

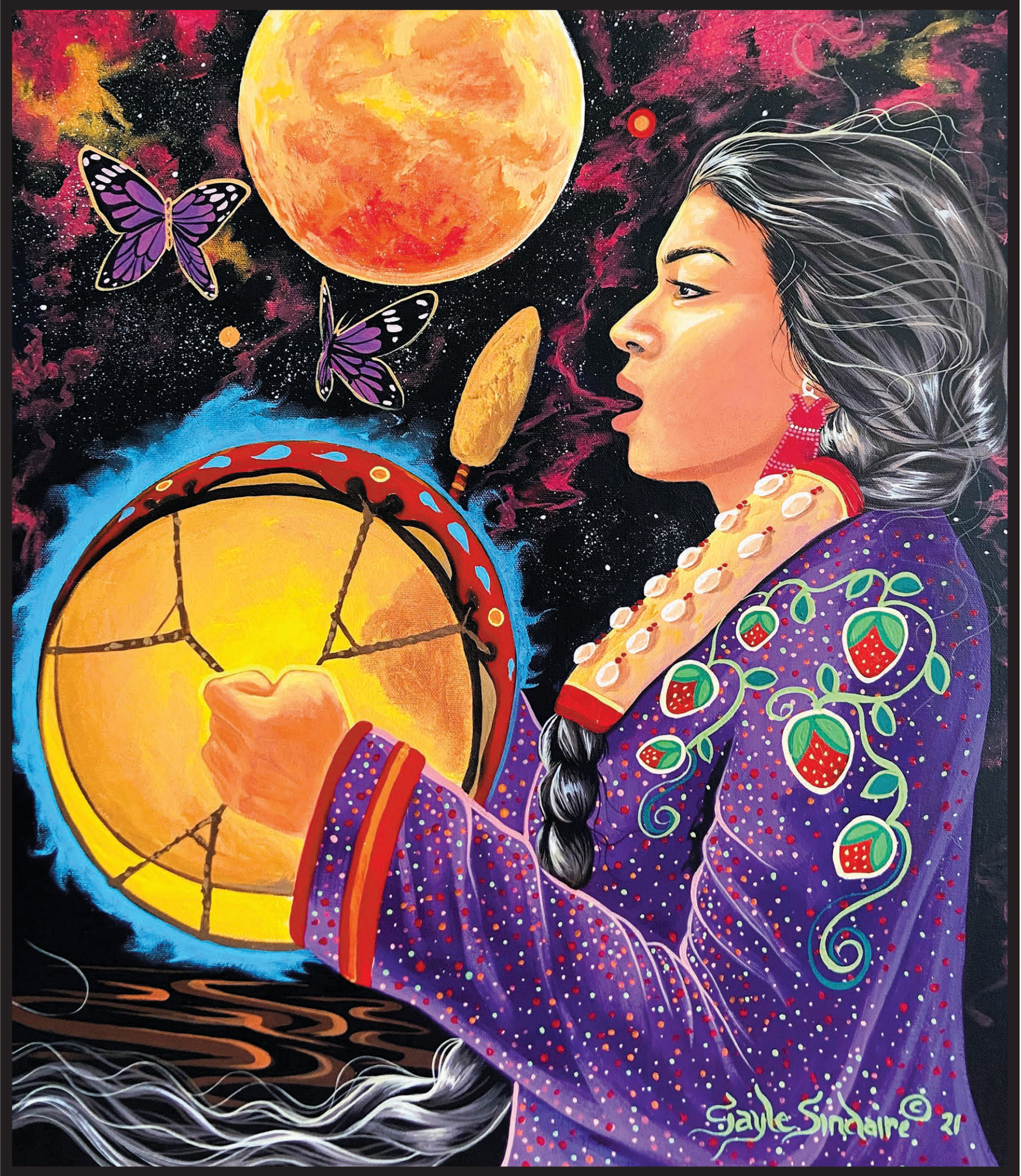
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Exhibition showcasing Indigenous architecture arrives in Edmonton

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

An interactive multimedia exhibition telling the stories of Indigenous architects on Turtle Island has come to Edmonton seven years after its debut on the international stage at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

The installation, *Unceded: Voices of the Land*, might “be the most important expression of Canadian Indigeneity ever presented in an exhibition outside of this country,” according to Mark O’Neill, the former president and CEO of

the Canadian Museum of History, which hosted *Unceded* in 2019.

Elder Douglas Cardinal, who designed the Canadian Museum of History, conceived of *Unceded* after he was selected to lead a team of Indigenous architects, including co-curators David T. Fortin and Gerald McMaster, to represent Canada in Venice in 2018.

The exhibition, which presents the work of 18 Indigenous architects from across Turtle Island, is being displayed at City Centre Mall (West) until June 21.

Featuring 20 different screens, the installation is designed for people to walk through “as if you’re moving along a river, going from one point to another,” said Lewis Cardinal, a distant cousin of Douglas who is a member of the *Unceded* board.

The purpose of the exhibition, explained Cardinal, isn’t simply to showcase Indigenous architecture, but to explain how Indigenous architects are “applying their Indigenous history, worldview and cultures within the architecture that they’re designing.”

“We’re bringing in our Indigenous worldview,” he said. “We look towards the very essence and foundations of who we are as Indigenous people, like living in relationship to Mother Earth and not asserting domination and control.”

Indigenous ceremonies are intended to uphold this balance between human beings and nature,



and that “balance and harmony” is reflected in “our structures,” Cardinal added.

“There’s all these deeper philosophical foundations in our world view to be applied in how we’re supposed to live and what we live in,” he said.

The exhibition also details the challenges Indigenous architects faced and how they persevered.

Douglas Cardinal, who is a residential school survivor, studied for a couple years at the University of British Columbia, but his professors told him he wouldn’t be accepted in the architectural industry. Cardinal ultimately obtained his degree from the University of Texas at Austin.

“He was thinking outside of the walls already, so that’s how he really became who he was,” said Lewis Cardinal.

Unceded was originally supposed to be displayed in Edmonton in 2022 but had to be delayed due to the Covid pandemic.

After the exhibition ends in Edmonton, the plan is to showcase it in Calgary, which is where Douglas Cardinal was born. There are additional plans to bring the exhibition to Australia and Switzerland.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.unceded.org/>.

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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

Volume 42, Number 04, April 2025
ISSN #08294135
www.albertanativenews.com

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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.

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AFN launches Virtual Forum Series with Federal Party Leaders

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) has launched its Virtual Forum Series with federal party leaders in advance of the 45th General Election, set for April 28, 2025. The inaugural series from the AFN began with Green Party Co-Leaders Elizabeth May and Jonathan Pedneault in a session held on April 14, with participation from First Nations Chiefs, leaders, and media across the country.

“First Nations issues must be front and centre in this election,” said National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak. “That’s why we felt it was critical to launch this series, the first ever of its kind. The forums are an opportunity for our leaders to raise the issues that matter most to our Nations, and to hear directly from those who want to lead this country. They allow our leaders to ask the hard questions and assess where each party stands. The question is not just whether parties support First Nations rights but what actions they will take to uphold them.”

Each forum will feature themes drawn directly from *Prosperity for All*, the AFN’s federal election priorities document. It outlines priorities where First Nations are seeking commitments in areas such as economic reconciliation, Canada-U.S. trade and border mobility, the well-being of First Nations children, families and future generations, policing, community safety, among other priorities.

“Federal elections provide an opportunity to advance our shared priority of creating prosperity for all who call these lands home,” added National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak. “Canada’s future depends on First Nations being full and equal partners in decision-making. More than \$560 billion in projects are expected to launch on our traditional lands in the next decade. Those projects will only move forward with First Nations’ free, prior, and informed consent, and if the next government is ready to commit to our priorities and work with us in full partnership.”

“We’ve heard from many of our leaders that some federal parties have yet to speak directly with First Nations. These forums help open that space, but they do not replace the responsibility to engage meaningfully with First Nations across the country,” National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak concluded. “We thank those who have committed to participate, and we will continue to call on all



federal party leaders to engage directly and respectfully with First Nations leading up to the election.”

The next sessions will feature Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, on April 22 and Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party, on April 23. Registration for these forums is free and open to First Nations Chiefs, Tribal Chiefs, Grand Chiefs, Councillors, and media. To register visit meetings.afn.ca.

Encouraging partnership opportunities within Canada

By Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations, Grand Chief Greg Desjarlais

The U.S.’s insistence on referring to our Land as the 51st State is offensive and wrong. As Grand Chief of the Confederacy of Treaty No. 6 First Nations, I remind our southern neighbours that Canada is on Treaty Land. Our First Nations are sovereign Nations with Treaty Rights forever; we stand against U.S. aggression.

First Nations remain willing partners in infrastructure and trade opportunities. The Government of Canada and its provincial governments must focus on internal partnerships with First Nations across the country —

Indigenous Peoples can be the answer. With respect for our economic sovereignty — as full-equity partners — the contributions of First Nations must be recognized, understood and viewed as a solution. We are in this together.

We must look for new ways to diversify our economies. Canada is a resource-based country — critical minerals, energy resources, grains, forestry and water are embedded in our Treaty Territories. We remind governments across the country that resource extraction requires the involvement of First Nations. The Government of Canada and its provincial governments have a duty to consult First Nations before any project is undertaken and cannot break ground, develop or build on our Land until we allow it.

As the cost of living increases due to U.S. uncertainty for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, we must all come together in unity, strength and leadership. Through cooperation and adherence to Treaty, we can break away from U.S. dependency and foster relationships here at home and in markets abroad — all with Indigenous Peoples and the next seven generations in mind.

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Leanne McLeod discusses building good relations and walking each other home

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The bridge that is between worlds, centres around visits with Indigenous communities to learn how to serve and support our Indigenous brothers and sisters in a good way. This is the behind the scenes work that the manager of the National Corporate team within Indigenous Relations at Rogers Communications, Leanne McLeod co-creates for an environment to hear stories to laugh, to connect from the heart, and to walk beside each other.

“Our team is the first in the industry, with 9 Indigenous people on our team,” says Leanne, our Anishnaabe sister. “We focus on outreach, change management, and providing services [with Rogers communications]. Our top priority is building strong relationships with Indigenous communities and providing services to meet their specific needs. We listen, we learn, we collaborate to ensure that the community voices are heard, and needs are met.”

From an Indigenous worldview, we are here to help each other in the best way that we can – we are walking each other home. Our connection to community is deeply rooted in taking care of each other as if we are kin, and everyone is seen through the eyes that we are all related – as brothers and sisters.

“We build that digital divide; we offer connectivity, economic development, community and cultural support to the communities,” shares Leanne. “Every community is different, so we approach them in different ways. Everyone has their own story and own way on how to do things – we are there to build trust and do things the right way.”

The work that McLeod does is embedded in the

understanding of, “how can we come in here, not take anything from you, and make your life better?” and with this Indigenous way of knowing and being, the work for Leanne is rewarding.

“The relationships we build and the after effect of when we’re helping communities and what it brings to the community [is rewarding]. A community with connectivity, a whole new world opens up for them...they can go to school, learn, communicate. It’s just a whole new world with safety, education, scholarships...There’s so many avenues that we deal with that it is overwhelming in the ways that we can help.”

Good relations are created from a place of reciprocity, humility, understanding, and compassion. For McLeod, she walks with this understanding as a way of life with everything that she does to honour her ancestors and the teachings that were inherently passed onto her – and it all starts with taking her time to learn and listen.

“There so much good that we do – things take time though, they take a lot of time. It’s not easy, and its heavy work...Each community has different needs, they need different support [because] there are trust issues [stemming] from so much wrong that was done to these



Leanne McLeod is manager of the National Corporate Team within Indigenous Relations at Rogers Communications. Photo supplied.

communities...So [the Indigenous relations team] goes into those communities and builds that bridge.”

McLeod becomes the bridge between two worlds – the backbone to the frontline people, the one guiding the Indigenous relations team while they engage with community. This work doesn’t come easy though. The understanding of walking in good relations with everyone and everything that resides on Mother Earth is a foundational teaching that over time becomes embodied as a way of life. She says, “Don’t be afraid to speak your truth, walk tall. always be your true self. You don’t need to hide who you are.”

“We don’t know what we know, until we know.”

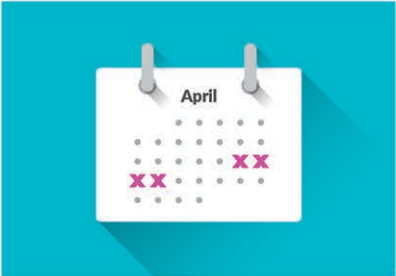
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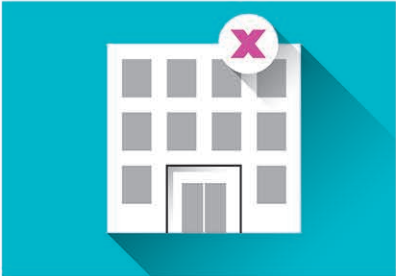
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The remarkable journey of Métis Leader Blake Desjarlais

By Kinnukana, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Blake Desjarlais, a significant Métis figure in Canadian politics, is known for his dedication to advocating for marginalized communities and his historic role as the first openly two-spirited Member of Parliament (MP) in Canada. Blake’s journey from a challenging upbringing to becoming a trailblazing political figure exemplifies resilience and dedication.

Blake was born at the University of Alberta hospital in Edmonton and was raised in the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement (Fishing Lake) by his Aunt Grace. Blake’s biological mother Brenda was impacted early in her life by the Sixties Scoop and was unable to raise her children. Brenda and Grace were taken from their parents at a young age and separated. Brenda was put into the foster care system. Throughout her upbringing, she was moved around to over a dozen different homes. While in care, Brenda faced negligence and abuse – physical, spiritual and sexual. Brenda aged out of care at eighteen and was dropped off at 115th Avenue in Edmonton. Many people in this area struggle with homelessness, addiction and mental health struggles. Brenda became a sex worker and got involved in serious incidences of abuse and drug addiction and cycles of helplessness. Blake said, “So many people don’t look at people like Brenda as a human being. They think when somebody falls on hard times that they end up on the street not knowing that it is because of the systems that they endured. But Brenda was able to do something pretty remarkable in her time, which was to not give up.”

Blake was her last and final child and Brenda did something incredible, she picked up her phone and called her half sister Grace who she didn’t really know that well. Brenda wanted to break the cycle for her son Blake and she asked Grace to take him before he was born. Grace did not hesitate and said yes. She left Fishing Lake and travelled to the hospital on the Greyhound bus to wait for his arrival. When she got there, the police and Government of Alberta workers were already there waiting to apprehend him before he was even born. Grace interjected and adamantly told them that she was taking the baby home. The Social Worker was moved by Grace’s intervention, so she worked with her to lay out a plan and gave Grace time to speak to a judge while Blake was still in the hospital under a doctor’s care. Grace had to officially apply for adoption, which was a highly intensive process that took two years.

Grace eventually took Blake home and raised him in Fishing Lake alongside her other children.

Blake grew up learning about the ceremonies, Cree language and was treated as an equal. Fishing Lake, also called Packedhawanis, meaning netting lake or a place where you put a net for fish has a special meaning for his family as that is what they did for generations. Blake learned how to fish too, like generations before him. He was able to spend time with Elders and hear the stories they shared about his grandparents. Blake was taught all the things that Brenda never got to experience.

As he grew up, Grace would send Brenda little things of Blake’s, like his kindergarten paintings. When Blake was twelve, he had an opportunity to see Brenda when she was ill and bedridden just before she passed away. Blake remembers that she had so much love and was so proud that she had done the right thing. Blake said, “She loved us so much and I know that because beside her night table was a little journal of prayers and at the end of the prayers, she’d say God forgive me for what I have done and bless my children. Please keep them safe.”

Blake continued: “She would always fight for us, even in her prayers. Grace and Brenda were two remarkable women who will be largely unknown like so many Indigenous women who rebuilt our Nations. They did the work of putting brick on mortar so that the generation that follows them would be strong.” Blake gives a lot of credit to who he is, because of Brenda and Grace.

Blake left Fishing Lake to pursue higher education after he graduated from high school. He initially enrolled at MacEwan University in Edmonton. However, facing intense discrimination, including a racially motivated death threat, he transferred to the University of Victoria. Blake said it was a culture shock going from an Indigenous community to a city with mostly non-Indigenous people and it was difficult to face racism for the first time. Blake found the support he needed at the University of Victoria, especially from the Elders, where he focused on Canadian politics and Indigenous studies.

After University, Blake was invited to apply for the National Director position at the Métis Settlements General Council (MSGC) and was successful. Blake knew he wanted to serve and give back to the Métis settlements. He worked in the role for six years, mostly building much needed housing. In his role at the MSGC, Blake became frustrated while trying to work with the federal government and decided to run in the



Blake Desjarlais is the NDP Candidate (and incumbent) for Member of Parliament in Edmonton-Griesbach.

federal election as a Member of Parliament (MP) in order to create positive change.

Blake ran in the 2021 election as the New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate for Edmonton Griesbach and won. It was another defining moment in his life as he then represented the same area, 115th avenue, where his mother Brenda was dropped off when she aged out of care. As an MP, Blake has taken on roles such as the NDP’s critic on Indigenous housing and co-chair of the parliamentary pride caucus. His commitment to giving back to vulnerable populations is deeply personal; his riding office is located in the area where his mother once worked in the sex trade. Blake honours his mother’s memory and strives to support and uplift the community she was part of. Blake said, “I think about it a lot, of how I represent the very same community I was born in but broke that cycle. I have a deep sense of responsibility for giving back to the people in my community.”

Blake’s advice to young people is: “You have a right to joy. This world will tell you so many different things about who you are, what you should be, how you should act, speak, look and what your future will be. You are our ancestors wildest dream come true. Do not dream little dreams, dream big dreams. You are a product of the greatest story of survival this planet has ever seen. Let us show the world that we were meant to be here for a real reason, to help others and show them that the pain, war and division is not natural. Indigenous people are here as ambassadors of peace, hope and love for a world that is becoming more and more divided.”

Blake is running in the 2025 election and is seeking a second term as the NDP representative. Blake’s work continues to focus on building a more inclusive and equitable society, addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, and reshaping perceptions of Alberta’s diverse communities.

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Miranda Saddleback discusses co-existing in a harmonious way

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Miranda Saddleback is the co-founder of Mother Tongues Network and director of community engagement, cultural affairs, and web development, where she helps preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages across Turtle Island by striving to provide accessible and interactive Indigenous language learning resources.

Helping people – this understanding is deeply rooted in *nêhîyaw pimâtisowin*, a Cree way of living and being. These harmonious ways of being, knowing, and understanding are what makes our *nêhîyaw sister*, Cree sister, Miranda, feel at home. She was taught them at a young age by both her parents, the traditional ways and values of how to walk in a good way.

“Everything that I learned growing up, I put that into everything I do...You always have to have a good heart, mind, and soul, be good and gentle. That energy goes into it...this is an Indigenous way of life, Plains Cree traditions I grew up with – four body people – I carry that with me. I pass that onto my son, I passed that onto the clients I used to work with, even the people I work with [now].”

Four-body people is a Plains Cree reference. The root of *nehiyaw* – a Cree person comes from *newo* – is the number four, making up the four quadrants of the medicine wheel: emotional,

mental, physical, and spiritual. These are part of the understandings that Saddleback grew up learning, “I owe it to my father and late mother – the traditional values that I walk with... I didn’t get here alone.”

For Saddleback ceremony is everything, teaching her how to live in a harmonious way – how all that reside on Mother Earth can co-exist together. This understanding came from her late Mother; she taught her to “always treat people like it is their last day – with unconditional love, doing it out of kindness of your own heart” and how this transcends into everything we do as good relatives.

“What really makes me feel at home – my mosoms, my uncles, my kohkoms, and my aunties would say in ceremony, ‘when we are here in ceremony, it feels like we are back at that way of life. It feels like home, we really get to start living, we’re finally here in the real world... Up there there’s money and borders... but when you are in ceremony you feel that realness again,’ and that makes me feel full.”

These teachings and the knowledge that was passed down to Saddleback comes from the heart and teaches her how to be gentle with everything



Miranda Saddleback is the co-founder of Mother Tongues Network and director of community engagement, cultural affairs, and web development. Photo supplied.

that she does. “I try to say things in a way that can’t be exploited and remember that it’s out of my hands; I leave it to the Creator. I say to the Creator, ‘I want to share this beautiful thing with my ally, I want to share these beautiful things with my friend, but I want them to respect it in a good way,’ and have that in my mind, body, and soul. That’s kind of how I communicate.”

Everything that Saddleback has engaged with, has always been tied directly to the ways of life she was taught. “I didn’t know that this was tied to social work in a sense, because it was just the way of life – *nehiyawewin*, Plains Cree, a traditional way of life. That’s how you are, and you help people. You aren’t expecting anything, you just do it with the kindness of your own heart...that’s how I grew up.”



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The Gifts of Literacy and Education – with Tishina Shannacappo

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Tishina Shannacappo feels a lot of strength from the support that her parents provided during her educational journey. “They really didn’t interfere in what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it,” she explains. “There were definitely strong words of advice, but a lot of the work that I do, especially going forward, is in honour of the sacrifices that [my parents] both made. They poured a lot of energy into me as a child with reading, giving me the gift of literacy and education.”

Most of Shannacappo’s life was spent as an urban Anishinaabe/Metis person in Winnipeg, Manitoba, but she left her home community and moved to Calgary in 2023 to pursue further clinical training within her psychology practice. “There were some barriers in Manitoba when it

came to registering as a provisional certified school psychologist – it was more feasible to secure the type of work I wanted to do, here,” shared Shannacappo. Going into doctoral studies is a huge time and financial commitment. In the process, she started to build connections with her new community and hear Indigenous stories about how others wound up in Calgary.

“I had always been interested in therapy and psychology, primarily as a client when I was a teenager. I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do, I wasn’t in it to make money. I moved to Vancouver when I was 18 and did a Gender Studies degree at UBC; after I graduated, there wasn’t much opportunity for a standard career... I was always very people focused, and ended up moving back to Winnipeg once I graduated... I

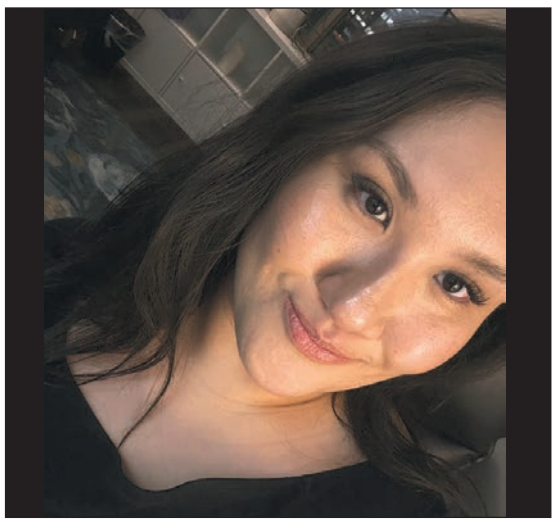
worked in an education resource centre for about 10 years...I was editing different books and stories – all of that was very story driven,” explained Shannacappo.

“Once I felt ready closer to the end of my 20s, I decided to pursue a masters degree in psychology...It was very assessment focused which is against what I studied and believed as an Anishinaabe...It was something that was pushed forward by the organization I worked with and I continue to be grateful towards them for their support and vision to train First Nations in the area of school.”

For the next two years, after obtaining her master’s from the University of Calgary, Shannacappo worked as a rural school psychologist across the province, where she focused on working with Manitoba First Nations community members, hearing people’s stories, working with families and introducing psychology services in the best way that she could.

“For me, being a teenager who had to access different services in terms of therapy [and] youth support I had an idea of what I didn’t like. I remember feeling very hesitant to be judged and also to be turned into a statistic. I remember feeling that very strongly.”

In her work with



Tinisha Shannacappo is a registered provisional psychologist at Heart Berry Psychology in Calgary.

clients today, whether they are Indigenous or not, she tries to “bring forth some of that vulnerability I felt and understanding of them” in building a relationship and rapport.

Shannacappo noticed how important it was to establish relationships within therapy. She grew her practice on how she would like others to treat her, “a relationship [with a client] would be built over multiple meetings together, the time we would spend together would be focused on them. My understanding is I wouldn’t push them too much but be as honest as I can about my limitations, what I could do as a professional, and create a lot of space for humor and fun.” Being initially hired as a cultural support, Tinisha was curious why she had this role, sharing, “for me as an urban Anishinaabe, I don’t have a lot of traditional teachings. The way that I think and the way that I move in the world was very much what my family believed in, both the Metis side and also the First Nation side. I don’t necessarily have a lot of traditional knowledge, instead it’s [simply] how I interact with youth and people.”

Within a 50-minute therapy session with Shannacappo, she engages with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in a space to have meaningful conversations by fitting relationality and connection into her practice. “[An Indigenous] type of framework that a lot of people have doesn’t fit within [a Western] structure,” she says. “As a practitioner, sometimes it feels limiting to me to have to work in that way, eventually I hope to work more in community while infusing as much of the ethos that I know and like to work from.”


The ethos that Shannacappo walks with stems from the understanding of humility, sharing with us that, “even looking at my last name, Shannacappo, it means ‘they who stand back watching’....There’s this observational piece of me that I feel is inherent in how I think and work with people, so the humility, the observation, plus do as little harm as possible while respecting a person’s agency within the process.”

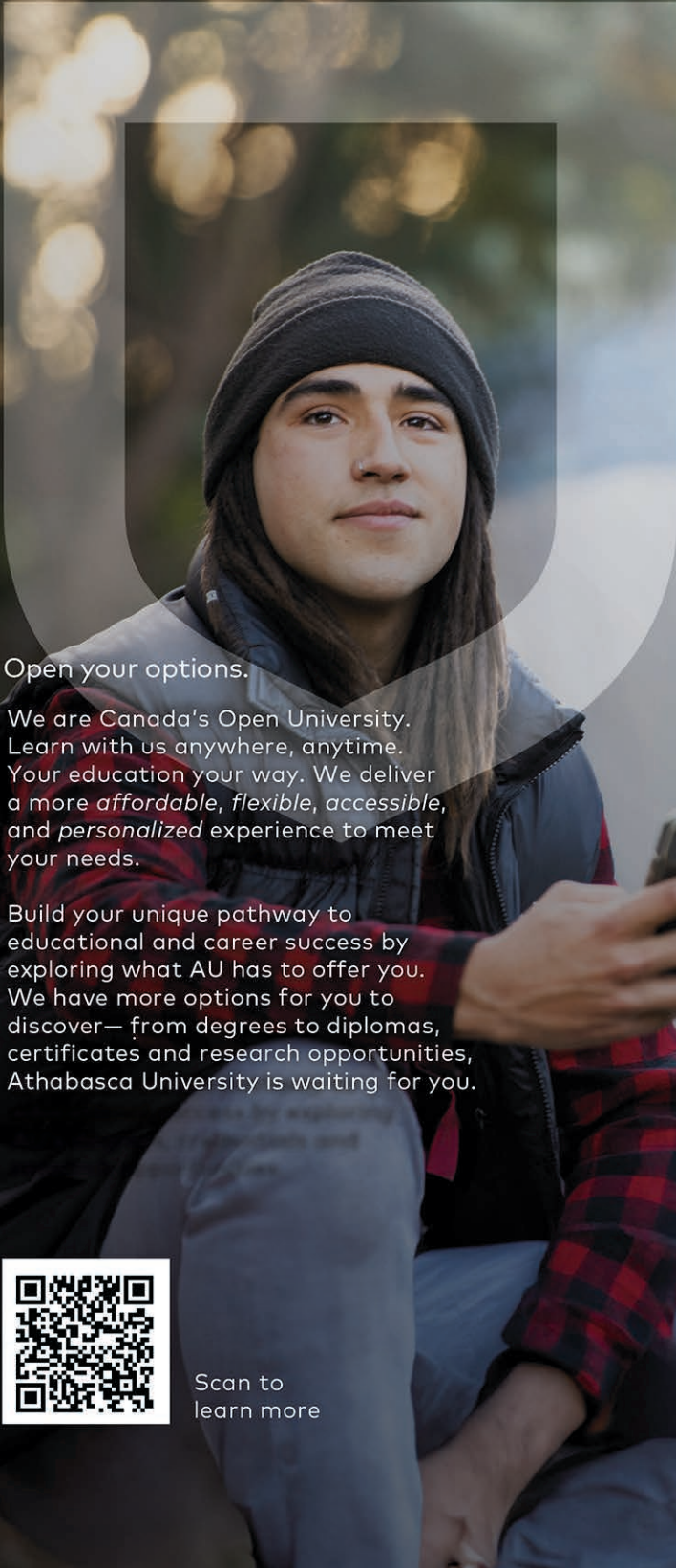
These are the principles, values, and ways of knowing that Tishina brings into her practice, Heart Berry Psychology in Calgary that can be accessed both in-person and virtually.

Heart Berry Psychology derives its name from “ode’imin” of the Anishinaabe language, representing a strawberry plant with a wild, complex root system. Ode’imin embodies sweetness, bitterness, and juiciness, with resilient roots deeply entwined in the earth, symbolizing a life-giving force. It symbolizes our heart and its integration into all aspects of our being and actions.



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Edmonton, AB – The Otipemisiwak Métis Government is proud to celebrate the achievements of outstanding Citizens who have been awarded the prestigious King Charles III Coronation Medals. These medals recognize individuals who have demonstrated exceptional service and commitment to their communities, including the Métis Nation Within Alberta.

To honour the recipients, a ceremony was on held on April 14, 2025, in Edmonton. The event brought together family, friends, and Citizens to celebrate the remarkable contributions of these deserving individuals.

“Each of these Citizens exemplifies the spirit of service and dedication that strengthens our Nation,” said President, Andrea Sandmaier. “Their contributions are an inspiration to us all, and it is a great honour to see their efforts recognized with the King Charles III Coronation Medals. On behalf of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each recipient for everything they have done and continue to do for our Métis



community.”

The Otipemisiwak Métis Government remains committed to supporting and celebrating the achievements of its Citizens. This recognition reflects the enduring resilience, leadership, and generosity within the Métis Nation.

The medal recipients include Riel Aubichon, Paul Bercier, Alice Berger, Doreen Bergum, Cindy Bourque-Punko, Georges Brosseau, Brett

Chernow, Angie Crerar, Paulette Dahlseide, Beatrice Demetrius, Bryan D. Fayant, Vyna Fluney, Lorne Gladu, Elmer Gullion, Sylvia Johnson, Alex Kusturok, Kelsey Landry, Kirsten Letendre, Brianna Lizotte, Marilyn Lizée, Dianne Ludwig, George (Bernie) Ouellette, Pearl Sandor, Norma Spicer, Maryann Stepien, and Molly Wagar.

North American Indigenous Games will return to Alberta in 2027

By John Wirth, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) – the largest continental sporting and cultural event for Indigenous youth – will return to Alberta in 2027. It symbolises homecoming to the province where the Games first began.

Set to take place in July 2027 over 8 days, the event is expected to welcome approximately 6,000 Indigenous youth athletes and coaches from across Canada and the United States. The Games will combine 16 sporting events with cultural programming that celebrates the traditions, languages, and identities of Indigenous First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples throughout North America.

“NAIG is a powerful platform for advancing reconciliation, community pride, and athletic achievement,” said the NAIG media coordinator in a release. “It is more than a competition – it’s a celebration of Indigenous excellence.”

The very first NAI Games were held in 1990 in Edmonton, with the vision of bringing Indigenous

youth together through sport and cultural exchange. One of the original organizers, Charles Wood, reflected on the movement’s beginnings:

“The vision of the NAIG, from the very beginning, along with my brothers, Willie Littlechild of Ermineskin First Nation at Hobbema, and Big John Fletcher of Peigan in Southern Alberta, was one of concern about what was happening among the young people in all of our communities... We wanted to give them something to look forward to.”

As the Games return to Alberta four decades later, organizers and community leaders see the 2027 event as both a continuation and an evolution of that vision.

The NAIG Council, which oversees the planning and governance of the Games, has appointed International Chief Dr. Wilton Littlechild, O.C., A.O.E., K.C. as the new Chair of the Board of Directors. A co-founder of NAIG, Dr. Littlechild brings extensive experience in Indigenous sport, advocacy, and law.

“The North American Indigenous Games represent the strength, resilience, and brilliance of our youth and Nations,” said Dr. Littlechild. “I

am deeply honoured to take on this responsibility and work alongside an incredible team to ensure the 2027 NAIG reflects the spirit of celebration, unity, and Indigenous excellence.”

While exact venues are still to be confirmed, Calgary’s selection as the 2027 host city presents major opportunities for infrastructure development, youth programming, and the increased visibility of Indigenous communities in Alberta.

Organizers are exploring how to build a meaningful legacy, taking inspiration from past Games – such as the 2023 NAIG in Halifax, which welcomed approximately 5,000 athletes from 756 Nations. That event had a significant impact, and as former NAIG Council President Shannon Dunfield noted, “[NAIG] can be expected to generate approximately \$15 to \$20 million in economic spending in the host province or territory.”

The 2014 NAIG in Regina left a lasting mark by expanding Indigenous youth sport programs, increasing local infrastructure investment, and forging partnerships between Indigenous communities and municipal governments.

As Calgary prepares to host thousands of athletes, families, and supporters from across the continent, NAIG 2027 is shaping up to be more than just a sporting event. It’s a chance to honour the past, invest in the future, and celebrate the rich cultures and achievements of Indigenous youth. For updates, visit facebook.com/NAIG2027/ or naig2027.ca.

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by Gayle Sinclair

Our Cover artist: Gayle Sinclair

The stunning art on the cover of this month’s *Alberta Native News* is titled *Strawberry Moon* by renowned First Nation Artist Gayle Sinclair. It is reprinted here with permission of Echo of the Spirit Gallery.

From Norway House First Nation, artist Gayle Sinclair has pursued the use of colour through oils and

the placement and use of vibrant colours. Content became the most important theme of her work: the image has to carry the realm of mystery, deeply embedding hidden messages of spirituality and culture.

Through all the creative experiences, Gayle has developed a unique painting style. Currently she paints and continues to trail blaze.

As a most compelling artist her soul filled efforts have been exhibited widely in both solo and group shows throughout Canada, the United States and Europe. Gayle’s work, not surprisingly focusses primarily on women and children, affirming the importance and strength of women in Indigenous culture and celebrating the family unit. Most works have a literal or symbolic connection with nature...birds, leaves, water... which injects a strong spiritual quality to her art.

In the fall of 2003, Sinclair was one of seven artists chosen for the Image Makers First Nation Art Exhibit in Las Angeles. More recently she completed a commission for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and a stunning mural that she just completed for Canadian Mental Health Association in Winnipeg. She says, “Murals are my favorite thing to do. If you ever need a mural – please give me a call.”

Her work is in the collections of the Manitoba Assembly of Chiefs, the community offices in Norway House and Cross Lake and in the homes



Gayle Sinclair with a mural she recently completed for CMHA.

and offices of numerous private patrons. It is available on exhibit and for purchase at Echo of the Spirit Gallery, where art bridges reality and spirituality through cultural storytelling. At its heart is the artistry of Gayle Sinclair. Echo of the Spirit is a growing Indigenous-owned art business rooted in the legacy of Sinclair and led by her son, Jove Desjarlais, who now serves as CEO.

Under Gayle’s mentorship, Jove grew up immersed in the world of Indigenous art. Today, he leads Echo of the Spirit as a modern art business that celebrates their shared vision while expanding the brand’s reach across new generations, markets, and platforms.

The business offers original art, high-quality prints, and “Healing Through Art” workshops, blending creative expression with cultural connection and mental wellness. Through community presence, digital outreach, and cultural storytelling, Echo of the Spirit continues to grow as a beacon of Indigenous identity, expression, and entrepreneurship.

Learn more at EchoOfTheSpirit.com.



Indigenous Art by Gayle Sinclair | Echo of
the Spirit – Echo Of The Spirit

echoofthespirit.com



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The line that connects us all

Language workshops help teach the beauty of Indigenous culture

By Kinnukana, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Bonnyville Friendship Centre (Centre) held a *Healing Through Language Conference* on March 28 in Bonnyville, Alberta. Dr. Jessie Sylvestre, a Dene First language speaker from *ejeredeséche* Buffalo River, Saskatchewan, shared the importance of healing through language, followed by an afternoon of Dene and Cree crafting of either caribou tufting or fish scale art, led by Cynthia Ganache and Rebekka Gobert, employees of the Centre.

Cynthia Ganache, Crisis Support Coordinator and Rebekka Gobert, Youth Worker at the Centre wanted to bring both languages together because there is a high Cree and Dene population in the community and surrounding area. The Centre attracts people from not just Bonnyville, but also Cold Lake, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Saddle Lake Cree Nation and Kehewin Cree Nation.

The Centre invited Dr. Jessie Sylvestre to guest speak at the event. Dr. Sylvestre, a Dene educator and language advocate, overcame the hardships of residential school to earn advanced degrees in education. She developed the Dene Language Program at the University of Blue Quills and became the first Denesųline President of the Saskatchewan Indigenous Cultural Centre. Recognized for her contributions, she continues to champion Indigenous language revitalization and cultural preservation.

Cynthia said, “We are really trying to focus on bringing those languages back. When we think about how people lost their language and reconnecting to culture and healing from residential

schools and things like that, language is a big part of that. We feel that bringing language back to our communities for young and old is just a really great way to heal from the past.”

Bringing back the Cree and Dene languages is important for keeping culture, history, and identity alive. These languages carry traditional stories, knowledge, and ways of life that connect people to their ancestors and the land. Reviving them helps young people feel proud of their roots and strengthens the community. It also helps heal the harm caused by colonization and residential schools, which tried to erase Indigenous languages.

The Centre is a community-based, non-profit organization in Bonnyville, Alberta, dedicated to fostering inclusivity and cultural understanding among all community members. The Centre offers a wide range of programs and services designed to support individuals – children, youth, families and Elders, including providing cultural programming and community services. Diversity is an intrinsic part of the Centre as an organization and the Centre is proud to offer diverse programs for people from all walks of life.

Cynthia said, “We definitely see a variety of people at the Centre, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people. We want to bridge that gap. We want to highlight the different cultures and showcase that we are a safe space for everybody. We welcome everybody through our doors and anyone can participate in anything that they are interested in learning or want to try.”

It is important for all people of different backgrounds to learn about Cree and Dene languages because language is a key part of Indigenous culture, history, and understanding. Learning these languages helps build respect and stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. It also supports reconciliation by recognizing and valuing Indigenous knowledge, traditions, and ways of life. Understanding Cree and Dene can give insight into the deep connection Indigenous peoples have with the land and their teachings. It also helps challenge stereotypes and promotes inclusivity. By learning even a few words or



A lesson in caribou and fish scale tufting.

phrases, non-Indigenous people can show support for language revitalization and help keep these languages alive for future generations.

The conference also gave participants the opportunity to participate in art workshops where the conversations continued throughout the afternoon. Cynthia said, “I really find that if you give people the opportunity to hear the language, to try and speak the language, and also give them an activity to do while doing that, it really helps them remember because they are associating it with something else. Every time they look at their caribou tufting they are going to remember the workshop and what they learned that day.” Learning and using these languages can also improve mental well-being and bring people closer together. By keeping Cree and Dene strong, future generations can continue to share their culture and traditions.

To learn more about the workshops, contact Cynthia or Rebekka by email at bayc@bfriendship.ca or call 780-826-3374. The Centre welcomes everyone to access their services and is always interested in hearing from the community. If something piques your interest or you are interested in learning something but you haven’t seen it through their office, let the Centre know. If it’s something they can do, they will definitely try to do it for you.

Visit bonnyvillefriendshipcentre.com for more information.



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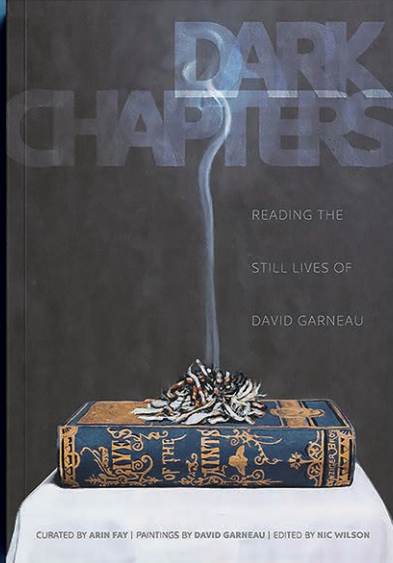
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Running as medicine and the Run for Reconciliation

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

“When I run, I feel like I fit in with the land, I don’t have to run fast. I can walk, I can stop, I can do what I want – nobody is judging me,” shared Amanada Patrick. Running as medicine has connected her to her roots.

When engaging with Mother Earth and her teachings, it is a never-ending knowledge system of wealth that supports us in the longevity of good relations with ourselves and everyone around us. The spirit of Mother Earth she brings insight into everything we do. And for our Metis sister, Amanda Patrick, the clarity that Mother Earth brings is found when she is running outdoors.

“My journey as an Indigenous person, the cultural aspect of it, really didn’t start until the run started in 2021,” shares Patrick. “215 Kamloops changed my life. My life did a 90-degree turn...I was working in a car dealership, selling cars and when that story came out, something changed... I couldn’t shake it. The next day I was out running, and I couldn’t stop crying...When I got back home [I asked myself], what can I do? How could I feel like I am doing something? What am I good at? ...I can run, and I know people who run, and maybe it’s something that we can do in honour of these kids.”

Wanting to do something in support of the children that attended Indian Residential Schools and never returned home, Patrick went on to ask her running friends about doing something to honour the children – innately knowing that all

life is sacred, and every child matters.

“As I was running [in St. Albert], there is a place called the Healing Garden...the one place that’s Indigenous and made to be a place of reflection. I run by it all the time... ‘Maybe we could just run to the healing garden and reflect.’ That was my initial thought. When I got home, I spontaneously posted a video on Instagram saying, ‘Hey this is affecting me, who wants to run with me?’ Thinking some of my running friends would come out...it went crazy and evolved super quick...I had no idea that that was going to change my life.”

Patrick’s idea quickly became a reality, and within less than a week. The Run for Reconciliation was held on Canada Day in St. Albert, Alberta. Initially wanting to talk about what was happening when the discovery of 215 in Kamloops became nation wide news, the day of the run was supported with over 380 participants, raising almost \$5000 to go towards the Indigenous Residential School Support Society. For the past five years it has been held as an annual event.

“I really wasn’t connected [to my Indigenous culture], even though I did go to powwows and stuff, but there was never anybody that led, mentored or taught me in a specific way...I didn’t have that connection. I feel [the run] really led me down a path that I was really needing and



Amanda Patrick is the organizer of the annual Run for Reconciliation, held each year on Canada Day in St. Albert.

wanting...the community connections that I’ve made have been amazing.”

But what started this all for Patrick, was how she found running as medicine – a therapy for her to be outdoors and connected – to ground herself and clear her mind. “When I was younger, I always wanted to be in sports. I was the oldest of 5, for me I never really got to have sports... I remember the first time that I ran and cried. I was 13, frustrated...I was running so fast as I was crying...Over time as an adult running became therapy for me...when my feet hit the ground, being connected to the earth. I stop a lot when running to look up at trees or see birds because it is so healing to me just to be in nature and to be out and running.it just clears my [head]...When I run, my mind just shuts off...it’s the most peaceful time...you just get to be in nature.”

The Run for Reconciliation is held each year on Canada Day in St. Albert, Alberta. For more information, Amanda Patrick can be contacted via email, runremrec@gmail.com



The Run for Reconciliation.

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The Love Story of Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

This story began in 1990 – when Constance Brissenden was teaching a creative writing class at the Carnegie Learning Centre in Vancouver, British Columbia. At first she noticed there was a man that would occasionally attend her classes. She later found out that this man, Larry Loyie, spent a lot of his time travelling to learning centres and conferences engaging in literacy activism. This became the start of Loyie’s writing career.

“Nothing you ever learn is ever wasted,” shared Brissenden. “I directed Larry’s play, the focus of the exhibit at UBC (‘Writing is Healing’). I got my Masters degree in theatre in 1972 working with plays and playwrights...Fast forward here I am... Larry comes into my class, we get to know each other, we start to go out, turns out he wants to write this play.. Guess what... I’m a director. The stars aligned.... he gave me meaning to my work, and I gave him these skills to help shape his play and direct it.”

The writings of Larry Loyie are currently on exhibit at the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre at the University of British Columbia.

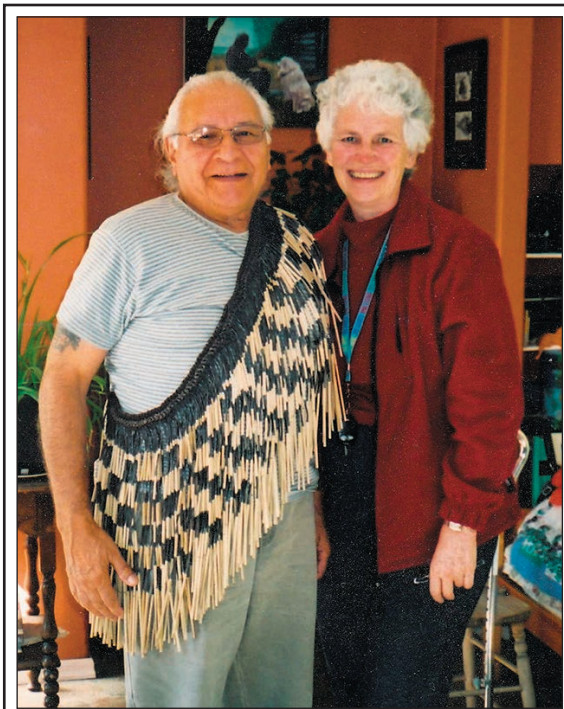
Ora Pro Nobis, Pray for Us, the play that was directed by Brissenden and debuted in 1994, was

based on Loyie’s residential school years. As Brissenden reflected fondly of Loyie’s determination, she shared, “It takes a lot of guts, but nothing is ever wasted because all the things you got...That’s what Larry found, that writing opened those doors [for him] to meet so many people, encouraged so many people, expanded his own horizons. And for a person who had approximately a grade six education from St. Bernard Mission Residential School in Grouard, that was huge. What amazed me, he didn’t say ‘well, can I do this?’– he just went and did it.”

The couple went on to write books on topics that were not being written about in many communities, especially in the Indigenous community. The book, *The Gathering Tree* (2005), is an uplifting and educational children’s book about HIV with a First Nations storyline. At the time of its publication the conversation around HIV was foreign, where a lot of topics Loyie wrote about were bringing light to heavy conversations through his gentle, honest, warm, and compassionate spirit.

“From his residential school experience, Larry lost contact with his family members, and it wasn’t until he was disabled and separated from his wife in his 50’s that he started to heal, and he did it in a very conscious way through writing. That is what the exhibit is about, Writing is Healing. He wanted to write since he was 12 years old in Residential School... He cried a lot, especially when he was writing about his traumas.”

Everything that Loyie walked with was behind his writing. Throughout the 24 years Brissenden and Loyie spent together, one thing stayed the same – how teachings from Larry’s grandfather echoed into how he walked in the world, and the world he shared with



Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden in New Zealand in 2005.

Brissenden. “About a year after we have been dating, Larry said... ‘everyday I wake up and the first thing I think is, I am going to be good today.’ That is what his mosom said, ‘it is important to be good...it is not easy being good’. ...You will see there is an echo in Larry’s books, he’s remembering what his Elder’s said.”

This untold love story, of how two people passionate about writing came together over a 24-year partnership and went on to deliver more than 1,600 presentations in schools, libraries, conferences and festivals across Turtle Island, sharing their love for literacy and the importance message that writing is healing.

Larry Loyie, with Constance Brissenden, created ten books published in multiple versions. *As Long as the Rivers Flow* won the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction and First Nation Communities Read award. Residential Schools, *With the Words and Images of Survivors* is an award-winning national history about the residential school system.

Three of Larry Loyie's popular memoirs are published by Indigenous Education Press in *Young Man, True Stories of a Cree Childhood* (*The Moon Speaks Cree, When the Spirits Dance and Goodbye Buffalo Bay*). *When the Spirits Dance, A Cree Boy's Search for the Meaning of War* is a rare book on how war affected Indigenous families with drama and humour.

For more on these and other Larry Loyie books, go to www.goodminds.com, Indigenous Education Press publisher and book distributor.

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SNAKE LAKE RESERVOIR EXPANSION PROJECT

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Filing by Eastern Irrigation District to Expand the Snake Lake Reservoir near Bassano, Alberta under:

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT ACT and
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION BOARD ACT

The Eastern Irrigation District has filed an environmental impact assessment report with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas for review and an application with the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB Application No. 2501) for approval to expand the Snake Lake Reservoir near Bassano, Alberta. The project proposes to construct an earthen berm to extend the existing reservoir to the south and east. All or a portion of the existing east dam would be removed, which would connect the existing reservoir with the expanded reservoir, increasing the reservoir area. The proposed expansion is located in sections 29, 30, 31, and 32-19-16 W4M within the County of Newell.

Proposed water management projects that are required by Environment and Protected Areas to prepare and submit an environmental impact assessment in accordance with the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* (EPEA) are automatically referred to the NRCB under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* (NRCBA) to conduct a public interest review and either approve or deny the project.

Nature of Filing

The Eastern Irrigation District has prepared and filed an environmental impact assessment report to Environment and Protected Areas. The environmental impact assessment report forms part of the Eastern Irrigation District's application to the NRCB. Environment and Protected Areas, the NRCB, and other Government of Alberta departments are currently reviewing the filing. Once the environmental impact assessment report has been reviewed and the proponent has supplemented any deficiencies, Environment and Protected Areas will issue a completeness letter. The NRCB will issue a further notice inviting public participation to the NRCB review process once it determines the application is complete.

To obtain information about the project, contact the proponent:

Eastern Irrigation District
550 Industrial Road West
P.O. Box 128
Brooks, AB T1R 1B2
Email: eid@eid.ca
Telephone: 1-403-362-1400
<https://www.eid.ca/>

NRCB Review Process

The application to the NRCB and associated documents can be viewed on the NRCB website Snake Lake project page: <https://www.nrcb.ca/natural-resource-projects/natural-resource-projects-listing/450/snake-lake-reservoir-expansion>. Sign up on the website to receive email updates about the project.

Under section 24 of the NRCB's Rules of Practice regulation, all documents filed related to this proceeding must be placed on the public record unless otherwise ordered by the Board, subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

For general information on the NRCB review process, refer to the Guides and additional links at <https://www.nrcb.ca/natural-resource-projects/guides> or contact:

Laura Friend, Manager, Board Reviews
Natural Resources Conservation Board
Telephone: (403) 297-8269 (Toll-free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000)
laura.friend@nrcb.ca

Dated at Calgary, Alberta, on April 14, 2025.

William Y. Kennedy, General Counsel, NRCB

A group photograph of approximately 15 people, including Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden, standing together at an event. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, and the setting appears to be an indoor space with a red wall in the background.

Larry Loyie's family stand proudly with Constance Brissenden at the opening of Larry Loyie, *Writing is Healing* exhibit at UBC in November 2024. It is open to May 23, 2025.

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Saying goodbye to the Hudson Bay Company

By Xavier Kataquapit

The historic Hudson Bay Company has been diminished and the company is on its way to becoming lost to the history books. Starting this past month in March 2025, the company filed for creditor protection which forced it to liquidate all of its stores across the country except for six key flagship stores in major cities including the historic flagship location on Yonge Street in downtown Toronto and both the Calgary and Edmonton locations.

As an Indigenous person, who grew up in the shadow of this all consuming company in my home community of Attawapiskat, I am happy to see it disappear from the landscape. To many Canadians, the HBC conjures up nostalgic images of Hudson Bay blankets, Canadian store fronts and an historic name that occupied the history of Canada since before the country was even founded. To my people, we only saw this company as a black hole that drained any wealth we may have had in the north.

The company was founded in 1670 as a trading company monopoly over an expansive region of territory and it was developed as way to harvest valuable furs from Indigenous people. The company was incorporated under a royal charter by King Charles II of England. It grew enormously wealthy by trading furs with Indigenous people for very little and then resold the product in Europe for even greater profit.

The first trading post for the company was founded in 1668 in what was named Rupert House on James Bay which is today known as Waskaganish, Quebec. Later came Moose Factory in 1673 and Fort Albany in 1679. From the start, the James Bay Cree were the first to be taken advantage of by this company. My ancestors harvested furs from the land which was a monumental challenge that required years of training, skill and knowledge in order to find the animals, harvest them and carefully process furs which took enormous amounts of time and effort. It would take months to gather enough furs

to trade for small amounts of food in the form of flour, lard, sugar and tea, along with blankets, clothing and metal tools. It took loads more furs in order to trade enough for a firearm.

I grew up watching my parents deal with the local HBC trading post in our community when I was really young. In the early 80s, I watched dad trade the last of his furs with the HBC. I can still remember entering into that store and walking towards the rear to the managers desk which sat on a raised platform inside a booth. Dad would have to talk through a small divider window to negotiate with the manager of the store to get a price on the furs. Even as a child, I knew it was difficult for my father because English was his second language and it wasn't easy for him to deal with a fast talking highly trained salesman about how much a set of furs should cost. A stair case led up to the entry of the platform and a second set was for the exit and every time I went there with my parents, there was always a line of trappers waiting their turn along with women coming to negotiate their debts with the only company in town.

When I think of it now, there was so much wealth that was extracted from our communities and our people from the imbalanced fur trade but also from the monopoly of having the only grocery and supply store in town. People always seemed to be in debt to Hudson Bay. The company store in Attawapiskat transitioned



Kataquapit family photo from the 1940s with Chief James Kataquapit (a veteran of WWI) standing with a hat and pin signifying his leadership and his wife Janie Kataquapit standing in back at the door.

to The North West Company in the early 1990s. Furs were no longer traded but the monopoly on food, hardware items and supplies remained. Even though other smaller grocers in town developed over the years, the main North West Company store was the main grocer for the community. I am proud of my family who have stepped up recently to provide a grocery, convenience store and gas station for the people of Attawapiskat.

The fading of HBC reminds me of the lesson that my Elders always taught us about how to see the land, the people and life in general. No matter what business or development may take place on remote Indigenous lands, companies don't last and projects don't happen forever. The only thing that stays constant is the land, the waterways, the creatures and the people who live on the land. Our dealings with Debeers Diamond mine has left a bitter sweet experience for Attawapiskat. This is the reason why many Indigenous leaders want to trend carefully on any development such as the Ring of Fire in northwestern Ontario. They know that any developer that starts work there will only last years, maybe decades, maybe even a century or two like the Hudson Bay Company but in the end, all these businesses disappear and the only ones left are the people who have to deal with the aftermath of what is left behind. Companies will come and go but Mother Earth will always be there and we have to take care of her.

For more columns by Xavier Kataquapit visit underthenorthernsky.com



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.

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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. Follow us on Facebook at River Cree Resort & Casino Job Board or come to our office in person and visit our Recruitment Specialist.

Post-secondaries in Northern Alberta sign historic MOU

Education in northern Alberta is now more connected than ever thanks to a collaborative agreement between five post-secondary institutions.

Keyano College, Lakeland College, Northern Lakes College, Northwestern Polytechnic (NWP), and Portage College today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to broaden educational pathways for students in Alberta’s northernmost communities.

The agreement fosters strategic collaboration between the colleges and polytechnic to ensure enhanced student access, mobility, and learner outcomes.

This marks the first official post-secondary partnership of its kind in northern Alberta and will deliver a strengthened skills and training approach that will stretch 700kms east to west from Lloydminster to Grande Prairie, roughly 560km north to south from Fort McMurray to Vermillion, and everywhere in between.

“Alberta’s government is committed to ensuring students in every part of the province have the opportunities and resources they need to succeed,” stated Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Advanced Education. “This MOU between Keyano College, Lakeland College, Northern Lakes College, Northwestern Polytechnic, and Portage College marks a significant step towards greater possibilities for students in Northern Alberta.”

The MoU is the first step in formalizing transfer agreements and credential recognition between the institutions, which collectively have 34 distinctive campuses across the region. At its core, the partnership aims to ensure that post-secondary education in northern Alberta remains accessible, relevant, and sustainable. This initiative will enable students to stay in the region throughout their educational journey and support graduate retention for career success in the North.

"We are excited to join this transformative partnership, establishing a connected and flexible

educational network in northern Alberta,” added Dr. Sandra Efu, President and CEO of Keyano College. “This collaboration guarantees our students access to top-tier resources and opportunities, allowing them to stay in the region and thrive.”

“Ensuring post-secondary education is accessible and sustainable is a priority that we know we share with our colleagues across northern Alberta,” stated Dr. Alice Wainwright-Stewart, President and CEO of Lakeland College.

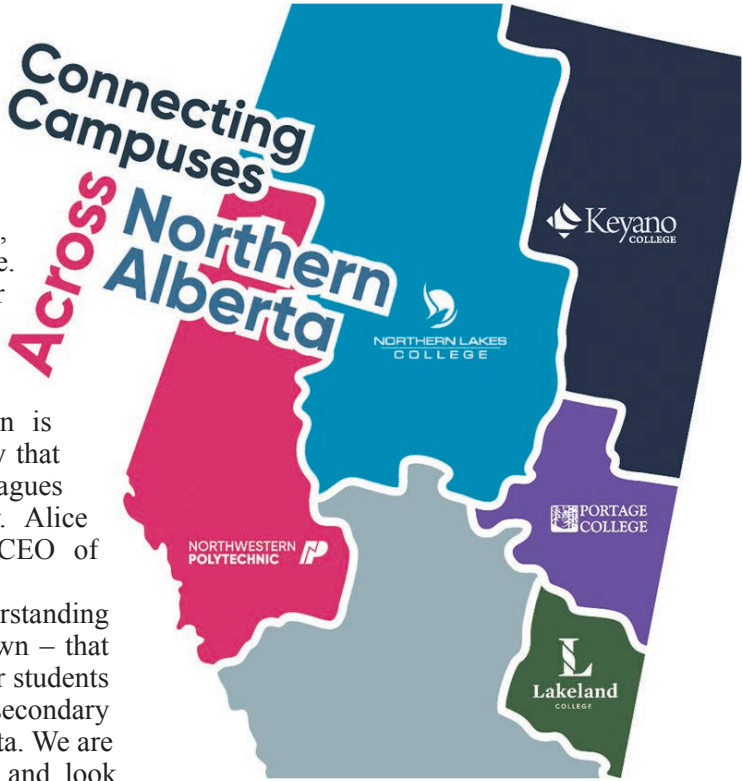
“This Memorandum of Understanding formalizes what we have always known – that collaboration is the key to ensuring our students have access to a world-class post-secondary education, right here in northern Alberta. We are pleased to enter into this agreement and look forward to strengthening our partnerships.”

The collaboration between institutions, industry, and government is welcome news for communities across the province. Along with creating a more cohesive and connected post-secondary network, existing and future students will benefit from greater choice and flexibility in their educational journey. In turn, this will strengthen northern Alberta’s employment pipeline with in-demand programs that will help attract and retain local talent.

"This collaboration will increase accessibility to educational opportunities for our students and communities,” said Dr. Glenn Mitchell, President and CEO of Northern Lakes College.

“By working together, we can create seamless pathways that empower learners to pursue their goals without leaving their home communities. Northern Lakes College looks forward to expanding programming and strengthening community connections that will support student success and regional workforce development.”

“NWP is immensely proud to be part of a collaborative, and learner-centred approach that



will proactively address student and community needs in the North,” added Vanessa Sheane, NWP President and CEO. “Strengthening the ties between our institutions is a natural solution that will boost regional competitiveness and help mitigate current and future workforce challenges.”

“Portage College has always had a corporate value reflecting the importance of partnership,” noted Nancy Broadbent, Portage College President and CEO.

“This initiative will formalize the collaboration with our Northern Alberta partners and strengthen us all as institutions. The signing of an agreement will ensure the spirit of partnership, which is alive now, will last for many years to come. I am excited to see how students and communities will benefit, and I want to thank the leaders of our partner institutions for their dedication to promoting rural prosperity for individuals and communities.”

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