



Indigenous youth gather in celebration at 2025 Teepee Summit

By Kinnukana, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The First Nations Health Consortium (FNHC) hosted its 4th Annual Youth Teepee Summit (Summit) from July 29 to 31, 2025, at the Northeast River Valley Event Centre in Edmonton, Alberta. The three-day summit brought together four hundred Indigenous youth and chaperones from across Alberta to participate in cultural, physical, and educational activities and to engage directly with Elders and inspirational guest speakers.

The Summit was emceed by Conway Kootenay, also known as Smudge Pan, a celebrated comedian, actor, and champion chicken dancer. Conway added energy and laughter throughout the event. The theme of the Summit was "Everyone Has a Dream." It focused on inspiring Indigenous youth to recognize and

embrace their dreams, encouraging them to pursue their goals with confidence rooted in culture and community support.

The Summit started with a powerful grand entry, where youth proudly showcased their regalia, song, and dance, setting the tone for a gathering rooted in pride, healing, and cultural celebration. Musical and spiritual energy for the summit was carried by the powerful voices and drums of Chubby Cree, who served as one of the Summit's drummers and singers. Their presence added depth, emotion, and cultural richness while bringing generations together through song and the drumbeat.

As part of the welcome a number of dignitaries provided opening remarks and advice to the youth. Edmonton Mayor, Amarjeet Sohi, spoke to

the youth and said, "All of the young people here today are so lucky. You are surrounded by support, Elders love, believe in you, who see potential in you, so tap into that, engage with them and let them guide your work and you will be successful. One day, one of you, or many of you, at different stages will be standing at this podium and speaking as Mayor of this city or any other leadership role that you can take on. Never give up on your dreams, people will always be there to support you as long as you are willing to work hard."

Kathy Heron, Mayor of St. Albert also shared her inspirational thoughts with the youth. She said, "The focus of the Summit, is 'everyone has dream,' and that could not be more powerful or more true. Each one of us carries a deep within us, sometimes it's bold and clear, other times it flickers quietly waiting for the right moment and the right support to come alive. Over the



Grand Entry. Photo by Kinnukana.

next few days, you will explore what it takes to bring dreams to life. ... This summit is going to help all of you build that foundation. You will be given tools to last a lifetime."

The first day of the Summit was filled with hands-on cultural experiences, including making dream catchers, bannock on a stick, and performances by traditional dancers. The A'sitapiiksi Powwow Club young dancers showcased their talent and pride through captivating performances. They also provided a moving performance of the "Circles" play, a production centred on healing, identity, and community strength. These sessions gave participants meaningful opportunities to learn from knowledge keepers and each other, grounding them in traditional teachings while strengthening community connections.

A unique highlight of the Summit this year was the participation of Māori youth from New Zealand, who were in Edmonton for the 2025 All Nations Volleyball Showcase. These youth joined the summit to share their cultural traditions, building bridges between Indigenous peoples across continents. Their presence brought global energy to the event, with cultural exchanges that included dance, language, and shared stories that resonated deeply with all in attendance. Nevaeh Pakuria- Te Pou, a Māori youth from Ruatoky Kaweru, New Zealand, shared that in her country it is their culture to sing. She said she was excited to attend the Summit today because she got an opportunity to explore new cultures. She said, "What stands out is how into culture the event is and how embraced it is. It reminds me of home and everyone is so friendly here. It is so nice."

Throughout the summit, youth participated in a variety of teachings and workshops held inside traditional teepees, creating an immersive and culturally rich learning environment. These teepee sessions included activities such as storytelling circles, and discussions on mental health and wellness, allowing participants to connect deeply with Indigenous traditions.

The Summit featured a number of inspiring speakers. Youth had an opportunity to learn more about their Treaties from Gwen Muskwa, Director of the Treaty 8 First Nations Organization, who led a powerful session titled

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The A'sitapiiksi Powwow Club young dancers showcased their talent and pride through captivating performances. Photo by Kinnukana.

What are the 5 grant writing myths holding communities back?

By Rolando Inzunza, Founder of Axioma Consulting

For years, I've sat across from Chiefs, Council members, CEOs, and Band Managers who carry the weight of their communities on their shoulders. Almost every time, I hear the same frustrations: "We don't have time." "We don't know where to start." "Funders won't support our priorities."

These myths are costing Indigenous communities millions in untapped funding each year. Here are five I see most often:

Myth #1: Only big organizations win grants.

Truth: Smaller communities often secure significant funding because they bring clear, local impact.

Myth #2: You need an internal grant writer.

Truth: You need clear priorities first, then support. That's why we often start trying to help with what you say the greatest need is first.

Myth #3: Grants are all about paperwork.

Truth: Strong applications come from storytelling, not bureaucracy. Funders want to see community vision, not just compliance.

Myth #4: One big grant will fix everything.

Truth: Sustainable funding comes from layering small and medium wins over time.

Myth #5: "We're too late this year."

Truth: Grant cycles repeat. A clear, organized approach means you never miss an opportunity. Even if you aren't successful in Grant A, you may be able to "tweak" your application so it fits for Grant B too.

At Axioma, we've seen communities break through these myths and secure over \$6.2 million in funding in less than two years by starting small, building capacity, and focusing on what matters most: their people.

As Founder of Axioma Consulting, Rolando Inzunza is committed to helping Indigenous communities replace funding overwhelm with clear strategies that work. Axioma's clients have secured millions in funding and built stronger, long-term relationships with funders. Discover how at axioma.ca.



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Our cover artist: John Rombough

By Terry Lusty, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Listen up Edmonton!

Beginning August 6th, you will have a wonderful new talent in your midst. Oh, he's been around a few times but not on any permanent basis. He is a former resident whose bloodlines flow from Canada's Northwest Territories, Lutselk'e to be specific. Geographically it lies on the south and east arm of Great Slave Lake and was known for quite some time as Snowdrift. That changed in 1992 when it reverted to its former Indigenous name with a population of just over 300.

His name is John Rombough, a naturally gifted artist originally from the Catholique family who was adopted out at age three to a Prince Edward Island couple. Luckily for young John, he was raised by the loving PEI couple in a warm and welcoming artistic environment.

Over the years John grew up during an era when some of the original members of the Indian Group of Seven {artists} were flourishing, notably the great woodland artist, Norval Morrisseau whose work truly inspired John. If one studies John's style with the use of bold black and brilliant colours, you will note similarities between the two artists – though his work is uniquely his own.

While especially attached to turquoise blue and purple, red and black are common as well in John's choices. As for subject matter, he tends to

gravitate to subjects such as bears, wolves, eagles, moose and bison, in addition to images of the land.

Even at an early age, John harboured a penchant to do art and become an artist. He fondly recalls his natural take to art and tells how he used to sell his art at a young age for "mere pennies." He further delights in the praise he got from a

teacher when he was in Grade Two. Those words still ring loud and clear, "Remember us, you've got a talent." John never forgot those compliments. That same teacher was a gifted artist, said John. "He was a cartoonist and did caricatures and cartoons; he worked in watercolours and was known for that all over the Maritimes."

He's additionally proud that, to that point in time, he had the highest mark ever in school - 97%! Aside from his art, he enjoyed fishing for brook trout in the creek, and was quite the athlete too, winning distance races of 10 K.

Over time, he got to thinking and wondering



Artist John Rombough poses with his art at Edmonton K-Days. Photo by Terry Lusty.

about his birth parents. Upon reaching adulthood, about 22, he made his way west, winding up in Banff and embracing the natural beauty and serenity of the region.

In the meantime, his biological parents were still on the lookout for him. In fact, his dad was "hanging with friends" in Edmonton still looking for his boy. Edmonton was always and still is a drawing card for many northerners. People from the north gravitate to Edmonton for a host of reasons - education, health care, dentistry, housing, employment, and so forth. Thus, it was a logical place to look for John.

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Encouragement is fundamental at UAlberta's ATEP program

By Laura Mushumanski, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In a room of 25 people, it only takes one person to be moved by something heartfelt and transformative. Behind that one person is someone who once received grace, compassion, and kindness – and who chose to carry those teachings forward. In learning how to be a good relative, they now walk in a way that uplifts others, sharing what was once shared with them.

In our lives, we all have this one person that comes to mind when thinking about who helped us along the way without ever asking for anything in return, instead were showered with continuous support and unconditional love. One person in particular that role models this understanding and continues to walk with teachings from people who have guided her along the way is Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer, the Director of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP), Associate Dean of Indigenous Education and a Professor in the Faculty of Education, specializing in Indigenous Peoples Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta.

"I can't take sole credit for what ATEP has become – so many people have helped and guided this work along the way," said Steinhauer. To date, more than 400 students have graduated from the ATEP program at the University of Alberta, including some who are now second-generation graduates, a testament to the strength and continuity of community commitment.

The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) has deep roots dating back to 1975, when the initial proposal for a Native Teacher Education Program was launched as the Morning Star Program. From 1975 to 1982, the University nuhelot'ine thaiyots'i nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills (UNBQ) partnered with the University of Alberta to deliver a teacher training program. In 2002, ATEP began offering a 2+2 program in collaboration with UNBQ and Northern Lakes

College. By 2017, ATEP had become a direct-entry program on the University of Alberta campus. In 2021, the program expanded further to include an online option and a part-time evening pathway to better meet the diverse needs of students.

The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP) supports Indigenous peoples in becoming teachers who can offer meaningful, culturally grounded education for Indigenous children.

Rooted in the land and teachings of amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton, Treaty 6 Territory), ATEP is guided by 14 core values in nêhiyawêwin, reflecting the spirit of the territory and the people it serves. These values include sâkihitowin (love), wâhkôhtowin (kinship), and *mîyo-wîcehtowin* (getting along together), which speak to the importance of relationships and community. Students are encouraged to practice *mâmahwohkamâtowin* (working cooperatively), manâtisiwin and manâhcihitowin (respect and mutual respect), and pikiskwestamowewin (speaking on behalf of others). Learning is guided by kiskinwahasimôwewin (accepting guidance), kiskanowapâhkewin (keen observation), and nanahihtamowin (listening with an open heart). ATEP also upholds kisêwâtisiwin (compassion and kindness), tâpwewin and kanâcisowin (honesty and clean living), wîcihitowin (sharing), miyotêhêwin (having a good heart), and tapâtêyimisôwin and ekâkisteyimisowin (humility). These teachings are not simply concepts, they are lived practices that shape how students, instructors, and communities walk together through ATEP.

Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing,



Dr. Evelyn Steinhauer with 2025 ATEP Grad, Gracey Rich-Carifelle. Photo supplied.

being and learning, ATEP is supported by Elder Calvin Cardinal of Saddle Lake Cree Nation, along with other respected Elders, whose guidance deeply enriches students' learning throughout their journey. The program is offered as a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) or, for those who already hold a degree, as a two-year after-degree option.

For Steinhauer, witnessing the growth of ATEP and the confidence of its students has been deeply moving. "I never thought I would see the day when our Indigenous students could be fully themselves, where ceremony, prayer, and song are part of our everyday," she shared. "It has truly changed my life to see our students walking with such a strong sense of who they are." She reflected on the power of encouragement and creating supportive spaces: "When you've been told you're not good enough, you start to believe it, but the same is true with encouragement. When you're surrounded by people who believe in you, you begin to see your own light." For Steinhauer, the transformation she's witnessed has been both humbling and affirming in ways she never imagined.

Our cover artist cont. from p 3

It was all a matter of time, then finally the two did connect and meet up. That reunion, said John, "was pretty emotional. I took to him, and we were both happy and cried too."

He and his dad moved north, back to Lutselk'e where his dad returned to his traditional life of trapping and water delivery in the community. Seeing his art as a future career, John moved to Yellowknife, met more of his relatives, made new

friends and marketed his art.

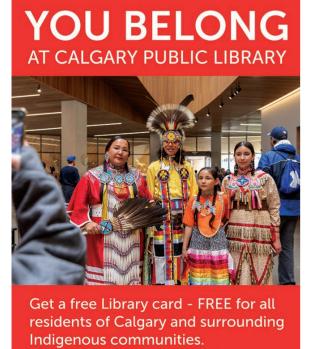
It was a good life and he began to settle in. One day he chanced upon a cousin of his, Snookie Catholique. She was a CBC broadcaster with some political leanings who participated in the Dakota Access Pipeline protest and also became the Language Commissioner for the NWT. It was she, in fact, who informed John that, "You have a big family."

The rest was history. John got to know his relations, learned more about his culture and made many friends. All this time, he nurtured his artistic talents, experimented a bit with styles, and

colours, until he evolved into his signature style. Today, that style perseveres and marks his unique imagery that continues to attract a following that appreciates his art.

And that, dear reader, is precisely why John Rombough is moving to Edmonton. That way he can move about easier and access a wider market base while promoting his creations far and wide.

He's exhibited and sold at Calgary Stampede, Edmonton's K-days, Heritage Days and much more to come. His art is currently available in Edmonton at Bearclaw Gallery.



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Circle of Leadership program empowers young Indigenous women

By Regan Treewater-Lipes, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For the past two years, Dr. Trudy Cardinal, professor of Elementary Education in the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education, has been coordinating a program designed to empower young Indigenous women through culture and community. "We learn together," she explained in a recent phone interview with Alberta Native News. "Growing up, I didn't always have access to the knowledge that participants in the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Leadership (YIWCL) receive today, and we want to close that gap for the next generation."

The name might be a mouthful, but the by Dr. Cardinal, young Indigenous women are able to access a robust knowledge resource year-round programming they offer is nothing short Every summer though, the YIWCL team facilitate a spectacular oneweek program for Indigenous youth. Girls ages 10 to 17 with a spectrum of cultural awareness come together for a uniting identityaffirming experience. "This year, we even had an 8-year-old join us,' Dr. Cardinal offered, clearly impressed "She was very capable and mature, but she also attended with family members. That is the intergenerational learning we encourage."

The summer program began over two decades ago as part of the Canadian Indigenous Language and Literacy Development Institute at the U of A under the guidance of Dr. Heather Blair. The original aim was to inspire young Indigenous women to discover additional layers of their Indigenous culture and language, with an



intergenerational consideration for learning. "We wanted to take the same foundational concept and bring the learning into the communities," Cardinal explained. "Instead of running the camp on campus, we felt it was important to engage with the spaces and surroundings where the participants live."

With generous support from the U of A's Sustaining Indigenous Language Revitalization initiative and the BHP Foundation, the YIWCL team hosted two camps this summer: one at the Alberta Avenue Community League in Edmonton and another in Wetaskiwin.

> local participants, so the two experiences complemented rather than duplicated each other. Coordinating two sites is a massive undertaking, Cardinal acknowledges, urban and semi-rural settings present different realities. Running both lets us tailor the experience and keep travel barriers low. Eventually, we hope to add transportation for youth in remote areas

Each camp was co-created with

welcome even more participants."

Early versions of the program centred on language acquisition. The program has grown to honour the everyday Indigenous language and culture including sewing, singing, cooking, and other cultural practices. "Some participants arrive with extensive knowledge of their culture while others only know that they have Indigenous roots," Cardinal explains. "So we invite mothers, aunties, and kohkoms to pass teachings from one generation to the next. Our aim is to strengthen each girl's bond to her Nation and kin while showing how our cultures resonate with one another. By sharing knowledge, they solidify their identities and form lasting friendships."

Elders, skilled craftswomen, and other knowledge keepers animate the camps. Cardinal describes how young women learned to sing rattle songs, guided by older generations, a practice echoed across many Nations. "The girls even made their own ribbon skirts and held a fashion show," she shared joyfully.

The young women, in addition to crafting

magnificent ribbon skirts, also make their own medicine bags. "The locations we are in are more urban, but this is also something meaningful because there's an ability to walk in both worlds. We engage with the urban world but also learn about the natural world and what grows around us." For the time being, the herbs and plants for the medicine bundles are brought in for the young women to learn about, but Dr. Cardinal and her team ensure that a strong connection to the land is paramount when accessing Indigenous knowledge.

"I'm so grateful for this work I get to do," she explained with touching sincerity. "I really do learn so much. Running these camps each year contributes so much to my research at the University. It's not something separate from my career as a professor but something that makes me better at my job." As a professor, Dr. Cardinal is responsible for research and service in addition to her teaching practice. She does not see her work with the Young Indigenous Women's Circle of Learning as belonging to any one of these areas. "It enhances my teaching, it's meaningful service, and it inspires my research."

The programming is free of charge and welcomes young women who identify as Indigenous regardless of their prior knowledge or experience. Throughout the year, the Circle also offers shorter "Pop-Up" sessions.

To learn more, sign up for updates, or get involved, visit: ualberta.ca/en/education/ programs/indigenous-teacher-education-andleadership/young-indigenous-womens-circle-ofleadership.

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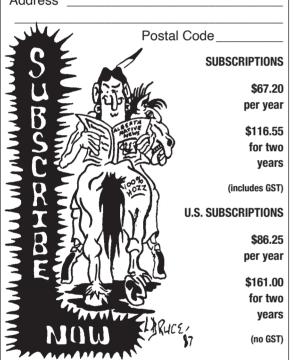
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Informed consent is non-negotiable

By Grand Chief Greg Desjarlais

ROY 24

While I acknowledge the importance of the conversations held at the One Canadian Economy Act Summit between First Nations Leadership and Prime Minister Mark Carney last month,

I remain deeply concerned about this government's commitment to, and understanding of, the Treaties it entered into with First Nations.

Free, prior and informed consent on First Nations Lands is non-negotiable. An advisory role is inadequate for real

partnership. While I appreciate this government's acknowledgement that the summit was not consultation, I question whether it understands what true, meaningful consultation is - and what that should look like going forward.

We are at a pivotal moment. The Government of Canada must restore its Treaty relationships in good faith, integrity and with recognition of the full jurisdiction of First Nations. The time for delegated consultation is over. Treaty No. 6 First Nations are Rights holders and our Sovereignty requires meaningful consultation, Nation by Nation. Our collective future must be built on Treaty-based governance, rightful jurisdiction and full consent. Treaty No. 6 First Nations must be at the table for all agreements moving forward

> and First Nations must have an ownership stake and share in revenue generated by every project on our Lands.

I am hopeful this is a future we can achieve, but I am also deeply skeptical. I will trust actions over words as we look to move forward.

I expect more from our Treaty partners in Ottawa. First Nations will no longer accept imposed regimes breaching our Treaties, denying our

authority and profiting from our Lands without 'As long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the waters flow' is not a poetic sentiment - it is a

constitutional and spiritual commitment and the

Government of Canada must honour it. Greg Desjarlais is the Grand Chief of the Confederacy of Treaty No. 6 First Nations.

We need economic reconciliation!

National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak released the following statement on July 22, after participating in the Council of the Federation (COF) meeting, which brought together Canada's premiers to discuss shared priorities, including infrastructure and economic reconciliation.

"Attending the COF meeting was an important opportunity to speak to Premiers directly about the role of First Nations in decision-making on major projects," said National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak. "Major project development cannot happen without us. Many Chiefs are deeply concerned about legislation that has tried to shove First Nations people aside. Collaborative decision-making is essential, and that includes legislation and decision-making on all major projects. A course correction is needed to ensure a constructive nation-to-nation relationship."

The National Chief added, "First Nations stand

united against unilateralism and imperialism in all its forms. Prosperity for all Canadians means responsible, sustainable development for all. Sustainable development requires respecting First Nations rights and including us as full partners in the determination of projects in the national interest."

"In my remarks to Premiers, I was clear that closing the First Nations infrastructure gap must be included as a national priority and as a project of 'national interest.' The Assembly of First Nations commissioned a report from the Conference Board of Canada that concludes that making this investment could generate \$635 billion in economic benefits and create 330,000 jobs over the next seven years. These are real opportunities that will support families, strengthen local economies, and drive demand for Canadian steel, lumber, and other materials. Closing the infrastructure gap is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do."

"I also spoke to the imperative of moving forward on First Nations policing and clean drinking water through co-developed legislation," concluded National Chief Woodhouse Nepinak. "Our safety and security must be protected. We're calling on all levels of government to move forward with us in the spirit of reconciliation and respect for fundamental



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Chief Tammy Cook-Searson misses convocation to lead Lac La Ronge Indian Band during wildfire evacuation

Athabasca University MBA grad helped oversee the evacuation of 8,500 people as wildfires raged in northern Saskatchewan



Lac La Ronge Chief Tammy Cook-Searson

For 10 straight days in June, Chief Tammy Cook-Searson (Master of Business Administration '25) of Lac La Ronge Indian Band was lucky if she got two hours of sleep at night.

Several massive wildfires in northern Saskatchewan had forced the evacuation of the community on June 2—an order that was in effect until June 12. The evacuation saw about 8,500 people in the region uprooted from their homes to stay in emergency shelters in Prince Albert and other communities.

Cook-Searson stayed behind at her home in La Ronge to lead the community she has served for more than three decades—including the past 20 years as Chief. When she wasn't online with her leadership team in emergency operations centre meetings, she was personally updating communications on the Band's website and keeping members informed on social media.

Sleep? It was an afterthought.

"I just kept going because it's one of those situations where you don't stop when you're tired. You stop when it's done, right? It's like a marathon," says Cook-Searson, an avid runner.

Sleep wasn't the only thing that Cook-Searson missed during the crisis. Unable to leave home, she missed Athabasca University's convocation ceremonies in Athabasca, Alta. on June 6, where she was to receive her MBA after four years of study.

"I was sad to miss the convocation ceremony. It was something I was really, really looking forward to."

Cook-Searson shared details of the evacuation, her 20-year anniversary as Chief, and her education journey with AU in the following Q&A.

What impact did the wildfires have on your community?

The fires were very hot, fast and furious, and they were taking everything that was in their path. We had firefighters, helicopters, our own First Nations crews, and crews from all over Saskatchewan coming in to help us. And not only was it impacting the communities, it was also impacting trapline cabins, where people spend a lot of time. And you know, it's a place where we still spend a lot of time on the land as trappers, fishermen, hunters, gatherers. So it's a big part of our life, having our Woodland Cree Culture and Traditions.

It was really important for me to be here and to be able to help the community, and also the community members who were displaced from their homes. Just being a contact and troubleshooting any issues that came up, working together to try to find resolution. Human life is always our top priority.

Moving away from the wildfires, in March you celebrated 20 years

as Chief. What was that like?

It doesn't even seem that long—time goes so fast! And before that, I was actually on Band Council for eight years. So I've been with the Band and Chief and on Council for 28 years now. And then, before that, I worked for the Band as a social worker. That's 31 years.

You joined AU's class of 2025 with an MBA. Why did you decide to go back to school, and why did you choose AU?

I didn't have an undergraduate degree, but Athabasca University accepted me. I was really excited about that. I wasn't sure if I could do it, but somehow I managed. I would highly recommend the AU way to get your schooling done. It's a flexible way to be able to get your formal education. not an easy program, but anything that's hard to get is usually also worth it.

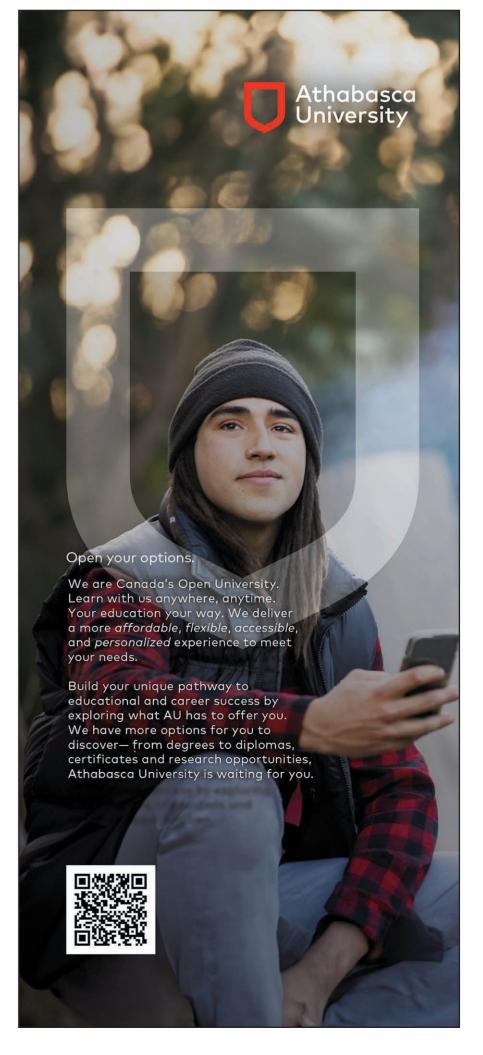
How did your MBA program help you professionally?

I used a lot of stuff to apply to my work, including when reviewing the Band's strategic plan. Before, I would probably only go to the strategic planning session and maybe glance at the plan here and there. Because of the classes I took at AU, I studied it and was looking at it in different ways, like how a strategy is kind of like a compass, you know?

You have these plans in place so that you're prepared when things happen. And anything can happen: storms can come up, fires can come up. I applied my learning to a lot of the stuff with the Band. I feel like I've grown a lot.

Given everything you've been through, you've earned some time off! What's next for you?

For now, what I really want to do is just clean up my house and cut my grass and just stay close to home. And we're helping rebuild. We'll be here to support our community members as best as we can.





The First Nations Goods and Sales Tax

By Nathan Sheppard, CPA, Indirect Tax Advisor

Revenue generation is essential for the governance and sustainability of First Nations. Like other governments, First Nations can raise funds through various means, including income taxes, sales taxes, property levies, and user fees. One emerging option is the First Nations Goods and Services Tax (FNGST)—a value-added tax that First Nations governments can impose on goods and services sold on First Nations reserves or settlement lands. These taxes are considered one of the most efficient public financing methods. When applied broadly, a low tax rate such as 5% can raise significant revenue – as a result, the 5% GST is the second largest source of revenue for the Government of Canada (with income taxes being the largest).

Functionally, the FNGST is almost identical to the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST). The key difference is that FNGST revenues go directly to the implementing First Nation rather than the federal government.

Key Points About FNGST:

Replaces the GST: When a First Nation implements the FNGST, the federal GST is replaced by the FNGST on the reserve or settlement land, and the First Nation then receives the tax revenue that it generates. A key benefit of using an established tax system is that it allows for certainty in compliance issues for businesses and individuals, since they are already familiar with how it works.

Applies on Reserve Lands: It applies to taxable supplies (goods and services) made on First Nations reserves or settlement lands that

have enacted an FNGST law. Most for-profit businesses which would be entitled to input tax credits already have to administer the GST, even on First Nations reserves. Implementing the

FNGST would ensure that the revenue from the tax being collected on First Nations lands goes back to the First Nation, and not the Federal government.

Status Indians and FNGST: Normally, Status Indians, Indian bands, and band-empowered

entities are exempt from paying GST on purchases made on reserves, but if a First Nation implements FNGST, they would generally have to pay the FNGST unless specific exemptions apply. However, as previously mentioned, that tax revenue goes to the First Nation, which in turn can be used to provide various benefits to all members, such as through community development, infrastructure, and services.

Implementation

Implementing the FNGST is voluntary - First Nations would need to opt into it first by passing their own FNGST law and entering into a tax administration agreement with the Government of Canada, which allows for the CRA to provide the administration. Each First Nation will have a unique process based on its specific governance structure, legal framework, and negotiations with

federal authorities. Obtaining legal consultation is highly recommended during this process.

Once implemented, the FNGST rate matches the federal GST rate, currently 5% on most goods and services. As part of the agreement the tax administration agreement, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) administers the tax system on behalf of the First Nation and transfers the revenue to them.

First Nations that have implemented the FNGST

As of this date, 73 First Nations across Canada have implemented the FNGST. The listing of those who have implemented it can be found in Schedule 1 of the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act.

Conclusion

The First Nations Goods and Services Tax (FNGST) presents a valuable opportunity for First Nations to generate their own revenue while utilizing an already established and efficient tax system. By opting in, First Nations can reclaim economic control over taxation within their territories and reinvest the funds into community development, infrastructure, and essential services. While implementation requires careful consideration, the long-term benefits of self-sustained revenue can contribute to greater financial independence and economic stability. As more First Nations explore the FNGST, it remains a promising tool for supporting self-governance and prosperity.

Nathan Sheppard, CPA is the Indirect Tax Advisor whose primary practice area is the Goods & Service / Harmonized Sales Tax, at Kingston Ross Pasnak LLP in Edmonton, AB. If ANNews readers are interested in learning more about the FNGST, they can reach out to nsheppard@krpgroup.com.

ALCLA: Conservation and reciprocal relationships

By Laura Mushumanski, LJI Reporter

Traditional Indigenous plant medicines are plants that grow locally, also known as native plants. They grow in specific regions without the involvement of human interference. In other words these plants thrive based on their ecosystem that aids them to flourish under the right growing conditions. Native plants can be perennials, annuals, and biennials in their native

habitat depending on the plant species. They are low maintenance and are taken care of by all the elements in nature. In each region around the world, native plants exist and come in different varieties of plants, where no two are alike. All our ancestors lived among plants that were native to their homelands, bringing them nourishment in abundance for people to thrive as food,

shelter, oxygen, tools, and various creative ways that aided people in good health and wellbeing.

Another important key component with native plants is how they support our ecosystem, especially our pollinator friends that in turn help plants nourish everyone and everything that resides on Mother Earth. One company in Southern Alberta that is helping these native plants thrive is ALCLA Native Plants by engaging in "ways of seeing how we interact with nature," said Latifa Pelletier-Ahmed, a team member, botanist and herbalist, for the sole purpose of increasing the biodiversity in native plants that are on the decline.

Both Pelletier-Ahmed and her partner at ALCLA Ben Hartney, who holds a Red Seal Certificate in Landscape Horticulture, have been lovers of plants all their lives. So, when the opportunity to purchase ALCLA in 2019 came up, the two made a heartfelt decision to further

Continued on page 11

Honouring Tradition; Empowering the Future

KRP proudly supports Indigenous businesses, Tribal Councils, Trusts, and entrepreneurs with expert financial reporting, tax strategy, and GST advice. More than accountants, we mentor future leaders, empower First Nations students, and champion financial success in Indigenous communities. Partner with KRP—where expertise meets cultural understanding.





Soapstone Carving for Sale



"Polar Bear Walking" is an original soapstone carving by Dene carver Anthony Antoine that is currently on exhibit and available for purchase at WakinaGallery.com.

The sculpture measures measures 8" in width, 5" in height and it weighs 4.5 lbs.

The piece comes with a signed certificate of authenticity. For information visit wakinagallery.com or call 780-237-1556.

Wîhkwêntôwin unveils mural celebrating Indigenous roots

By Jeremy Appel

The Wîhkwêntôwin Community League unveiled a mural painted by a local Indigenous artist on July 12, reflecting the inclusivity behind Edmonton's largest neighbourhood's new Cree name.

Kayla Bellerose painted the mural, which is displayed in the tunnel that's shared by a bike path and the High Level Bridge Streetcar tracks, located just north of Constable Ezio Faraone Park

Since the mural sits along two transport networks, an event celebrating the unveiling was held at the park, with live music, vendors, games, and free bannock, tea and ice cream. Volunteers took attendees who wanted to see the mural on a tour every half hour.

Bellerose, who is First Nations from Treaty 8 on her mother's side, said her mural was inspired by the river valley.

"The neighbourhood is so close to the river, so I often go on walks to spend time with nature," she explained to volunteers and dignitaries during the first tour of the day.

Bellerose highlighted the pollinators on the mural, including the bumblebee and swallowtail butterfly.

"I don't know about you, but when I go on walks in the river valley, I'm often eating Saskatoons. They're super ripe right now, so I wanted to include plants that I often would see on my walks," she added.

The mural also includes people Bellerose sees on her regular walks, including elderly people on a stroll, a mother walking her baby in a stroller, a couple on a date and a person in a wheelchair wearing an Oilers jersey. She also was sure to



Kayla Bellerose

include an image of her dog, Willow.

There are seven flowers representing seven generations into the future.

The words, Together, we are stronger, are written across the mural, a phrase Bellerose said she saw written down during an engagement session at last year's community league BBQ.

"That really stood out to me when I was coming up with the concept of that idea that we are stronger together as a collective. Because right now in society, there's so much division and separation from one another," the artist said.

"It's not productive. It's not helpful.

"All of us are connected. All of us are related. We're all human beings, living here, sharing this land as Treaty people. Let's respect each other, let's be kind to each other, let's live together as a community."

In January 2024, the community league announced that the neighbourhood formerly known as Oliver would henceforth be known as Wîhkwêntôwin, which translates to 'circle of friends' in Cree.

The community's previous namesake—Frank Oliver—was a notorious racist, who advocated for the forced removal of First Nations communities, including the Papaschase band, as a Liberal MP and publisher of the *Edmonton Bulletin*.

The process of renaming the neighbourhood, which sits just west of downtown, began in 2020 with the #UncoverOliver campaign, representing the first instance of a community-led process to rename a neighbourhood that was named after a problematic figure.

In attendance at the mural unveiling were Edmonton-Centre MLA David Shepherd and his local NDP caucus colleague Janis Irwin, Ward O-day'min city councillor Anne Stevenson and Edmonton Public School Board trustee Julie Kusiek.

"The man that this community used to be



Artist Kayla Bellerose explains that the Wîhkwêntôwin mural was inspired by the River Valley.

named for, was someone who had a very small vision of what it meant to be Albertan, of who belonged in this community and who belonged in our province, who deserved to have a voice and hold power," said Shepherd.

He praised the "diligent work" of the community league, which involved "some great community conversation" with Indigenous, Black and other community leaders, "to find a new name that truly represented who we are as Albertans now and what this community is."

"The new name—Wîhkwêntôwin—I think, embraces a much bigger vision of who we are," Shepherd said, calling Bellerose's mural a "beautiful representation" of this vision.

Coun. Stevenson called the mural a "lasting gift that Kayla has given to the community."

"Wîhkwêntôwin is the perfect name for this neighborhood—it is truly a circle of friends," she said. "But I also think of the circle of keepers, and those are the volunteers at the community league who make the intentional effort to create spaces for us to come together in community."

Kusiek, whose Ward D includes the newly named Wîhkwêntôwin School, noted that Bellerose's mural "celebrates every single person in this community."

She said that the process the community league went through in renaming the community "was so well done" that it made it easy for the public school board to rename the former Oliver School.

"This is the name that best fits this school and school community, and when I look at that mural, we are stronger together," said Kusiek.

Jeremy Appel is a Local Journalism Initiative Reporter with Alberta Native News.



First Nations Bank of Canada announces \$9 million equity raise from Indigenous investors

Five Indigenous communities and groups invest in FNBC to support loan book expansion and national growth

(Saskatoon) – August 5, 2025 – First Nations Bank of Canada (FNBC) today announced the successful closing of a \$9 million equity investment by five Indigenous investors. The new capital will support the Bank's continued loan book expansion, particularly in response to rising demand in its core commercial lending business, as well as new programs being delivered in partnership with the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) and Canada Infrastructure Bank (CIB)

The investment comes from a group of Indigenous-led organizations and communities across Canada:

- Whitefish Lake First Nation #128 (Treaty 8 – Alberta)
- Úúj**Q** Developments (Treaty 8 – British Columbia)
- Doig River First Nation (Treaty 8 – British Columbia)
- Dáanaa Jíli (Cache) Trust (Yukon – FNBC shareholder expanding its position)
- Athabasca Basin Development (Saskatchewan – Indigenous investment firm)

"This equity raise is a strong endorsement of our strategy and the trust that Indigenous communities across Canada place in FNBC," said Bill Lomax, President and CEO of FNBC. "These are not just investors – they are partners in building an Indigenous-led financial institution capable of accelerating economic reconciliation and driving prosperity in our communities."

FNBC plans to deploy the new capital to meet the increasing demand for lending from Indigenous governments, entrepreneurs, and businesses across the country. The funding will also help scale up lending under its CIB Indigenous land development loan program and the recently launched FNBC-BDC Indigenous Business Acquisition loan program.

Since becoming President and CEO of the FNBC in 2023, Lomax and his team have expanded the lending capacity of the bank exponentially first through a \$100M loan participation agreement with the Canadian Infrastructure Bank launched in 2024 to help finance the construction of new infrastructure projects, and now through a \$100M initiative with BDC to accelerate the acquisition of existing businesses by Indigenous communities and organizations.

This announcement is part of a broader capital raise, with the Bank seeking to secure up to \$50 million in equity capital over the coming year. The proceeds will further strengthen FNBC's ability to serve Indigenous economic development and expand its national reach.

"Indigenous Nations and communities are on the rise in this country, with this capital investment we plan to keep pace with Indigenous Nations and be the lender of choice for



FNBC Saskatoon branch. Proudly located on Yellow Quill First Nation Urban Reserve land.

Indigenous-led growth," said Lomax. "We stand proud to be building a bank that is owned by Indigenous communities and works for Indigenous communities."

About FNBC:

Founded in 1996, First Nations Bank of Canada (FNBC) is a Canadian chartered bank focused on providing financial services to the Indigenous marketplace in Canada. FNBC is 88% Indigenous owned and controlled. The Bank offers Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, corporations and governments a full range of personal and business banking services including loans, mortgages, investments (registered and non-registered), transaction accounts and cash management as well as trust services through its wholly owned subsidiary, FNB Trust.

First Nations Bank of Canada is an approved member of the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Canadian Payments Association and is an approved mortgage lender with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, as well as the First Nations Market Housing Fund.



Learn more at www.fnbc.ca



ALCLA cont. from p 8

their "relationship with plants in a meaningful way," said Hartney.

Through ALCLA's commitment to building sustainable plant relationships in an ethical way, ALCLA also offers educational programs. Topics include: how plants grow, plant relationships with animals and humans, plant identification, horticulture-related subjects, and anything related to how native plants play a role within our

"One native plant makes life thrive, and you can help those tiny beings by being a refuge for them. The life of these native plants can be in abundance, and we all have a responsibility to take part in it," shared Pelletier-Ahmed. If everyone grew native plants in their own neighborhoods or helped support native plants to thrive in a meaningful way, we could all be a part of something bigger that supports the longevity of our ecosystems, she added.

ALCLA also offers native plants and seeds for purchase on their website. In their plant nursery they specialize in Alberta native plant production and genetics in the Treaty 7 region, including grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs plugs and seeds. Seeds from these native plants germinate according to their life cycle while considering temperature, genetics, and environmental guidance.

With the level of habitat loss increasing,

ALCLA encourages teachings that were passed on to them from Blackfoot knowledge keepers on how to sustain the life of these traditional plants. Protocol is the fundamental teacher of slowing down to engage in a reciprocal relationship built on learning without taking. Start with honouring the plant; some Indigenous cultural practices include putting tobacco down as a form of good

relationships and respect. Tobacco that is used in ceremony is a traditional Indigenous medicine but not native to Canada because it does not have a long and hot enough growing season, and although the plant is used widely in exchange of reciprocal relationships, it is also important to understand the practice of being mindful when engaging in relationships, especially within the plant world.

"Never pick the first plant you see and only pick what you need. You don't know who else has been there to harvest," said Latifa, because that might be the only plant there is, and although these plants may seem to thrive in abundance, that

Latifa Pelletier-Ahmed and Ben Hartney at ALCLA Native Plants

is not always the case. With larger populations and plant medicines becoming more popular, part of the work that ALCLA does directly relates to how we can sustain the native plants within our ecosystems so there will be enough for future generations to learn from and live among.

ALCLA collaborates with numerous organizations including the Alberta Native Bee Council, Alberta Native Plant Council, Bee City Canada, Buffalo Rock Tipi Camp, Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation, Edmonton Native Plant Society, and Grassland Restoration Forum by working together to conserve native plant species.

Indigenous youth cont. from p 2

"Treaties 101: Do You Know Your Treaty?" Gwen guided participants through the history and significance of Treaties, explaining the rights and responsibilities established between First Nations peoples and the Crown. Her talk helped youth understand the importance of Treaty rights and legislation as foundations for advocacy, selfdetermination, and cultural resilience.

Other leaders that inspired youth, included Edmonton Elks players Justin Rankin and Nick Anderson who shared courageous stories about their personal journeys in and beyond football, encouraging youth to overcome adversity with strength and focus. Katie Mulkay and Taylor McPherson, contestants from last year's Amazing Race Canada, also inspired with their message: 'Strong is beautiful' and 'Never give up.' Their talk emphasized resilience, teamwork, and selfbelief. Another standout session came from Flames Alumni Colin Patterson, who spoke about his career in the National Hockey League (NHL)

and his path to the Stanley Cup. Youth were thrilled to hear about his experiences and even got to see his prized Stanley Cup ring up close.

Youth also heard from Kyra Buchan, representing the Indigenous Sports Council of Alberta (ISCA), who shared exciting news. ISCA is preparing to form Team Alberta for the 2027 North American Indigenous Games in Calgary. Tryouts are coming soon, and youth were encouraged to get involved in this empowering pathway to sport, wellness, and leadership. More information is available at https://isportalberta.com/team-alberta.

The summit featured a vibrant vendor and exhibitor space focused on delivering valuable resources and opportunities to youth. Organizations representing education, health and wellness, construction and trades, and workforce development and employment services were on hand to provide mentorship, guidance, and tools for building successful futures.

The 2025 Youth Teepee Summit is a living example of reconcili-ACTION, where Indigenous youth come together to celebrate who they are,



Nevaeh Pakuria-Te Pou, a Māori youth from Ruatoky Kaweru.

learn from those who came before them, and dream boldly about the future. With its success, FNHC is already looking ahead to next year, ensuring that even more youth will have the chance to gather, grow, and rise together again.

NEWSPAPER FOR SALE

After 40 years of publishing the Alberta Native News, the owners wish to retire.

We are hoping some enterprising individual(s) with a passion for communicating

Indigenous issues will carry on with publishing the newspaper. It is not easy in this day and age to produce a print media with a supporting digital presence but it is something that serves a vital interest for the Indigenous communities across Treaty 6, 7 and 8 territories.

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





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University of Alberta and UCalgary partner with FNHC in landmark health research agreement

By Kinnukana, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter.

In a powerful gathering grounded in ceremony and cultural protocol, a landmark Memorandum of Relational Understanding (MORU) was signed at Bison Lodge in Edmonton that promises to redefine the future of health research for and with Treaty First Nations communities in Alberta. The MORU is a new partnership between the First Nations Health Consortium (FNHC), the University of Alberta (U of A), and the University of Calgary (U of C) and was formalized through ceremony, shared intent, and mutual respect.

More than just a formal signing, the event was a cultural and relational moment. Guests were welcomed with food and warmth as the sun settled over Edmonton's river valley. As attendees gathered, an Honour Song by Chubby Cree resonated throughout the lodge, grounding the space in respect and unity. Elder Mike Beaver offered a prayer that opened the evening, bringing spirit into the room and inviting the ancestors to witness what was to follow.

FNHC leaders and emcees for the event, Dr. Tyler White and Chief Operating Officer Lorraine Muskwa, welcomed the guests, followed by opening remarks from FNHC Board Chair Randy Littlechild, Chief Executive Officer Barry Phillips, U of C's Dean Todd Anderson, and U of A's Dean Brenda Hemmelgarn. Each speaker emphasized that the agreement being signed was about more than health research. They emphasized that it is about relationships, reconciliation, and responsibility.

At the heart of the evening was the sacred Pipe Ceremony led by Elder Beaver, an act of spiritual commitment that gave weight to the signatures that followed. As the Pipe was shared, it was understood that what was being agreed upon was not just a partnership but a relational and ethical pledge between organizations.

The MORU itself outlines a long-term, community-led health research collaboration grounded in Indigenous sovereignty and Treaty rights. It is designed to respond to persistent health disparities by centering Indigenous knowledge, addressing service gaps, and uplifting Treaty First Nations priorities. This initiative is particularly significant in that it focuses the research paradigm on co-creation. The MORU affirms the right of Treaty First Nations to direct the research that affects them. Importantly, this partnership is framed through the lens of Ethical Space, a concept that encourages mutual respect and learning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems.

In recognition of the vision that led to this historic partnership, the MORU was given a ceremonial name: the Amisk Agreement. "Amisk," meaning beaver in Cree, was gifted earlier to FNHC CEO Barry Phillips as part of his spiritual naming. The beaver symbolizes



UAlberta, UCalgary and FNHC sign a unique landmark health research agreement. Photos by Kinnukana.

determination, hard work, and building strong foundations, all qualities reflected in Barry's leadership and the spirit of this agreement. Naming the MORU the Amisk Agreement honours the roots of its creation and the role Barry's vision played in bringing the parties together in a good way.

As part of the culturally grounded signing ceremony, all partners took part in the traditional act of signing a ceremonial hide, symbolizing the living, relational nature of the MORU. This powerful gesture reflects Indigenous protocols of honouring commitments not just through paper, but through meaningful, lasting acts rooted in tradition. The hide, which will be preserved as a record of this historic moment, represents the shared responsibility, trust, and accountability between the FNHC, U of A, and U of C. By signing the hide, each partner affirmed their commitment to walk forward together in unity, respect, and relational integrity.

Randy Littlechild, Chair of the FNHC Board, emphasized the depth of the commitment: "This is about building trust and taking action. Through this partnership, we're combining the lived experience and leadership of Treaty First Nations communities with the academic strengths of Canada's top universities to create meaningful, measurable improvements in our children's, youth, and families' health and well-being."

For the university partners, the agreement is a clear step toward reconciliation. Dr. Hemmelgarn, Dean and Vice-Provost at the U of A, remarked, "This really is an important event. We are going to be signing a MORU and not just a standard MOU. That is important because it is all about relationships, it's all about partnerships and trust and that's what this signing here today

will mean and what will do for us, building trust and taking action. It is important for us to work towards reconciliation in health research."

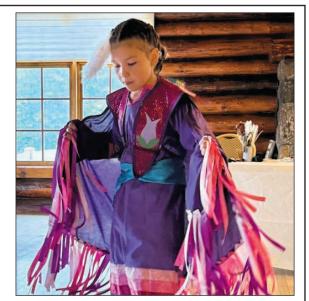
Dr. Anderson, Dean of Cumming School of Medicine at the U of C, shared that "the University wanted to be part of this partnership for many reasons, especially because they want to have relationships with outstanding groups and the work of the FNHC aligns well with the University. Research is an integral part of both Universities and so the ability to advance research with this MORU in an area that is meaningful for everyone is a win-win-win that aligns with our values. Also, in our strategic plan we have many priorities but one of them is children's health. We are committed to improving the health of Indigenous communities."

Following the signing, the ceremony shifted into celebration. Powwow dancers in full regalia from Alexander First Nation brought movement and joy into the room. The evening closed with Chubby Cree's powerful Victory Song, a symbolic affirmation of the strength and resilience of Treaty First Nations communities and the hope that this partnership represents.

The MORU marks a new chapter in how research will be done in Alberta with Treaty First Nations. It affirms that communities will not just be subjects of research, they will be leaders in health research. The MORU demonstrates that universities can be powerful allies when they approach partnerships with humility, accountability, and respect. When partnerships are grounded in ceremony and cultural values, they carry not only institutional weight, but spiritual and moral meaning as well. This signing ceremony, steeped in culture, will ensure that any following work will be done in a good way.







Dancers from Alexander First Nation: Stan Arcand III, Joana Campiou, and Claire Horseman.