



# ALBERTA NATIVE NEWS

Visit us now at  
[albertanativenews.com](http://albertanativenews.com)



# Inuvialuk athlete shares journey to American university hockey

By Kinnukana, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Michael Iatridis is an Inuvialuk, born and raised in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. His Inuk name is Appakaq. Michael is currently in his third year of studies at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he was awarded with several scholarships to attend and play college hockey. He is studying Kinesiology, focusing on sport management and business. While there, he also plays Division 1 Hockey for the Calvin Knights in the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA).

The Calvin Knights ranked 15th nationally in the 2023-2024 hockey season, out of 72 teams in the league. This year they had 21 wins, 9 losses, and one overtime loss during the season and just earned themselves a spot at the ACHA D1 National Championships taking place in March at St. Louis, Missouri.

According to the *National Alliance for Youth Sports*, 70% of athletes quit sports before starting high school. The numbers continue to decline after high school where about one in three go on to play varsity sports in college and less than 2% go on to play at NCAA Division 1 colleges in the United States of America (USA).

As an Indigenous person from Northern Canada, Michael has come a long way to make it to USA College Hockey. Growing up, he was very athletic and loved to play a variety of sports, but he didn't start playing ice hockey until he was older. Michael was a soccer player. He started playing indoor soccer at three years old. He also played recreational baseball during the summer months. Michael would also join whatever after-school activities were available, like badminton and tennis.

When Michael was in grade five, he signed up

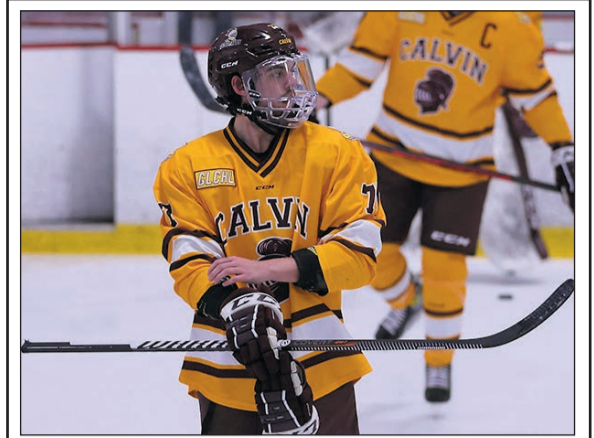
for what he thought was floor hockey. He was so excited about playing the sport with his friends at school. When the time came to begin the activity, he realized that it was not floor hockey, it was ice hockey. Michael was devastated because he did not know how to skate and was not able to participate in the activity that year.

Michael was so sad when he went home that his mom agreed to sign him up for Can Skate lessons at the Yellowknife Skating Club. The Can Skate group is typically filled with beginner skaters and very young children just starting out. Michael's mom thought that he might attend one or two sessions and feel uncomfortable with all the small children there and change his mind. However, the minute Michael got on the ice, he was determined to learn how to skate, and nothing could wipe the smile off of his face.

Michael's mom recalls him being this big kid at ten years old. At the beginning of the lessons, the group would stand around the middle circle of the ice and do the chicken dance as part of the warmup. Michael looked huge out on the ice beside all the other skaters, but that did not deter him from learning to skate. Michael said, "I really wanted to be a part of the hockey world and have the feeling of connectedness with being on a team".

Michael practised skating all year and then he was able to sign up for ice hockey the following year. His mom did not know how to dress him in his hockey equipment. Michael's cousin, Cullen McLeod, offered to go with Michael to his first hockey try-out and help him put on his gear.

At the time, Michael's mom and dad did not know much about the hockey league. They signed him up for the developmental team try-outs,



Michael Iatridis plays hockey at Calvin University in Michigan. Photo by Perry Iatridis.

thinking it was beginner hockey. It turned out that the developmental team was the advanced level. Once again, Michael ended up in this awkward situation, on the ice with all these advanced skaters zooming around him. As a new skater, he could not keep up with the pace of the other players. However, he did not give up.

Michael moved down to the house league and spent two years playing in the PeeWee hockey league, even making Captain the second year. Both years, in 2011-12 and 2012-13, he won the 30th Anniversary Esso Medals & Certificates of Achievement Awards in the PeeWee league. In his third year of hockey, Michael advanced to the development team and played for the Bantam league.

In 2014, Michael moved to Alberta with his family and had an opportunity to participate in hockey academy as part of junior high school. During that year, he was able to increase his skill levels significantly. He also played for the St. Albert Raiders and won the Bantam AA Comets Top Defensive Player of the Year Award. Throughout high school, Michael continued to play for the St. Albert Raiders Midget 15 AAA Flyers, AA Crusaders and AA Blues.

Continued on page 8

## From class to career

NorQuest College supports your career success. Through workplace practicums, you can graduate with experience and receive hands-on training.

Explore our programs at [norquest.ca/explore](https://norquest.ca/explore).



Impact Assessment Agency of Canada / Agence d'évaluation d'impact du Canada

### Cando Sturgeon Rail Terminal West Expansion Project Public Comments Invited

#### What is happening?

**March 5, 2024** — Cando Rail & Terminals is proposing the Cando Sturgeon Rail Terminal West Expansion Project, an expansion to an existing rail terminal facility located in Sturgeon County, Alberta.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) invites you to review the summary of the Initial Project Description and provide comments on the proposed project. This feedback will help the Agency prepare a summary of issues that will be given to the proponent.

Visit the project homepage on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (reference number 87381) to:

- Learn more about the project.
- Submit your comments online by **11:59 p.m. on April 4, 2024**. All comments will be published to the Registry.
- Find information on participant funding, which will be available to eligible participants during this comment period. Details will be announced shortly on the Registry.
- Participate in one of the virtual information sessions about the project and the federal impact assessment process.



Scan the QR-Code to visit the project Registry page.

#### Have a question?

Write to us at [Sturgeon@iaac-aeic.gc.ca](mailto:Sturgeon@iaac-aeic.gc.ca) or visit the Agency's website at [canada.ca/iaac](https://canada.ca/iaac).

For media inquiries: [media@iaac-aeic.gc.ca](mailto:media@iaac-aeic.gc.ca) or 343-549-3870.

## Candace Cunningham: You never know where life is going to bring you

Candace Cunningham’s decision to pursue post-secondary education was spurred by a gentle nudge from her father-in-law, Archie Cunningham. Archie, who passed away in 2020, was a long-time employee and board member of Northern Lakes College. She explains, “I was visiting with [my parents-in-law] and just discussing how, since the kids had started school, my days were just not as fulfilling as I’d hoped they’d be. And [my father-in-law] said to me, ‘You know, my girl, there is a [Northern Lakes College] campus across from the school, right?’ I said, ‘Yeah?’ and he just said, ‘Well, what are you going to do about it?’”

Candace realized her father-in-law was right. All she needed to do was choose an area of interest to study. “I remembered how, in high school, I had actually volunteered as a candy striper in long term care, so I had some health care experience. Then, in grade twelve, I did my work experience in the acute care department. So, when I was a kid, I always liked the idea of working in health care, but life got in the way, and I never pursued my education. When I thought about it more though, I was like, ‘Wow, geez, I would love to be a health care aide working with seniors. I love seniors!’ And what also appealed to me was that it was only a five-month program, offered virtually. That was perfect – as a stay-at-home mom, I could attend classes virtually and then coordinate with my husband to attend my lab experiences.”

With nothing to lose and everything to gain, Candace registered in the Health Care Aide program at Northern Lakes College. She thrived in her studies, and it wasn’t long after beginning her career when supervisors encouraged her to

obtain her Practical Nurse (PN) Diploma. Again, Candace found encouragement in the words of her father-in-law.

“I was kind of on the fence about how long it would take me to get my PN Diploma after just completing my Health Care Aide certificate. And Archie just said, ‘Well, why wouldn’t you? You’re bright, you know. You’re a smart girl. You have a lot of potential. What’s stopping you?’ And I thought to myself, ‘yeah – nothing is stopping me! Just my own fears.’ So, I registered in the PN program in 2019.”

Candace soon discovered that her second experience at NLC was every bit as positive as her first. “I still have connections with the people on campus,” Candace reports, “even after graduation, I felt like I had support and open communications. Like, even if I had questions while at my job, I could just reach out to [former instructors]. The [Northern Lakes College] community is so understanding, and very supportive. It’s like a family. It was great!”

During her practicum, and before even graduating from her Practical Nurse program, Candace was presented with an offer of two different positions; one in Health Management and one in Community Health. After being provided an additional ten months of training upon her hire, Candace now works as the Health Manager of Kapawe’no First Nation, and currently serves on the Indigenous Panel for the Alberta Ministry of Health. The goal of the panel is to provide advice and recommendation to ensure the health care system is accessible, relevant, and culturally safe for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. She plans on pursuing her Registered Nurse degree within the next ten



NLC graduate Candace Cunningham.

years, and dreams of perhaps one day becoming a Nurse Practitioner.

“When I look back over the last eight years, it’s just been such an amazing journey. I’m very thankful. If I were going to say one thing to encourage others like me to go back to school, I’d tell women to remember that motherhood is just one of our many journeys in life, and that there are many opportunities for advancement, for furthering your education, and for providing financial stability for your family. Reach out to your [local] Northern Lakes College campus. You never know where life is going to bring you.”

*Northern Lakes College offers many programs through Supported Distance Learning. Get more information at [www.northernlakescollege.ca/programs-courses](http://www.northernlakescollege.ca/programs-courses)*



## BUSINESS & ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

Delivered online through Supported Distance Learning.  
**Programs you can take from anywhere!**

Business Administration

Computer Network Specialist

Office Administration

Human Resource Management Diploma

NORTHERN LAKES  
COLLEGE

The education you want. The flexibility you deserve.

APPLY  
TODAY!

[www.northernlakescollege.ca](http://www.northernlakescollege.ca) | 1-866-652-3456

# Cree Hoop Dancer shines at the Alberta Country Music Awards

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dallas Arcand Jr., from the Alexander First Nation, embodies the talent and Indigenous brilliance nurtured by his family. The next generation took the stage and performed at the Alberta Country Music Awards, showcasing traditional hoop dancing to Canadian A-list country stars.

The Arcand Dynasty is known for their talent, creativity, and performance prowess, reshaping narratives in the face of intergenerational trauma, and defining themselves on their terms. Following in his father Dallas Senior's footsteps, a three-time World Champion Hoop Dancer, Dallas Jr. emerges as a multi-talented artist, showcasing the family's dynasty of creativity and performance.

Dallas Jr. describes his first performance as a sink-or-swim moment. At the age of twelve, he faced a monumental challenge: performing for the first time in front of a crowd of twenty thousand at the prestigious Calgary Stampede. Initially hesitant and overwhelmed by the scale of the event, he said, "I was trying to cry to my father, I said, I don't want to go out there, I don't want to." Despite his fear, his father's encouragement pushed him forward. "Nope, too bad," his father declared, emphasizing the importance of seizing opportunities. "Otherwise, you don't get to go on rides after." With little choice but to confront his fears, Dallas took to the stage, guided by his father's insistence that he embrace the challenge.

Reflecting on the experience, Dallas acknowledges the gravity of the moment, noting, "My first performance was in front of 20,000 people for the Rodeo Halftime Show." Despite his initial trepidation, Dallas rose to the occasion, demonstrating remarkable courage and natural talent. The enormity of the crowd, while daunting, served as a catalyst for his growth and development as a performer.

In hindsight, Dallas recognizes the significance of that moment, describing it as his first step into the world of performance. "Who cares if it's in front of 20,000 people at the Calgary Stampede?" he muses, acknowledging the formative impact of that early experience.

Reflecting on his father's influence, Dallas Jr. shares, "So my father taught me the routine and gave me the core of what he uses. And, to compare it to music, Quincy Jones has a quote

that you can always tell the musician from the personality of the music. So, it goes the same way with the dance."

His hoop-dancing career reached new heights when he graced the stage alongside country music icon Brett Kissel at the Alberta Country Music Awards. "Seeing my name up there with Brett Kissel was surreal," he admits. The multitasking Dallas Jr. also aspires to be a singer,

At the Country Music Alberta Awards in Edmonton, where many of Canada's country music stars gathered, Dallas Junior stood out among them. While he performed as a hoop dancer, he also left the event inspired to continue developing his musical side.

Dallas Jr. explains, "I just came back from Yellowknife before I performed as a Cree Hoop Dancer at the music awards last night, like a 15-hour drive back from Yellowknife." Upon arriving at the Alberta Country Awards, Dallas recounts, "So, I mean, I come back and run into Brett Kissel... At the beginning of the show, Ashley Callingbull was giving the rundown on the artists that are up for nomination."

At the Country Music Awards, Dallas Jr. describes a thrilling moment for him. "They announced special thanks to our sponsors and then it says, with appearances from special guests, Brett Kissel and performance by hoop dancer Dallas Arcand Jr.," he recounts. "That's so cool. So that part was like, oh, wow, that just really hit me, to have my name up there with Brett Kissel," said Dallas Jr.

"It's like, you know, we're both very successful in our fields, and Brett Kissel is a hero of mine because I actually have a very strong love for country music as well after watching the Ken Burns documentary," he continues. "And I even decided that I want to be the next Charlie Pride, the next big Native country singer."

In addition to his performances, Dallas Jr. is passionate about sharing his heritage through music. "I have a kids' album called 'Rez Dog



Dallas Arcand Jr. is an accomplished Hoop Dancer, Musician, and Singer-Songwriter, from the Alexander First Nation. He recently performed at the Alberta Country Music Awards.

Blues' available on Spotify and iTunes," he shares. "It's a project close to my heart, blending traditional and contemporary sounds to create something truly unique."

As Dallas Jr. continues to navigate the entertainment industry, he remains grounded in his roots, drawing strength from his Indigenous heritage and the resilience of his ancestors. With each performance, he honours their traditions while forging new narratives that inspire and uplift audiences worldwide.

Dallas Jr. suggests that readers can look out for his music and book him for Hoop Dancing performances on his personal Facebook page. He calls on Canadians to support artisans by sharing content created by locals and encourages uplifting actions like hiring locals and buying Canadian products and services. Above all, he emphasizes the importance of sharing stories like this on their social media platforms.

## Happy Easter

Wishing you and your family a very happy Easter, full of hope, joy, and the promise of new things.



**Rebecca Schulz**  
MLA, Calgary-Shaw



**Mike Ellis**  
MLA, Calgary-West



**Eric Bouchard**  
MLA, Calgary-Lougheed



**Muhammad Yaseen**  
MLA, Calgary-North



**Ric McIver**  
MLA, Calgary-Hays



**Myles McDougall**  
MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek



**Tanya Fir**  
MLA, Calgary-Peigan



**Rajan Sawhney**  
MLA, Calgary-North West

# Teaching with power

There were many times during her training that Syncrude employee, Lora Cardinal wanted to give up. However, she persisted and overcame the obstacles in her way. Today, she's an electrical training instructor striving to empower people in and outside her classroom.

"I didn't love it in the beginning, but I grew to be passionate about my trade because I got good at it. When you get good at something and you understand it and you know it, you're competent and confident. When you have that ability, you can conquer anything in your career," says Lora.

Also, a hockey mom of two young boys, Lora Cardinal found her passion and discovered her talent as a dual-ticketed Red Seal Electrician and Power System Electrician, but it wasn't an easy journey getting to where she is now. As a shy 19-year-old in the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship program and in the beginning of her career she found it difficult to understand her instructor's and mentor's teaching methods and was afraid to ask questions. "I struggled like crazy," she says. "I did my third year over again and I did a rewrite exam for my 4th year."

Fast forward 20 years at Syncrude in various field-based roles, Lora is now a full-time electrical training instructor. "I facilitate the Electrical Worker Suncor Standards for shock and electrical arc flash." She is proud of the positive feedback she's received on how she teaches the course. "I empower everyone to share their stories. I get the classroom talking because there's so much we take away from sharing experiences."

Outside the classroom, Lora gives back to her community through the Athabasca Tribal Council by hosting girls to live with her while completing high school off-reserve. "I hope to inspire them by showing what an independent woman can accomplish. I'm a strong advocate for educating a young person to help them grow so that they can bring back to their community."

Lora shared a particular instance of when her story and support inspired a young woman to keep pursuing her trades training. "I met a young Indigenous girl who was doing her 4th year electrical and was ready to give up." Lora told her that she wasn't ashamed to share the struggles she went through. "I asked her to find every little ounce of anything she had left and take it and just try. I encouraged her to reach out to me for support." One month later, Lora was thrilled to receive a message from her that she had completed her final year, and it was Lora's talk that inspired her to keep going.

Lora was recently featured in Electrical Business magazine, has been a panelist at a Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, Women in Trades conference power and the Supporting Women In Trades conference. She will also be on the board of Women Building Futures beginning in September this year. By sharing her story and experience she wants to empower other women like her. "I had many ups and downs, but my message is whatever you do, and as hard as it gets, just never stop."



Lora Cardinal, electrical training instructor teaching her class.



## We're Stronger Together

Building relationships is a journey. We are committed to working with Indigenous communities to learn, grow and earn trust. From open and honest dialogue to creative business partnerships, a values-based approach benefits both Indigenous communities and Suncor for years to come.



Lora Cardinal on site.



Publication Mail Agreement No. 40050628  
Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:  
Circulation Department:  
#206, 8944 182 Street  
Edmonton AB T5T 2E3  
natnews@shaw.ca  
Tel: (780) 421-7966

Funded by the Government of Canada | Financé par le gouvernement du Canada | Canada

Volume 41, Number 03, March 2024

ISSN #08294135

www.albertanativenews.com

EDITOR: Deborah Shatz

ADVERTISING:  
Dan Moser 780-421-7966

Alberta Native News is published monthly for distribution to Native Bands and Metis Settlements across Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Northwest Territories.

All rights reserved. No part of this newspaper can be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Editor. Alberta Native News is published by 320754 Alberta Ltd.

For change of address, please send both old and new addresses. We welcome your stories, pictures, artwork and opinions. Please send anything you would like to have published to our office.

### SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Alberta Native News

#206, 8944 182 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5T 2E3

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_



#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$57.75

per year

\$100.80

for two years

(includes GST)

#### U.S. SUBSCRIPTIONS

\$75.00

per year

\$140.00

for two years

(no GST)



## Dying at the hands of racism

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The healthcare system in Alberta fails Indigenous peoples, perpetuating a cycle of suffering and premature death. Structural racism pervades every aspect of care, from access to treatment to the attitudes of healthcare professionals. Countless examples across the country demonstrate Canadians turning a blind eye to the plight of dying Indigenous people within the healthcare and mental health systems. Indigenous individuals frequently encounter poor experiences, lack follow-up care, and fear the healthcare system due to poor outcomes, amplifying the urgency for Canada to address the injustices faced by Indigenous communities.

Indigenous peoples in Alberta face significant barriers to accessing healthcare services, exacerbating health disparities. Geographical isolation, limited transportation options, and underfunded healthcare facilities on reserves present formidable obstacles to receiving timely and adequate care. Additionally, linguistic and cultural differences often lead to misunderstandings and mistrust between Indigenous patients and non-Indigenous healthcare providers.

Within healthcare facilities, Indigenous patients encounter overt and covert forms of racism that compromise the quality of care they receive. Numerous reports document instances of discrimination, stereotyping, and neglect by healthcare professionals. Indigenous individuals seeking treatment for various health concerns, including cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes, and mental health issues, are met with indifference or outright hostility. This systemic bias contributes to the worsening health outcomes and increased mortality rates among Indigenous populations.

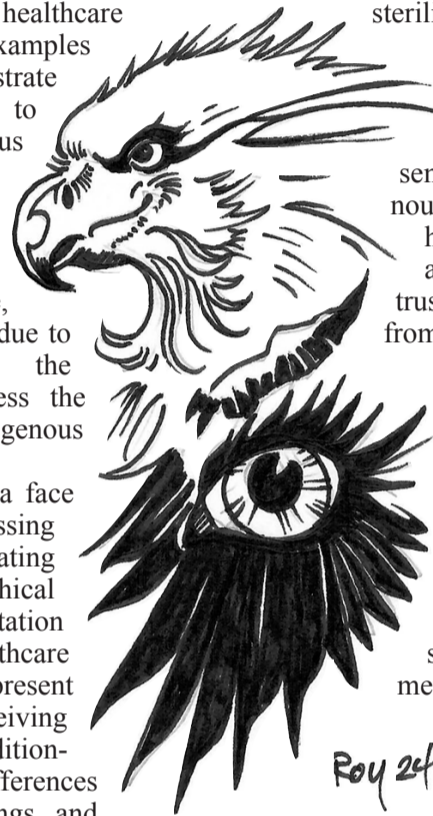
The erosion of trust between Indigenous

communities and the healthcare system is a dire consequence of persistent racism and mistreatment. Historical traumas, such as the legacy of residential schools and forced sterilizations, continue to shape Indigenous perceptions of healthcare institutions. Despite efforts to address cultural competency and sensitivity training, many Indigenous people remain skeptical of healthcare providers' intentions and capabilities. This lack of trust further dissuades individuals from seeking essential medical care, leading to avoidable suffering and preventable deaths.

The crisis facing Indigenous peoples in Alberta demands immediate and comprehensive intervention. Reforms must prioritize Indigenous-led initiatives that center on cultural safety, community empowerment, and self-determination. This includes the establishment of on-reserve hospitals equipped to address the unique health needs of

Indigenous populations. Additionally, healthcare professionals must undergo mandatory anti-racism training and commit to upholding principles of equity, dignity, and respect in their interactions with Indigenous patients.

The status quo is untenable. Indigenous peoples in Alberta cannot continue to suffer and die at the hands of a healthcare system plagued by racism and neglect. It is incumbent upon policymakers, healthcare leaders, and society as a whole to confront these injustices head-on and work collaboratively to build a healthcare system that honours the rights, dignity, and well-being of all Indigenous peoples. Anything less is an affront to justice and humanity.



Roy 24

### Catch the Magic Castledowns Bingo Association

12222 - 137 Avenue, Edmonton, AB

780-457-4670

Start Times:

Afternoon: 12:00pm • Evening: 6:00pm

Late-Night: 10:05pm

Our Pots:

Loonie Pot 1 • Loonie Pot 2

Full Card Insurance • Odd/Even

• Double Action • Crazy C • Houdini (Late-Night)

Tuesday is Half-Price,

Wednesday is Player and Guest of the Week!

Last Saturday of every month  
is our Bonanza Month-End Special!

Big Bucks Bonanza Blitz played quarterly!

First event takes place on October 6th

and the next will be January 5th!

Play the Starburst to win a \$100 Ticket!

## Athabasca Chipewyan FN takes the Alberta Energy Regulator to court

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's (AFCN) chief served the head of the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) with lawsuit papers at a town hall-style meeting in Fort Chipewyan on March 5, where the regulator was lambasted for its coverup of the Kearn oil mine spill two years ago.

When it was Chief Allan Adam's turn to speak at the event, he followed through on an earlier promise to pursue legal action against the AER.

"As the chief of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation I am handing you these documents that say we are going to court ... we are suing you for the damage that you have caused the community of Fort Chip," he said while holding up the

papers.

"We've had enough," Adam told AER CEO Laurie Pushor as he handed him the documents to audience applause. "No more of these dirty dealings are going to ... continue on our traditional territories."

The AFCN and Misikew Cree First Nation, which live downstream from Imperial Oil's Kearn mine, weren't informed that the mine's tailings pond had been leaking for at least nine months until February 2023, when a 5.4-million-litre spill occurred.

Continued on page 9

# CAREERS set the wheels in motion for Olivia Bell

Like so many Alberta high school students, Olivia Bell didn't have a clear idea of what she wanted to do with her life. Her passion for fitness, creativity, and working independently, made her eager to learn more about entrepreneurship, however, there were so many different career pathways to explore. As a child, she would drive by the Tuccaro building on the outskirts of Fort McMurray and dream about what went on behind the modern architecture and multitude of office windows. Little did she know back then, she'd get a life-changing opportunity to immerse herself in the business world and find out.

The wheels were set in motion when Olivia was introduced to CAREERS: The Next Generation, a non-profit organization that partners with schools to connect youth to employers for paid internships. The CAREERS team worked with Olivia to learn more about her interests, helped her put together a resume, and before she knew it, she was walking into the Tuccaro building for a paid internship in human resources.

"It was so exciting to actually try out a career I was interested in. I got real business and office experience, getting to work behind the scenes and learning about the less commonly known duties of H.R."

Olivia's experience is one of 37-thousand internships CAREERS has facilitated in Alberta since the organization was founded in 1997. Their Indigenous Youth Internship Program provides additional support for Indigenous youth to explore any career path they're interested in.

"CAREERS aspires to continue to empower our Indigenous, Metis, and Inuit youth, through collaboration with the FNMI coordinators within the schools across Alberta," explains CAREERS Provincial Indigenous Co-lead, Crystal Wolvengrey. "By creating a space for youth to explore their passion, CAREERS hopes to empower the next generation of Indigenous youth to realize their full potential."

A large part of CAREERS' success is attributed to the many employers who are open to mentoring youth. With looming workforce gaps, businesses are finding that working with CAREERS provides an effective way to attract and retain future talent. Youth also bring fresh energy and ideas to the workplace.

Dave Tuccaro, founder of the Tuccaro Group of Companies where Olivia was hired, has been working with CAREERS for over 25 years. Growing up in Fort Chipewyan, Tuccaro built an empire from humble beginnings, partially due to the chances he was given along the way. He says it's become his mission to provide those same opportunities to youth today.

"That's the reason why I believe so much in CAREERS. The kids I hired back then are starting to become leaders because they are trained to be leaders early. Now I can sit back and see how many lives we've impacted; how many Indigenous youth have gone on to be successful. With the work CAREERS is doing, we have self-sufficient individuals coming out of not just the indigenous communities, but all of the communities in Alberta."

Olivia hopes to be that next success story. Her goal is still to start her own business but after her internship, she's open to exploring human resources further.

"What would I say to somebody thinking about trying an internship? I'd tell them it's a good way to try out different career paths without fully committing to anything. What have you got to lose?"

Whether you're a young person or an employer, you can take advantage of CAREERS services, completely free of charge. Learn more at [www.careersnextgen.ca](http://www.careersnextgen.ca).



Olivia Bell encourages others to try an internship with CAREERS. "It's a good way to try different career paths. What have you got to lose?"



## HIRE TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE TODAY

CAREERS connects employers with dedicated, motivated Indigenous youth who are interested in learning about your business.

- **BE** a leader,
- **CHANGE** a life,
- **GIVE** youth a chance.



[careersnextgen.ca](http://careersnextgen.ca)

**GET YOUR MONEY NOW!!!**

**CFS** WEALTH MANAGEMENT INC.  
Invest | Insure | Unlock

**WE UNLOCK:**

- **FORMER EMPLOYER PENSION PLANS**
- **LOCKED IN RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS (LIRA)**

**CALL MARK**  
toll Free:  
**1 (888) 451-6133**

**PAY NO WITHHOLDING TAX WITH STATUS CARD**

\* Not Available in QC.

**"PROUDLY SERVING ALBERTA'S FIRST NATION COMMUNITIES FOR OVER A DECADE"**

Visit us online or follow us at @ABNativeNews

# Brushstrokes of resilience: Jackie Traverse's artistic odyssey

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Jackie Traverse, a versatile Indigenous artist, expresses her creativity across a myriad of mediums, ranging from oil and acrylic paintings to mixed media, stop-motion animation, and sculpture. Hailing from Winnipeg, Manitoba, she proudly identifies as Ojibway from the Lake St. Martin First Nation. Jackie's artistic journey traces back to her childhood, where a transformative visit to the Wahsa Gallery at the age of 13 sparked her passion for art. However, it wasn't until she reached the age of 32 that she took the bold step of submitting her portfolio to the University of Manitoba, ultimately graduating with a diploma in Fine Arts in May of 2009.

Expressing her gratitude for her artistic journey, Jackie concluded, "I'm amazed that I made it out of that system, that cycle. I have a very long criminal record. I was criminalized for 12 years of my life after aging out of care."

Jackie suggests systemic changes to support individuals who have rehabilitated, asserting, "It's holding me back from gaining proper employment, which keeps me stuck in the system. And sometimes, people get stuck in those systems, then they're forced to re-offend because they can't provide for themselves any other way."

Reflecting on her artistic evolution, Jackie recalls, "I have been making art for about 20 years. But like, I was always doing art as a child. I knew I would be an artist. From the time I was probably about four or five years old, I was just obsessed." Despite facing personal challenges, including involvement in the correctional system, she remained committed to her pursuit of art. "I'm also a sixty scooper, so I lived through a lot of trauma. It wasn't until my last stint in women's

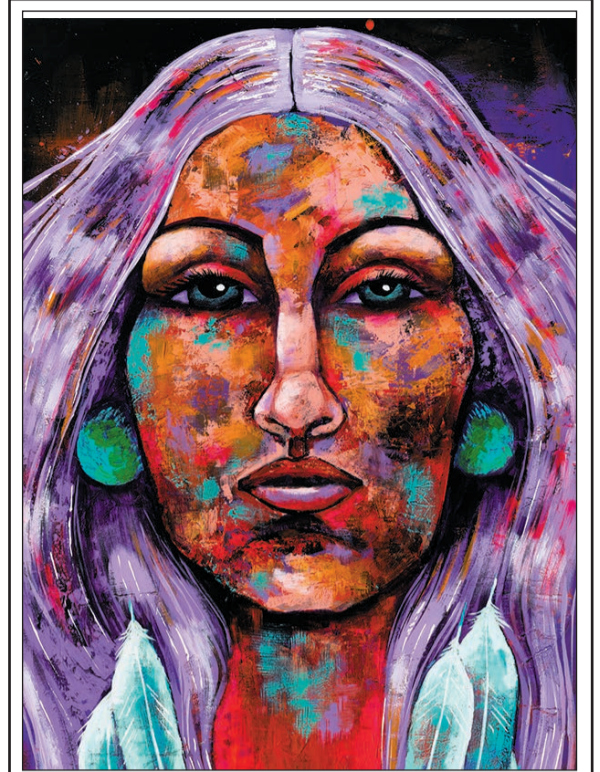
corrections that I decided to really pursue art and change my life around," she remarked.

Driven by sheer determination and a lack of familial support, Jackie emphasized, "I didn't have any support because I don't have family, right? So, I just kind of did it all on my own. And failing was not an option because there was nothing else in this world that I was good at." Her dedication to her craft is evident as she continues to immerse herself in creativity. "I constantly work, and I don't even know if I should call it work. I love what I do. If I'm not painting, I'm making something; it's a career now," she shared.

Influenced by the Woodland style and her personal experiences, Jackie integrates her unique perspective into her art. "I've combined a bit of Woodland with my own style," she explained. Her passion for portraying Indigenous women in her artwork stems from her familial connections. "I love to paint our women. I have three daughters and a granddaughter, so I love to portray our women in a good light, in a beautiful way," she expressed.

Delving into the social issues embedded in her artwork, Jackie shared, "I have this painting, and it's about Tina Fontaine. It's an Indigenous woman with a blindfold on, holding a feather in one hand and the scales of justice in the other. It's unbalanced, with her dress resembling the Canadian flag tipped upside down, blood dripping from it, and a group of women falling from the main police."

Reflecting on the challenges artists face, Jackie shared, "You've got to have a really thick skin if you're going to make it out there because they put these roadblocks there to make you fail, to make



Ribbon Skirt Teachings © by Jackie Traverse

you give in." She also highlighted the importance of supporting up-and-coming artists. "By doing that, you're encouraging them to keep creating. You're helping them to live their dream and giving them the self-esteem they need to keep going to pursue their dreams," she explained.

Addressing the need for more support in the arts community, Jackie noted, "I know they do to a certain point and then, you know, again, it's like funding, it's just never enough. There needs to be ongoing support where a place where they can thrive and be supported."

Jackie's story is about the transformative power of art in overcoming adversity. For more information about Jackie Traverse and to explore her artwork, visit [jackietraverse.com](http://jackietraverse.com).

Wishing you a  
**BLESSED  
EASTER**

Chelsae Petronic -MLA  
Livingstone-Macleod

**CONSTITUENCY OFFICE**  
4927 1st Street West, Claresholm, AB T0L 0T0  
[Livingstone.Macleod@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:Livingstone.Macleod@assembly.ab.ca) | 587-424-2004

## Inuvialuk athlete cont. from p 2

After high school, Michael was invited to play for the Red Lake Miners, in Red Lake, Ontario as part of the Canadian Junior Hockey League (CJHL). After a year and a half, he was traded to the Cochrane Crunch, in Cochrane, Ontario where he completed his third and last year of the CJHL. His last year was played during Covid-19, and it was difficult because all the hockey rules changed, and times were uncertain.

Throughout the years of playing hockey, Michael had always had a goal in mind of playing American University hockey one day. But, after his last year of the CJHL, Michael was uncertain if he would continue with hockey and started making plans to attend post-secondary studies.

Fortunately, Head Coach Mike Petrusma of the Calvin Knights Division 1 team reached out to Michael during the summer of 2021 and asked him to try out for the team and attend Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Michael said, "It was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up. I am forever grateful that I accepted the challenge and I have been enjoying every moment of it. I get the chance to play hockey, go to University and earn a degree, and most importantly continue to grow as an individual."

Michael's perseverance and determination led him to the success that he has today. His advice to other young aspiring hockey players is to "Stay confident in yourself and trust that all your hard work will pay off. Keep striving and chipping away each day to achieve your goals."

**NEWSPAPER  
FOR SALE**

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](mailto:nativeads@gmail.com)

**Our People. Our Product. Our Service.**  
It's what sets us apart.

**YOUR ONE STOP FOR...**

- Septic Tanks (up to 5m burial depth)
- Holding Tanks (up to 3m burial depth)
- Water Cisterns (up to 3m burial depth)
- Lift Stations
- Sumps
- Oil & Grit Separators
- Advanced Wastewater Treatment Systems
- INFILTRATOR® Field Systems
- Pumps, Pipe & Fittings
- Fleet of Picker Trucks for Delivery

**20 YEAR WARRANTY ON ALL CONCRETE TANKS • CSA APPROVED**

**Toll Free: 1-800-232-7385**  
**Calgary - Edmonton**  
[www.wilbert.ca](http://www.wilbert.ca)



# Charges dropped against journalist

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A criminal charge faced by Indigenous journalist Brandi Morin for reporting on Edmonton police's teardown of an inner city homeless encampment has been dropped by the Crown.

On March 1, criminal defence lawyer Richard Moristry was set to enter a not guilty plea on Morin's behalf and schedule a trial date, but was informed the Crown decided to drop the charge of obstructing a peace officer.

"I'm just so relieved. So thankful for everyone who stood by me," said Morin. "I was present to report, and I did nothing more or less than my job. It's gratifying to see the Crown finally acknowledge that I did nothing wrong."

Morin, a former *Alberta Native News* contributor, was arrested on Jan. 10 after she was told to leave a tent encampment at 95 Street and Rowland Road, where she was interviewing residents who were in the process of being displaced on assignment for the online news outlet *Ricochet*.

"The Crown had no reasonable prospect of conviction on the evidence, so it's no surprise they withdrew the charge," said *Ricochet* managing editor Andrea Houston.

But Houston questioned why it took as long as it did "to drop a charge that amounts to an attempt at intimidation of the media by the Edmonton Police."

"The stress and financial costs over the past nearly two months have been significant, and we hope that no working journalist is ever put through such an ordeal again," she added.

A spokesperson for the Alberta Crown Prosecution Service, told the *Edmonton Journal* that the charge was dropped because pursuing it wasn't

deemed by prosecutors to be in the public interest.

On Jan. 29, a coalition of eight national and international press freedom groups, including the Canadian Association of Journalists, Journalists for Human Rights, Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders, called for the charge to be dropped.

Morin's case mirrors that of fellow

Edmonton-based freelance

journalist Amber Bracken,

who is suing the RCMP

for arresting and detaining

her for four days in November

2021, when she covered

Wet'suwet'en land defenders' efforts to

prevent the completion of the Coastal

GasLink pipeline on their unceded territory.

Morin, however, said she has "zero interest"

in pursuing legal action against Edmonton police.

"I'm over it and ready to get back to work

on the ground. I've wasted enough of my time

and tears during this criminalization

experience," she said. "Exceedingly

happy the charge is dropped. Now, I

press on."



## Chipewyan FN cont. from p 6

According to reporting from The Canadian Press based on Imperial Oil documents, the AER was aware of seepages from the mine as early as 2019.

According to the ACFN statement of claim, there were three major leakages from the Kearl mine between May 2022 and November 2023.

"The failings of the AER in relation to the Kearl Facility are also symptomatic of deficiencies in the provincial regulatory system as a whole, including its lack of consultation or consideration for how cumulative impacts affect ACFN's aboriginals Treaty rights," reads the nation's statement of claim.

The AER "knew or ought to have known that ACFN would be harmed by the uncontrolled discharge of tailings flowing into land waterbodies feeding the Athabasca and Firebag Rivers," the statement of claim continues, alleging the regulator violated its "duty of care to ACFN as a downstream First Nation."

"The AER failed to carry out this duty and this breach harmed ACFN's ability to exercise their Treaty rights on their traditional territory safely."

The lawsuit is asking that the ACFN receive at

least a portion of the royalties the Alberta government received from activities at the mine from May 2023 to November 2023, which the statement of claim pegs at \$300 million, in addition to \$500 million in damages.

ACFN Councillor Mike Mercredi told AER representatives at the meeting that he has a "graveyard full of family and friends that you killed" in apparent reference to increased rates of certain cancers in Fort Chipewyan.

"The blood is on your hands," Mercredi added.

The Alberta government commissioned two studies into cancer rates in Fort Chipewyan — in 2009 and 2014 — which were inconclusive.

Chief Adam has since then called for an independent study, "where government and industry have no participation in it."

At the meeting with the AER, Elder Edward Flett told APTN that "[e]verything is going downhill" with the local water as a result of tar sands extraction.

"My traditional way

of life ... it has been drying up with no water. Climate change just changes everything," Flett added.

It wasn't only members of the First Nation that expressed its displeasure at the meeting.

"I don't want to be a part of it anymore ... if it was up to me I would shut down the oil sands today," said Fort Chipewyan Métis President Kendrick Cardinal, who is also a Wood Buffalo municipal councillor. "Don't try to line our pockets. That is what is happening."

AER CEO Pushor told *APTN News* that the regulator "will respond appropriately" to ACFN's lawsuit.

Impact Assessment Agency of Canada / Agence d'évaluation d'impact du Canada

### Cando Sturgeon Rail Terminal West Expansion Project Participant Funding Available

**March 7, 2024** — Funding provided by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) is now available to help Indigenous Peoples and the public participate in the impact assessment process for the proposed Cando Sturgeon Rail Terminal West Expansion Project, an expansion to an existing rail terminal facility located in Sturgeon County, Alberta.

Funding is available for eligible individuals and groups to support their participation throughout the planning phase of the federal impact assessment process. During the current comment period, which ends on April 4, 2024, Indigenous Peoples and the public are invited to review the summary of the Initial Project Description and provide comments. The Agency will retroactively reimburse eligible participants for their participation in this first comment period.

Applications received by **April 8, 2024**, will be considered.

For more information about the Participant Funding Program, including eligibility criteria and the application form, please visit the project home page on the Registry website, reference number 87381, and click on "Participant Funding." You can also contact the Participant Funding Program by writing to [fp-paf@iaac-aeic.gc.ca](mailto:fp-paf@iaac-aeic.gc.ca) or by calling 1-866-582-1884. Details about the project can also be found on the project home page.

#### Additional Information

In October 2023, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change announced the Government of Canada's guidance on the interim administration of the *Impact Assessment Act* (the IAA), following the recent decision by the Supreme Court of Canada on the constitutionality of the IAA. According to the interim measures, advancing projects through the impact assessment process is at the discretion of the proponent. The Agency remains committed to collaborating with proponents to advance the assessment of projects and discuss the information requirements. Stay updated on this project by following the Agency on X (previously Twitter): [#SturgeonRail](https://twitter.com/IAAC_AEIC)

For media inquiries, contact the Agency's media relations team by writing to [media@iaac-aeic.gc.ca](mailto:media@iaac-aeic.gc.ca) or calling 343-549-3870.

ON SALE NOW

**An important collection of traditional narratives and historical accounts published in both Tsut'ina and English**



University of Regina Press  
UOFRPRESS.CA



# Jolain Foster paves the way for Indigenous women in business

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The managing partner for nation building at a multinational consulting firm says the challenges she faced in the corporate world made her want to serve as a voice of empowerment for young Indigenous women.

Jolain Foster, who hails from the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en nations in British Columbia, works for Deloitte helping Indigenous communities on the road to self-determination and economic empowerment.

Foster spoke to *Alberta Native News* on March 8 — International Women's Day — detailing her upbringing as the child of a single mother who struggled with the poverty and trauma so many First Nations people experience.

"She faced a lot of discrimination and stereotypes from employers in entering the workforce," Foster said of her mother. "It was really, really challenging for her in a small rural community that had huge forestry opportunities, but women weren't really getting access to that workforce at that time."

Her mother's challenges in the workforce were compounded by the fact that she lacked access to child care for Foster and her three siblings.

"One of the things that I think really helped me is understanding early on in life that I have the right to equal opportunity as everyone else in this country and in this world. I can tell you that culturally and spiritually, I believe that I was given that understanding early on in life by the ancestors," Foster said.

"That's what really led me down this path to prove that we can have it too."

She said poverty proved to be a blessing in disguise, because it helped her dedicate her life to improving the quality of life for her people.

"To be honest, I didn't really have to fight for opportunities," Foster confessed. "Sometimes they would come in front of me, but the difference is that I went for them, and didn't shy away from new opportunities where there were no real answers."

This ambition helped her "get past and transcend" the barriers she faced as an Indigenous woman.

But, as an Indigenous woman, Foster knew she had to be "twice as good as everybody else" for her work to stand out.

"Unfortunately, in my time, that's what was necessary to get me here. I'm hoping that for the next generation, it won't be that difficult," she added.

Foster decided to study accounting — a field with little Indigenous reputation. In her class of 500 students at Simon Fraser University (SFU), she was the only First Nations person.

With little economic support, she had to balance her studies with working part-time, a constraint few of her peers faced.

After SFU, Foster studied at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), where one of her instructors — not realizing she was Indigenous — attempted to speak about First Nations issues by telling the class about his negative experiences with First Nations people.

She filed a complaint about her instructor as a means of "standing up for my own rights and standing up for what's right so that other Indigenous students who came up after me didn't have to deal with it." That instructor, Foster said, no longer works at UNBC.

Foster began working at Deloitte in 1996, when there were few other Indigenous people at



Jolain Foster is Managing Partner of Nation Building at Deloitte.

the firm.

"At that time, I didn't see any First Nations women or Indigenous women, or men, in leadership roles or in partner roles that could help mentor me," she said.

"That was a real struggle for me because I was trying to build something new. I was trying to build a better understanding of Indigenous clients."

This experience of "carving new ground at a young age" while "running into wall after wall after wall" was frustrating.

By the year 2000, she quit Deloitte to do accounting for Indigenous-run businesses and First Nations communities.

With that experience directly working with her community, she returned to Deloitte with a better ability to help it serve Indigenous clients.

Foster's advice to young Indigenous women is "to not be afraid to take chances and to not feel like you have to know exactly what your purpose is before you jump into something."

"Something that really helped me in my career is having faith that we're getting the right guidance, spiritually, and to trust in your gut, to really be true to yourself, and to understand and value the gifts that you've been given," she said.

**Get connected & feel confident online.**

Learn how with the Digital Literacy Program

START YOUR FREE TRAINING  
(888) 839-9239  
[alberta.ca/DigitalLiteracy](http://alberta.ca/DigitalLiteracy)

Funded in part by the Government of Canada's Skills for Success Program

**Injured? We have answers.**

**CAM LLP**  
INJURY LAWYERS

[camllp.com](http://camllp.com)  
Call: 1-780-969-6998

# SC approves Child Welfare legislation

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Indigenous leaders expressed relief last month when the Supreme Court of Canada upheld Bill C-92, which affirms First Nations, Métis and Inuit jurisdiction over child welfare.

“This is a grand historic moment,” Confederacy of Treaty No. 6 First Nations Grand Chief Cody Thomas said in a Feb. 9 statement.

“The Supreme Court’s ruling recognizes our inherent right to care for our children with our own cultures, traditions, and languages, and it affirms the principles of reconciliation and our inherent right to lawmaking and self-governance.”

Quebec’s provincial government opposed the legislation, which first passed in June 2019, arguing that the federal government overstepped its authority, infringing on provincial jurisdiction.

In February 2022, the Quebec Court of Appeal agreed with the government that aspects of the law were unconstitutional, namely those that gave Indigenous legislation the force of federal law

and allow Indigenous governments to overrule conflicting provincial laws.

The federal government appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled unanimously in its favour on Feb. 9.

“The act as a whole is constitutionally valid,” the court concluded. “Developed in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, the act represents a significant step forward on the path to reconciliation.”

Métis National Council president Cassidy Caron, Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed held a news conference to applaud the court ruling the day it was made.

Hajdu called the decision a “clarion call for all provinces and territories to be partners in this reconciliation.”

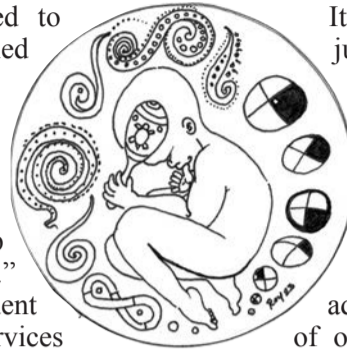
“It is now the law, actually, that that work has to continue.”

Cindy Blackstock, whose legal advocacy challenged decades of discrimination against Indigenous children in the child welfare system, said the legislation creates consistent “national standards” for Indigenous child welfare.

It also “creates a pathway to affirm jurisdiction in child and family services,” she explained in a panel discussion with lawyer Pam Palmater.

Another panelist, Mary Teegee, president of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, explained that the core issue C-92 sought to address was the “overrepresentation of our children in state and stranger care.”

The legislation serves as a “reaffirmation that we are able to draft our own laws and implement our own laws within the realm of child and family [services],” she added. “We’ve always had inherent rights. We just haven’t had the resources to breathe life into our own laws.”



## RCMP: Restorative justice and recruiting

The RCMP in Eastern Alberta District are proactively working with our respective Indigenous communities building strong healthy relationships through encouraging dialogue and partnerships. As we move on in this new year 2024/2025-year, detachments will be reaching out to establish what the policing priorities for each Indigenous community. This information will become an integral part of the Detachment and Community Annual Performance Plan that includes measurables that are monitored and reported upon that will provide the RCMP with a road map of what the community sees as required priorities for safer communities.

### Restorative Justice

In Eastern Alberta District the RCMP has been working with Indigenous communities encouraging the creation and use of Restorative Justice processes and practise. Restorative Justice has proven to be effective in ‘repairing the harm’ between those involved in conflict as opposed to entering the Judicial System. Eastern Alberta District has enlisted the assistance of a subject matter expert to assist with educating and guiding communities should they wish to develop a Restorative Justice System. Communities are encouraged to reach out to their detachment

commander and discuss the possibilities of initiating this program. Restorative Justice and Indigenous Court systems require involvement from all stakeholders to have positive results.

### Recruiting

Efforts to recruit young Indigenous people into vocational policing is ongoing. The RCMP’s Pro-Active Recruiting Section out of K Division Headquarters supports the detachments at career fairs, community events and schools encouraging potential candidates to apply as a regular member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Those interested in pursuing a career are encouraged to go online @ [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca) for additional info.

Applications are now open for the Indigenous Youth Camps that take place at K Division Headquarters. This is a great opportunity for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years to attend and learn firsthand what the RCMP has to offer by

way of a career. These youth camps are of no cost to the applicants or their families, as all costs for the week are covered by the RCMP. For additional information you can e mail [kyouthcamps-kcampsdejeunes@rcmp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:kyouthcamps-kcampsdejeunes@rcmp-grc.gc.ca). The deadline for applications for the youth camp is April 30, 2024, the camp dates are from August 12 to 16, 2024.

Choosing a career as a police officer in the RCMP is rewarding and it should be acknowledged and appreciated of how many community members offer recognition and encouragement of the police officers that serve in your communities.

RIVER CREE  
RESORT AND CASINO  
EDMONTON, ALBERTA

## WE ARE HIRING

ARE YOU A CHARISMATIC, OUTGOING, AND ENERGETIC PERSON?

If you are a people person with a flair for exceptional customer service, you are the kind of person that we are looking for. Here at River Cree Resort and Casino, we value our associates. We prepare them to excel, and we recognize a job well done. The River Cree Resort & Casino is committed to helping you reach your personal growth and career goals, while paying you a competitive wage. While we offer careers with a wide range of responsibilities, every role in our organization is valued and recognized as a contributor to our success. We're always interested in dedicated, friendly people who not only want to make a difference in their work lives, but in their personal lives as well.

WHAT CAN YOU ACHIEVE AT RIVER CREE RESORT AND CASINO?

- You can work in a world class entertainment facility
- You can work with motivated individuals who have great customer skills
- You can gain the skills and knowledge that you need to advance in your career
- You can help contribute to an exceptional guest experience


If you are interested in a people-oriented profession and have strong interpersonal skills, consider a career in customer service. Utilize those skills to find fulfilling employment in the Gaming Industry, Food & Beverage and the Hospitality Industry.

HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT ABOUT CURRENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES AT RIVER CREE RESORT AND CASINO?


You can view job openings and submit your resume on line at [www.rivercreejobs.com](http://www.rivercreejobs.com). Follow us on Facebook at River Cree Resort & Casino Job Board or come to our office in person and visit our Recruitment Specialist.

## IT'S TAX SEASON


Is your voter information up to date?




**If you're a Canadian citizen 18 or older**




**Check "YES" on your tax form**



**Be ready to vote in federal elections**

[elections.ca](http://elections.ca) 

**1-800-463-6868 / 1-800-361-8935**



# INDIGENOUS ADMINISTRATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Take all nine micro-credential courses to receive your certificate.

*Your training needs are why we are here.*



**NORTHERN LAKES COLLEGE**

CONTINUING EDUCATION & CORPORATE TRAINING

Limited sponsored seats are available to Indigenous learners.

Contact us for details!

cect@northernlakescollege.ca  
1-866-652-3456

[www.northernlakescollege.ca/cect](http://www.northernlakescollege.ca/cect)



local artists | exclusive collection | original pieces



**WVG** | Wakina Gallery



carvings • paintings • illustrations • cards

780-237-1556

[www.wakinagallery.com](http://www.wakinagallery.com)