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Study looks at impact of herbicide on traditional plants in boreal forests

For the past 15 years, Bigstone Cree Nation Elder Helen Noskiye has operated a trap line in the boreal forest in northern Alberta, in an area north of Chipewyan Lake near the Wabasca River.

In that time, logging companies have cleared a lot of timber and reforested vast stretches of land. They spray the herbicide glyphosate broadleaf plants and shrubs to help newly planted trees thrive. This spraying includes traditional plants and medicines such as Labrador tea, chokecherries, and raspberries, which have been consumed for generations by the sakawiyiniwak, or Northern Bush Cree.

“Once they do the spraying, people can’t pick the berries anymore because it’s poisonous,” Noskiye said. “There’s nothing trappers can do because the companies overrule them, I guess.”

Athabasca University researchers Dr. Srijak Bhatnagar and Dr. Janelle Baker are leading a study with members of Bigstone Cree Nation to better understand the impact of glyphosate on the health of Labrador tea.

This important traditional food and medicine is used to treat ailments like headaches, inflammation, asthma, and heart problems.

Combining Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and lab-based research, the team is addressing long-standing concerns in the community about industry’s impact on traditional food sources.

“This is research that will be directly useful to other First Nations with the same concerns—which are a lot of them,” said Baker, an assistant professor and cultural and environmental anthropologist in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.



To understand how glyphosate affects traditional plants, the team will look at which microbes are present in the roots of Labrador tea, which grows throughout the boreal forest in northern Canada.

“Every living thing has microbes. We have microbes living in our skin, in our mouth, in our gut. These plants also have microbes living everywhere,” explained Bhatnagar, an assistant professor of computational biologist in the Faculty of Science and Technology.

The research team is working with Traditional Knowledge Keepers in Bigstone Cree Nation to identify microbes present on plants found in treated compared to those found in untreated areas. Bhatnagar said existing research has found the presence of glyphosate in berries foraged in boreal regions.

“We know from other plants that the herbicide affects the microbial community of the plant that in turn can negatively affect

the health of the plant,” he said.

The study will also look at how consuming Labrador tea could affect human health. Collaborators at McMaster University will expose human cells grown in Petri dishes to teas from plants gathered in both sprayed and unsprayed areas.

“They will expose those cells to the teas brewed in the traditional way,” Bhatnagar said. “Basically we’re going to try to see if glyphosate can be detected.”


He said the team chose to study Labrador tea because of the community concerns, but also because it’s so common throughout boreal forests. The team hopes the results can be used as a model for understanding the implications of glyphosate for other plants and other communities.


The results of the study could have broader implications for reforestation practices—and for truth and reconciliation in Canada, said Baker. She has worked extensively with Bigstone Cree Nation and other Indigenous communities to study industrial contamination of traditional foods and water sources.

Plants like Labrador tea, fireweed, and chokecherry are common throughout the boreal forest and are classified as weeds. So when former industrial sites are reforested, companies fail to recognize the cultural value of these plants, she said.

“If we really want to have truth and reconciliation, we need to start paying attention to Indigenous Laws and Indigenous Systems of how to interact with these species.”

The research is being funded in part through a New Frontiers in Research Fund 2022 Exploration grant, overseen by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.





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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

Métis Spring Festival returns to Servus Place

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Métis Spring Festival is returning to Servus Place in St. Albert this year from May 17 to 19, with daily square dancing and competitions.

“It’s all about Métis music and Métis dance,” Florence Gaucher of Métis Child & Family Services, who’s organized the annual celebration of Métis culture since its inception 15 years ago, told *Alberta Native News*.

“It’s bringing a community together to come and either participate as a contestant or to be there as one of the supporters of the event.”

But, Gaucher emphasized, the event is not only for Métis people, anyone interested in immersing themselves in Métis culture is welcome to attend and enjoy the festival.

“It’s not only for the [Métis] community,” she added. “It’s also to create an awareness of our culture and share it with other people.”

In its original iteration in 2009, the event was hosted at the Kinsmen Korral, but it became immediately apparent that they needed a bigger venue, so Servus Place has been its home since

2010.

Festivities kick off on Friday May 17th with vocal talent shows beginning at 6:30 p.m., which you can register for up until an hour before showtime. There are separate categories for kids aged 7 to 12 and 13 to 19, adult males and females, and seniors.

Jigging and fiddling competitions occur on the Saturday and Sunday, both starting at 1 p.m., with registration open until noon. The categories are the same as the vocal competitions.

There will be concessions and crafts for sale on site, which Gaucher said will look familiar to people who’ve been to other Métis events in the region.

“I’ve tried to keep it as authentic as possible for people making their own products,” she explained.

Homemade goods for sale will include beads, baked goods, dolls, sculptures, fish scale art, candles, clothes, moccasins and mukluks.



The Métis Child and Family Dancers (file photo)

Admission, which was originally going to cost \$10 for adults, is now free, thanks to the generosity of sponsors.

The festival is co-sponsored by the Métis Child & Family Services Society, St. Albert Riverlot Métis Association, St. Albert-Sturgeon County Métis Nation Local #1904 and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

“It’s going to be a wonderful celebration of Métis culture,” concluded Gaucher. “See you there!”

For further information and to register, email florencemc@metischild.com.

Tsuut’ina introduces program for youth aging out of care

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tsuut’ina Nation has established a new program to assist young adults who are transitioning out of the First Nations child welfare system by providing them with needed social support as they enter adulthood.

The program, which began in February, is called Idanaguts’ishoti, meaning “One who gets to know themselves again” in Dene. It’s also known as the Post-Majority Program, referring to participants being past the age of majority.

“Providing support for youth aging out of foster care and as they transition into adulthood is essential for promoting their well-being, independence and success,” Kathleen Bigplume, an outreach worker with the program, told *Alberta Native News*. “Our program can help ensure that they have the opportunity to reach their full potential and thrive as they make this transition.”

The program provides wraparound support for youth aged 18 to 25 tailored to their unique needs, which could consist of assistance with housing, food, mental health care, employment, financial security, addiction, cultural support and healthy relationships.

“We also provide mentorship and ongoing support to help youth navigate challenges and achieve their goals,” Bigplume added.

Her role as a support worker is “to promote self-identity, stability, empowerment and self-sustainability [by] providing mentorship for

educational support and career counselling, and bridging gaps in services and making sure that they’re available to all of our participants.”

A significant challenge in getting Idanaguts’ishoti off the ground is “reaching the majority of our potential participants,” she added.

Many young Indigenous adults who are aging out of care, Bigplume explained, aren’t aware that they have this resource to support them as they enter adulthood.

She estimated that there are around 75 people who are entitled to enter the program that they haven’t been able to track down.

The program is intended specifically for Tsuut’ina band members who have been through the nation’s Child and Family Services, even if they live off reserve, but non-band members

who are Indigenous, live on reserve and have gone through the child welfare system are also eligible.

The desired outcomes for participants are wide-ranging — obtaining secure and stable housing, completing their education, or making progress towards completion, securing employment and developing crucial life skills.

“We measure their success, not by the outcomes, but by the sense of confidence and self-sufficiency. that our participants gain through their journey with us,” Bigplume emphasized.



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St Albert, AB

Métis Spring Festival 2024

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Launching a war against drugs

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In the obscured corners of our prosperous First World Nation known as Canada, a tale of devastation unfolds — a narrative all too familiar, a reality too grim. It’s a story of how the war on drugs has laid waste to Indigenous communities, leaving behind a trail of shattered lives and dreams.

Envision children orphaned, traditional roles obliterated by meth pipes, and the promise of bright futures extinguished by needles in arms. Hopes and dreams, painstakingly preserved by generations of Indigenous ancestors, now bartered away for a fleeting high.

Imagine once-thriving communities, steeped in culture and tradition, now caught in the grip of addiction and despair. Indigenous people, the guardians of our land, find themselves ensnared by the insidious claws of the drug trade. What was once a sanctuary of harmony and unity has become a battleground, where lives are lost and futures stolen.

In the ruthless pursuit of profit, drug traffickers prey upon the vulnerabilities of Indigenous communities, callously peddling their poisons. Mothers weep for their lost children, stolen away by addiction’s relentless grip. Fathers stand powerless as their families crumble before their eyes, helpless against the tide of destruction. Grandparents bearing their grandbabies lost to addiction.

But the tragedy extends beyond shattered homes – it infiltrates every aspect of Indigenous life, poisoning our youth with hollow promises of escape. It strips away our cultural heritage, erasing the bonds that once united us as a people.

Yet, amidst this darkness, a flicker of hope remains – a flame of resilience burning bright within the hearts of Indigenous communities. It is a call to arms, a rallying cry for justice and redemption.

We must heed this call. We must rise together, hand in hand, to confront the forces that seek to destroy us. We must declare war against drugs, reclaiming our communities from the clutches of addiction.

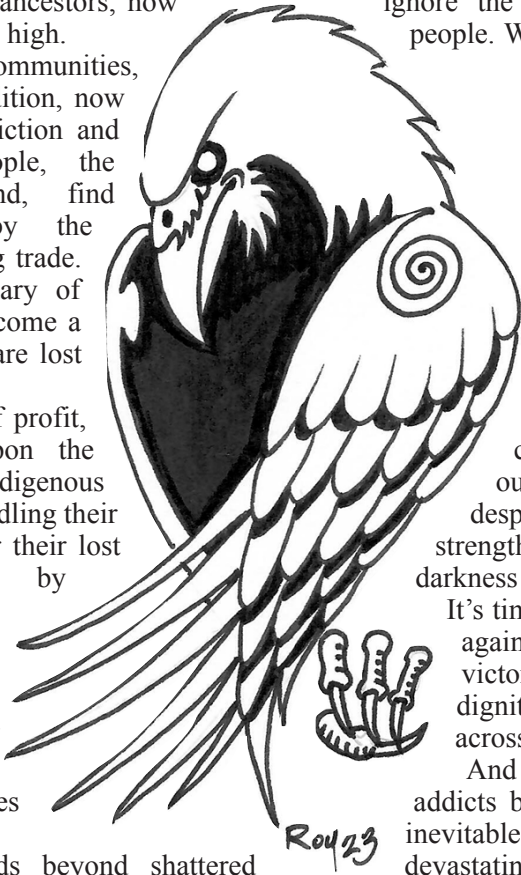
The time for action is now. We cannot afford to ignore the suffering that plagues our people. We cannot allow the legacy of

the war on drugs to continue unchecked. It is up to us to rewrite this tragic tale, to carve out a new narrative of hope, healing, and resilience.

Together, let us forge a path forward, guided by the light of justice and fueled by the fire of our collective determination. Let us reclaim our communities, our culture, and our future from the clutches of despair. Only through unity and strength can we overcome the darkness that threatens to consume us.

It’s time to wage a new war - a war against drugs - and emerge victorious, restoring hope and dignity to Indigenous communities across the nation.

And the injustice of witnessing addicts being humiliated before their inevitable demise is nothing short of devastating. The end of an entire family line for a quick sale. We need to empower the victim, we need more support for families and communities suffering and it needs to be compassionate.



Event honours IRS Survivors

By Alberta Native News staff

In early February of 2024 a lightbulb suddenly went on in Terry Lusty's head! Something didn't seem quite right. He thought for a moment, then almost instinctively grabbed his cellphone and called around the Edmonton community, and beyond. The response was, in all instances, the same. All those contacted had not heard a single mention of an event aimed at commemorating the tenth anniversary of the 7th and Final National TRC Survivor Gathering that took place in Edmonton in 2014.

He recalled thinking, "This is terrible. That special and historic event certainly deserves commemoration." And so, it began.

Various organizations and services that served the Indigenous community were contacted and agreed wholeheartedly to support and partner with Lusty, the Nuksahtowin office of Athabasca University and Creating Hope Society whose executive director, Bernadette Iahtail,

would serve as the lead organizer.

Generally speaking, she was asked to plan and implement a commemoration of the 2014 gathering, while also honouring residential school survivors who are still with us and assisting survivors on their journey towards closure and healing. Throughout the process, representatives from the cooperating groups served as a consultative committee.

Native Counselling Services also jumped on board, as did the Edmonton Native Seniors Centre, St. Faith's Anglican Church, Sacred Heart Church of the First People, the Greater Edmonton Alliance, and End Poverty Edmonton. And so, it all began to take shape.

With just two months to put it all together, Iahtail played a valuable role in locating and securing much-needed financial sponsorship. Most of this came from Native Counselling

Continued on page 8

Carson Cardinal: The importance of relationship in post-secondary education

When Carson Cardinal decided to pursue a degree in psychology, he knew that living close to the support provided by his friends, family, and local church would play an important role in his success. Because of this, Carson chose to register in the Northern Lakes College University Studies Diploma program. This program allowed him to complete two years of his psychology degree while continuing to reside in his home community of Slave Lake, Alberta.

Immediately, Carson felt welcomed by NLC staff and instructors, and knew his community had grown to include the College. He felt especially supported by his instructor, Judy Nicholson, who provided thoughtful insight throughout his studies and on his essay papers. "Judy made me feel very valued and cared for as a student, and I definitely carried that with me into my own work," said Carson. "She helped me to see that education revolves around the formation of human bonds. She showed me how humility and kindness does not seek its own."

But Nicholson is only one of many faculty members Carson credits with adding to an encouraging environment. Even in simple daily interactions, Carson felt a sense of friendly support from administrative staff, librarians, and other instructors. He was also inspired by the academic challenges and psychological concepts introduced to him.

"I really enjoyed studying the work of Viktor E. Frankl, a psychiatrist who specialized in existential psychology. That kind of sparked this

interest in me to learn how to help people find meaning and purpose and the will to live despite suffering and despite the pains that we all experience," he explains.

After graduating from the Northern Lakes College University Studies program in 2018, Carson went on to complete his Bachelor's degree in psychology in 2021, and completed a Master's degree in Education in 2022. He has found multiple opportunities open to him as a result of his post-secondary education. Carson's work now focuses on cultivating healthy bonds in on-campus relationships; a value he shares with those who added to his educational experience at NLC.

"I focused a significant amount of my capstone work on the creation and maintenance of caring and thoughtful student-teacher relationships. In my eyes, warm student-teacher relationships and collegial interactions don't just concern intellectual conversations but are also built upon developing heartfelt connections that allow for the needs and interests of students and colleagues to be honored. It is our responsibility as lifelong learners to help one another feel included, valued, and respected for our personal histories and our current lived experiences," Carson explains.

As he prepares himself for the future, Carson hopes to complete a PhD in Educational Psychology. He also hopes to author and publish books to further promote this philosophy to schools around the world. But more than anything, Carson plans on living his life in a way



NLC graduate Carson Cardinal

that reflects the philosophy of kindness and inclusion he so values. "No matter what experiences await me, and in spite of the fact that the world is so often prone to valuing 'doing' rather than 'being', what I do concerns me less than who I am. I want to live my life in a genuine way: in faith and hope, I desire to be someone who exudes the humble brokenness and wholeness of a life well lived."

Northern Lakes College offers many programs through Supported Distance Learning. Get more info at www.northernlakescollege.ca/programs-courses



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Dreamspeakers International Indigenous Film Fest starts April 26

Film lovers are in for a real treat this month with the annual Dreamspeakers International Indigenous Film Festival, taking place in person from April 26 to 28 at Metro Cinema at the Garneau Theatre in Edmonton (8712-109 St NW), and online from April 29-May 6 at dreamspeakers.org/diiff-2024.

Since 1992, DIIFF has celebrated the latest works by Indigenous peoples’ innovation in film, video, radio and new media, presenting selections of Indigenous works from around the globe. The festival creates community by reflecting the diversity of the world’s Indigenous nations and illustrating the vitality and excellence of Indigenous art and culture.

“Gather around the light with Dreamspeakers from the world over as we tell the tales of people, places, events and stories that shape our dreams and lives, express our creativity and share our humanity,” states Christine Frederick, DIIFF Executive Director. “We are so grateful to the artists and producers who brave the telling, have courage and commitment to share their stories

and to our audiences and communities who come to revive their spirits!”

This year’s festival has over 40 films, filmmaker panels, an animation workshop and more. Each film was selected by the jury from over 200 entries. There are documentaries, shorts, features, animations, and films from seasoned professionals and first time directors. The films hail from all over the world including: Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, Chile, Japan, and for the first time, Iran.

DIIFF will once again have both in person and online screenings. In person screenings and panels will be held at Metro Cinema at the Garneau from April 26-28 and online screenings and workshops from April 29-May 6 on the festival website (dreamspeakers.org/diiff-2024).

Dreamspeakers International Indigenous Film Festival (DIIFF) was first presented in Edmonton in 1992 and was the first Indigenous film Festival in Canada. It was founded by Indigenous filmmakers and creatives in response to the growing industry and to support Indigenous

representation in film and media.

The name “Dreamspeakers” was derived from a story about the first Dene film maker who returned home to his community in the north and was struggling to talk to the Elders about his work, because a word for filmmaker did not exist in their language. The Elders understood and called it Dreamtalking. The Festival organizers adapted its name from this story.

Tickets are on sale at dreamspeakers.org. Tickets for per film screening cost \$14 for General Admission and \$11 for Students and Seniors. Festival Passes cost \$75 + fees for General Pass and \$55 + fees for Students and Seniors.

There are a host of amazing feature films, documentary films, short documentaries, shorts and animated films that have been selected for this year’s festival. The Dreamspeakers website is complete and easy to follow. Here is a small synopsis sampling of films to choose from.

On Friday April 26, the festival begins with Family friendly animation shorts, followed by Indigenous ways of being shorts.

At 3 pm there are screenings of 3 short films: *Itu Ninu*, *Radio Bingo* and *Nautilus*, followed at 4:30 by short documentaries *Preserving our Place*, and *On Suspicion: Zokunento*.

Narrated in the language of the Mapuche people, the film *On Suspicion: Zokunento* is a journey through the works of the artist Bernardo Oyarzún from the perspective of his nephew, Daniel Díaz, who proposes a reflection on identity and racial justice in contemporary Chile.

On Saturday morning at 10 am the documentary *Aitamaako’tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun* will be screened along with shorts: *Huli*; *Running Rabbit*; and *Ancestral Threads*.

Aitamaako’tamissk api Natosi: Before the Sun is a documentary that provides a thrilling portrait of a young Siksika woman and the deep bonds between her father and family in the golden plains of Blackfoot Territory as she prepares for one of the most dangerous horse races in the world... on bareback. A sport for the truly brave, Logan Red Crow is an Indian Relay rider who vaults from horse to horse in short, exhilarating races. She is a champion in the making - besides her skill and sheer grit, Logan has a loving family, an elite group of horses, and a home on her ancestral lands. As she pushes toward her goal, the connections between animal and human, family and community, ancestral tradition and

Continued on page 7

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Dreamspeakers cont. from p 6

contemporary life are profound and lasting.

At 12:30 there will be a screening of the documentary *Remembering the Children: The Red Deer Indian Industrial School*. For over 100 years, many of the Indigenous children of Canada were forcefully taken from their families and sent hundreds or thousands of kilometers away to Residential Schools whose purpose was to take away their language and culture and replace it with that of the European colonizers, often using abuse and neglect to achieve this goal. The Red Deer Indian Industrial School operated from 1889 to 1919 and was per population one of the most deadly Indigenous Residential Schools in Canada's history. This film focuses on honouring the memory of the students who survived as well as those that died at the school whose bodies were never returned to their families. It also focuses on how this has affected generations of First Nations, Inuit and Metis through intergenerational trauma, but also how to move towards a brighter future of cultural revitalization and reconciliation through the eyes of the Indigenous filmmakers on their journey of discovery.

The short documentary *Bimibatoo-win: Where I Ran* will also be screened during that time slot. The film is about Charlie Bittern, a residential school survivor from Berens River First Nations in Manitoba. In 1967, when he was 19 years old, the principal of Birtle Indian Residential School forced him to run 80 km through a brutal blizzard. It took almost nine hours. 55 years later, Bittern embarks on the same journey – but this time, he's surrounded by his family. Bittern hopes that retracing his steps will help him heal from his experience, while spreading awareness for all residential school survivors and all the children who never made it home.

At 4 pm on April 27 is the screening of documentary *Lii Michif Niiyanaan - We Are Metis* with a Filmmaker Talkback. In this one-hour documentary Metis elders, artists, activists, and scholars examine the unique history of Metis people in Canada and share their diverse perspectives on what it means to be Metis today. The film is a love letter to the courage, determination, and resilient spirit of the Métis nation, and a call for all Canadians to embrace the richness of their shared history. Their animated beadwork motif and music animate a very spirited film journey through western Canada in the Covid era.

On Saturday night at 6 pm, the film *Finding Justice: Metis families' experience with the criminal justice system* will be screened at Metro. The 2023 documentary was produced by Potluck Productions Inc. in association with the Métis Nation of Alberta. On March 28, 2020, Jacob Sansom and Maurice Cardinal, two Métis men, were found shot dead outside their vehicle in rural Alberta after returning from a successful hunt. This film is about their families' experiences with the criminal justice system and their calls for changes following the trial. This film deals with mature subject matter and viewer discretion is advised.

At 9 pm the Saturday's offerings close with the Feature Film, *Songs of Kamui*.

In this amazing Japanese film, brilliant Teru longs to attend school with other girls. But in early 20th-century Japan, Teru is excluded, because she is Ainu. Instead of writing, the Ainu - an Indigenous people from Japan's Hokkaido island - pass down their traditions through yukar (oral poems). When Teru meets a Tokyo professor who has devoted his life to decoding yukar, Teru discovers a chance not only to prove her brilliance but to rewrite the fate of the Ainu. Based on a true story.

Sunday's features include *Because She's Adopted* and *Winding Path* at 1:30 pm. In *Because She's Adopted*, Kristal, a Cree adoptee from the West Coast of Canada must come to terms with the complicated reality of her adoption. She embarks on a journey to find the missing pieces but when tragedy strikes, her grief yields a new reality.

In *Winding Path*, Jenna Murray is an Eastern Shoshone medical student at the University of Utah. When her active, 70-year-old Papa suddenly dies of a preventable health issue, she grapples with her dream of a career in tribal



health while facing her own mental health crisis. Directed by Cree filmmaker and 2019 Sundance Award Winner Alexandra Lazarowich (*Fast Horse*), and Oscar winning Director Ross Kauffman (*Born into Brothels*, *ETeam*); Produced by Oscar-Nominated Filmmaker Robin Honan; Co-Produced by Sundance Native Lab Alum Charine Pilar Gonzalez; original score by Choctaw Nation Musician Samantha Crain (*Fancy Dance*, Sundance 2023).

Online screenings and workshops continue from April 29 – May 6.

The 2024 Dreamspeakers International Indigenous Film Festival is produced by The Dreamspeakers Festival Society, and is supported by Indigenous Services Canada, Edmonton Arts Council, Windspeaker Media, CJWE FM, CFWE FM, 89.3 FM Raven, CTV Edmonton, Step Contractors Ltd., Parke Pacific Projects Ltd., Hopkins Law and Whiskeyjack Art House.

For more information contact Dreamspeakers at (780) 378-9609 or info@dreamspeakers.org.

REMEMBERING OUR RELATIONS: Dēnesųłíné Oral Histories of Wood Buffalo National Park

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation with Sabina Trimble and Peter Fortna

978-1-77385-411-3 (Paperback) \$34.99 | 352 pages

Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada's largest national park, is located in the heart of Dēnesųłíné homelands, where Dene people have lived from time immemorial. Central to its creation, expansion, and management was the eviction of Dēnesųłíné people, the forced separation of Dene families, and the restriction of their Treaty rights. *Remembering Our Relations* deliberately challenges the erasure of Dene voices experiences in a ringing call for justice.

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SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE				
	FRIDAY APRIL 26TH	SATURDAY APRIL 27TH	SUNDAY APRIL 28TH	APRIL 29 - MAY 6
10 AM	In Person	Aitamaako'tamisskapi Natosi: Before the Sun with Shorts: Huli; Running Rabbit; Ancestral Threads	The Food Yashar Allira	Online Screenings & Workshops
11 AM	Family Friendly Animation Shorts		Preserving Culture Shorts	
NOON		Residential School Stories: Remembering the Children & Bimibatoo-win		
1 PM	Indigenous Ways of Being Shorts		Because She's Adopted with Winding Path	
2 PM		Women's Story Shorts		
3 PM	Indigitech Stories: Itu Ninu with Radio Bingo & Nautilus			
4 PM		Lii Michif Niiyanaan – We Are Metis with Film Maker	Atikamekw Suns with MMIWG2S Shorts	
5 PM	Preserving Our Place ON SUSPICION: Zokunentu			
6PM		Justice Shorts & Finding Justice : Métis Families' Experience with the Criminal Justice System	2 Spirit Stories: re-ken-si-le-a-shen with Aikāne	
7 PM	@ Metro Cinema at the Garneau Theatre 8712 109 St Edmonton			
8 PM				
9 PM				
10 PM	Full Schedule Tickets & Passes dreamspeakers.org	Songs of Kamui		
11 PM				

Event honours cont. from p 4

Services, City of Edmonton's Indigenous Relations Office, and the Anglican Church which also provided the feast for supper time while Sacred Heart provided the noon lunch vittles.

As with any reputable and well-designed Indigenous event, this one started off with a traditional pipe ceremony attended by more than 40 attendees. Doing the honours was Edmonton pipe carrier, Russell Auger.

Cree Elder Jerry Saddleback, a member of the Samson Band at Maskwacis First Nation, an hour drive south of Edmonton, provided an Opening Prayer and a smudge ceremony.

Event coordinator Iahtail then delivered words of welcome and introduced special guests and visitors. She went on to explain the workshops being offered for the day and how the event came about thanks to Terry Lusty's brainchild. Iahtail then called for an Honour Song for the survivors in attendance to conclude the Opening Ceremony segment of the day's event.

Greetings and support were additionally extended by a few of Alberta's prominent Indigenous politicians presently holding office. This included Member of Parliament Blake Desjarlais, MLA Brooks Arcand-Paul and Edmonton Council member Aaron Paquette. The sole sour note of the day was a verbal attack aimed at Paquette by a female visitor in the audience who took exception to Edmonton's ongoing struggles in the area of housing and homelessness which, as so many know, is a never-ending saga, especially in relation to the largely affected Indigenous population.

When questioned about the matter later, Lusty



Some of the Indian Residential School Survivors posed for a group photo at the 10th anniversary commemoration of the 2014 National TRC Gathering in Edmonton.

admitted it was an "unfortunate" flare-up and it was definitely "not the time nor place" for such an outburst. Why? Because this was an occasion during which positive outcomes and reconciliatory processes were supposed to be at work, he said, not personal or offensive attacks of individuals. He felt that the gathering was no place for airing one's political dissatisfaction and causing a counter-productive atmosphere.

The remainder of the morning heard from Mervin Grandbois, a Cold Lake First Nation residential school survivor, and from Lusty, one of Manitoba's 8-year survivors. Lusty was later gifted a beaded western stetson and a gorgeous blue ribbon shirt adorned with the image of a camera - one of his trademark symbols recognizing his long-standing professional career as a photographer and journalist.

Complimentary remarks about Lusty's long time contributions and positive impact in many communities were provided from a variety of people including but not limited to Iahtail, Rev. Enright, Karen Bruno of End Poverty Edmonton, Gary Savard and Gary Gairdner.

A series of workshops, related to residential school survivor issues and reconciliation took place during the afternoon. Rev. Enright's 'Healing our Memories' session offered information and advice on how people can cooperatively work together to assist with healing processes for victims of trauma, finding safe spaces, and creating peaceful environments.

Lusty facilitated a well-attended healing circle that provided participants a platform to "share their truths" as well as disclose things they hold most sacred about their experiences in the cycle of residential schools. During this type of session, survivors often disclose highly sensitive information that has festered because they've carried it deep within for so long. For this reason, the circle was an "in camera" or "closed" circle

and participants were subject to confidentiality protocols.

Other workshops were focused on achieving and maintaining balance led by Al Crawford while the one by Karen Bruno examined varying means of reconciliation processes and styles.

A session on grief, loss, victimization, trauma and the road to healing was led by veteran presenter Rocky Ward.

In general, the sessions moved along very well - "smoothly, effectively and respectfully" according to the organizing committee.

Once the workshops were complete, delegates reconvened in the gymnasium where Lusty, assisted by Native Seniors Centre director, Deborah Rose, formally recognized attending survivors with "Honouring Survivor" certificates that acknowledged their time spent in residential schools or in Indian hospitals. The certificate wordings said the select survivor was being honoured "to acknowledge him/her as one of Canada's survivors of the residential school system and to thank this individual for his/her courage, bravery and resilience and contribution(s) to the Indigenous and Canadian Community."

As the certificates, along with a few other gifts, were handed out to the survivors and all was concluded, the conference took a supper break before moving on to the pre-scheduled evening round dance.

The food, to be sure, proved plentiful and nourishing. Both the noon hour lunch and the supper were compliments of St. Faiths Anglican Church and Sacred Heart Church of the First peoples. And, yes, the supper did include a most delicious stew, along with traditional bannock and tea!

As for the round dance, it ran its course from 5 to 9 p.m. before wrapping up with a giveaway and folks departing contentedly until the next time around.

Speaking of the next time, organizers met later and discussed the possibility of doing it all over again, perhaps four times in total, but this is not definite at this time. To know more, one is advised to "keep their ear to the ground" or "listen to the moccasin telegraph."



Attendees were presented with Certificates of Honour.



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By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Beaudin told *Alberta Native News* in an interview that a crucial requirement for Michel

He called this a “very emotional” topic for Michel descendants.



Those who believe they have Michel ancestry and are registered under the Indian Act, or in the process of registering under the act, are invited to fill out a statement of intent to get on the MCNS's band list.

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New book explores the life and legacy of Louis Riel

By ANNews staff

The posthumous journey of Louis Riel from Canadian enemy to Canadian hero is as riveting as it is paradoxical. A new title published by University of Alberta Press examines this roller coaster journey.

In *The Riel Problem: Canada, the Métis and a Resistant Hero*, University of Alberta Professor Emeritus Albert Braz maps out the national metamorphosis of Louis Riel from a wicked foe of Canada to the epitome of Canadian hero. He does so mainly by examining a series of watershed cultural and scholarly commemorations of Riel since 1967, from a large-scale opera about his life, through his published extant writings, to several statues in his honour. In the process, it shows that a country's conversion of a former enemy into a national icon is complicated but achievable.

Through a variety of essays, prose and narratives by notable authors and even Riel himself, Braz examines why modern-day Canadians are so invested in celebrating Riel as a national hero.

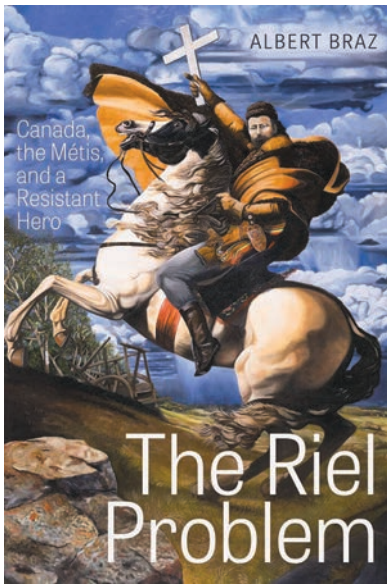
In the collection of chapters, the reader comes to understand that almost every important cultural work that portrays Riel as a Canadian hero also

presents reservations about either his Canadian-ness or his character. Another paradox is that fictional representations of Riel do not appear to possess the imaginative power of nonfictional ones.

Tracing Louis Riel's metamorphosis from traitor to hero, Braz demonstrates that, through his writing, Riel resists his portrayal as both a Canadian patriot and a pan-Indigenous leader. After being hanged for high treason in 1885, the Métis politician, poet, and mystic has emerged as a quintessential Canadian champion.

Braz also probes how aspects of Riel's life and writing can be problematic for many contemporary Métis artists, scholars, and civic leaders. Analyzing representations of Riel in light of his own writings, the author exposes both the structure of the Canadian nation-state and the magnitude of the current historical revisionism when dealing with Riel.

"Albert Braz examines the transformation of the former 'rebel' Riel into a 'Canadian' figure



through post-World War II artistic representations," writes Christopher Dummitt, Trent University. "This indispensable work delves into the complex challenges facing modern Métis artists and leaders, revealing how Riel's Catholicism and Frenchness complicate efforts to present him as a pan-Indigenous champion."

"Professor Albert Braz traces the recent evolution of Louis Riel in the Canadian imagination, from traitor to revolutionary hero," writes Atilla Berki, in a Quill & Quire Review. "Recent commemorations in art and monuments seem at odds with aspects of his writings and life, which many Métis scholars and leaders regard as problematic. *The Riel Problem* looks at the reasons for Riel's redemption, and how it interacts with the project of Canadian nation-building."

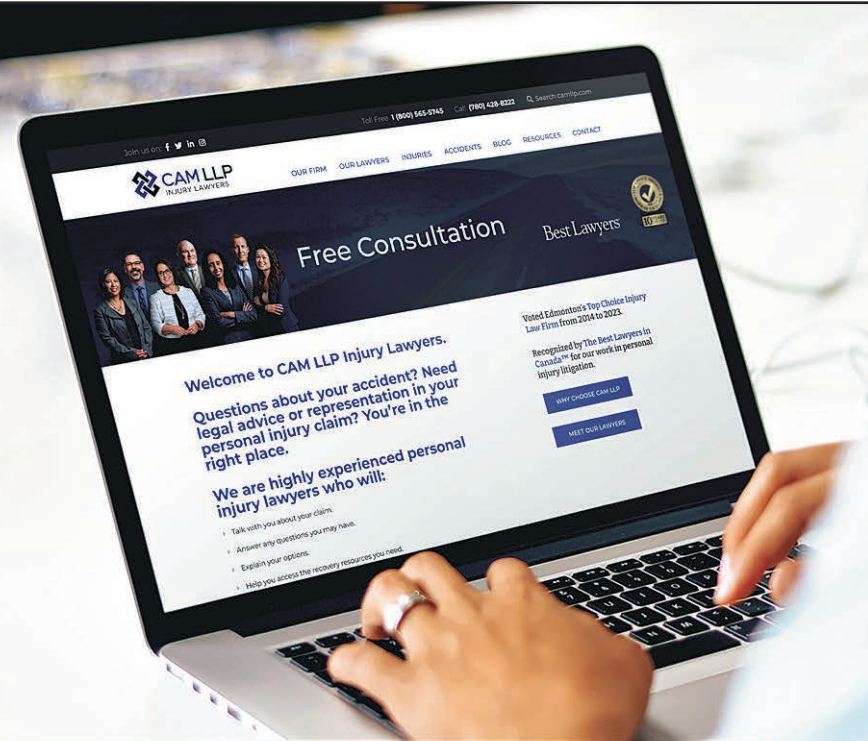
The Riel Problem examines Louis Riel's complicated life from many points of view and charts how he has been commemorated since 1967, demonstrating his transformation from a traitor to a Canadian hero. It is a must read for Métis scholars and anyone who is interested in Canadian history and this larger-than-life Indigenous icon.

Court orders Canada to revise parts of its agreement with MNA

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Canadian government must amend the self-government agreement it signed with the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), a federal court

ruled on March 28, arguing the deal is overly broad and failed to consult other Métis organizations in Alberta.



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The Fort McKay Métis Nation Association and Métis Settlements General Council (MSGC) challenged the agreement in court, arguing that their Treaty rights were usurped by the federal government when they recognized the MNA as the sole legitimate representative of Métis people in Alberta.

Justice Sébastien Grammond agreed with Fort McKay and the MSGC that the agreement gives the MNA a "monopoly" over Métis Treaty rights in Alberta.

"What it exclusively grants to the MNA, it necessarily withholds from the applicants," Grammond wrote in his decision. "It prevents the applicants from negotiating separately with Canada for the recognition of their rights, effectively forcing them to assert their rights before the courts."

Noting the Crown's "complete lack of

consultation with the applicants," Grammond ordered the feds to "quash" aspects of the deal that give the MNA exclusive sovereignty, and consult with the applicants on the revised agreement.

In his decision, the judge noted that Fort McKay and the MSGC were only given two weeks' notice from the Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations that it had entered into a self-determination agreement with the MNA.

Fort McKay and the MSGC, which represent the only Métis land bases in the province, wanted the entire deal thrown out.

In February 2023, the feds signed deals with the MNA, as well as Métis nations in Saskatchewan and Ontario, giving them authority as an order of government on par with those of First Nations.

It gave these Métis organizations control over determining who is a Métis citizen and how Métis governments are structured, in addition to incorporating them into federal legislation on Indigenous child welfare.

Jeff Langlois, a lawyer for the Fort McKay association, told The Canadian Press that Grammond's decision allows his client to pursue self-determination outside the MNA's control.

"For our constituency, there is a different path. And we want to make sure Canada has room to manoeuvre," Langlois said.

In a March 28 statement, the MNA noted that the court "upheld the validity of the vast majority of the contents of the Agreement as negotiated between the MNA and Canada with only minor exceptions."

President Andrea Sandmeier said the ruling "only strengthen[s] our resolve to fully implement our nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada."

In an interview with APTN, MNA lawyer Jason Madden likened the process of reaching a self-governance agreement with the feds to a recurring Peanuts cartoon, in which Lucy holds out a football for Charlie Brown to kick, only to remove it at the last moment, leading to him falling down.

"We are too far along now and Lucy isn't going to get us this time," Madden said, adding that it's important for the MNA to have an agreement that excludes people it has no jurisdiction over.

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Treaty 8 Nations draft law requiring that children stay in their care

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta have drafted a new law to ensure that children cannot be adopted or put into care without the consent of their First Nation.

Treaty 8 chiefs announced the Nehiyaw and Dene Nations of Treaty No. 8 Adoption and Private Guardianship Law at a March 15 news conference, where attendees wore sweatshirts declaring “Our children are NOT for sale.”

The law supersedes any other legislation dealing with First Nations children, leaders emphasized.

“Treaty 8 First Nations maintain authority over our children, youth and families – that is not the right of the province or any other level of government. Currently, our children are being stolen from our Nations,” explained Chief Ivan Sawan of Loon River Cree Nation, who also serves as the Grand Chief of Child and Family Services for Treaty 8.

“The current government process of adoption and private guardianship continues to have devastating cultural effects stripping children of their identity and diminishing inherent Treaty rights.”

The adoption and private guardianship law serves as a stopgap measure to ensure First Nations children remain in the custody of their nations while each nation develops its own detailed child and family services laws, he added.

Chief Ramona Horseman of Horse Lake First Nation said that the new law is rooted in “natural

law as designed by the creator.”

Under the recently Supreme Court of Canada-approved federal Act Respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit Children Youth and Families, Indigenous communities have the right to establish their own child welfare laws superseding those of the province in which they’re located.

Whitefish Lake First Nation Chief Eddie Tallman, speaking at the March 15 press conference, emphasized the need for other orders of government to respect the sovereign jurisdiction of First Nations.

“They respect laws of other countries. Canada has treaties with other countries. Now, they have to go with our law,” he said.

Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey described the adoption law as a step “towards healing the spirit of our children, youth and families.”

“First Nations played such an important role in raising children and

it is a responsibility we all share. Our children and youth should be loved and be nurtured in their own fires raised with their kinship connections and we cannot do this if provinces keep encouraging the adoption of private guardians of our children and youth,” added Noskey.

From 2018 to 2020, Treaty 8 leadership sent multiple letters to the Alberta government — specifically to then-premier Jason Kenney and former child services minister Rebecca Schulz — ordering them to “cease and desist” from removing First Nations children from the care of their families and communities.

Grand Chief Noskey said he hopes the provincial government will make the Nehiyaw and Dene Nations of Treaty No. 8 Adoption and Private Guardianship Law provincial legislation, but if they don’t, it will still be the law of Treaty 8 First Nations.

“We are the government of Treaty No. 8,” he said.

Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta represents 24 Treaty First Nations in northern Alberta, from Smith’s Landing First Nation in the north to Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation in the south, Horse Lake in the west, and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in the east.



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Executive Director – Full Time

Wah Pow Healing Lodge is an alcohol and drug treatment facility located in Beaver Lake Cree Nation. Operating since 1984, Wah Pow offers a holistic approach to treatment that integrates both Western treatment best practices and traditional healing methods such as Indigenous ceremonies. In the near future, Wah Pow will be seeking accreditation with a recognized accreditation body in Canada.

Wah Pow is now looking for someone to fill the role of Executive Director. Reporting to Wah Pow's Board of Directors, the successful candidate will leverage their expertise to manage the treatment facility, and to deliver top quality addiction treatment for Wah Pow's clients. The Executive Director will also work to strengthen partnerships and relationships with funders and with Beaver Lake Cree Nation leadership and oversees the operations of the treatment facility.

The ideal candidate will be someone with expert knowledge, preferably lived experience, regarding Indigenous culture, addictions related challenges, and healing. Strong ethical standings, the ability to think outside the box, expert knowledge in addictions treatment, and in managing a non-profit organization are also important assets.

Responsibilities:

Working with Elders, Beaver Lake Cree Nation leadership, funders and other stakeholders to strengthen Wah Pow's model of care, operational standards, and financial management. Review, and improve if necessary, programming and processes for client intake, treatment, referral, and aftercare. Managing a qualified team of core staff, as well as visiting professionals, cultural and community supports, and other supporting service providers. Maintaining and improving relationships with existing funding stakeholders and partners (e.g.: Indigenous Services Canada), as well as establishing relationships with potential funders and partners. Working constructively with Wah Pow's Board of Directors; follow directions given by the Board, and in accordance with secured funding agreements. Manage programming, personnel, and financial resources to ensure the delivery of quality treatment and care for clients in a comfortable, safe, and culturally responsive environment.

Qualifications and Skills:

Knowledge and respect for First Nation culture, values, and beliefs. Ability to speak an Indigenous language is considered an asset, but it is not a requirement. Having the experience of living and/or working in a First Nation community is an asset, but it is not a requirement. Experience and passion in the delivery of holistic addictions treatment that integrates Western best practices and First Nation healing approaches. Experience in leading, or working with, a team of professionals and staff. Experience in providing quality care and improving wellness of First Nations individuals and families, particularly related to mental health, trauma, and addictions support. Knowledge of the impacts of residential school, and treatment options to address historical transgenerational trauma. Knowledge of a full range of treatment options to address addictions, as well as ongoing evaluation of treatment effectiveness. Strong crisis management skills, with the ability to function in times of high pressure and/or stress.

Ability to work collaboratively with other community-based agencies to achieve common goals. Ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with a wide variety of community stakeholders, including Elders, knowledge keepers, political leadership, and community members. Possesses a bachelor's degree in psychology, psychiatric nursing, social work. Equivalent education and experience combination will also be considered. Familiarity with First Nations Health Funding arrangements would be an asset. Wah Pow prefers to have an Indigenous person filling the role. But it is open to all candidates that have the right qualification and experience.



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