northern Alberta. “Since graduating high school, I worked as a labourer in the oilfield. I’d never worked in an office environment. I did secure a trade in pipefitting, but the job never felt right for me. And then, by 2019, the industry really slowed down.”

With little work to pick up and a sense of occupational dissatisfaction, Brett was on the lookout for anything that would pay the bills. It was his wife, Amber, who drew his attention to the new, Computer Network Specialist program offering at Northern Lakes College, and encouraged him to register.

“Amber was really supportive and really happy for me. I received a couple

grants to help with financial costs, and then I was ready to begin the course.” There was only one problem; almost immediately after the start date, the COVID-19 pandemic effectively shut down all in-class learning. Luckily, Northern Lakes College was prepared – and so was Brett.

“I didn’t expect to do the whole course online, but NLC made distance learning very easy. Students could participate in the online classes in real time, which I and about ten other ‘regulars’ did, or they could study and view the classes on their own time. I learned a lot and took in a lot of new information.” But perhaps the best thing about the online experience was the way it was received by Brett’s school-aged son.

“His school moved online, too, so for the first time not only did he know his dad was in school, but he actually got to see me learning. A lot of the time we sat side-by-side doing our work. I hope he found it inspiring.”



Northern Lakes College graduate Brett Gladue

Now employed as an IT Technician for the Bigstone Health Commission, Brett has encouraging advice for others in search of their calling: “Take the risk and get an education. Try something you are already interested in – look at your hobbies and find a career that is similar.”

Tseshah First Nation issues 26 calls to action

In an emotional presentation, the Tseshah First Nation has announced the detection of 17 suspected unmarked graves at the site of the former Alberni Indian Residential School on Vancouver Island.

The First Nation and the ?uu?atumin yaqckwiimitqin (Doing it for our Ancestors) team also indicated that a combination of interviews with survivors, historical records and other documents show that 67 students died at the school. Not the 29 that had been previously reported.

“We need to remember that all of these students were just children,” said Tseshah Elected Chief Councillor Wahmeesh, whose English name is Ken Watts.

“We cannot let these findings become just another statistic.

“They were just children. So ... for those of you that are not from our communities, I want you to think about that, think about what would happen today if children who were five years old were removed from their homes.

“That’s the reality that our communities have to live with,” said Wahmeesh.

In response to the discoveries, Tseshah First Nation has released 26 calls to action.

The announcement ended with 26 calls to action, including a request for funding from the federal government so the nation can conduct more research and replace the former residential school buildings on its territory with a healing centre.

Continued on page 9



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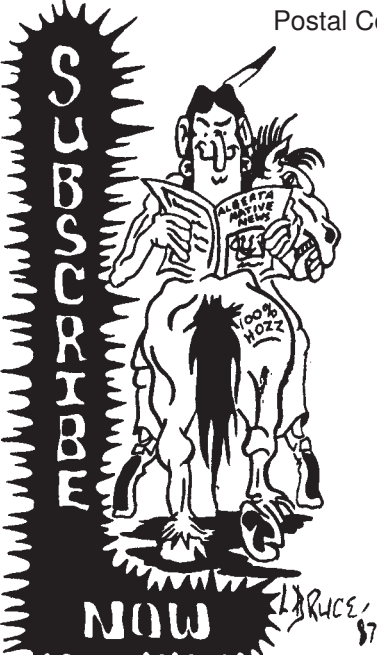
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Mikisew Cree First Nation sounds alarm bells about oilsands seepage

Mikisew Cree First Nation is calling on government and industry for immediate action in the wake of Alberta’s largest - and ongoing - spill at an oil sands project at Imperial Kearl’s operation.

The remote and northern First Nation is concerned about the drinking water situation. According to a Mikisew FN statement, on March 1, 2023, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo has stopped drawing from Lake Athabasca, meaning there is a limited supply of drinking water, and the winter ice road melts in the next couple weeks, limiting the ability to bring in drinking water.

“Getting safe drinking water to our members is the most urgent priority,” said Mikisew Chief Billy-Joe Tuccaro. “Our Nation has been battling increased cancer rates for years. We are calling on Imperial and government to make that happen. We also expect full disclosure of RMWB’s findings following their water investigations,” he continued, referring to the RMWB Community Notice posted just March 1, 2023.

The drinking water problem is just the tip of the iceberg.

This spill of 5,300,000,000 liters of process-affected water is a minimum estimate of how much oil sands process water has escaped into the environment. The spill is in addition to significant seepage of mine water in the same area. The Nations have learned the seepage has been going on for at least nine months with the only notice coming from the Alberta Energy Regulator in May, 2022 with no further communication until February 7, 2023 (only by way of Environmental Protection Order).

If the seepage is not stopped and cleaned up by the time the snow melts, then there could be significant impacts downstream. Mikisew members remain dependent on the fish and animals to survive and have been using the land, swimming and drinking the water, without any adequate notice from the AER or Imperial.

Alberta and Canada approved this project and all of its associated plans despite known concerns about this particular tailings pond.

Chief Tuccaro said, “This is a failure of the provincial regulator to do its job. The AER and Canada approved Imperial’s project knowing the risk of seepage for this tailing pond.

There needs to be an independent review of the approval of this tailings pond and the AER’s management of this mess. Canada and Alberta need to establish a commission to look at solutions for tailings accumulation. As we all know, there are many more tailings ponds and the risk to our Nation is huge. Meanwhile, Imperial

Oil needs to honour the agreement that we entered into prior to this project going ahead.”

The AER neglected to notify Mikisew of the severity of the problem for months, preventing the Nation from taking steps to protect its members and limited timely action to protect the fish, medicines and animals that Mikisew members depend on. Mikisew is therefore calling for an immediate and independent review into the Alberta Energy Regulator’s oversight of oil sands tailings.



NCTR say feds take another misstep

By Darnell Dobson

The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation is deeply concerned that the federal government has given the responsibility of carrying out an extremely sensitive engagement process to an international agency with no prior knowledge of the residential school system, and no prior experience working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Survivors.

Under the terms of the Technical Arrangement that was publicly released on February 17, the federal government has contracted the Netherlands-based International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) “to engage with Indigenous communities on options relating to the identification and repatriation of missing children.”

“How many times do we need to repeat nothing about us, without us?” said Eugene Arcand,

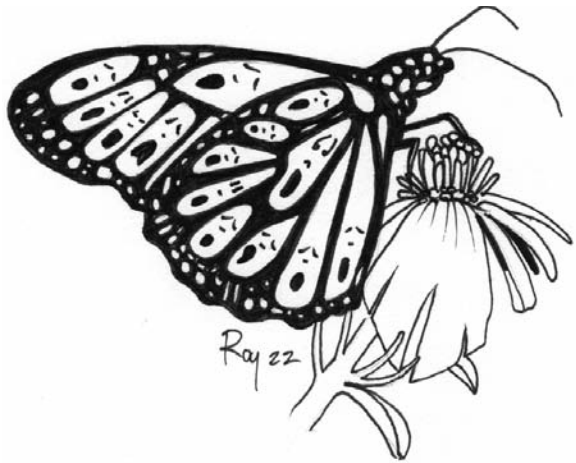
member of the NCTR’s Survivor Circle. “We need a healing process, not something that further traumatizes Survivors, our families and our communities. I don’t understand why the federal government would entrust such a sensitive process to an agency that doesn’t have the necessary cultural competency.”

Rumours have circulated for weeks about the ICMP’s possible involvement in the search for residential school missing children. Although the Technical Arrangement is focused on an engagement process to inform future federal government plans, expectations have been created among some Indigenous communities that they will receive direct investigative support from the ICMP. The federal announcement has

Continued on page 14

Federal court approves \$2.8-billion day school settlement agreement

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



The federal government’s \$2.8-billion settlement with 325 First Nations whose members were forced to attend residential day schools is moving forward after a federal court approved the agreement.

The settlement, first announced in January, seeks to redress the harms suffered by band members as a result of forced assimilation, including loss of language and culture. It will provide each First Nation involved with an initial \$200,000 payment to each nation to develop proposals for further funding, which will amount to about \$8.6 million to each impacted First Nation, with modifications based on specific nations size and remoteness.

An Indigenous-led non-profit will be tasked with dispersing the funds, the federal government said.

“These are the actual steps that really need to take place when it comes to the impacts of the

residential schools system on Indigenous communities,” Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir of Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc, one of the nations that originally brought forward the lawsuit, told *Global News*. “It’s really important to be able to move forward in a good way and... the proposal that came from the federal government was a huge step.”

Justice Ann Marie McDonald, who approved the settlement, called it “historic both in terms of the quantum of the settlement and its unique structure.”

“As Canada remarked, the \$2.8-billion settlement is not intended to put a value on the losses suffered by the Band Class members, as that is an impossible task,” she said.

These funds are separate from any that might be awarded in the future to families whose children disappeared or died at day schools.

At a settlement approval hearing in February

former Former Tk’emlups te Secwepemc chief Shane Gottfriedson said the settlement “means everything” to him as an admission that it’s “about time Canada steps aside” and allows First Nations to decide how to recover from the residential school system themselves.

A 2021 settlement compensated individual day scholars for the harm they suffered.

Both agreements are dubbed the “Gottfriedson settlement” because he launched the challenge to

Continued on page 10

Tseshahṭ *cont. from p 7*

“Our 26 Calls for Truth and Justice ensure any further investigations into what happened at this ‘school’ are done independently and that survivors, their families and our community are given wellness support they need to heal,” stated the First Nation in a press release.

The calls for action are directed to all levels of government (federal, provincial, regional and municipal), as well as the RCMP and the Presbyterian Church and United Church of Canada.

UBCIC commended the Tseshahṭ Nation and stated, “The phase I results of the ʔuuʔatumin

yaqckʷiimitqin (Doing It for Our Ancestors) project into the former Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS) have confirmed horrific survivor-accounts of violence and abuse, including the verified deaths of 67 students, plus 17 geophysical features representing suspected graves from ground investigations.

“Our hearts go out to cišaaʔath, the over 70 First Nations who had children forcibly taken to the AIRS, members of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, and all residential school and intergenerational survivors who are impacted by today’s announcement and the ongoing investigations into former Residential Schools across the country.

“We acknowledge the heartfelt leadership of Wahmeesh, (Chief Ken Watts), the Tseshahṭ First Nation administration and community members, survivors, elders, and the AIRS research team for pursuing the truth and undertaking sacred work. We pray for a healing path, offer our support for the cišaaʔath Calls for Truth and Justice, and stand behind all BC First Nations seeking justice, accountability and healing.”

The Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program has a hotline to help residential school survivors and their relatives suffering with trauma invoked by the recall of past abuse. The number is 1-866-925-4419.



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Patrick Mitsuing is creating a healthy powwow community

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Patrick Mitsuing and his family are powwow community builders who call Central Alberta home. Most recently, Mitsuing has become internationally famous for his fancy dance performance at the 2023 Super Bowl; it was a huge milestone for his family.

Mitsuing is also a well-known figure in Central Alberta for his role in creating a healthy and vibrant powwow community in Red Deer.

The power powwow couple, Patrick and Melissa Mitsuing invested nearly a decade of community building with the City of Red Deer. They have created a social infrastructure for a healthy and positive powwow community.

It started about a decade ago, explained Mitsuing. "12 years ago, I set the intention when we first arrived in Red Deer. I said I'm going to have a powwow there as we drove by the Peavey Mart Centrium."

In an interview with *Alberta Native News*, Patrick Mitsuing opened up about fleeing a violent neighborhood and seeking out a safer city area.

He said it was by chance that the Mitsuing family heard about the safest places in Canada on the news.

"I was living in Saskatoon, in a bad neighborhood," said Mitsuing, and he had just heard about a murder and a drug bust that took place near his home. "At the time, I had my one-year-old, and I wanted to make a better life for my family."

The news report said the safest places to live in Canada were two locations down east, which were too far; the closest place listed was Sylvan Lake, Alberta.

"We left on a whim," said Mitsuing. "We didn't

know anybody, we just left." The Mitsuing family arrived in Sylvan Lake.

Patrick instantly recognized the opportunity to serve a community that was being underserved when it came to Indigenous community activities. When they arrived in Red Deer, they discovered there hadn't been a powwow in the city in nearly 20 years.

Coming from a traditional powwow family, Mitsuing had the talent and skills to educate and perform locally. He said that at first he started volunteering his time at local schools to guest speak about powwow dancing.

"I would call schools and ask if they needed a speaker or a dancer. I wasn't getting paid. I just wanted to get myself out there, and sure enough, through word of month, I started getting requests to perform at the schools," said Mitsuing.

He explained, "There was a group here called the Red Deer Aboriginal Dance group that was about to call it quits – we decided to get a group of people [who were] passionate about community, and we took over the group."

"We started creating powwow nights; then people started showing, 200 people, then 300 people... We were like, wow, people really like this."

Mitsuing continued, "After that, we went to talk to the City of Red Deer and let them know we have this awesome programming going on, that's not being supported, but we are bringing the community together, and so I asked for a bunch of money to support us."

"Sure enough, the city started supporting us because of the families we served," said Mitsuing.

The City of Red Deer was initially hesitant to give them a large amount of money because they didn't understand what a powwow was, he added.

They needed to be educated about the value of Indigenous powwows and how they benefit a community.

"So, we had to do a lot of education in this area with the city, about what events like that would look like for the city," said Mitsuing.

Eventually the city bought in and started financially investing in their group and they eventually created Red Deer's 1st Annual Red Deer International



Patrick Mitsuing. Instagram photo: Jay McDonald

Powwow (RDIP) and an award-winning Powwow exhibit which they partner with Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery (MAG) to showcase traditional powwow regalia at MAG.

Mitsuing gives credit to his mentors who have helped mold his vision of creating a healthy and vibrant powwow community in Central Alberta.

"I have to give credit to Don Speidel from the Saskatoon Public Schools' Division and Manito Ahbee festival," he said.

"I gave these people tobacco and asked how I run a powwow; that tobacco was so powerful. So I got a university education by just sitting and conversing with people, and they gave me their sponsorship package, budget, and everything I needed to create a powwow."

"What we have created is growing into something awesome," continued Mitsuing. "It was the beginning of doing larger events, Truth and Reconciliation Days and full-on powwows."

"I think overall, it was just our love of serving the community and doing selflessly, and we just wanted to serve this market."

Mitsuing shares how Powwow Times was initially an online platform to stay connected to society, culture and showcase Indigenous culture and powwow through various social media platforms.

He said, "Powwow Times was me going out and creating content for Powwow Times. It was a way to stay connected to my culture; I was recording the powwow songs, meeting singers, recording the stories, hearing the elders, and hearing the stories around the dancing... Sitting with elders and going to ceremonies started connecting me."

"I started getting into online marketing and amazon affiliate marketing products online too."

This is where he came up with combining online affiliate marketing with offering online powwow programming.

"I thought I could name it like New York Times, LA Times, and then I thought... Powwow Times. That sounded cool," said Mitsuing.

From an idea to reality, Powwow Times is now a large online media site for Indigenous Culture, Song, and Dance. "Our mandate is revitalizing the Indigenous language and promoting healthy living through Indigenous culture and decolonization."

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2.8-billion *cont. from p 9*

day scholars' exclusion from the 2008 residential school settlement, alongside former shishalh chief Garry Feschuk.

"I would like to acknowledge all of our ancestors who didn't make it, as well (as) all of our day scholars who signed on to the fight (and) who didn't see the result, who moved on to the spirit world," Gottfriedson said when the settlement was announced in January.

The agreement establishes "four pillars" that the funds can go towards: the revival and protection of Indigenous language; the revival and protection of Indigenous culture; the protection and promotion of heritage; and the wellness of Indigenous communities and their members.

According to a news release from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, this settlement is the first to acknowledge the collective harms of residential schools and to offer redress for the damages and destruction of Indigenous languages and culture.

Ever Deadly: A documentary of power and song

Reviewed by Deena Goodrunning, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Ever Deadly is a documentary about award-winning Inuk singer, activist and author Tanya Tagaq. The film was written and directed by Tagaq and filmmaker Chelsea McMullan, and was produced by the National Film Board of Canada. *Ever Deadly* premiered at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival on September 9, 2022. Since then *Ever Deadly* has had various screenings across Canada, including two screenings at the Metro Cinema in Edmonton in January 2023, which is when I watched the film.

I was excited for the film since I love listening to Tagaq’s music and her book *Split Tooth* is one of my favourites. But, despite being a fan I didn’t know too much about her - except that I love her music and her book. While the film doesn’t provide a complete biography of her life, it does provide glimpses into her life with a focus on her music and activism.

The film started off with Tagaq traditionally throat-singing with another Inuk artist Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. At first, I was wondering: what were they doing? Were they simply singing a song together? Were they acting out a story together? Then at one point I realized they were competing with each other. And later on in the film I felt delighted to be proven right when Tagaq described traditional throat-singing as a friendly competition between two women. Tagaq’s throat-singing that is featured in most of her albums is contemporary throat-singing.

In *Ever Deadly* scenes shot in Nunavut of Tagaq’s life were skilfully entwined with scenes of her performing at a concert. The film also featured animated illustrations hand-drawn by

Inuk artist Shuvina Ashoona and spoken word lines from *Split Tooth*. The flow was captivating in that the tone of the scenes from Tagaq’s life were being matched with the tone of her singing scenes. Performance scenes where she would be singing in a calmer way were followed by calmer scenes from her life, while scenes where she was singing in a darker and more anguished way were followed by darker scenes. The film actually reminded me of a score of music where each note was paired with the next notes. All the scenes and sequences in the film flowed together very melodiously.

The film and Tagaq’s music was creepy and scary at times. But, I didn’t mind. In fact, I welcomed the creepiness and scariness of the film and her music. Because the world is a creepy and scary place. If people want to criticize Tagaq for having strange and dark sounding music, they should first criticize the world for being a strange and dark place.

Dark situations and topics were shown in the film. Tagaq’s mother tells the story of how the Canadian government forcibly relocated Tagaq’s family from their resource rich community to a new location that was scarce in resources. Her family nearly starved to death, but they managed to survive. The film also brought attention to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada and brought attention to residential schools and the abuse and assimilation practices that happened.

“Residential schools have beaten the Inuktitut out of this town in the name of progress and the name of decency,” Tagaq said at one point in the film.

People were using their power to harm others. And most people didn’t care to stop it because it was Indigenous peoples being harmed.

Despite addressing such dark issues, the film was also really funny at times. There was a sense of humour and healing throughout the film.



When Tagaq was asked if other animals besides fish also have hearts that continue to beat after they die, Tagaq remarked that she doesn’t know. She thought for a moment and then said that maybe chickens do.

I’m not capturing the sense of humour in that scene through my writing, but watching it in the theatre almost everyone around me was laughing. The audience members around me were also laughing when Tagaq humorously said at one part in the film, “I don’t want people to visit my grave. I hate people!”

In conclusion, I really loved *Ever Deadly*. The film was so beautiful and stunning and was (just as the title suggests) ever deadly. I would really recommend that everyone watch the film. The messages and truths that the film tells on the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism in Canada are incredibly important.

And even if *Ever Deadly* had only shown concert footage scenes, the film would still be incredible just for the pure beauty and radiance and darkness of Tagaq’s music and singing. Plus, I don’t think I’ve ever seen a film shot and cut together in the way this film has been. Something about the way the film was edited and directed really gives off a sense of it being a song almost.

However, I will acknowledge that the film and Tagaq’s music might not be everyone’s cup of tea. Both the film and her music are very different from what most people would normally see and hear. But, as Tagaq said herself in the film: “It’s a very small room, so if you really hate it, it’s easy to leave. It’s just a few steps that way.”



Inuk singer / author Tanya Tagaq

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Public artwork documents Indigenous relation to the land

Indigenous relation to the land in amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton) is the subject of a new artwork, *Sipikiskisiw (Remembers Far Back)* by Michelle Sound, which was coordinated by the Edmonton Arts Council and is currently being installed at the Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) shelter located at 10020-100 Street NW. The transit shelter was recently renewed as the City of Edmonton works toward creating more safe, inclusive, and attractive public spaces for transit riders and the public.

Commissioned in 2022 under the City of Edmonton’s new Public Art Policy, the Edmonton Arts Council worked with three local Indigenous artists/curators to select an artist for this project. Edmonton Arts Council’s Public Art Director David Turnbull said, “the new policy allows us to be flexible, responsive, and use curatorially-driven approaches to intentionally grow and develop a public art collection that is high quality, accessible, relevant, and representative of Edmonton’s diverse communities.”

“We are pleased to partner with Edmonton Arts Council and artist Michelle Sound to display this Indigenous art – which tells a meaningful story of those who were here before Edmonton was a city – in our transit space,” said Carrie Hotton-MacDonald, Branch Manager of Edmonton Transit Service. “Supporting talented artists and displaying their beautiful works of art helps to create more vibrant transit spaces for everyone to

enjoy, and this work adds to the inventory of public art and murals in transit spaces.”

Like Sound’s artwork often does, *Sipikiskisiw (Remembers Far Back)* explores her Cree and Métis identity from a personal experience rooted in family, place and history. Her artwork for the ETS shelter uses torn copies of archival images of an Indian Affairs Papaschase reserve survey map from 1899 and a photograph taken prior to 1907 of Indigenous men and tipis on the grounds of Fort Edmonton. The artist then mended the torn imagery using embroidery thread, caribou tufting, porcupine quills and beadwork.

The rips in the images are meant to “show the colonial violence that Indigenous people have experienced, including residential schools, intergenerational trauma, loss of language, and displacement from our territories,” explains the artist. The mending of the images doesn’t fully obscure the rips, shares Sound, just as “the loss, grief, longing, and memory cannot be fully mended and the resiliency required to survive colonialism is also messy and fragile. These losses can never be fully healed but we can process our histories and realities through art,



Sipikiskisiw (Remembers Far Back) by Michelle Sound has been installed as public art at an Edmonton Transit Shelter.

culture and stories.”

In an article about the artwork, Emily Riddle – one of the curators of the project – writes that the land on which the ETS shelter now sits was an important outlook for Indigenous Peoples prior to the construction of downtown Edmonton. Said Riddle, “When the jury met, Michelle Sound was at the top of each of our lists of artists whose work we wanted to see in Edmonton...in stitching together these two archival records with threads, beads, rick rack and tufts, Michelle Sound asks us to imagine a restitched present while we are in transit. On the hill above the site of both these photos, we are very much embedded in this history and in the forever now of a Nehiyaw present.”

ULethbridge signs on as a supporter of Buffalo Treaty

What began as conversations between a University of Lethbridge graduate student and Blackfoot elders more than a decade ago came full circle Wednesday when the University became the first post-secondary institution to sign on as a supporter of the historic Buffalo Treaty.

President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Mike Mahon, signed the treaty as part of ULethbridge’s annual Indigenous Awareness Week activities this month, joining the City of Lethbridge, with members of city council and Mayor Blaine Hyggen, and the Piikani Nation, represented by Chief Troy Knowlton and members of council, as signatories.

“The name of our university is Iniskim, which means sacred buffalo stone, and why we were given that name by Elder Bruce Wolf Child in 2001 relates to the historical relationship between where the university is located and the sacred buffalo stone,” says Mahon. “For us to be here today to sign on to the Buffalo Treaty is very important and exciting because it continues to build upon the efforts and traditions this university has undertaken for many years in its relationship with the Blackfoot and all Indigenous Peoples.”

The Buffalo Treaty, a treaty of cooperation, renewal and restoration, was born out of graduate research work Paulette Fox (MSc ’05) was conducting in environmental science. Her conversations with elders included the issue of the buffalo and its importance in

Indigenous culture.

“The elders were saying how important the buffalo is for our land and our culture, songs, stories and ceremonies. And they talked about how our youth hear these stories and sing the songs and even participate in the ceremonies but when they look outside, there are no buffalo to be seen,” says Dr. Leroy Little Bear, ULethbridge’s Vice-Provost Iniskim Indigenous Relations. “We wanted to bring the buffalo back so our youth could make those connections again.”

The Buffalo Treaty was first signed on September 24, 2014, at the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, to honour, recognize and revitalize the time immemorial relationship with buffalo. It was initially signed by four American and four Canadian First Nations, the first treaty to be signed between Indigenous Peoples in more than 150 years. In the years since, nearly 50 First Nations have been added as signatories.

“The treaty itself speaks to conservation, culture, education, health, economics and research — all things we can work on together — with the buffalo in the centre. This will be the portal through which cooperation and relationships can be built,” adds Little Bear.

While only sovereign entities can sign treaties, the elders who created the Buffalo Treaty understood there were various organizations and individuals who could and would support the



ULethbridge President Dr. Mike Mahon signs the historic Buffalo Treaty.

vision of the treaty and work to restore the environment through the buffalo. They were invited to sign as supporters for all the ideas and concepts within the treaty.

“The University of Lethbridge signing on as a supporter shows they agree to work towards the ends that the Buffalo Treaty speaks to through education, research and cooperation,” says Little Bear. “It is a momentous day and very fitting that the University of Lethbridge is the first university to sign on because the very beginnings of the Buffalo Treaty happened right here, on Blackfoot territory.”



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U of C study highlights anti-Indigenous bias in health care

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A new University of Calgary study shows two-thirds of Alberta physicians have an implicit anti-Indigenous bias, fuelling concerns about racism in the health-care system.

Every practising physician in the province was provided with a survey in 2020, with 375 participating. The largest demographic group represented was cisgender white women at 40 per cent.

The survey results showed widespread concern with “reverse racism,” the perception that white people are being discriminated against, and a general discomfort with discussing racism.

Pamela Roach, the study’s lead researcher, is a member of the Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA). She told the CBC the survey’s results validate Indigenous people’s concerns about widespread anti-Indigenous racism among health-care providers.

The numbers outlined in the survey are “unacceptably high,” Roach said.

The study looked at implicit and explicit bias among physicians. Participants were given two sliding scale questions to understand their level of explicit bias. The first question asked participants their feelings about Indigenous people while the second inquired about their preference for white or Indigenous patients.

According to the study, eight per cent of participants felt unfavourably towards Indigenous people while 25 per cent preferred white people to Indigenous people.

For implicit bias, physicians were asked to match photos of Indigenous and white European people with positive and negative characterizations, which were randomized.

The survey found that 67 per cent of physicians showed an implicit bias towards white people and 13 per cent demonstrated an implicit bias towards Indigenous faces.

"I am aware that 67 per cent feels really big - and it is - and part of the reason for that is because of the messages that society tells us," Roach said.

"Even people who would have answered the explicit bias questions in a way that they felt positive toward Indigenous people, what the implicit bias does is gives us a baseline of how people are reacting."

Additionally, the study found physicians in rural or remote settings had the most balanced implicit perceptions of Indigenous and settler patients while those in urban and large rural settings were more inclined to favour white faces.

Older physicians, those in surgical practices and those without academic affiliation were also more likely to favour white people.

This information is especially important, since physicians are expected to make life-altering decisions quickly.

Jessica Kolopenuk, the Alberta Health Services (AHS) research chair in Indigenous health at the University of Alberta, is from the Peguis First Nation. She told CBC the survey’s results were unsurprising.

"It is unfortunate that a scientific study evidencing racism is needed and perhaps even regarded as more solid proof than are the stories and testimonies of Indigenous peoples ourselves," Kolopenuk, who wasn’t involved in the study, said.

"Providing 'equitable' health care to Indigenous patients might not be an adequate framework and goal given that it maintains white measures of health as the norm to be striving for."

Reagan Bartel, the director of health for the MNA, told CityNews that Indigenous people’s experience in the health-care system is often their first

experience of racism.

"Taking care of their chronic conditions on their own, waiting until a chronic condition is so bad that they have to access care through our emergency departments. We have an incredibly low attachment to physicians and that’s often because they tell us they don’t feel safe actually seeking out care in the communities they live in," Bartel said.

Asked for comment on the study’s findings, AHS spokesperson James Wood emphasized the service’s “Indigenous Health Commitments: A Roadmap to Wellness” guidelines.

"All staff are required to complete mandatory Indigenous awareness and sensitivity training as part of their employment with AHS, and there are a number of additional diversity and inclusion education programs available to employees," Wood told CBC.

Alberta Medical Association president Dr. Fredrykka Rinaldi told CityNews the survey results are “disheartening.”

“Such bias exacerbates health inequity that is already severe. It is also deeply rooted and will take time to eliminate but stating our intent to do so is the first step,” Rinaldi said in a statement.

Dr. James Makokis, a two-spirit Nehiyô (Plains Cree) family physician from Saddle Lake Cree Nation, told CBC that anti-Indigenous bias often results in negligent care.

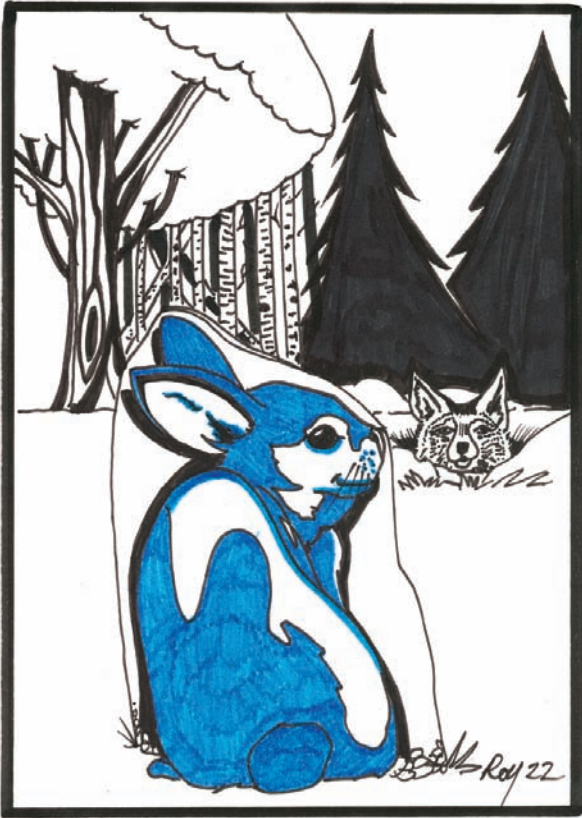
"If someone presents to the emergency room, and their vital signs are not taken, there's some perceptions made about somebody based on their skin colour or a sexual orientation and then that patient leaves because they're not being treated properly," Makokis said. "That's an instance of discrimination and potentially racism."

In one recent example of negligent health care for Indigenous people, Cara Roan had a miscarriage in Wetaskiwin, Alta., but the hospital provided her with the wrong remains, which she was informed of after holding a memorial service for her baby.

"To find out that it wasn't ... my baby I put away the first time, to have to do it the second time, it was hard," she said. "I'm totally broken from this. I don't even have the words for it."

AHS and lab service provider Dynalife said it was the result of a lab error.

"We offer our deepest apologies to the two families who were impacted. This mistake should have not happened," AHS and Dynalife said in identical statements to the CBC.



"AHS is taking this incident very seriously and is reviewing what happened in this case to determine how it occurred, and what can be done differently to ensure it never happens again ... AHS is providing the family with a written apology and is available to listen to their concerns and answer any questions they may have."

Digging up the remains of the baby she was initially given went against Roan’s culture, but she had a doctor assist her with the exhumation so those remains could be returned to the appropriate parents.

"You don't go back and dig up a body. It's not right in our culture," she said.

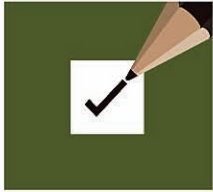
Roan held a second burial service once she received the correct remains.

IT’S TAX SEASON

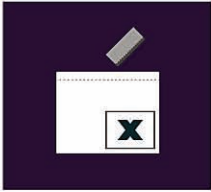
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EHC is funding Indigenous resurgence in Edmonton

Telling stories about our communities is an essential part of strengthening these communities for generations to come, and the Edmonton Heritage Council greatly appreciates the opportunity to play a role in fostering this work.

To this end, the Council offers the FIRE Grant program (Funding Indigenous Resurgence in Edmonton) to provide funding assistance - up to \$10,000 - to Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) individuals and organizations to support projects that help tell important stories about their communities.

The FIRE grant program is designed by Indigenous people for Indigenous people. The program supports Indigenous peoples' inherent right to self-determination and cultural resurgence, and it aims to provide recipients with the support and resources to advance their brilliant work.

A wide range of meaningful assistance is provided to FIRE grant recipients. An experienced team offers project mentorship throughout the entire application process. Guidance is provided to facilitate connections with other grantees, professionals, and organizations that will advance your project, such as Arts Habitat Edmonton who will help in your search for venues and spaces in Edmonton to suit your project needs.

EHC platforms will be used to share your story, spotlight your work, and inspire others. A continued relationship will be maintained with recipients to help build your capacity to apply for other grants, such as the EHC's Heritage Community Investment Program (HCIP) grants.

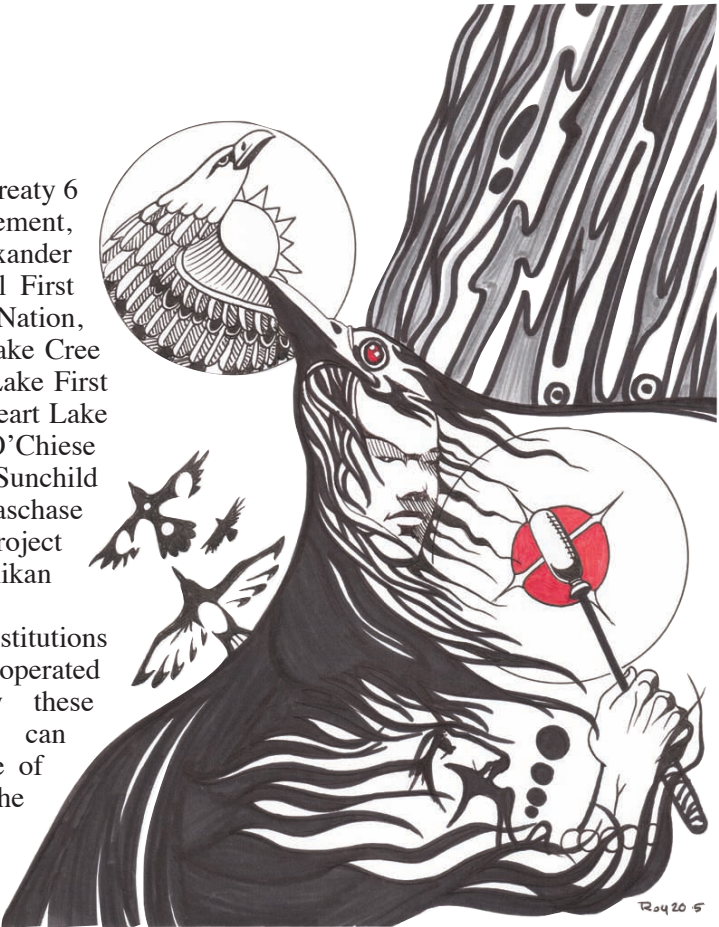
Who is eligible?
If you are an Indigenous person living on a First

Nations reserve or Métis settlement in Treaty 6 Territory (eg. Kikino Métis Settlement, Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, Alexander First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, Paul First Nation, Maskwacis, Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, Whitefish Lake First Nation, Heart Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, O'Chiese First Nation, Samson Cree Nation, Sunchild First Nation, Michel First Nation, Papaschase First Nation) and have a heritage project relating to amiskwacîwâskahikan (Edmonton), you are eligible to submit.

FIRE Grants exclude educational institutions and government owned and/or operated facilities. Individuals employed by these institutions are eligible if they can demonstrate that the project is outside of their professional role within the organization.

Other criteria include: The applicant must be a First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit person over the age of 18. The applicant cannot currently have a FIRE funded project underway. Applicants can only receive one FIRE grant per calendar year. The applicant must be up to date with final reports for other EHC-funded work, including returning any unused grant funds. Applicants who have been granted extensions on other EHC-funded work are also not eligible to apply. The project must explore Indigenous history or heritage with a connection to arts and/or storytelling.

The project must have clear start and end dates with a specific scope of activities (if applying as a non-profit or collective, your project must be



distinct from your organization's ongoing operations or programs). The applicant must be an individual, registered non-profit society, or collective whose residence, location of work, or proposed project is in the Edmonton metropolitan region.

For information and to apply for a FIRE grant visit edmontonheritage.ca/grants/fire-grants/
The deadline is April 21, 2023.

Contact Indigenous Initiatives Lead Jessica Johns at jjohns@edmontonheritage.ca

NCTR *cont. from p 8*

created further confusion by emphasizing the benefits to Indigenous communities rather than the fact that the Arrangement, as written, is primarily about providing advice to the federal government.

"There has been a shocking lack of transparency and clarity around Canada's decision to hire the ICMP. This is profoundly unfair and harmful to Survivors and communities. Unfortunately, actually seeing the terms of this agreement has only raised more questions," said NCTR Executive Director Stephanie Scott.

Under the terms of the Technical Arrangement, the ICMP is to organize an expert roundtable, two national "townhalls", and approximately 35 regional engagement sessions before reporting its

findings and recommendations to the federal government – as early as this June. Throughout this process, the ICMP is to hire Indigenous facilitators to "ensure that spiritual and ceremonial needs are met" while the ICMP will provide "expertise and educational elements on all matters related to identification, repatriation, and DNA analysis."

Governing Circle member Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux said, "Beginning with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, there has been a clear understanding that any work related to the harms caused by the residential school system must be led by Indigenous Peoples and that Survivors must be at the heart of this work. Putting the planned engagement process in the hands of a non-Indigenous NGO is a misstep and a very worrying one at that."

"We can all agree on the need for a coherent

national response to our missing children. The NCTR is committed to working with Survivors, families, communities, partner organizations and the federal, provincial and territorial governments on this Sacred endeavor. Unfortunately, the federal government has built its engagement process on the wrong foundation. Great care must be taken going forward to protect the health and well-being of Survivors and their families and to ensure that any future strategy respects Indigenous Peoples' laws and protocols, expertise and self-determined decision-making authority," said Stephanie Scott.

Since receiving a copy of Canada's agreement with the ICMP, the NCTR has raised its concerns in a meeting with Minister Marc Miller and will be following up with recommendations for measures to respect the rights and safety of affected families and communities who will be affected by this process.

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Deadline: April 21, 2023

Up to \$10,000 of funding awarded

Application can be found at edmontonheritage.ca/grants/fire-grants/

Contact Indigenous Initiatives Lead Jessica Johns with questions at jjohns@edmontonheritage.ca

EDMONTON HERITAGE COUNCIL

Leading advocate steadfast in vision that ‘no child is left behind’

By Geoff McMaster, Folio.com

In January of 2022, Canada rang in the new year with a landmark \$40-billion settlement for Indigenous youth harmed by the country’s discriminatory child welfare system, which had severed them from their communities for decades.

Indigenous child welfare advocate Cindy Blackstock — who first filed the human rights complaint against the federal government in 2007 — welcomed the historic settlement, but warned it was just “words on paper” and that “we have to see the government actually deliver this stuff.”

Sure enough, as the calendar turned to 2023, it appeared those words on paper were indeed in jeopardy. The agreement was rejected by the Human Rights Tribunal last October, after it ruled that the \$20-billion cap for compensation of individuals would leave out many eligible survivors.

As the federal government ordered a judicial review of the settlement, the Assembly of First Nations grappled over what to do next.

That’s when Blackstock once again stepped into the national spotlight, imploring the assembly to make sure “no child is left behind.”

“We have had too many apologies, we’ve had too many compensation deals, we’ve had too many kids hurt. And this has got to be it,” she said.

Last month there were signs of significant progress. The federal government and Assembly of First Nations told the court they were close to an agreement on a proposed \$20-billion settlement package for victims of the on-reserve child-welfare system.

Since founding the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society in 1998, Blackstock has become Canada’s leading champion for the rights of Indigenous children and families. The society “works to ensure the safety and well-being of First Nations youth and their families through education initiatives, public policy campaigns and quality resources to support communities,” says Blackstock.

Translating research into solutions

For the past decade, her tenacious advocacy has been fuelled by evidence-based research centred in the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education. In 2012 she founded the First Nations Children’s Action Research and Education Service (FNCARES) in partnership

with her society.

“Over the years, we’ve spent a lot of time doing public education, equipping the average citizen with things they can do to make a difference in implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action,” says Blackstock.

Under the direction of Melisa Brittain in the Educational Policy Studies program area, FNCARES aims to highlight “the structural drivers of disadvantage” for Indigenous children and their families, translating their research into “pragmatic, community-based solutions,” directly involving First Nations communities and their children in the process.

Their research helped the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations first file suit against the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2007, arguing that the federal government’s policies and funding practices discriminated against Indigenous children based on race.

Most important, says Blackstock, FNCARES is dedicated to exposing the unconscious bias that normalizes such discrimination.

“When you talk about the biggest fight, it’s really against that attitude — the discrimination towards First Nations folks that wouldn’t be acceptable if perpetrated against other populations.

“Colonialism really manufactured a system where non-Indigenous people didn’t see the discrimination, even though it was in plain sight.”

Public attitudes have been shifting lately, she says, partly due to the recent uncovering of unmarked graves of children at a number of former residential schools. Despite some progress, Blackstock refuses to relent in her ongoing fight for reconciliation, with FNCARES right at her side.

One of the research group’s SSHRC-sponsored projects, involving several universities, examines teachers’ perceptions of how reconciliation activities are affecting children.

“We wanted to find out what teachers felt, because if there were any adverse impacts, we wanted to address those right away. If there were positive impacts, we wanted to learn from them and blossom,” says Blackstock.

Exposing colonialism

FNCARES has also collaborated with American cult expert Steven Hassan of the Freedom of Mind



FNCARES founder Cindy Blackstock

Resource Center to produce resources and events about colonization and mind control.

According to Blackstock, the Canadian government used propaganda to construct distorted views of Indigenous peoples, allowing for “the theft of land, children and resources through mass displacement, starvation, suppression of culture.

“FNCARES lets us ask new questions and unpack colonialism in new ways. We’re interested not just in how colonial mind control affected the non-Indigenous population, but also how it affected Indigenous populations.

“It got us into patterns of behaviour that maybe weren’t always in our interest.”

Undergirding those mind-control patterns — still prevalent in the post-secondary environment — is the “dichotomy that underlies colonialism,” she says, and the assumption that everything western is civilized, everything Indigenous somehow savage.

Exposing those assumptions is a big part of reconciliation, she adds, and of providing a brighter future for children and their families.

“Dr. Blackstock holds steadfast to her vision of ensuring that every First Nations child in Canada gets the services and resources they need to thrive in the face of monumental opposition,” says Brittain.

“She is guided by a moral compass that will not allow her to quit and will not allow us to leave even one child behind. Our research and public education work at FNCARES is dedicated to making this vision a reality.”

This article was originally published in Folio.com, newspaper of the University of Alberta.

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