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Cindy Woodhouse elected AFN National Chief

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A regional chief from Manitoba who led negotiations resulting in a \$23-billion class action settlement with the federal government over on-reserve child welfare neglect has been elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

Following six rounds of voting on Dec. 6, Cindy Woodhouse was declared the victor of the AFN special election, which was set in motion in July after former national chief Roseanne Archibald was ousted.

The AFN represents the interests of more than 600 First Nations across Canada.

Woodhouse led each round of balloting, but was unable to declare victory until runner-up David Pratt, vice-chief of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, conceded defeat.

Otherwise, voting would have continued until one of the two remaining candidates reached 60 per cent support in the AFN's ranked ballot system.

"My role every day is going to be to answer the calls of our chiefs," she said in her speech upon winning. "That's the duty of the national chief."

Pratt, in his concession speech, said that he didn't want to prolong the voting process knowing the wide array of challenges First Nations people face, including housing, addictions and mental health.

"The issues are too important for us to hold back the next national chief from taking over," he said, adding that he supports Woodhouse "110 per cent."

In her victory speech, Woodhouse thanked Archibald — who was the first female AFN national chief — "because she smashed glass ceilings for all of us."

Woodhouse voted in favour of Archibald's ouster, which was the result of allegations of bullying and harassment in the former national chief's office. Archibald strongly denies the accusations.

Woodhouse acknowledged that the AFN was coming out of a "dark period" of division.

She assured delegates, however, that "by ceremony, by prayers, by working together, by trying to find a new way... we can overcome some of those challenges."

Woodhouse added that she intends on drafting a budget and sending it to every MP and federal government official in early 2024.

"There's a growing gap in this country and they know it and we have to try and work together. We just have lots of issues to work on," Woodhouse said.

In her campaign, Woodhouse, who hails from Pinaymootang First Nation in Manitoba, said there needs to be a "big discussion" with the federal government about Indigenous policing jurisdiction.

She was also critical of former Manitoba premier Heather Stefanson's unsuccessful reelection campaign, in which



Newly elected Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse pledges to work with the chiefs across Turtle Island.

Stefanson campaigned on her refusal to search a Winnipeg-area landfill for the remains of Indigenous women who are believed to have been victims of a serial killer.

Woodhouse said she accepted Stefanson's public apology for running ads against searching the landfill, but cautioned that the former premier never apologized to the women's families.

In a pre-election interview with APTN News, Woodhouse cited her role in negotiating the \$23-billion child welfare class action settlement with the government, which includes an additional \$20 billion to reform the child welfare system, as an example of her ability "to work on the issues and to get results for our people."

Quilt of Valour Presentation



L-R: Captain (retired) Rod McLeod was presented a Quilt of Valour during Lethbridge College Sash Day by local QOV representative Margaret Ventress along with Brittany Lee from Lethbridge College and Warrant Officer (retired) Glenn Miller President of the Alberta Branch of the Last Post Fund.

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New study reports economic contributions in Treaty 7 region

Jointly commissioned by Calgary Economic Development and the City of Calgary, and executed by MNP, a new study titled the Indigenous Economic Contribution Study reports that the Indigenous economy generated a total GDP of \$1.5 billion in 2021, approximately 1.2 per cent of Calgary’s total GDP.

Of this, First Nations governments contributed \$540 million, Indigenous-owned businesses contributed \$450 million, and Indigenous households contributed \$530 million.

“This study highlights the contributions Indigenous Peoples and businesses make to the Calgary regional economy,” said Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek.

“As we pursue Economic Reconciliation, understanding the opportunities and barriers will better enable entrepreneurs, businesses and governments to collectively unlock the talent and ideas of First Nations, Métis and urban Indigenous Peoples.”

With the Indigenous population in Calgary young, growing and able to fill labour gaps now and in the future, seizing the Economic Reconciliation opportunity positions Calgary’s economy for sustainable growth.

“Building an economy that is inclusive and accessible for everyone is a priority in Calgary’s economic strategy,” said Brad Parry, President & CEO, Calgary Economic Development.

“Our city can only realize its full economic potential by deliberately removing barriers to economic participation. This study both proves this and provides tangible actions we can take to champion the growth of the Indigenous economy.”

Approximately 42 per cent of the Indigenous population in Calgary is under the age of 25, compared with 29 per cent of the non-Indigenous population. At an annual average growth rate of 3.6 per cent, this group is also growing at nearly double the rate of the non-Indigenous population (1.6 per cent).

Economic Reconciliation is the process of making economic amends for historical injustices to Indigenous Peoples. The study makes three specific recommendations to increase Indigenous economic participation, led by the City of Calgary, civic partners, community organizations and businesses:

Support an Indigenous Procurement Program: Collaborate with the City in its current development and implementation of an Indigenous Procurement Program to increase access to City contracts for Indigenous-owned businesses.

Strengthen Indigenous economic development: Work with the Blackfoot Confederacy Nations, Tsuut’ina Nation, Stoney Nakoda Nations, Métis and urban Indigenous economic development organizations to enhance program offerings and support for Indigenous businesses.

Attract Indigenous meetings and events: Foster a sense of connection by attracting Indigenous meetings and events, laying the foundation for relationship-building and encouraging the establishment of Indigenous businesses in the region.

“First Nations are drivers of economic development and prosperity,” said Jamie Springchief, Community and Economic Development Manager, Siksika Nation.

“Reconciliation is important but can only be achieved through ReconciliACTION. Ensuring that First Nations are key players in procurement and project planning and development is the key to success. In the true spirit of Nation Building, we all must recognize that we are stronger together.”

The economic contributions data captured in

the study will be updated on an ongoing basis, following the release of new census information by StatsCan.

“Community Futures Treaty Seven is very pleased with the Indigenous Economic Contribution Study that was conducted by The City of Calgary and Calgary Economic Development and views it as a very positive step in the history of Indigenous Economic Development,” said Shawna Morning Bull (Ikinnaisipistoohkomi), Manager Business Development, Community Futures Treaty 7.

“With ongoing updates expected, this assures long-term edification for Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, as this data will be able

to provide an improved and factual explanation of the Indigenous economy in Treaty Seven.”

By continuously measuring these key indicators, the study will quantitatively track progress against economic measures and actively close the gaps identified in the study.

“It has been the resource sector that has led this country’s relationship with the Indigenous People. It is now the resource sector that will lead the Indigenous People’s relationship with this country,” said Arthur Cunningham, Elder, Métis of Alberta.

To continue this important conversation, the Calgary community is encouraged to register for the New Economy LIVE: Advancing Economic Reconciliation webinar on Jan. 18, hosted by Calgary Economic Development.

Merry Christmas



Warmest Wishes

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

We wish to extend our gratitude to all the essential workers, community outreach teams, stakeholders and funders who selflessly support our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the most vulnerable community members including Two-Spirited, homeless and other marginalized groups.

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

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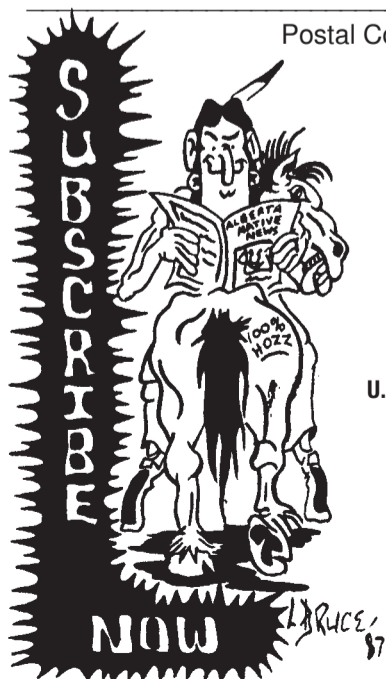
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Call for Action on housing for vulnerable Indigenous people

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As I sit down to write, my heart weighs heavy with the memory of my cousin Karen Rabbit. Her story is not just about one individual's tragic end but a stark reminder of the silent struggles endured by countless vulnerable Indigenous women.

Karen's journey, fraught with unimaginable hardships, ended tragically on the train tracks. She faced indescribable challenges, her suffering ignored, her pain misunderstood. Witnessing her distress and desperation was utterly heart-wrenching.

It felt as though she was punished for being a victim, pushed into a cycle of despair that deepened with each passing day. Her sense of self eroded, and fear seemed to guide her final, desperate act - an attempt to escape the harsh realities of winter and the profound lack of care she experienced.

This tragedy highlights the pressing need for housing and support for vulnerable Indigenous women. Our housing policies must prioritize and embrace the inclusion of women and children, addressing the systemic neglect leading to such devastating outcomes.

As a top housing advocate in Canada and a journalist, I sit on the Native Women's Housing Association of Canada and the Pan-Canada Women's Housing initiatives. I advocate fervently for LGBTQ rights and shed light on the struggles faced by vulnerable Indigenous women. Collaborating with my mother, Lavenia Schug, we've taken our voices to Ottawa, speaking directly about the challenges Indigenous people face, particularly those like Karen, left homeless due to overwhelmed

support systems.

For years, I've tirelessly fought for LGBTQ rights and highlighted the dire circumstances of vulnerable women facing domestic violence without adequate support. Karen deserved a safe haven, a fundamental human right that was denied her. She needed protection from a community that failed her, from exploitation, from psychological bullying, and from a mean-spirited population.

The truth is, Karen didn't find that safe space on the reserve or in rural Alberta.

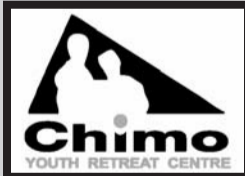
We urgently need to reassess how funding is allocated to Indigenous women in rural Alberta. The failure of the reserve system to provide for her requires immediate action, demanding specific policies that ensure funding for Indigenous women without political interference.

There must be dedicated funding streams within rural Alberta, tailored explicitly to support vulnerable Indigenous women. We cannot afford to let more stories like Karen's fall into the depths of neglect and despair.

Karen's story is not just a tragedy; it's a wake-up call to the collective conscience of our society. We must ensure that vulnerable Indigenous women receive the care, support, and safe spaces they deserve. We must act now; their lives depend on it.

As I write these words, I implore each of us to rise, advocate, and work towards a world where no vulnerable soul is left behind or neglected, where every Karen Rabbit finds her safe space and her peace.

Chevi Rabbit is an advocate for Indigenous Rights, LGBTQ+ Activist.



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Superfan Magoo brings love to the Oilers and to youth across Canada

By Kinnukana, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

There is no one more dedicated and passionate for the Edmonton Oilers than Superfan Magoo, whose real name is Blair Gladue, a Cree from Calling Lake Alberta. He is recognized as a beloved figure among Oilers fans and a role model for Indigenous people. He is often seen at games and events decked out in Oilers gear cheering on the team. He spreads his positivity and love to not just the Oilers, but he also uses it to inspire Indigenous Youth all over Canada.

Blair Gladue is a Cree who was born in Calling Lake, Alberta. He lived there as a young boy and was raised by his grandparents, Alice Gladue (nee Beaver) and Paul Gladue. Right from infancy they spoke only Cree to him. Blair is a fluent Cree speaker and did not speak English until he went to school at age five.

Blair loved growing up with his grandparents. He said that “the most special memory I have with my grandparents is every weekend, every Saturday morning, we would go check our snares in the bush, hike for miles and go hunting. Every weekend, right from when I was a little baby.” They taught him how to set snares, shoot and skin animals. They taught him how to live off the land, pick berries and cones. Blair remembers when he was about ten years old, and he would go pick cones with his grandpa. Every sack that they picked together was dropped off at Forestry and they would receive twenty dollars a bag.

Blair’s love of hockey came from playing ice hockey in the ponds and watching hockey on television. He said he was always a fan of the Edmonton Oilers right from when he was a kid. As he grew up in a log house, he would watch hockey games with his grandpa on their black and white TV. They had an antenna that they had to move around just to get reception for CBC.

Blair was a young man when his grandparents passed away. Afterwards, he moved around a lot. He lived in Wabasca, Athabasca, and Elk Point. Then, Blair ended up living with his mother Virginia in Edmonton. When he moved there, he was already a Superfan of the Edmonton Oilers but didn’t have any money to purchase tickets to

attend games. He would walk around with his Oilers T-Shirt and a little Oilers flag that he had, and he would stand on the corner of the street by the rink and pump everyone up before games. At the time, Blair made do with what he had available to him.

Blair says he was not an Angel growing up and did what he needed to do to survive. However, he chose early on not to consume alcohol and has maintained his sobriety throughout his life. Blair said that while growing up, he saw his friends and relatives go through a lot of challenges related to alcohol abuse and he did not want to follow the same path. Blair’s advice for young people is that ‘You have a gift. Use it, don’t abuse it.’

Blair is dedicated to being Superfan Magoo and prefers to be called that. He takes his role of promoting his beloved team seriously. Superfan Magoo is always decked out in Oilers clothing, and he never misses standing outside with his traditional Indigenous drum and flags cheering on the team before games. His special drum was gifted to him by Rocky Morin of Enoch Cree Nation. Superfan Magoo has met many Oilers players, coaches and staff. He said that they have shared with him that the whole dressing room loves what he does, and they can hear his drum which gives them inspiration.

Superfan Magoo also inspires youth through his entertainment crew called the Magoo Crew Entertainment. Superfan Magoo had a crew in the past that focused only on break dancing, but they ended it after a few years. In 2016, Superfan Magoo’s wife, Nipiyiskwew, encouraged him to restart the crew with a different focus. The Magoo Crew consists of up to five members who travel all over Canada to host workshops with youth. They are an entertainment group that does hoop dancing, traditional dancing, jigging, singing, rapping and break dancing. As they



Superfan Magoo and Nipiyiskwew spread love to Edmonton Oilers fans and inspire youth across Canada.

entertain, they also speak to everyone about anti-bullying, suicide awareness, respecting yourself, Elders and Culture. They provide a message for kids – “as long as you stay in school, respect yourself and everyone around you, you are going to grow up to be whatever you want to be in life.” The goal of the Magoo Crew is to inspire and motivate youth, adults and Elders everywhere.

Superfan Magoo said, “On social media, and all over the world, there is so much negativity today. I was taught by my grandparents that in order to respect anyone else around you, you have to respect yourself, and the world is a better place when everyone is smiling, having fun and enjoying themselves. That is what I focus on, being positive and spreading love. I just want to be that person that everybody loves because I love everybody, it doesn’t matter who they are or where they come from, I love them. What we need to do as Indigenous people is lift each other up and not bring each other down.”

For more information on the Magoo Crew and to book them in your community, email magoocrew.entertainment@gmail.com



Wishing you a wonderful Holiday Season and a New Year filled with Peace and Happiness.

Blake Desjarlais, MP
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Legacy Project honours Indigenous soldiers buried in The Netherlands

By Glenn Miller

Last year a group of Canadian, Indigenous and Dutch individuals created the Indigenous Legacy Project to research and identify the graves of Indigenous soldiers buried in war cemeteries across the Netherlands. The first step was to identify the graves in the larger Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries located at Holten, Groesbeek and Bergen op Zoom.

After many years of researching by comrades Yvonne and Berry Swarthoff in particular, an initiative has been started by The Royal Canadian Legion Branch Liberation Branch 005 located in Lochem, Netherlands (RCL005) to give concrete substance to the marking of those deceased liberators.

The Liberation of the Netherlands Branch 005 Royal Canadian Legion, in Europe formed a project and a team to honour the sacrifices made by Canadian Indigenous Veterans who are buried in their country. The Indigenous Legacy Project team was joined by other local organizations from the Holten information center, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands Association North American Indians (NANAI Foundation) and Faces-to-Graves work to help identify and validate the data of the deceased liberators.

The branch wanted to find a way to honour these veterans and were placed in contact with the Aboriginal Veterans Autochtones (AVA) to find a way forward to conduct a ceremony in a traditional Indigenous way. The AVA initially were able to share this project with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) who agreed to support the project. The AVA and VAC started to locate and

contact family or nation representatives of those who were buried in the Canadian Holten War Cemetery to form the delegation.

A delegation representing 13 families and a group from the AVA travelled to the Netherlands from September 11-15 to conduct ceremonies.

The first day started with a sunrise sharing circle led by Elders Bernard and Tammy Nelson. This was followed by a formal ceremony later in the morning at Holten Canadian War Cemetery with a visit to the graves by family members or their representatives.

Involving youth is a key element of commemorating Remembrance. Chris Young of the AVA was able to have a youth group from Shabot Obaadijwan make up pouches to provide to a youth class from the Netherlands who were present for the ceremony at Holten. They in turn presented the pouches to the families when they made their way to the graves to offer tobacco and place flowers. These students were very moved and appreciative of the opportunity to participate in such a small way.

The day concluded with a dinner hosted by the Deputy Minister Paul Ledwell who shared that the trip was moving for him and a success. He expressed his commitment to conduct a future trip.

The second day consisted of a formal ceremony at Groesbeek War Cemetery followed by a visit to the Liberation museum and a presentation of a project by Mathilde Roza from Radboud University.

Glenn Miller was honoured to be an Ally to help in identifying and promoting partnerships in Canada so the Liberation of the Netherlands Branch 005 of the Royal Canadian Legion can honour their liberators. Miller brought the initiative to the



Wilson Williams performs an honour song for Private Joseph Chalifoux as his relative Pat Chalifoux looks on

attention of the AVA who supported the Project and championed it to VAC. They provided their full support, and the team was key to making the trip a success. AVA sent a small delegation of four members with Chris Young as team lead, Wendy Jocko, Shauna Mulligan and Denis Gravel. Glenn Miller was recommended by the AVA as an Ally and travelled as a representative of the Alberta Branch of the Last Post Fund.

This delegation was very grateful to all who made this trip a success. It was the first trip to their loved one's graves for many and emotional for all.

Since the initial research was conducted earlier this year, additional Indigenous veterans have been identified. If you know of a loved one buried outside of Canada in a military grave, please contact Glenn Miller gmiller114@shaw.ca so that the warriors can be more fully honoured by Indigenous partners in future commemorative ceremonies.

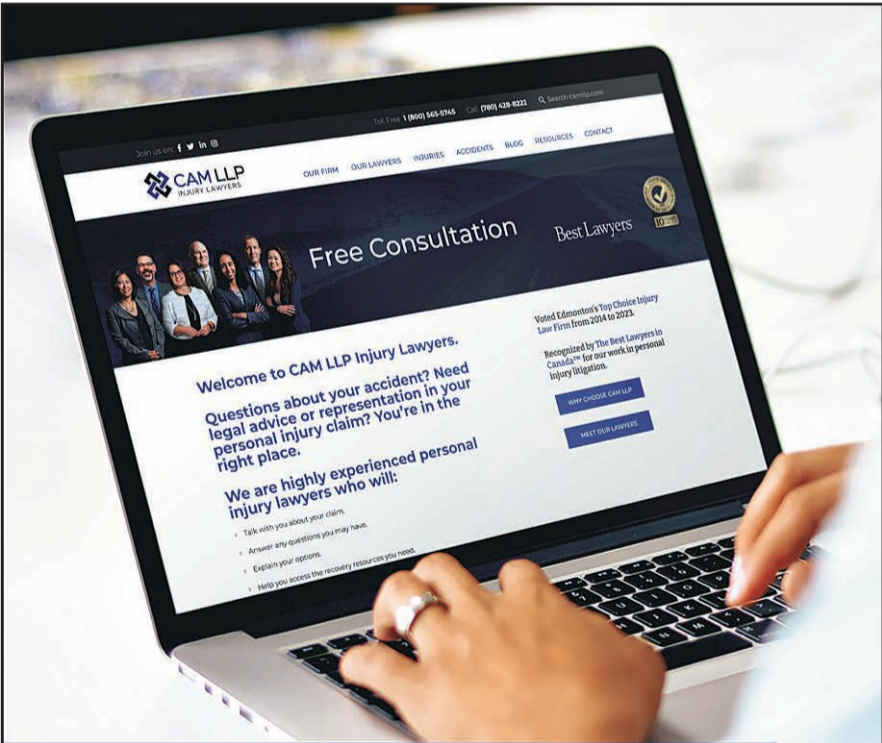
In keeping with the spirit of the ongoing Reconciliation process, The Last Post Fund (LPF) launched a program in March 2019 to help commemorate and honour Indigenous Veterans through the Indigenous Veterans Initiative (IVI).

The program offers two services by placement of a military marker for Veterans that have been buried more than 5 years and with no existing tombstone in place and an inscription of the Indigenous Veteran's traditional name on existing tombstones previously placed by the Last Post Fund.

Both services require research and community support from members of Indigenous communities throughout Canada. Researchers are provided a list of Indigenous Veterans as a starting point for the research.

Trips like this help to raise the profile of the Indigenous Veterans Initiative and gain more

Continued on page 14



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PROPOSED CHIN RESERVOIR EXPANSION

ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTED AREAS

On November 2, 2023, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas issued the final terms of reference for the environmental impact assessment report for Chin Reservoir Expansion proposed by St. Mary River Irrigation District. The project would be located within the County of Lethbridge and MD of Taber, approximately 30 kilometers (km) east of Lethbridge and 15 km south of Taber, in Township 7, Range 15, W4M.

Copies of the terms of reference are available from:

Chin Reservoir Expansion Project
525 – 40 St South, Lethbridge, AB, T1J 4M1
Phone: 587.220.5652
Email: chin.expansion@smrid.com

Registrar of Environmental Assessment Information
Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
Phone: 780-427-5828, Toll Free: 310-0000
Email: environmental.assessment@gov.ab.ca

Terms of Reference and more information on the proposed project are also available on the following websites:

St. Mary River Irrigation District: <https://smrid.com>

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas:
<https://www.alberta.ca/environmental-impact-assessments-current-projects>



Our cover artist Collette Cullen's journey of service and resilience

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The beautiful art on the cover of this month’s *Alberta Native News* is by Collette Cullen, a veteran who says that her “best weapon is a paintbrush.”

In a compelling illustration of strength, duty, and cultural pride for Two-Spirit Youth, 55-year-old Cullen, shares a remarkable journey from enlisting in the army at seventeen to evolving into an artist, stone carver, and grandparent. As we commemorated the contributions of Indigenous veterans in Canada on November 8, 2023, Cullen graciously shared her inspiring story with *Alberta Native News* readers.

Cullen’s military journey began in 1985, fueled by a deep sense of duty and the honour of being recognized as a warrior. Rooted in the teachings of her Indigenous heritage, she understood that being a warrior transcends making war or taking

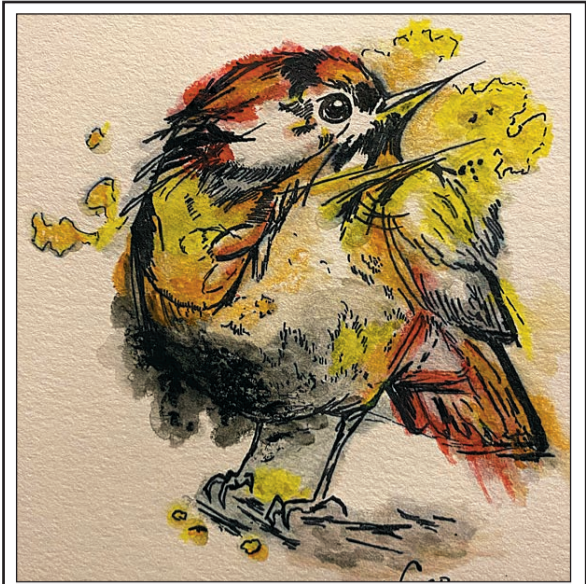
lives; it’s about safeguarding elders, children, and people of all backgrounds. She poignantly remarked, “Our traditional teachings show us that to be a warrior is not about making war or killing, but to protect our Elders, our children, all peoples – settler or Indigenous – and to protect our lands from harm.”

Two impactful tours in the former Yugoslavia, notably the 1993 battle of Medak with the 2nd battalion Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, marked pivotal moments for Cullen. Tasked with halting ethnic cleansing and genocide, she found no glory in such endeavors. Reflecting on the mission of stopping ethnic cleansing as an Indigenous person, she shared, “The irony of stopping ethnic cleansing was not lost on me as an Indigenous person.”

Hailing from northern Alberta, Cullen expressed an unwavering commitment to duty, stating, “While serving I never felt oppressed or different than my comrades in arms beside me, and to this day those bonds as warriors hold strong.”

Amidst her military service, Cullen sought not medals or glory but aimed to uplift the oppressed. She explained, “I wanted to help those who were oppressed, beaten down and being wiped away by others. The faces of the children and elderly remain with me to this day. Those hidden scars are my honour to bear.”

Cullen’s journey extends beyond the military; currently attending the University of Alberta, she embraces her artistic side as a stone carver and revels in the joys of grandparenthood. Contemplating volunteering for the Canadian Rangers, an opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to protect and patrol the north, she continues her



Painting on a canvas by Collette Cullen

commitment to service, contributing to the preservation of their homelands.

Addressing the critical need for Indigenous role models, Cullen stresses the importance of challenging historical stereotypes and providing positive examples for all Indigenous Peoples. She acknowledges the role of the military in shaping her identity, highlighting programs like Bold Eagle as valuable initiatives contributing to reconciliation. “Being a soldier was an honour, a duty, and medals were not why I joined, or glory, there is no glory in war,” she emphasized.

Expressing openness to talks, Cullen recognizes the significance of role models in breaking stereotypes and fostering pride within Indigenous communities. As she paves the way for future generations, Cullen stands as a living testament to the resilience, strength, and multifaceted identities of Indigenous Peoples, dispelling outdated stereotypes.

If you are inspired by Collette Cullen’s story and considering a career in the Canadian Forces, explore opportunities at www.forces.ca.



Multimedia painting by Collette Cullen



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EPS Recruit Torrell Red Iron fosters respect and positivity

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Edmonton Police Service (EPS) is leading the charge in modernization, attracting individuals who embody diversity and a commitment to serving the community. This commitment is aptly portrayed in Recruit Training Class 157, which convened on October 27, 2023, featuring 35 individuals from diverse backgrounds united by a common goal - to become police officers. Constable Torrell Red Iron, a standout in this cohort, symbolizes the Edmonton Police Service's remarkable progress in recognizing and embracing the diversity within their population. As a proud Métis recruit, Torrell personifies the inclusive direction that the EPS is embracing.

Torrell's venture into law enforcement is intertwined with a family legacy rooted in upholding the law, a history of service, and fostering positive change. In many ways, both he and his father, Barry Red Iron, emerge as role models within the Indigenous community, embodying a commitment to service and contributing to the well-being of their community. In an interview with *Alberta Native News*, both father and son offer insights into their collective experiences, providing a revealing look into law enforcement.

Born in Calgary, Torrell's connection to law enforcement traces back to his father's distinguished career with the RCMP, guiding the family through various regions in northern Alberta - the Slave Lake area, Bigstone Cree Nation, and Wabasca, eventually settling in the Leduc area. This upbringing instilled in Torrell a profound connection to the region and a deep appreciation for Indigenous communities.

Torrell's experience working with vulnerable populations forms a crucial aspect of his perspective on effective policing. "Having some college, university, or even work experience will help anyone because it adds maturity," he notes. Drawing on his background with the Native Counselling Services of Alberta at Buffalo Sage

Wellness House and Stan Daniels Healing Centre, Torrell emphasizes the importance of maturity in navigating complex situations.

Recognizing the gravity and respect behind the badge, Torrell underscores the humanitarian outlook required when dealing with people's lives daily. "The importance of policing lies in the fact that you are dealing with people's lives every day, and you're interacting with individuals regularly," he emphasizes, acknowledging the profound impact officers can have on individuals.

His reflections on the criminal justice system highlight the pivotal role of the first interaction with a police officer. "The initial stage of the criminal justice system, and a positive interaction with a police officer, can go a long way in how the public perceives the police forces," he affirms, recognizing the lasting impressions left by both positive and negative interactions.

In evaluating EPS's efforts, Torrell specifically applauds the significant strides in providing culturally inclusive programming for Indigenous officers. He emphasizes, "The EPS is doing a lot of programming; they're offering... especially addressing the needs of various communities in the Edmonton region, with a focus on empowering Indigenous engagement through culture." Torrell highlights these changes, noting that individuals who are Indigenous and wish to explore their culture through an EPS lens can now do so, thanks to the tailored program offerings at EPS. This reflects a meaningful step towards cultural empowerment and understanding within the police force.

"EPS offers an opportunity to grow culturally... keeping with my indigenous roots."

Torrell emphasizes the importance of maturity and a broad perspective, stating, "I think it's beneficial for many reasons. Maturity comes with age, and as you age, the depth of one's experiences, whether through personal life,



Retired Corporal Barry Red Iron, presented his son Torrell Red Iron with his Edmonton Police Service diploma. Photo courtesy EPS.

university, college, or work, contributes significantly to effective policing."

In navigating the complexities of reconciliation through a police force lens, Torrell emphasizes the need for understanding and patience. "A little bit of a more rounded perspective" is needed, he states, acknowledging the intricate dynamics involved in the process, "because these are people's lives."

In a separate interview, Retired RCMP Corporal Barry Red Iron expressed pride in his son's achievements, highlighting Torrell's dedication to redefining modern EPS policing. Barry emphasized Torrell's background in Native counseling and working with vulnerable populations as valuable lenses, coupled with the authenticity of his Métis heritage.

Reflecting on his upbringing, Barry, mentioned that his own father, Torrell's grandfather, left the reserve in Saskatchewan and led the family to Alberta. In later years, Torrell's father obtained Métis status rather than a First Nation Status Card, highlighting the complex nature of both processes.

Applauding Torrell's dedication, Barry noted his son's fascination with Aboriginal culture at a young age and his immersion in Indigenous communities during schooling. He emphasized that his children were raised to give back and respect everyone, important values that shaped Torrell's experiences in the Slave Lake area.

Torrell's accomplishments at the Native Counselling Services of Alberta with Buffalo Sage Wellness House and Stan Daniels Healing Centre, where he completed a Criminal Justice-Policing diploma at Lethbridge College, were pivotal experiences, said Barry. Torrell's diverse background and educational achievements contribute to his ability to serve as an EPS officer effectively, allowing him to help people in various situations, he added.

Barry wants the *Alberta Native News* readership to know that officers are humans, too. "Being an officer is a job; it's a calling that people want to help the communities," he said.

Continued on page 11

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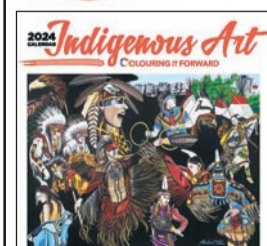
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First Nations leaders and Métis groups in dispute over Bill C-53

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

First Nations and Métis leaders are divided over impending federal legislation recognizing certain Métis governments in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta as distinct orders of government.

Bill C-53, which was introduced in the House of Commons in June, is now before the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for further examination.

The legislation has been criticized for providing official recognition to six Métis communities in Ontario of questionable legitimacy, alongside concerns that future Métis treaties with the Crown could potentially impede on First Nations Treaty rights.

In committee, Martin Reiher, a senior bureaucrat in the Crown-Indigenous Relations Department, conceded that the federal government hasn't verified the legitimacy of any specific communities covered by the legislation, which he maintained is outside the feds' purview.

"They aren't doing their homework to make sure that they are hearing from the right people," NDP MP Lori Idlout, who sits on the committee, told The Canadian Press on Dec. 1.

"And I can understand why First Nations in Ontario would be greatly concerned about what's going on."

Nippissing First Nation Chief Scott McLeod told CP that Reiher's comments demonstrate that the bill was "legislated out of thin air."

Echoing comments from Métis Nation of Ontario president Margaret Froh, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree told the committee that it's unfair to "deny [the] existence" of Métis communities in Ontario, which the provincial government recognized in 2017.

"Our communities are deeply hurt by the falsehoods that are being perpetuated by some and the notion that finally recognizing the Métis people and our rights takes away from the rights of anyone else," Froh told CP. "We strongly disagree that reconciliation is a zero-sum game."

The Supreme Court of Canada's 2003 Powley

decision recognized a Métis community in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., but the court hasn't ruled on the legitimacy of the six other communities in question.

On Nov. 29, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) called on the feds to "immediately withdraw" Bill C-53.

Interim AFN national chief Joanna Bernard said the government needs to go back to the drawing board "to develop a respectful First Nations-led process that ensures all impacts of this legislation are thoroughly considered."

"The development of Bill C-53 failed to include a process for First Nations to voice their concerns regarding the potential negative impacts of overlapping Métis rights assertions or concerns regarding unfounded Métis rights assertions," said Bernard.

If Métis treaties negotiated as a result of Bill C-53 include the right to land-based practices, such as hunting, harvesting, fishing and resource management, these could very well overlap with First Nations' inherent, Treaty and section 35 Charter rights, resulting in costly legal proceedings, the AFN cautioned.

Minister Anandasangaree maintains that the legislation does not pertain to land rights, but acknowledged that the treaties resulting from it very well could.

Idlout said this needs to be made explicit in the legislation.

"If the intent is that there will not be land or resource rights being infringed, then clearly state that," she said.

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Cathy Merrick said passing Bill C-53 without First Nations' input would be a "great disservice to the good work done in the name of reconciliation."

"Canada has a duty to consult with First Nations," Grand Chief Merrick added. "This duty is triggered when the Crown contemplates

conduct or makes a decision that engages a potential aboriginal or treaty right, the Crown has knowledge of that right, and there is potential for the contemplated conduct to adversely affect the right."

The Métis National Council (MNC), which is composed of the leadership of the Métis nations of Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as British Columbia, which isn't included in Bill C-53, supports the legislation.

MNC President Cassidy Caron said its support for the bill is the product of its mandate of "ensuring that Métis rights, including the right to self-determination, are advanced and respected."

In 2021, the MNC National Assembly voted in favour of creating an expert panel to investigate the six Métis communities in Ontario whose legitimacy has been questioned. That panel is expected to report back to the MNC later this year.

In an Oct. 25 statement, the Métis Nation of Alberta called Bill C-53 "reconciliation in action."

"Self-government means that we decide for ourselves how to best support Métis in Alberta," MNA President Andrea Sandmaier said. "We decide what our housing and health programs look like. We decide how to help prepare our young people with world-class education and training. We decide how to support our elders as they age."

"And we decide how to move forward together. Only through self-government will the voices of Métis people be truly heard."





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Kim Yellowknee's path from adversity to success

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Kimberly Yellowknee working in her kitchen, infusing love and culture into every dish she creates. Visit www.kimscreations.ca.

In the world of entrepreneurship, there are stories that inspire us, stories of individuals who have braved adversity to emerge stronger and more determined than ever. Kimberly Yellowknee’s journey is one such story of resilience, triumph over addiction, and rising above workplace bullying, all while embracing her Indigenous identity. What makes her journey even more remarkable is the twist of fate that propelled her into the world of female entrepreneurship – a prophetic reading from a friend.

Kimberly Yellowknee’s life began in Wabasca, Alberta, where she was raised by a single mother who worked three jobs to make ends meet. “I grew up with a single mom who worked three jobs to support us,” she recalls. “Every time she worked; we were there.” The struggles were real, and it wasn’t just a matter of finances; Kimberly had to confront workplace bullying that, in her perception, was amplified by her Indigenous heritage. “I got tired of working for other people and facing the workplace bullying,” she confesses. “I believe I was targeted because of my Indigenous background.”

Kimberly explained that her life took an unexpected turn when she received a reading from a friend. This friend’s revelation became the turning point in her life, propelling her into the world of entrepreneurship. “She said: You’re going to make something, and it has to

do with cinnamon,” Kimberly remembers.

Inspired by her friend’s prophetic words, Kimberly Yellowknee embarked on a culinary odyssey, drawing from her Indigenous roots and her newfound entrepreneurial spirit. This leap of faith led to the creation of “Kim’s Creations,” a venture that has since become a symbol of love, culture, and resilience.

“Kim’s Creations” is more than just a catering service; it is a manifestation of love and culture in every dish. Kimberly Yellowknee offers a weekly menu of home-cooked meals, each imbued with her loving energy. “I wanted to offer them a taste of love and comfort in the form of my food, prepared with my loving energy,” she explains. Her culinary rituals are a testament to her belief in the power of positive energy. “I’ll smudge, meditate, play positive frequency music, or my favorite ’90s tunes,” she says. “While I’m cooking, I focus on positive thoughts, sending those vibes into the food. It’s all about making each bite a delight for the senses and the soul.”

Beyond her own journey, Kimberly encourages non-Indigenous businesses to support Indigenous entrepreneurs by booking their services.

“Supporting one another in the world of entrepreneurship means lifting each other up, not tearing each other down,” she emphasizes. “We should always focus on the positive and acknowledge the strengths and successes of our fellow entrepreneurs.”

Kimberly Yellowknee’s journey demonstrates the strength of Indigenous women to transform their lived experiences into successful ventures, highlighting resilience, determination, and self-belief. Through “Kim’s Creations,” she has not only created a thriving culinary venture but also a space where positivity, love, and entrepreneurship intersect to create something truly remarkable. Her story is an example of economic resilience of women and a call to support the diverse array of talent that Indigenous female entrepreneurs bring to the world of business.

EPS Recruit *cont. from p 8*

“That’s probably the number one thing: don’t look at them (officers) like evil. They’re just people like you or me, and that’s the path they want to help people with.”

To conclude the interview, Torrell acknowledged that his life “wasn’t always sunshine and rainbows.” However, he notes his current ability to move forward and shape a future where interactions align with how families would want to be treated by police officers or fellow

citizens.

“It’s about fostering respectful and positive engagement,” he said, emphasizing the transformative power of respectful community interactions.

A stylized illustration featuring several Christmas trees in shades of yellow and blue, decorated with white snowflakes. In the background, a series of yellow power lines stretch across a dark blue night sky filled with white stars. The ground is depicted in layers of blue and white, suggesting snow and ice.

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LEGEND

The Sacred Rock is provided by the Lac La Ronge Band, Curriculum Resource Unit who are dedicated to providing quality educational resources to all the people of the First Nations.

The Sacred Rock

Collected and illustrated by James Ratt; told by Jean Roberts



Long ago, there lived a widow who had two small boys. She made two small bows with arrows and taught them how to use them.

One day, she told them to go out and shoot some birds to eat. "Later, I will make you stronger bows so that you can shoot bigger game," she told them.

She put some ready cooked meat in a bag and told them to sit on a large rock when they got hungry and wanted to eat.

One day while the boys were eating their lunch on a large rock, they heard a voice saying, "I'd like to tell you boys a story."

They looked all around but did not see anyone so they kept on eating.

"Shall I tell you some stories?" the voice asked again. It was coming from the rock they were sitting on.

"What kind of stories do you tell?" the boys asked then. The rock said he told stories of things that happened a long time ago. He said, "If you will give me your birds, I will tell you many stories."

The two brothers laid their ducks and geese beside the rock and sat close to it as it told them strange stories and legends. It was almost sunset when the voice from the rock said, "You have to go home now, but come back tomorrow and I will tell you more stories."

On their way home, the boys shot three birds each. When their mother asked why they didn't have more, they said the ducks and geese were getting scarce. The same thing happened the next day and also the day after.

The mother knew that her children were not telling the truth. So, she went to the Chief and told him the problem.

The Chief said, "I will send two men tomorrow to follow your sons to see what they are doing with their catch."

This was done and the two men watched the boys shoot ten birds each. The boys then laid them down beside the rock.

As the men watched, they were surprised to hear a voice coming from the rock saying,



"Bring all the people from your village here tomorrow. Tell them to bring some food or a gift and I will tell them many stories."

The Chief and all the people were astonished to hear what the braves had to tell. The Chief said, "We will do as the rock says."

Everyone took gifts or some food and went to the talking rock.

When the people had all made their offerings, they sat down around the stone and the voice began to speak. It told wonderful stories of beautiful lands and strange creatures. It told of animals that could talk to one another and of people yet to come to this land.

When it was almost sundown, the rock said, "I have told you many stories and it is up to you to keep them as long as the world lasts. Tell them to your children and grandchildren but make sure they always place tobacco or a little food before the story tellers."



The rock never spoke again, but for many years the people visited the sacred stone. Today, some old people still remember those legends and stories.

When you visit old people, you should always carry a gift. The old person will never refuse it.



OWNER RETIRING

After 40 years of publishing the Alberta Native News, the owners wish to retire. We are hoping some enterprising individual(s) with a passion for communicating Indigenous issues will carry on with publishing the newspaper. It is not easy in this day and age to produce a print media with a supporting digital presence but it is something that serves a vital interest for the Indigenous communities across Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories.

Expressions of interest from serious individuals are welcome.
Please contact Deborah Shatz, nativeads@gmail.com

Another leak reported from Imperial Oil’s Kearl Mine

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Chief Allan Adam is reiterating his call for federal intervention against the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) after Imperial Oil’s Kearl mine leaked into its nearby water supply for the third time in 18 months.

The Kearl facility leaked on Nov. 13, nine months after it was revealed that the company and AER concealed a May 2022 leakage from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

The first spill was only revealed to the public and impacted First Nations because a larger spill in February forced the AER to address the initial leak publicly. But documents obtained from The Canadian Press suggest that the initial seepage had been on the AER’s radar as early as 2019.

Consulting firm Deloitte, in a review published in September, found that the AER had done everything by the book when it neglected to inform surrounding First Nations and the public about the initial spill.

The three Kearl spills came from different facilities. The first spill was from a tailings pond, which collects the toxic sludge leftover from mining, whereas the February spill came from a drainings pond, which collects industrial wastewater contaminated from mining.

Both these spills resulted in contamination of the water supply, which First Nations depend on for sustenance, and the AE issuing environmental protection and non-compliance orders, as well as Imperial executives and Indigenous leaders testifying before the House of Commons.

The most recent Kearl spill came from a settling pond, which captures surface water runoff to allow it to sit before being released, resulting in 670,000 litres of contaminated water leaking into the Muskeg River.

Imperial Oil spokesperson Lisa Schmidt told the *Globe and Mail* last month that the water in

the most recent spill was already treated, but the culvert used to transfer the water to the Muskeg River eroded, leading to it being contaminated by soil.

Brian Jean, Alberta’s energy minister and the MLA for the riding where the Kearl mine is located, dismissed the most recent spill as a case of “muddy water from the surrounding area.”

The AER said it will work with Imperial to collect water samples to determine the leak’s impact on fish and wildlife.

At a November 27 press conference, Chief Adam, flanked by the Alberta NDP’s two Indigenous MLAs — Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse and Brooks Arcand Paul — said the AER lacks credibility.

“At every opportunity the AER has diminished or dismissed all of our concerns,” Adam said, noting that the First Nation has been raising concerns about the impact of tar sands mining on the community’s health since 2007.

He added that the AER was “failing big time” in its role as a regulator.

“Their job is to inform the communities if there’s any harmful bacterias or chemicals that are in the ecosystem,” Adam said.

“We were supposed to be the first to be notified. It turns out we are the last to be notified.”

Adam called for the feds — namely the Department of Fisheries and Oceans — to intervene to get the AER to “immediately cease what they’re doing.”

“Everything that they’re pumping out is

flawed,” he said of the AER. “They’re not credible enough to do anything.”

The chief was also critical of Alberta Health Services (AHS), which is in the process of being dismantled by the provincial government, and Health Canada for not taking action on Indigenous health concerns related to the oil sands.

In 2014, AHS conducted a study into higher than normal cancer rates in Fort Chipewyan. Despite finding elevated rates of cervical cancer, bile duct cancer and lung cancer, AHS concluded that “the total number of cancers and most types of cancers in the Fort Chipewyan area were the same as rates in the rest of Alberta.”

The federal government promised a review of the study, but it hasn’t been completed almost a decade later.

Calahoo Stonehouse, the NDP’s climate, parks and climate resilience critic, blamed the UCP as much as the AER for the way these spills have been handled.

“It’s their responsibility as the government and as the energy regulator to ensure that industry is being upheld to the legal standard and that they are fulfilling their responsibilities,” said Calahoo Stonehouse, a member of the Michel First Nation.



A provincial government-commissioned AER review underway is being led by David Yager, a UCP loyalist with close ties to Premier Danielle Smith, who received a \$70,000 sole-source contract to lead the review.

Calahoo Stonehouse said this review needs to have “public oversight.”

“We need to ensure that the water levels are safe, that communities are consulted, that members are notified when there is a leak immediately and that all is done to ensure the

Continued on page 15

Debbie Mineault wins Outstanding Indigenous Educator of the Year

Northland School Division (NSD) recently announced that Director of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Debbie Mineault was selected as the 2023 Outstanding Indigenous Educator of the Year Award. The award is presented by the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s (ATA’s) Indigenous Education Council.

The ATA’s Indigenous Education Council is a professional organization for teachers, associate members of the ATA and university students. Given the changes to the provincial curriculum and the Teaching Quality Standard with regards to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education inclusion, the council strives to provide resources and projects for members to explore with students.

The Outstanding Indigenous Educator of the Year Award is for a teacher, advocate and professional who has made significant efforts in furthering First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education in Alberta. This person cares deeply

about the success of Indigenous students, and has demonstrated leadership, and authentic inclusion of Indigenous voice and presence in Education.

"On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I congratulate Debbie on earning such a prestigious award," said Cathy Wanyandie, Board Chair. "We very much appreciate the efforts Debbie puts in to weave language and culture into the student learning experience. Her contributions support Northland School Division’s priorities around excellence in learning, leadership and relationships."

"Debbie has contributed so much to education as a teacher, school principal, while working with Alberta Education and as the Director of First

Nations, Métis and Inuit Education with Northland School Division," said Shelley Willier, Superintendent of Schools/CEO. "Her efforts have positively impacted the communities, the students and staff. Congratulations Debbie!"

"Ninaskomin, I am so thankful, proud and honoured to be selected for such a highly praised award in excellence of Indigenous education," said Mineault.

Debbie was presented the 2023 Outstanding Indigenous Educator Award on November 18, 2023.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas

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Treaty 8 Chiefs back lawsuit against governments over child welfare

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Treaty 8 First Nations chiefs are supporting a lawsuit launched by current and former Indigenous foster children alleging the Alberta government pocketed federal funds intended for children in care.

The suit alleges that children’s special allowances (CSA), which are intended to match funds for children whose parents receive the Canada Child Benefit, have been used as general revenue by Alberta governments dating back to 1993.

Under the CSA, children under the age of six are entitled to a monthly \$620 payment while children six and over are entitled to \$520.

“The Province of Alberta by its actions was essentially using children in care as a source of revenue, to offset its funding obligations of child welfare. And that is just wrong,” plaintiff lawyer Harold Cochrane, said at a Nov. 27 news conference, as per *CBC News*.

CSA funds are meant to be used for care, training, education and the general advancement of foster children, as opposed to maintenance funds which provide for their basic needs.

The lawsuit focuses on children who live off reserve, whose CSA funding is delivered through Alberta’s Ministry of Children’s Services. Child welfare organizations and foster parents on

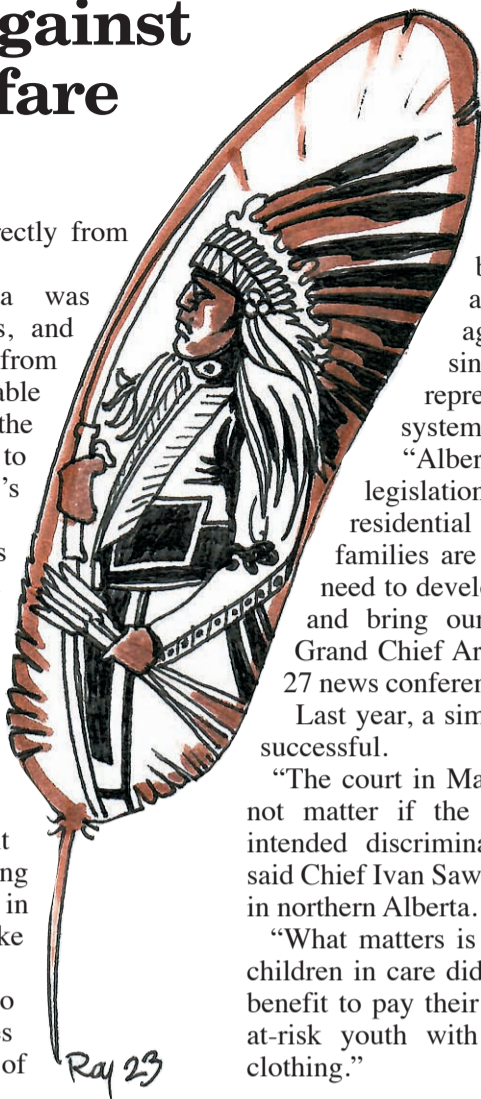
reserves receive the funds directly from the feds.

“The conduct of Alberta was deliberate, lasted for decades, and represents a marked departure from ordinary standards of reasonable and decent behaviour,” the statement of claim submitted to the Edmonton Court of King’s Bench on Nov. 24 says.

However, the suit also names the federal government as a defendant, arguing that it is responsible for ensuring the funds are properly allocated by its partners.

The individual plaintiffs are Sierra Elise Clarke of Tall Cree Nation, Octavian Laboucan and foster parent Kelly Gosal, who is representing an unnamed Indigenous child in her care, both of Whitefish Lake First Nation.

Gosal described an inability to afford extracurricular activities for her foster child as a result of not receiving CSA payments.



“These children go through so much trauma, they need extra love and care. The last thing they should worry about is finances,” she said.

The lawsuit argues that the province’s failure to distribute CSA funds appropriately amounts to discrimination against Indigenous children, since they are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system.

“Alberta Children’s Services legislation has the same effects as the residential schools. Our children and families are broken. We as First Nations need to develop our child well-being laws, and bring our children home,” Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey said at the Nov. 27 news conference, according to *APTN News*. Last year, a similar lawsuit in Manitoba was successful.

“The court in Manitoba was clear that it does not matter if the government may not have intended discrimination against our children,” said Chief Ivan Sawan of Loon River First Nation in northern Alberta.

“What matters is that the result of the policy, children in care did not have access to the CSA benefit to pay their expenditures that may assist at-risk youth with homelessness and lack of clothing.”

Legacy Project *cont. from p 6*

awareness. The Last Post Fund has made significant achievements since the program was launched in 2019. So far over 300 unmarked graves of Indigenous Veterans have been found with the help of 23 Indigenous community researchers established across Canada. Over 140 grave markers have been ordered or already placed and commemorative ceremonies conducted after the installment of the marker.

Requests for traditional names in 6 distinct Indigenous languages have been received (Algonquin, Blackfoot, Cree, Interior Salishan, Inuktitut, Saukteaux). Special collaboration with Cree artist Jason Carter for the creation of seven symbols for headstone inscriptions, to be used in perpetuity.

If you know of any veterans in your community who have been unmarked for 5 years or more or would like to conduct research on your nation’s contributions in the military please contact the Last Post Fund 1 800 465 7113.

Warrant Officer (ret’d) Glenn Miller CD, *Ikkaiyoitsahsokittupii*, is President of the Last Post Fund, Alberta Branch.



Veterans Affairs guide member David Thomson, at the temporary Indigenous exhibit installed at the reception center, standing beside a bilingual Blackfoot and English banner of the poem 'In Flanders Fields' translated by Kainai Elder Dr. Lenna Russel AOE. (Photo by Glenn Miller).

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I'm dreaming of a safe and happy Christmas

By Xavier Kataquapit

Holiday Season is here and you can see everyone is excited in the annual high of getting ready for Christmas. Different religions and cultures celebrate this period and some don't at all. I grew up in the remote Indigenous community of Attawapiskat on the James Bay coast and through colonization and the invasion by Christian missionaries my people for many years ended up becoming swept up in either the Catholic or Protestant religions depending on who was doing the invading. We all became part of this religion and managed also to incorporate some of our own original traditions and culture. However, most of our traditions and cultural practices were banned and considered evil by these new religions.

We all enjoyed Christmas for the excitement of this time and the various celebrations that went on during festivities. This included of course Christmas trees, gift giving, midnight mass at the local church and home visits with family and friends. Along with this time and also as part of the colonization process we became introduced to alcohol and that ended up producing an epidemic of alcoholism and tragedy for my people.

Too many of us recall difficult times during Christmas. Yes, there was some fun and joy in celebrating this time of the year but once the drinking started many became helpless and all kinds of terrible tragedies occurred. There were all sorts of accidents, violence, crazy situations where people sometimes died, were injured or became incapacitated and ill over time.

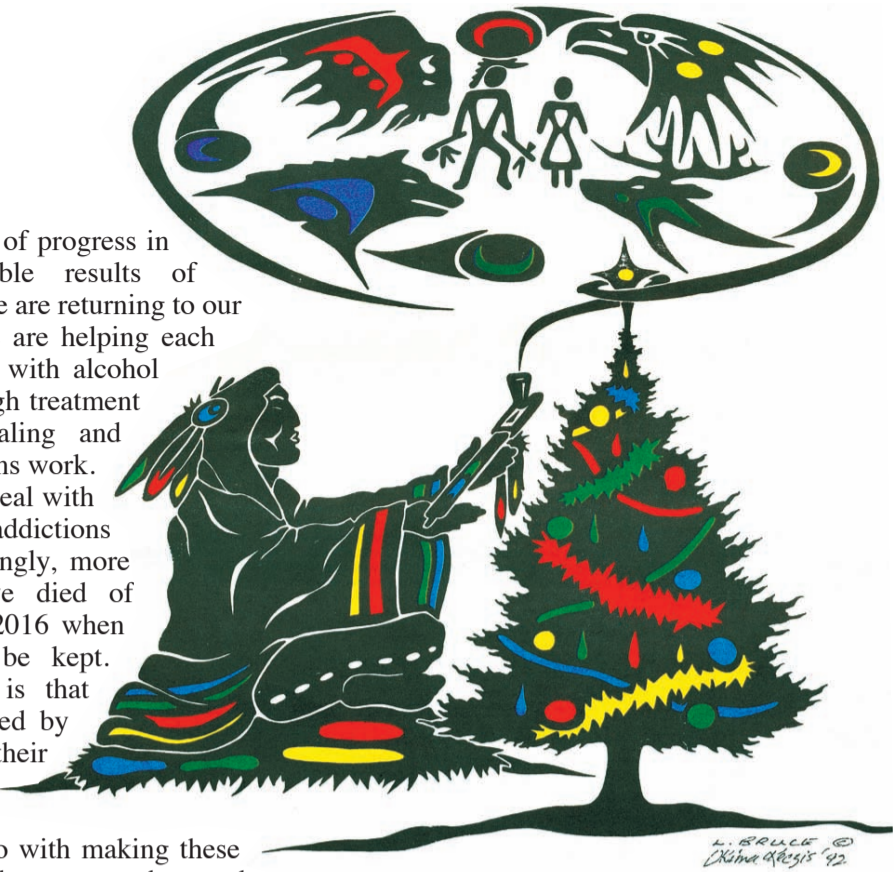
The alcohol was impossible to contend with and then in the 1970s and 1980s drug abuse became more prominent. Many of our Indigenous communities became dysfunctional and unsafe as alcohol and drugs took over the lives of people. In particular, this became a generational process with the young picking up these addictions in their teen years and even as children. Thankfully,

today we have made a lot of progress in dealing with the terrible results of colonization and my people are returning to our traditions and culture. We are helping each other in terms of dealing with alcohol and drug addictions through treatment programs, traditional healing and education on how addictions work.

These days we have to deal with new and deadly addictions involving opioids. Alarmingly, more than 40,000 people have died of opioids in Canada since 2016 when records first started to be kept. The worst part of this is that prescription drugs produced by big pharmaceuticals and their promotional relationship with the medical community had a lot to do with making these dangerous opioids available to many thousands of people. A great documentary series called 'Pain Killer' on Netflix provides an insight on how this epidemic was manufactured.

We are still dealing with this crisis as it now involves Fentanyl, a very powerful and potent opioid and too many people continue to die, are hospitalized and injured by these devastating drugs. This opioid crisis has dealt a great blow to the public's trust in big pharmaceuticals who are often more concerned with making billions of dollars on drugs and less for the care of patients. Medical professionals were also caught up in the vast marketing scenes run by these drug companies and thankfully due to some good reporting by journalists, awareness campaigns by activists and the strength of our health care professionals we are now in a more informed and enlightened state when it comes to opioids,

My hope is that you and your family and friends have a wonderful, safe and happy holiday



season and that you are watching out for those around you. If you think you have a problem with alcohol or drugs then please for the sake of yourself and your family and friends reach out for help. You can contact people in your community who are working in drug and alcohol treatment and prevention as well as local health professionals with addiction knowledge and of course the traditional people that are dedicated to healing our people. This is the time of the year to celebrate this holiday season in any way you desire but make an effort to put smiles on the faces of your children, family and friends and give them a safe and comfortable Christmas. They don't need or deserve the terror of a drug or alcohol fuelled Christmas.

For more columns by Xavier Kataquapit visit www.underthenorthernsky.com

Another leak *cont. from p 13*

safety of the land, the water and the people,” she said, “which is evident that is not currently happening.”

This issue isn't exclusive to Imperial Oil nor the Kearl mine.

The AER has approved the expansion of Suncor's Fort Hills mine into the McClelland Lake Wetland Complex, which includes sensitive, carbon-capturing peatland, recently rejecting the Alberta Wilderness Association's (AWA) proposal to reconsider its approval.

According to the AER, Suncor originally told the regulator that 662,000 litres of runoff from a containment pond leaked. But on Nov. 24, the day after it rejected the AWA's attempt for the mine's expansion to be reconsidered, Suncor informed the AER that the figure was closer to 10 million litres, and might have been released as early as June 2022.

In April 2023, Suncor reported a leak of six million litres from a Fort Hills sedimentation pond

into the Athabasca River. While Suncor said it informed northern Alberta First Nations of the spill, the Alberta government neglected to inform the Northwest Territories government, which it's required to do under a water-sharing agreement.

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First Nations Child and Family
Services and Jordan's Principle
Settlement

The Federal Court has approved the \$23.34 billion Settlement Agreement to compensate some impacted First Nations individuals and their family members.

What does this mean for you?

While the Claims Process is not yet open, you can learn more and sign up for updates at fnchildclaims.ca or call 1-833-852-0755.

Compensation is not yet available.

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