

# Building a future in carpentry

At just 17 years old, Liam has already laid the foundation for a promising career in carpentry. As a graduate of the Pre-Employment Carpenter program at Northern Lakes College, he has leveraged his early education into a full-time position with Biggs and Little Contracting. Now, with high school behind him and a clear path ahead, Liam is determined to earn his journeyman certification before his mid-20s.

Growing up in a family of tradespeople, Liam always had a passion for using his skills to create something new. "All my family is in trades, and I've always liked making ideas come to life," he says. "Carpentry seemed like a great way to do that. I could build houses, modify things the way I wanted to, and really understand how structures come together."

His experience started early, working on small projects around the house. "I built chicken coops and garden boxes with my mom," he says. "Nothing too big, but it got me interested."

When Liam learned about the Dual Credit program at Northern Lakes College, he saw an opportunity to get a head start on his career

while still earning high school credits. "A lot of people don't realize it's an option," he reports. "But it's great because you get knowledge from the College while working toward your high school diploma. It helped me finish the last credits I needed to graduate."

Liam officially graduated high school early and is now working full-time as a carpenter. "I did the first semester at the College, and now I'm in the workforce full time. It's been a smooth transition."

His time at Northern Lakes College gave him a strong foundation, both in technical skills and in professional confidence. "I really liked the College experience," Liam says. "The small class sizes and one-on-one instruction made it easier to learn. It was a great environment."

Liam's pre-employment training has proven invaluable on the job site and gave him an edge when applying for work. "Having the program on my resume made a huge difference," he says. "It shows you've taken the initiative to learn the trade rather than coming in with no experience."

Liam is already thinking about his next steps. "In ten years, I hope to be running my own contracting business," he reports. "Maybe even teaching the trades one day, but that's way down the line. I don't think I could ever stop working, but as a retirement job, I'd consider it."



Liam is a graduate of the Dual Credit and Pre-Employment Carpenter program at Northern Lakes College.

He encourages other high school students to take advantage of the Dual Credit and Pre-Employment programs at Northern Lakes College. "I'd tell them to try it out and follow through. Even if you decide later that carpentry isn't for you, you'll always have that knowledge and experience to fall back on. It's a win-win - you get high school credits and career training at the same time."

From high school student to full-time carpenter, Liam has made the most of every opportunity. With determination and a strong work ethic, he is on track to achieve his journeyman certification and, ultimately, his dream of running his own business.

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



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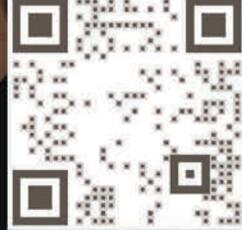
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# A unique Indigenous gathering space opens in Calgary at The Confluence

A special Indigenous gathering place has opened in Calgary. On January 30, The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland and the Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC) celebrated the grand opening of Naatowápitao'ohkánao'p (Nah-doh-WAH-bee-doh-gah-nope) (Holy Gathering Place) at The Confluence in Calgary.

Indigenous organizations and individuals can now book this indoor and outdoor space at no charge for ceremony, cultural practice and to run Indigenous-led programming. The event also celebrated the opening of BOW MOTHER III – “Confluence”, a vibrant mural created by artist Nicole Wolf that wraps around the exterior of the Holy Gathering Place.

“This land — Mohkinstsis — has always been a gathering place for our people,” says AFCC CEO Shane Gauthier. “To have a space intentionally designed for ceremony and cultural practice in the heart of our city is a profound act of reclaiming that connection. This partnership with The Confluence goes beyond simply providing a room; it creates a dignified, culturally safe home for our traditions to live and breathe downtown. It directly answers the call from our community for accessible spaces where we can gather, smudge, and connect in a good way, ensuring that Indigenous culture remains a visible and vital part of Calgary’s fabric.”

The Holy Gathering Place was funded through the City of Calgary Capital Grant program for civic partners. The design of the newly renovated 1,000 square foot space was informed by Indigenous consultation. In spring 2024, The Confluence and the AFCC signed a memorandum of understanding and partnered to operate the Holy Gathering Place.

Jennifer Thompson, The Confluence president, says the plan to convert part of the existing Replica Fort Calgary Barracks is an important piece of a larger plan at The Confluence to further welcome Indigenous culture, practice and stories on the 42-acre site.

“Indigenous Elders have told me stories about when conducting ceremony, and even using their own language, was forbidden on this very land,” says Thompson. “We hope Naatowápitao'ohkánao'p will help Indigenous communities feel welcome to gather and take part in their culture on the land they have called home for time immemorial.”

The Holy Gathering Place is a bright, ventilated room that can accommodate smudging. It features a separate entrance, kitchenette, two dedicated washrooms, an outdoor firepit area complete with built-in seating, and a dedicated parking area. It has already facilitated several Indigenous community gatherings prior to its official opening. In fall 2025, The Confluence hosted the



The Gathering Place is a free, accessible space for Indigenous ceremonies and programs in Calgary.

Sinopaa Pokaiks Blackfoot cultural camps for urban Indigenous youth to connect to their culture through elder teachings and immersive activities.

The Holy Gathering Place is located at The Confluence Centre in Calgary at 750 9th Ave SE. Located along the RiverWalk, at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers, it is a short 10-minute walk from Calgary’s downtown core.

The centre is currently under construction and will reopen on February 14. For more information visit [theconfluence.ca/gather](http://theconfluence.ca/gather)

# Nathaniel Arcand: From 'North of 60' to 'Sinners' and 'Train Dreams', a career of storytelling and creative risk

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

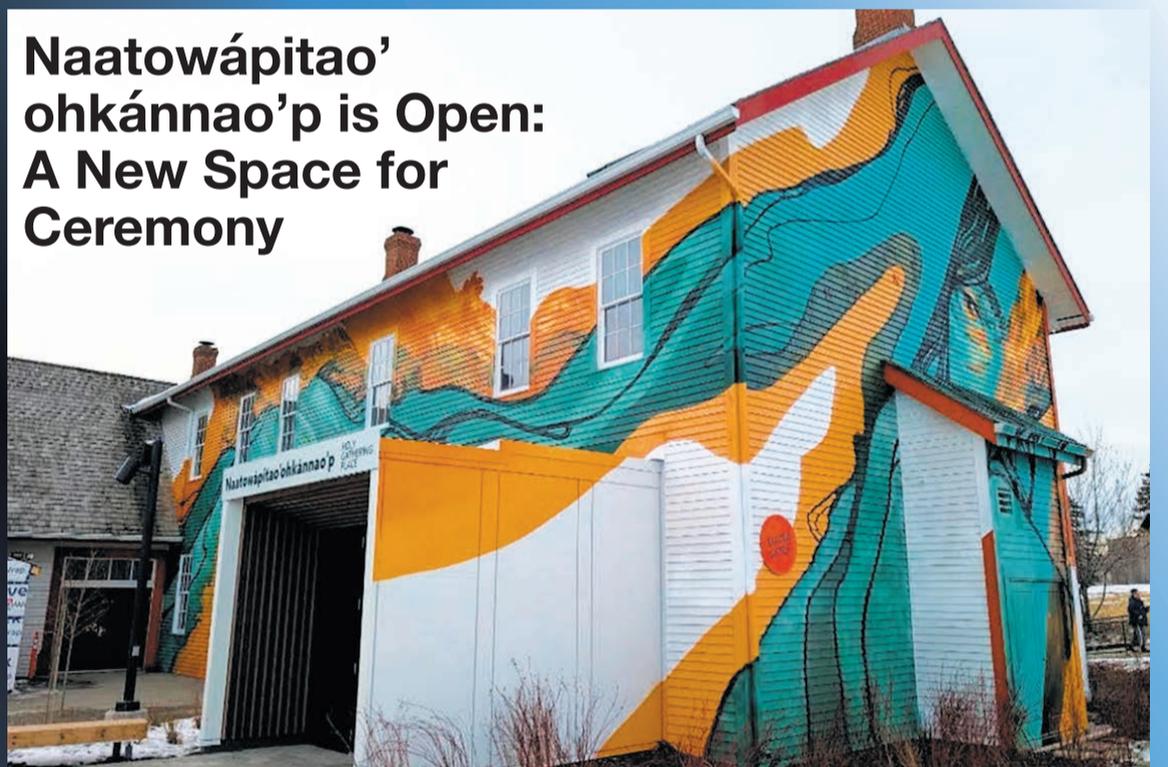
For more than three decades, Plains Cree actor Nathaniel Arcand has quietly and *consistently* reshaped what Indigenous representation looks like on screen – not by chasing stardom, but by committing himself to story, craft, and cultural responsibility.

Arcand didn’t grow up planning to be an actor. His entry into film and television was unexpected, but once he found his footing, he made it his mission not just to succeed, but to push boundaries for Indigenous artists working within an industry that has historically offered few complex roles.

Born November 13, 1971, in Edmonton, Arcand is Nēhilawē (Plains Cree) from the Alexander First Nation. He carries that identity with pride, grounding every performance in lived experience and cultural awareness. His breakout role came in the mid-1990s on the CBC drama *North of 60*, where he played William MacNeil, a smart-mouthed, troubled teen whose sharp intelligence and emotional depth resonated with

Continued on page 9

## Naatowápitao'ohkánao'p is Open: A New Space for Ceremony



Ok! The Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC), in partnership with The Confluence, is honoured to announce the opening of Naatowápitao'ohkánao'p (Holy Gathering Place). Guided by our Elders, this dedicated facility offers a safe, accessible, and free space for Indigenous Peoples to practice ceremony, hold sharing circles, and connect with culture in the heart of Mohkinstsis.

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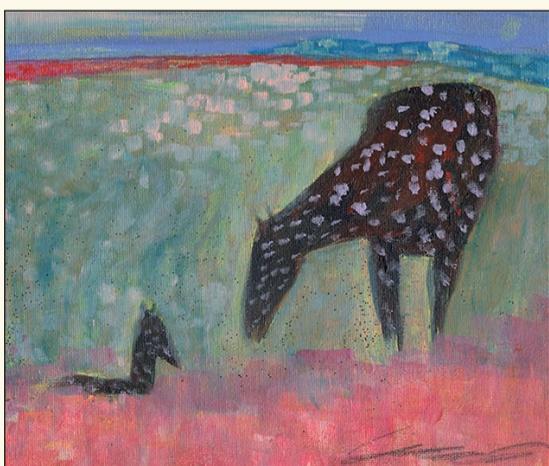


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## Residential School Denialism is not academic freedom

By John Wirth, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On January 22, the plaza at the threshold of the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (IRSHDC) at the University of British Columbia was transformed into a profound wall of resistance and orange fabric.

The sound of drums and chants from approximately 800 students, faculty, and survivors gathered there was not to protest, nor to provide a counter-argument. They were peacefully present to shield a site of testimony from those who would desecrate it. Yet, as Dallas Brodie and her OneBC “band of misfits” were escorted off campus by the RCMP, they sought to frame the day as a failure of academic freedom. While Brodie’s group was removed, Frances Widdowson remained the sole arrestee of the afternoon, having refused to depart the campus—though she was later released without facing charges.

This tension was not a clash of two equal “sides”; it was a conflict between the lived realities of survivors and a political group that uses the language of the university to cast doubt on historical atrocities. The largest blockade to their credibility is their own voices, which shatter their “intellectual” veneer. As she told APTN reporters at the event, Widdowson said, “I’m here to restore UBC to an academic institution, which it is not right now. It is a propaganda outlet for indigenization activists.” In response to a question about residential school survivors lying, she added, “No, I don’t think residential school survivors are lying. I think they’re misremembering.”

To understand the strategy behind the OneBC campaign, one must look at the “respectable” mask Brodie maintains in her official outreach. Only days after the failed protest, she – through her dubious standing as party leader – promoted “UBC Debates,” a forum examining issues such as international labour with almost clinical,

intellectual detachment. By using the same branding to request a “structured debate” on the remains of 215 children found at the Kamloops Residential School, Brodie attempts a rhetorical sleight of hand. She frames the existence of unmarked mass graves not as a documented human rights tragedy, but as a compelling viewpoint up for debate.

The act itself is designed to back the university into a corner – a lose-lose situation that either validates denialism as legitimate academic inquiry or brands the school as a “woke” institute that suppresses the very dialogue it claims to champion.

The comment Widdowson gave to APTN was not a quick, off-the-cuff remark; her statements are the refined product of a career built on the dismissal of Indigenous trauma. Widdowson is an academic whose career at Mount Royal University ended in a high-profile termination following claims that residential schools provided Indigenous children with “educational opportunities.” She has spent years testing the limits of academic tenure as a shield for denialism.

When she asserted to APTN that survivors were simply “misremembering,” she was employing a practiced form of gaslighting – one that attempts to strip survivors of their credibility without the “indecent” of calling them frauds, effectively shifting the burden of proof back onto the victims. For Widdowson, the Dialogue Centre was merely a stage for her ongoing crusade against “Indigenization activists.” However, as the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) noted in their open letter, this is a “pattern of hate.” Her past controversies reveal she isn’t interested in the evidence of the 215 children at Kamloops; she is interested in maintaining the settler-colonial narrative her academic career was built upon, regardless of the human cost.

Dallas Brodie said at the protest, “The situation is that if your parents do die, you can’t bury them in your backyard. You’re not allowed to do that in Canada.”

Brodie seemed overwhelmed by the cacophony of voices objecting to her presence; her flustered comments centered on burying parents, rather than parents burying children. Absent from her red herring was love and respect. When these children were laid to rest, they were interred unceremoniously by uncaring hands that held the legal responsibility for their upbringing.

To debate the modern difficulty of private burial is a legal distraction. While Brodie uses the law to argue these graves shouldn’t exist, landowners in the Chilliwack Valley have found the opposite to be true. To them, the legal reality of ancestral burial mounds on their property isn’t a ‘debate’ – it is what one owner called a ‘bottomless pit of Hell.’ (CBC The National 2019).

This exposes the contradiction at the heart of the OneBC playbook: they use modern law to deny the dead, while the law itself is already busy

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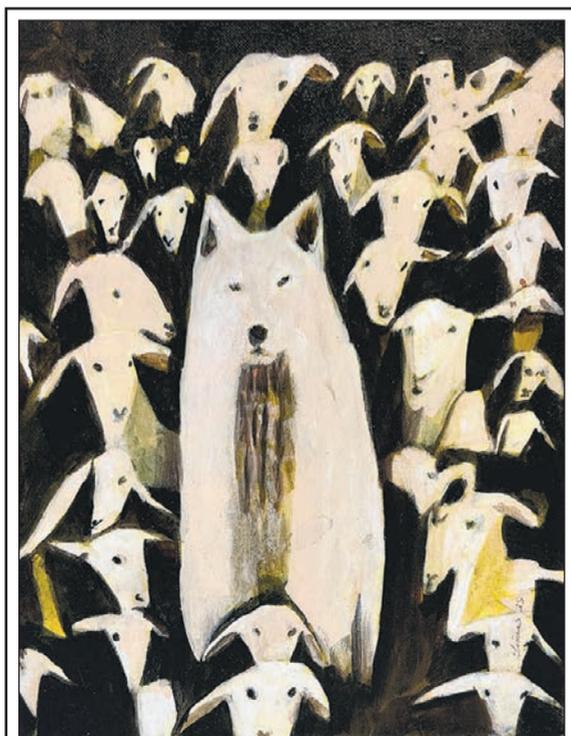
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# Warrior Women bring Cree culture to International Tourism Conference

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Mackenzie Brown (Kamamak, which means “butterfly” in Cree) and Matricia Bauer (Isko-achitaw Wacy / ᐃᓃᐃ ᐃᓃᓃ ᐃᓃᓃ), co-owners of Warrior Women, are bringing Cree culture to Edmonton from February 17 to 19 to showcase their talent, art, and Indigenous knowledge at the International Indigenous Tourism Conference (#2026IITC).

The mother-daughter duo from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation are recognized leaders in Indigenous tourism, known for sharing Cree stories, land-based teachings, and cultural practices with audiences from around the world in ways that are authentic, respectful, and community-guided.

“We’re a mother-daughter duo from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, and we absolutely love what we do,” said Mackenzie Brown. “Tourism really found us. We didn’t set out thinking we were going into tourism – we were just sharing who we are.”

Warrior Women is a Cree-led, Indigenous-women-owned tourism business operating in Calgary and Jasper, offering plant walks, drumming and singing, moccasin and mitt-making, art workshops, fireside teachings, and Indigenous art walk tours.

“We started performing not just for local audiences, but for people traveling from Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand – from all over the world,” Brown said. “It’s important that we tell our own stories from our own voices, because so often people tell stories about Indigenous people that aren’t always true.”

Both Brown and Bauer emphasize that showcasing culture publicly comes with responsibility, accountability, and guidance from Elders.

“Because we teach about our history and aspects of our culture, it’s really important that we’re always talking with our Elders,” Brown said. “Everything that we share is vetted, and it has to be appropriate and okay to share.”

“You can’t share everything – and you shouldn’t. Some teachings need to stay with the people, and you need some mystery.”

Matricia Bauer, a Cree knowledge keeper, artist, singer, and cultural educator, says Indigenous tourism allows communities to share stories on their own terms.

“Indigenous tourism allows Indigenous people to tell their story the way they want to tell it,

share what they want to share, and have their art appreciated and not appropriated,” Bauer said. “Every song we sing, every story we tell, comes from our perspective. That’s what makes it real.”

She explained that Indigenous tourism is rooted in lived experience, history, and connection to land.

“Indigenous tourism is real stories told by Indigenous people through an Indigenous lens,” Bauer said. “Not every story is meant to be shared with the general public. The beautiful thing about being in charge of what gets shared is you get to choose what stories you tell, which songs you sing, and what art gets to be shared.”

According to *Top 40 Under 40* by Calgary *Avenue Magazine*, Mackenzie Brown “acts as a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures and experiences — that’s her superpower.”

Brown is an artist, educator, and tourism consultant who served as director of industry development at Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) from 2021 to 2024, growing the organization from 37 to 175 members. Under her leadership, ITA created allyship tool kits and cultural-awareness training that have since been adopted nationally, with more than 1,000 tourism professionals trained in Alberta alone.

Brown currently serves as the executive advisor of Indigenous engagement at the Glenbow Museum, continuing her work to advance Indigenous leadership, cultural understanding, and institutional change within Alberta’s arts and tourism sectors.

Matricia Bauer, whose traditional name Isko-achitaw Wacy means “She Who Moves Mountains,” has shared Cree teachings on international stages, including TED Talks, and has received numerous honours, including the Esquao Award for Art and Culture (2021), Mayor’s Artist Award – Jasper (2015), and the Aboriginal Woman’s Day Award (2005).

Both leaders see Indigenous tourism as a powerful tool for education, reconciliation, and community investment. “When you invest in



Mackenzie Brown and Matricia Bauer are co-owners of Warrior Women, an Indigenous tourism business operating in Calgary and Jasper. Photo by Ron Brown.

Indigenous tourism, you’re investing in communities,” Brown said. “Tourism is an industry of industries.”

“I’ve seen communities create language programs, Elders programs, and youth programs funded through tourism. Profits stay in the community.”

Brown added that tourism offers an accessible way for people to learn about truth and reconciliation. “Tourism is one of the easiest ways for people to learn about reconciliation,” she said. “You have a captivated audience who wants to learn from Indigenous people about their culture.”

At the conference, the duo will connect with Indigenous tourism operators from across the globe, including Māori tourism leaders from New Zealand and Indigenous representatives from Chile, Finland, Japan, China, and across North America.

“At the conference, Indigenous people from all over the world come together to discuss what Indigenous tourism is, what it can be, and to share best practices for the future,” Bauer said. “The goal is to show visitors that Indigenous culture is alive, vibrant, and evolving – not just history.”

The International Indigenous Tourism Conference (#2026IITC) will be hosted by the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) in partnership with Indigenous Tourism Alberta, Explore Edmonton, and Travel Alberta on Treaty 6 Territory, home to many Nations, including Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Sioux, and Métis Peoples, in Amiskwaciwâskahikan/Edmonton, Alberta, from February 17 to 19, 2026.

For more information, visit [warriorwomen.ca](http://warriorwomen.ca) and [kamamak.ca](http://kamamak.ca)

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# Artist Isaac Murdoch speaks out against Alberta Separation

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As Alberta faces discussions about a potential separation referendum, Indigenous artist and activist Isaac Murdoch is making it clear that the province has no authority over Indigenous lands or treaty agreements.

Murdoch, a celebrated member of Serpent River First Nation, is a world renowned artist, as well as a singer, songwriter, educator, and consultant on Nationhood issues, who has spent decades sharing the wisdom, Ojibwe culture, and history across Turtle Island. Known for his immersive storytelling and socially engaged art, Murdoch has earned recognition for using creativity to foster dialogue on Indigenous rights, social justice, and environmental conservation. His beautiful painting titled "For the love of water" appears on the cover of this month's *Alberta Native News*.

"The land people know as Alberta has always been occupied by the Indigenous people that have always lived there. There is a Treaty on Indigenous Land with the Crown that allows non-natives to live on that land. The Alberta government has no jurisdiction or treaty on Native Land, therefore has no authority to tamper, shift, or make nationhood decisions regarding separation as that is a direct assault on current Treaties with the Crown and Indigenous peoples. The Treaties obligates the Crown to get involved by supporting First Nations in their fight for their homelands."

The art made at Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation was part of 'Treaty Week' organized by Gloria Larocque which was to get the community engaged in the issues, and "to help get expression through creative processes to help shift the social

conscience of society," Murdoch said.

He emphasized that the historical framework of treaties predates Alberta itself. "The numbered Treaties were made before the province of Alberta was in play. It's a Nation-to-Nation relationship with the Crown and not Alberta or Canada, so in other words, Alberta or Canada have no say in Treaty and cannot ratify legally binding agreements with the Indigenous people. They are not rights holders," Murdoch explained.

## Understanding Treaty Rights in Canada

Treaty rights in Canada are constitutionally recognized under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which affirms and protects existing Aboriginal and treaty rights. Treaties were negotiated historically between Indigenous Nations and the Crown as legally binding agreements, often covering land use, hunting and fishing rights, resource management, and governance. They are considered Nation-to-Nation agreements, meaning provincial governments, like Alberta, cannot unilaterally alter or override them.

## Treaty Rights from an Indigenous Perspective

From the Indigenous viewpoint, treaties are living agreements that reflect ongoing relationships with the land, the people, and the Crown. They are not just legal documents; they represent spiritual responsibilities, stewardship of the land, and the recognition of Indigenous



Isaac Murdoch with Elder Doris Manchoose and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation Chief Sheldon Sunshine.

Nations as sovereign entities. Indigenous leaders stress that treaties are agreements made with Nations, not provinces, and therefore Indigenous communities retain inherent authority over their territories and governance.

"The art that was made is an assertion by the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation in response to political interference by the province of Alberta. Many conversations were had while making the art and I noticed how well the people were already empowered and had great knowledge on the current issue. Their amazing leadership is also a testimony of how advanced they are in their Treaty understanding with the Crown. As an Anishinaabe, I know we have a great alliance with the Cree, so I wanted to get involved. These beautiful people are our Sister Nation and we need to back each other up," Murdoch said.

Through his work, Murdoch continues to use art as a political and social tool, creating spaces for discussion on issues that are often politicized. His statements come at a critical time as Alberta debates the implications of a separation referendum, highlighting Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and treaty obligations.

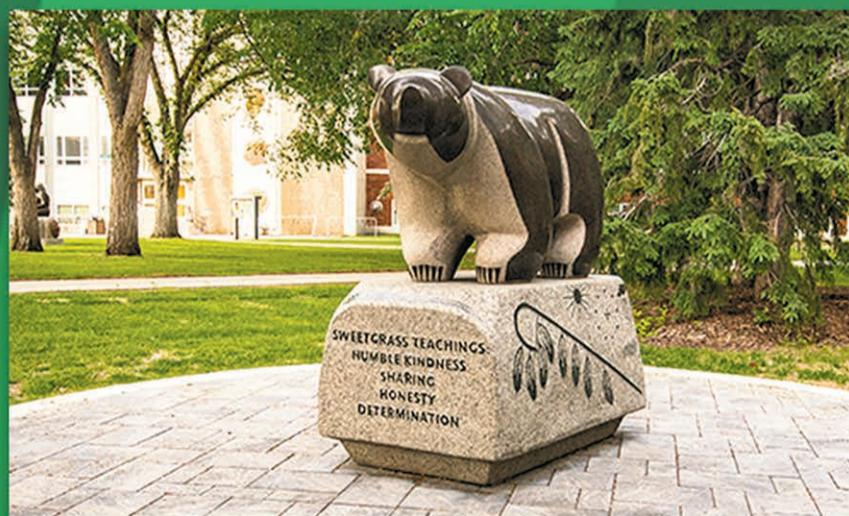
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# Historic investment adds momentum to Edmonton downtown development

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Northern Ontario's Wiikwemkong First Nation has made a landmark investment in Edmonton's Ice District, purchasing the site of the cancelled Canadian Western Bank tower for \$65.25 million. Located at 10308 103 Street NW, the site is currently home to Connect Centre, a two-storey commercial complex completed in 2022 and anchored by Loblaws CityMarket, with tenants including CIBC, National Bank, and the Edmonton Oilers Official Team Store.

A 16-storey office tower, originally planned for the site, was cancelled after Canadian Western Bank opted to relocate to Manulife Place. The Nation's purchase marks the first time Wiikwemkong First Nation has invested outside its traditional territory in Ontario.

Edmonton's downtown has faced challenges in recent years, including higher office vacancy rates, slower retail activity, and a need for more residential density to sustain economic vibrancy. According to Economic Development Edmonton, downtown office vacancy climbed to around 17% in 2025, while residential growth has not kept pace with other major Canadian cities. Local business owners and city officials have long emphasized the need for strategic investment to revitalize the core.

Speaking with Edmonton City Councillor Anne Stevenson, representing Ward O-day'min, it became clear why this deal is significant. "What makes this investment so compelling is that the Nation comes from an unceded



Edmonton Mayor Andrew Knack, Ogimaa Tim Ominika, Chief Tony Alexis and other dignitaries. (Facebook)

territory in the north, yet chose to invest in Edmonton rather than within its own traditional lands. That decision is really at the heart of the story," Stevenson said.

"This was the first time the Nation had ever invested outside of Ontario. From what I understand, it's a first-of-its-kind deal, and it really signals confidence in Edmonton's downtown market."

On the broader economic impact, Stevenson noted: "Real estate transactions happen all the time, whether through institutional money or private investors. What's really exciting is seeing the economy diversify and create opportunities for investors who may not have been involved before. This kind of economic reconciliation is important — it helps build broader, shared prosperity."

Stevenson also highlighted the practical aspects of the development. "One of the exciting things about this site is how it's already anchored by a grocery store, which makes it an asset for residential development downtown. And the building is designed to allow for a tower on top — the Nation is keen to start building a residential tower, which could add hundreds of new units."

"That's the kind of vitality we're seeing in downtown Edmonton right now. More residents mean more customers for local businesses, more activity on the streets, and a stronger community overall," she added.

On the city's role in supporting the project, Stevenson explained, "From the city's perspective, we're focused on supporting this momentum — exploring residential incentives, staying in close contact with the Nation, and helping their vision come to life. It's all about collaboration. Everyone benefits when downtown grows in a smart, inclusive way."

Stevenson also reflected on the symbolic nature of the investment. Edmonton's Ice District, completed in phases since 2012, is Canada's largest mixed-use sports and entertainment district, spanning 11 acres and including the Rogers Place arena, JW Marriott Edmonton Ice District & Residences, office towers, and retail spaces. Downtown residential density has increased by nearly 40% over the last decade, driven by condos, office-to-residential conversions, and mixed-use projects — but growth has lagged compared to other major Canadian urban cores, highlighting the importance of strategic investments like this one.

"We love to see this kind of development downtown at a stable, consistent level," Stevenson said. "It demonstrates the value of commercial real estate, which in turn helps fund the many public services we provide. More housing downtown will only increase vitality, support local businesses, and keep our downtown lively and festive."

For Wiikwemkong First Nation, the purchase is not just a real estate investment — it's a strategic move that signals confidence in Edmonton's downtown economy and lays the groundwork for future collaboration between Indigenous communities and the city.



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## Nathaniel Arcand cont. from p 3

audiences. The performance earned Arcand a Gemini Award nomination and marked the beginning of a career defined by depth rather than spectacle.

Nearly 30 years later, Arcand reached a new professional milestone when he became part of two major films – *Train Dreams* and *Sinners* – receiving awards-season recognition in the same year. “It’s been a great journey since I started, and I feel really fortunate,” he says. “I’ve been part of a lot of good productions, and to be in not just one, but two movies in the same year recognized at the Oscars – that’s incredible. I’m rooting for both. I hope they each take home at least one, but honestly, I’m rooting for them to win it all.”

Arcand worked on both projects in April 2024. “I did both films in April 2024, back and forth from Spokane to New Orleans. I gave my best performance to both films and then went home,” he recalls. “Next thing you know, both films were being nominated for Oscars.”

Arcand describes *Train Dreams* as especially moving. He attended the Netflix premiere in Los Angeles last November, where he watched the film for the first time. “It was surreal,” he says. “I thought everyone in that movie did incredible work. I cried three times during it. That movie is like watching a poem come to life. It’s a poetic story about life, and it really made me reflect.”

Arcand’s filmography spans decades and genres, including *Grey Owl*, *Black Cloud*, *Cold Pursuit*, and *Killers of the Flower Moon*. On television, he’s appeared in *Smallville*, *Longmire*, *Supernatural*, *FBI: Most Wanted*, and *Heartland*, where he played Scott Cardinal. He starred as Victor Merasty in *Blackstone*, a groundbreaking series that explored Indigenous governance, power, and community politics, and led *Two Indians Talking*, which won the Vancouver International Film Festival’s Most Popular Canadian Film Award in 2010.

Growing up Indigenous in Canada, Arcand

says, came with early lessons about hardship and resilience. “You learn early that life isn’t always easy,” he reflects. “But our experiences, our struggles – they shape us. They give us the strength to carry our stories forward.”

That sense of responsibility informs every role he accepts. “Every role I take on carries weight,” Arcand says. “It’s not just about acting – it’s about representing a people, a history, and a culture accurately and respectfully.” Mentorship, he adds, is just as important. “I try to be the person I wish I had when I was starting out. It’s about showing that it’s possible, that there’s a path, and that your heritage is something to be proud of, not hidden.”

Despite his success, Arcand remains grounded and forward-focused. “You’ve got to keep learning and growing – that’s the natural rhythm of life,” he says. “I’ve come a long way from where I was, but I still have a long ways to go. I’m not finished. I could do other work – truck driving, whatever – but is that me? No. I want to stick to what I’ve built my career on – acting, television, entertainment. That’s where I belong.”

In recent years, Arcand has also turned toward writing and producing, though he’s candid about the challenges Indigenous creators continue to face behind the scenes. “I’ve written scripts, I have ideas, but I don’t have the right people in my corner to make them real,” he says. “I’ve kind of turned into an introvert in this world because of the way it is, especially for Native people. Today, yes, there are more Native-generated producers, but it’s still a challenge to get ideas off the page and onto the screen.”

He’s also outspoken about what he sees as



Actor Nathaniel Arcand in the acclaimed 2025 film "Train Dreams" portrays a storekeeper named Ignatius Jack. (Facebook)

creative limitations within Indigenous media itself. “There are more and more Native films and TV series, but it’s not enough,” Arcand says. “The storylines are very limited, and they’re not thinking outside the box. Most people just want to tell their own story – their trauma, their family history. And to me, that’s overdone. Every film festival, it’s the same story from last year: different title, different actors, same story. How many times can you tell it over and over?”

For Arcand, the future of Indigenous storytelling lies in imagination as much as truth. “Why aren’t we creating something new, like a Harry Potter-style character, a whole different world?” he asks. “Just be creative.”

After three decades on screen, Nathaniel Arcand remains exactly where he’s always been – committed to story, grounded in community, and pushing for something more expansive, not just for himself, but for the generations of Indigenous artists coming next.



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Some people find it helpful to take time before making big financial decisions.

It is okay to pause, ask questions and seek guidance from a trusted financial professional, community organization or person in your circle.

Understanding your short-, medium- and long-term goals may help you plan. Consider if arranging to receive your compensation through monthly payments may help you meet those goals.

Planning with care can help your compensation continue to support your wellbeing over time.

Find financial information and resources at no cost at [www.FNChildClaims.ca/FI](http://www.FNChildClaims.ca/FI).

# Geraldine Carriere: Empowering the Wild Woman within

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Geraldine Carriere, a serial entrepreneur, international speaker, best-selling author, life and business coach, and performing artist, has dedicated her life to empowering people to see themselves in the world. Originally from Cumberland House Cree Nation in northeastern Saskatchewan, Carriere grew up in urban settings where she often felt misunderstood and out of place. These early experiences fueled her determination to challenge societal norms and create spaces where people could belong.

“Growing up, I was outspoken and endlessly curious about how the world works,” Carriere says. “I asked, ‘Who does this benefit? Why is it this way?’ Feeling different and misunderstood pushed me to find ways to make the world better for people who feel the same.”

Her path to becoming a serial entrepreneur was shaped by early work experiences in human resources, marketing, and other industries, where she noticed limits on what voices and perspectives were valued. Rather than accept those restrictions, she decided to forge her own path.

“I created a professional development company to bridge the gap between school and the workforce. I teach essential skills and employment training – soft skills that aren’t often taught – and I include ancestral knowledge, confidence, and a sense of belonging,” she explains. “I wanted to show people like me that they can have pride, presence, and a place in the world.”

Carriere’s work is particularly focused on youth and elders, helping them see themselves in spaces where Indigenous voices have historically been absent. This work is especially critical given the challenges Indigenous youth face with mental health. Less than half report excellent or very good mental health, nearly one in five have been diagnosed with a mood disorder, and almost one in four have experienced anxiety. Research shows that culturally grounded mentoring and role models can significantly strengthen resilience, promote cultural identity, and improve emotional well-being. (Sources: Statistics Canada, Deloitte Canada)

“I don’t believe I’m the only person who feels this way. If I needed relief and understanding, I

knew there were others who did too,” she says. “Everything I do comes from the purpose of helping people see themselves, giving them a voice, and helping them feel worthy. My work is about creating visibility, belonging, and possibility where it hasn’t always existed.”

Her mission aligns with a growing movement of Indigenous entrepreneurship across Canada. There are more than 50,000 Indigenous-owned businesses contributing roughly \$50 billion annually to the Canadian economy. Indigenous youth are launching businesses five times faster than their non-Indigenous peers, and Indigenous women are twice as likely to own businesses as their non-Indigenous counterparts. This growing momentum is expected to expand Indigenous entrepreneurship by 23% over the next decade, reflecting both the demand for Indigenous-led leadership and the resilience of Indigenous communities.

At the heart of Carriere’s teachings is the concept of the “Wild Woman” – a celebration of authenticity, freedom, and strength.

“When I say I’m a wild woman, people often picture something very specific – a sexy woman running through the woods, hair wild, completely untamed,” she laughs. “But being wild, to me, is much deeper. It’s about calling out harmful behaviors, trusting your instincts, and embracing your ancestral knowledge. It’s knowing your truth, even when the world tells you otherwise.”

Her book, *The Art of Pride, Presence, and Productivity*, expands on this philosophy.

“It addresses the ‘war within’ – the internal conflict between who we truly are and who we’ve been taught we must be to survive and succeed,” Carriere explains. “It challenges restrictive roles placed on women and introduces a powerful alternative identity that is matriarchal, intuitive, resilient, and rooted in ancestral strength. It teaches people to integrate authenticity with ambition – to be both powerful and professional, rooted and results-driven.”

Carriere also emphasizes the importance of intergenerational mentorship.

“As we grow into elders, we have a responsibility to pass the torch. I want the next generation of innovators and leaders to go further than I ever could,” she says. “Our job is to



Geraldine Carriere is founder of Wild Women Personal & Professional Development.

prepare them to surpass us, to achieve things beyond what we could imagine, and to show what’s possible.”

Art, fashion, and music are additional avenues through which Carriere expresses her vision.

“Fashion is my creative expression. It’s freedom. It allows me to create a world for myself and share that joy with others,” she says. “Music is the same – it’s a gift I’ve finally been able to give myself. It’s not just about me; it’s about all of us celebrating, thriving, and stepping into our Indigenous identity with pride.”

Her first single released in July has been performing strongly on Indigenous radio, and a new album is set for release in February 2026. She also plans to re-release her book this fall, restoring the Indigenous storytelling that had been previously removed.

“We’ve been through so much as Indigenous people,” Carriere reflects. “Now it’s time to be loud, proud, and joyful. The work I do shows people that it’s possible to step into their purpose and embrace their authentic selves. There’s space for all of us, and when we empower and uplift one another, we all rise.”

Carriere offers performances, workshops, keynote speaking, and professional development programs ranging from one-day sessions to month-long courses. For more information [www.linktr.ee/GerCarriereWildWoman](http://www.linktr.ee/GerCarriereWildWoman)

“Everything I’ve done has been for the purpose of showing what’s possible,” she concludes. “I want people to believe in themselves, to celebrate who they are, and to know that thriving, being loud, and being proud is not just for some – it’s for all of us.”

## UBC denialism cont. from p 4

protecting the very graves they claim are impossible. On the UBC campus, Brodie looks at history and sees “propaganda”; in the valley, a settler looks at a grave and sees a financial

liability. Both perspectives share a common root: the belief that the presence of Indigenous dead is an intrusive ‘defect’ in the settler’s world.

The UBC administration has faced heavy backlash from its own news outlet, *The Ubyssy*. A statement from the Indigenous Student Society righteously shames the institution: “We are extremely disappointed in UBC for failing to make any public statement renouncing this group... Indigenous students have a right to access their academic spaces without fearing for their safety.”

Before the event at UBC, OneBC attempted several “protests” at other institutions. The University of Victoria (UVic) and Thompson Rivers University (TRU) both issued public statements declaring the group was not authorized to stage events on their campuses. Dr. Airini, President of TRU, stated that individuals would be instructed they did not have permission to hold the event under the B.C. Trespass Act.

Brodie, however, sees herself as a leader of martyrs. In her request for debate, she claimed her group was met with “harassment, intimidation, and violence.” This claim rings hollow given her history. Brodie was previously removed from the Conservative Party of BC for her denialist

statements and briefly lost leadership of OneBC following a vote of no confidence. It is a bitter irony that Brodie—representing Vancouver-Quilchena, the second-wealthiest riding in the province—stands on the ancestral lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) people to tell survivors their memories are incorrect. Her privilege allows her to treat the ground beneath her feet as a political stage, while for the Musqueam, that same ground is a ledger of stolen lives.

Is it possible for a university to truly commit to “Truth and Reconciliation” while leaving the door open for those who deny the “Truth” part of the equation? A university cannot be a neutral arbiter of facts while hosting those who seek to erase them. By allowing Brodie and others to treat the IRSHDC as a “propaganda outlet,” UBC signaled that the safety of its Indigenous students is secondary to the “academic” comfort of denialists. If Truth and Reconciliation is to be more than a corporate slogan, the institution must recognize that some truths are not up for debate – and that the “bottomless pit of Hell” is not found in the discovery of graves, but in the silence of an institution that refuses to name racism when it arrives at its front door.

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# SACRID Beauty has culture and commerce at its core

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Jacqueline Buffalo of Montana First Nation is part of a growing wave of Indigenous women entrepreneurs across Canada who are building businesses rooted in culture, purpose, and community. A role model, mother, and CEO of SACRID Beauty, Buffalo has created a wellness-centered makeup and apparel brand that blends culture with commerce while empowering women in their everyday lives.

“SACRID Beauty represents intentional living. It’s soft power. It’s choosing yourself without guilt,” Buffalo says. “The essence of the brand is respect – for self, for culture, for spirit, and for community. Our values are rooted in wellness, empowerment, authenticity, and giving back.”

Her journey reflects a broader national trend of Indigenous women leading culturally grounded, economically viable, and socially impactful businesses. Indigenous women now own 23 percent of Indigenous-led businesses, outpacing the rate of business ownership among non-Indigenous women. Yet these entrepreneurs face persistent barriers.

“Recent surveys show that up to 81% of Indigenous women entrepreneurs list access to capital as a major barrier, and are significantly more likely than Indigenous men to report both a lack of microloan options and sexism in the entrepreneurial landscape.” (sac-isc.gc.ca)

Legal restrictions under the Indian Act – including a rule that stops on-reserve assets from being used as collateral – make it especially difficult for Indigenous business owners to secure commercial loans. (atb.com) Many rely on their own resources, with around 63% of Indigenous women entrepreneurs using personal savings as their primary source of start-up capital. (ccib.ca) These systemic and financial challenges are compounded by caregiving responsibilities and limited access to mentorship, especially in remote communities.

“My ideal client is anyone who wants their beauty routine to mean something,” Buffalo says. “SACRID Beauty is for women who are building, healing, mothering, leading, and dreaming.

Beauty, to me, is a form of self-respect.”

Buffalo’s Montana First Nation heritage is deeply embedded in every aspect of the brand. “My culture and spirituality are woven into everything I create. I was raised with the understanding that how you treat yourself reflects how you honour the Creator,” she explains.

That belief shapes her approach to beauty – one that uplifts rather than disconnects women from who they are.

SACRID products reflect this intentionality through thoughtful design, naming, and colour choices. One of the brand’s best-selling lipsticks, Baloney, blends humour with meaning.

“You can see those influences in the intentional colour choices and design. Even the humour – laughter is healing,” Buffalo says. “Nothing about SACRID is rushed or random. Every product and every client is approached with care, meaning, and respect.”

For Buffalo, SACRID Beauty is about far more than cosmetics. “What makes SACRID different is that it’s not about trends or perfection – it’s about purpose. This is a community-driven brand rooted in wellness.”

Beyond products, SACRID offers services such as lash extensions and semi-permanent brows, supporting women who balance professional, personal, and community responsibilities. These services enhance natural beauty while easing the pressure of daily routines.

“I’m not just selling makeup,” Buffalo says. “I’m building something that creates employment, trains women, and supports long-term confidence and independence.”

She envisions SACRID as part of everyday life and ceremony alike.

“Everyday life is sacred. Getting ready in the morning is sacred,” she says. “Whether it’s five minutes in the mirror or preparing for a meaningful event, SACRID becomes part of a per-



SACRID Beauty has culture at its core.

sonal ritual – a reminder to slow down, breathe, and honour yourself.”

Buffalo’s vision extends beyond individual success to collective well-being. “My long-term vision is to employ more people, train more women, and continue building wellness-focused opportunities in my community,” she says. “When women are supported, healed, and confident, entire communities rise with them.”

Through SACRID Beauty, Buffalo demonstrates how Indigenous women can lead businesses that honour culture while thriving economically. From her roots in Montana First Nation to the creation of SACRID Beauty, she is building more than a brand – she is crafting a legacy grounded in culture, community, and empowerment.

To learn more about SACRID Beauty, visit [www.sacridbeauty.ca](http://www.sacridbeauty.ca).



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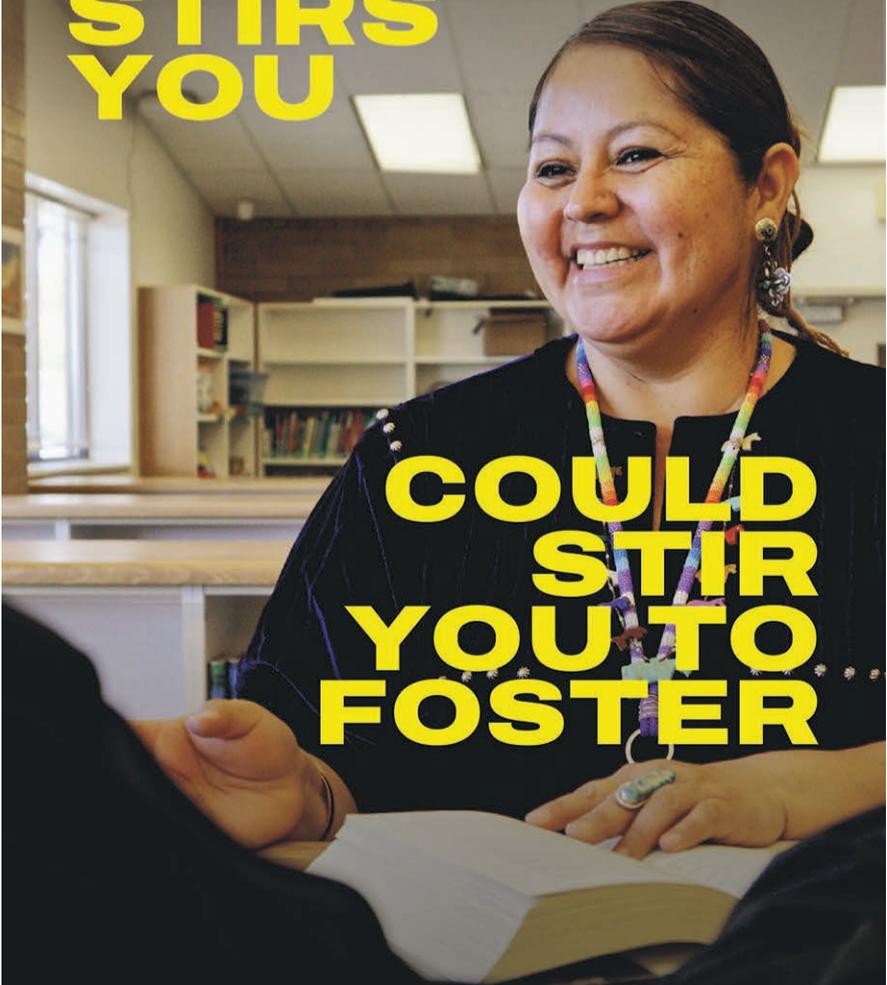
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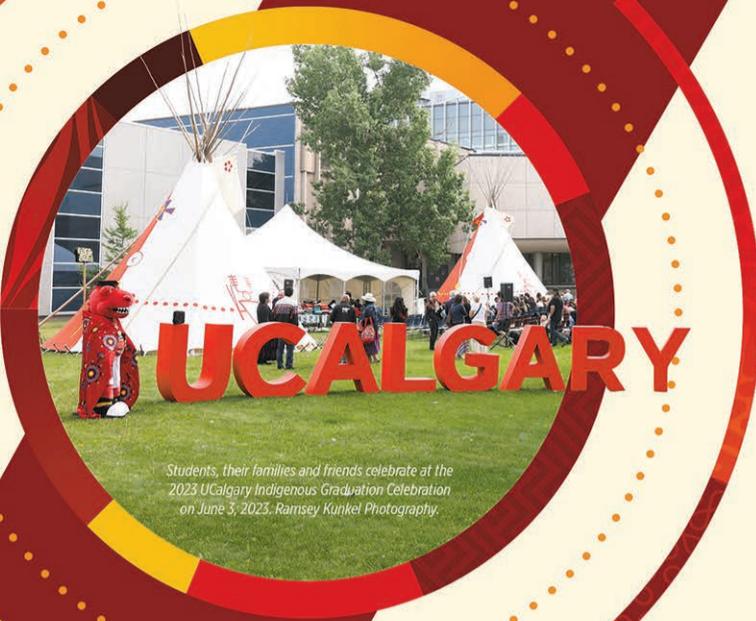
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