

*Distributing across Alberta for over 40 years!*



# ALBERTA NATIVE NEWS

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



# A conversation with dynamic performer Crystle Lightning

By Terry Lusty, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Lights! Camera! Action! Crystle Lightning has entered the room. All quiet on the set please, Annnnd . . . roll 'em!

Now here's a talent you should definitely see.

In 2023 her company, LightningCloud, performed at Edmonton's Expo Centre during K-Days and, honestly, people could not get enough of her live and fiery production called *Bear Grease* (yes, a take-off from the movie, *Grease*).

This dynamic entertainer is not just an actress. She's a mom, a writer, hip-hop DJ, musician, activist and more. She originally hails from and is a First Nation member of the Enoch Cree Nation situated alongside Edmonton, Alberta. At the tender age of nine, her mom packed her down to Los Angeles where she followed her footsteps in the film industry. Her mom, Georgina, was working as an actress and filmmaker while Crystle was growing up.

Now residing back in Alberta, Crystle's been a veritable busy-body. Her track record is already quite the read. She's had parts in countless television productions, many big screen films and rubbed shoulders with numerous stars.

But her true admiration is for individuals like actress Halle Berry, a person of colour who found the wherewithal to rise above and gain stardom. And Angelina Jolie, who demonstrated toughness. "She played these really tough parts; I always wanted to do that," she explained. As a youngster, women like them lent her inspiration. So did successful Indigenous actors, people like her own mom as well as her acting teacher "Graham Greene, Michelle Thrush, Wes Studi, all the Indigenous actors in the industry who paved the way...actors that were before me."

She went on to explain; "Wes Studi is a very close friend of my mom." She even went to his wedding.

Then there's Adam Beach. When he hit the big screen, all the girls in Native country went gaga over him. "My mom used to coach Adam Beach. When I was a kid, he used to come over to our house," she stated.

Live theatre and films result in a lot of roadwork, lots of travelling. She's been to many states and provinces. "Washington, New Mexico, California, Utah, Montana, Florida, Colorado, Arizona, Nova Scotia to British Columbia...coast to coast to coast," she explained.

She's performed in casinos, theaters, Native communities, she added. All over the map.

"Our best reception in Canada was Winnipeg," she stressed, "they went crazy... that stands out."

Next best was Regina... and then Edmonton.

She's had roles in productions like *Yellowstone*, *Diggstown*, *Outlander*, and many more. Her role as Maggie Moody in *Trickster* won her a Canadian Screen Award for Best Actress in a Drama Series in 2021. That certainly was special.

However, she said, New York was absolutely amazing. Getting to perform in the iconic Times Square, now that was a real treat. "I'll never forget performing on Broadway, right in the middle of Times Square!" she chirped.

When questioned about having any regrets, she said, "No, none... Everything that happens in life is supposed to happen that way. I really believe that."

Crystle embraces the notion that "everything happens for a reason." She further explained that when something you wish for doesn't happen, it is sometimes replaced by something else, that



Actress / musician Crystle Lightning dazzles her audience with every performance.

does work out for you. Things have a way of working themselves out. For example, "You may miss out on a (movie) role, but there are other roles." Maybe you'll land an even better one. Now that's what you could rightly refer to as having a positive outlook.

Crystle recently spent some time at home resting up, keeping busy with housework in a relatively new house she took over, as well as writing material for a new production. Tentatively, the working title for it is, *Rez Side Story*. It's sort of a take-off from that famous musical, *West Side Story*. Hey, I think that could turn out to be quite entertaining and thought provoking. Keep that in mind readers.

It's always interesting to hear one's take on balancing life and work. "We keep so busy and things are never dull or boring." When issues arise, one just needs to carry on. She says: "When you fall, get up, motor on; you've gotta work hard. Never lose faith or hope."

As a parting shot, her advice is: "Your dream is not going to come knocking on your door, you've got to chase after it."

## GREAT FAMILY ADVENTURE RAFFLE

**TICKETS**  
\$100 EACH OR  
3 FOR \$250

**DRAW DATE:**  
JUNE 5, 2026

<p><b>1st Prize:</b> 2026 Sea-Doo Switch Cruise 21' 300 HP</p> 	<p><b>2nd Prize:</b> 2026 Sea-Doo Wake Pro 230 PWC</p> 	<p><b>3rd Prize:</b> 2026 CAN-AM Outlander MAX XT 700</p> 
--	--	---

Raffle License #766115

SCAN HERE TO PURCHASE TICKETS!



It's the Great Family Adventure Raffle, where every ticket sold helps support Alberta's foster and kinship caregivers – the people raising children through some of life's hardest circumstances.



sponsored by




# FNBC

First Nations Bank of Canada

We do the financial part of Nation Building.

Learn more at [www.fnbc.ca](http://www.fnbc.ca)



# Calgary designer builds fashion brand grounded in cultural resurgence

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At 41, Calgary-based Indigenous fashion designer Stephanie Gamble is building a career that bridges fashion, cultural expression, and community healing, shaped by her identity as a Plains Cree woman and a life marked by foster care, intergenerational trauma, and recovery.

“My Indigenous name is Thundering Thunderbird Woman. I am the daughter of Doris Ben and James Gamble, and the granddaughter of Edna Ben and Joe Bear of Makwa Sahgaiechan, Saskatchewan, and Violet and Arsene Gamble of Beary’s and Okemasis,” she said.

Gamble says her identity is grounded in purpose and a deep responsibility to community. “My identity as a Plains Cree woman shaped me by gifting me strength and determination, the ability to rise, rebuild, and keep going. Even challenges become my power.”

She points to her family’s teachings as foundational to who she is today. “My grandparents would take in people in need, feed them, or help them in any way they could,” she said. “They relied on Creator to get through anything.”

She adds that creativity and resilience run through her lineage, shaping her artistic path.

Her earliest relationship with fashion began in childhood, where she experimented with design and self-expression. “I was sketching designs in school, making Barbie clothes, dressing up, braiding colourful thread in my hair, and even dyeing my hair with Kool-Aid.”

But her path changed after becoming a young mother and confronting the realities of trauma and instability. “I went through so much growing up. I became a young mom, and I knew I needed to heal. I needed to break cycles of intergenerational trauma, poverty, and instability, and give my children a different life.”

That decision became the foundation for C. Lysias Designs, her fashion and wellness brand rooted in identity, healing, and self-acceptance.

For Gamble, fashion became a way to survive and transform experience into expression. “Fashion can be a form of healing. It’s a way to tell our stories and convey our messages to the world. It’s a way to transmute emotions into art and beauty, and take our power back.”

She describes her work as deeply connected to cultural reclamation. “Every garment has trauma woven into the seams. Every stitch tells a story of overcoming adversity. It’s a voice for everything I couldn’t say before.”

Her collections often draw from Cree language and teachings, including Iskotew (fire), Wicihitowin (unity), and Miyoskamin (spring and renewal). “I am learning my language as I go, and I am proud to teach my children and grandchild,” she said.

Entirely self-taught, Gamble says she developed her craft without formal training. “I taught myself how to sew. I didn’t go to school for it. Everything I create is from scratch – I just take fabric and build the pattern myself.”

Motherhood became a turning point in her life. “I made a lot of sacrifices to move into sobriety, stability, and better choices. I just needed to give my children the life I never had.”

Over time, her personal healing expanded outward into community work. “When I started sharing my story, people began coming to me and sharing theirs. It just grew from there.”

She now runs workshops in ribbon skirt making, moccasin making, and beadwork, focused on cultural reconnection and healing for youth. “I want to create safe spaces where young people can come in, learn these skills, and heal through them.”

Mental health awareness is also part of her message. “I was a very suicidal teen growing up because of trauma,” she said. “I want young

people to know that’s not where their story ends. There is hope. Life is worth living.”

Faith continues to anchor her. “I pray morning, evening, all the time. I’m so connected to Creator that it keeps me grounded no matter what I go through.”

Through Fashion With a Passion, Gamble has partnered with Child and Family Services to create cultural regalia and powwow kits for children in care – work she describes as personal healing as well as community responsibility.

“I heal my inner child by helping them as well.” She also works as a Program Support Officer with the Indigenous Business Corporation, supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs in business development and access to funding.

Her work has gained recognition in Calgary’s fashion community, including being named one of *Avenue Calgary’s Best Dressed* and participating in multiple Indigenous fashion



Stephanie Gamble's positive message is part of her C. Lysias Designs, fashion brand.

showcases and collaborations.

One of her most significant upcoming milestones is international. Gamble has been accepted to travel to Tokyo, Japan in June, where

Continued on page 4

## The Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC) 3rd Annual Red Dress Powwow – Calgary Honouring MMEIP Through Culture, Ceremony, and Community

A powerful evening dedicated to honouring our Missing, Murdered, and Exploited Indigenous Peoples (MMEIP) through song, dance, and shared connection.

Friday, May 8, 2026

Big Four Roadhouse – 1410 Olympic Way SE, Calgary

Doors Open: 5:00 PM | Grand Entry: 6:00 PM | Ends: 10:00 PM

FREE Admission – All are Welcome

### Special Guests & Features:

- National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak
- Live performance by Juno Award-winning Inuk artist Susan Aglukark
- Special Honouring Ceremony for Josie Nepinak, President of the Native Women’s Association of Canada



Together, we will uplift voices, honour lives, and strengthen community through culture and ceremony.

### Call for Sponsors

We are currently seeking sponsors to support this important event. Your partnership helps create a safe, culturally grounded space for healing and awareness.

To sponsor or learn more: [info@afccalgary.org](mailto:info@afccalgary.org)  
Sponsorship deadline: May 6, 2026.



Learn more: [www.afccalgary.org](http://www.afccalgary.org)

403-270-7379

Mon-Fri: 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Scan me for more info



# Alberta's healthcare hinges on function, not structure

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dr. Arika Lafontaine, a rural anesthesiologist in Grande Prairie and former president of the Canadian Medical Association, says Alberta's healthcare challenges are not rooted in a single policy or structural fix, but in how the system functions day to day – and whether it is designed around patient outcomes.

Lafontaine says ongoing debates about restructuring Alberta's healthcare system often miss the central issue: how care actually functions once patients enter the system.

He noted that governments have repeatedly attempted large-scale reforms, including moving from regional health authorities toward centralized, province-wide models. Alberta, he pointed out, was an early adopter of this approach.

"Governments have consistently tried to move from multiple different regions that manage healthcare... into these pan-provincial systems," he said.

While acknowledging Alberta Health Services had early challenges, he added that it also delivered long periods of stability.

"Alberta Health Services in its early years had some stumbles, but ended up for a long period of time actually working pretty well," Lafontaine said.

He added that concerns about efficiency and responsiveness in large systems are not unfounded. "Every system at some point doesn't function in the way that it should," he said, noting that concerns about slower decision-making and difficulty implementing change in large organizations were "probably reasonable."

However, he cautioned that simply breaking systems into smaller pieces does not automatically fix underlying problems.

"Just breaking it down into smaller chunks

doesn't necessarily solve the core problem of how it actually functions differently, right?" he said.

He added that real improvement depends on internal change rather than structural reshuffling alone. "There's a lot of work that has to go into culture change and having people focus on different outcomes," Lafontaine said.

He also stressed that structure alone does not determine patient experience or outcomes. "Changing the structure doesn't automatically change how care is delivered," he added.

Lafontaine says one of the biggest barriers to improving healthcare performance is an overemphasis on reducing costs rather than improving care quality.

"I think one of the biggest challenges with utilizing the healthcare budget effectively, ironically, is actually the fixation on lower costs," he said.

He argued that cost reduction should be a byproduct of better care – not the primary goal. "Lower costs are probably a secondary outcome of people receiving high-quality care," Lafontaine said.

He added that when systems focus too heavily on financial targets, it can distort decision-making. "If the whole focus remains on how to lower the budget, I think that we'll be disappointed when we look at this whole exercise five years from now," he warned.

To illustrate inefficiencies in the system, Lafontaine pointed to patient experiences where inadequate assessment leads to repeated visits and unnecessary strain.

"If you go and receive care in an emergency room and you don't get properly assessed... and then you have to return two, three times before finally convincing your provider that there's an issue that should be investigated," he said, "that's an extra two visits across the healthcare system."

He noted that inefficiencies extend beyond system strain and directly affect patients' lives.

"There's the extra days of work that you have to take off. There's the ongoing stress and frustration that you have with the healthcare system,"



Dr. Arika Lafontaine

Lafontaine said.

He also emphasized that repeated, avoidable visits represent both wasted resources and delayed care for others in need. "That delay doesn't just affect one patient – it ripples through the system," he added.

Rather than focusing narrowly on cost reduction, Lafontaine says Alberta should prioritize shortening the time between when a health issue is identified and when it is resolved.

"The way to utilize the healthcare budget most effectively is to try and figure out how to shorten the points between having the problem and having it fixed within healthcare," he said.

He believes improving flow through the system would naturally reduce unnecessary demand and repeated visits. "If people receive high-quality care the first time, they don't need to come back repeatedly for the same issue," he said.

He added that meaningful reform requires focusing on outcomes rather than inputs. "We'll lower costs by providing high-quality care in ways that have patients not have to see people repeatedly for care that doesn't make a difference," Lafontaine said.

He warned that overly narrow cost-cutting approaches risk undermining long-term improvements. "If the whole focus remains on how to lower the budget, I think that we'll be disappointed," he said.

Across his analysis, Lafontaine returns to a central theme: healthcare reform must move beyond organizational design and focus on culture, outcomes, and patient experience.

For him, the core question is not how Alberta organizes its healthcare system – but how effectively it delivers care once patients are inside it.

## Find your path

Open House | April 28, 2–6pm

See where NorQuest can take you. Discover programs with hands-on training and real work experience, designed to get you career ready.

Register today

[norquest.ca/openhouse](https://norquest.ca/openhouse)

 **NORQUEST COLLEGE**



## Calgary designer cont. from p 3

she will present a 10-piece collection with 10 Indigenous models as part of a cultural fashion exchange.

She is scheduled to be in Tokyo on June 18 and 19, where she plans to create a cultural exchange through fashion.

"I'm an independent fashion designer in Tokyo, Japan. My goal is to have a cultural market exchange, present my 10-piece collection, bring 10 Indigenous models, and do a photo shoot in downtown Tokyo with my team and Indigenous business."

She says the goal is visibility, exchange, and global storytelling. "I want to bring Indigenous fashion to a global stage and share who we are through what we create."

Looking ahead, Gamble hopes to establish a nonprofit focused on healing through the arts, creating space for youth in fashion, music, and creative expression. "I have a vision of Indigenous fashion houses, runways, and institutions led by our own people. I see youth walking in confidence, grounded in who they are and where they come from."

Despite her growing career, she says her foundation remains unchanged. "I stay grounded through prayer. Everything else can be taken away, but that connection cannot."

Connect with Stephanie Gamble on Social Media: Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/c.lysiasdesigns/>;

Brand: C. Lysias Designs / Fashion With a Passion.

## Shaping the future through education

Zachary Gauchier worked as a line cook for nearly nine years before realizing it was time for a change. Taking a chance, he applied to Northern Lakes College with a simple plan: “I didn’t put pressure on myself, I just thought, maybe if I just apply to college and get accepted, I’ll go to college. If not, then I’ll keep working as a cook.” While the thought process made taking the leap less intense, Zachary committed fully once accepted into the Computer Networking Specialist program, and it changed everything.

As a mature student and a dedicated father, Zachary knew he needed to focus in order to succeed. He made the decision not to work while studying so he could fully dedicate himself to the program. That commitment, combined with strong support at home and at school, made all the difference. “My better half, Julie, supported me wholeheartedly. Like, 200% support,” he says. “That’s why I was able to do so well, because I had very good support both at home, and through my program instructors.” Northern Lakes College’s online program delivery techniques also played a key role in his success. “I was able to achieve honours in my program because I could go back and rewatch the instructor... I’d watch a video like three times to make sure I really understood the concepts,” he explains.

After graduating in 2023, Zachary quickly moved into the field, working as a field service technician in Indigenous communities. “I was boots on the ground in each Indigenous surrounding community,” he says, installing internet services and gaining hands-on experience with evolving technologies such as 5G and LTE networks. That experience led him to his current role as IT Director for Peavine Métis Settlement – something he hadn’t originally imagined. “My very first goal was just to get a job as an IT person. I didn’t imagine that my education could take me this far!”

Now, Zachary is focused on using his role to support his community in meaningful ways. As the first IT specialist in his settlement, he is helping shape decisions while exploring bigger questions around data sovereignty. “I realized I could help my Indigenous community members, the Métis people themselves, by sharing my knowledge around these quickly evolving technologies,” he says. His work is already starting important conversations around technological accessibility and data sovereignty, and Zachary has recently created a paper capturing the details about these issues and how they relate to Indigenous community building, a

project he updates frequently alongside technological and legal changes and shares freely with others.

“Every time I share (the paper) with another Indigenous member or First Nation, they tell me something like, ‘oh, that’s happening in my community.’ My goal is to open discussions about this issue. I find it very fun, and I find it very rewarding.”

Reflecting on how far he’s come, Zachary is most motivated by the impact his work can have beyond himself. Now in a position to shape the future of technology in his community, he sees opportunity where there were once gaps. “Through my education, I can help my Indigenous community members, the Métis people themselves.”



NLC alumnus Zachary Gauchier

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)



# SUPPORTED DISTANCE LEARNING

Flexible educational opportunities allow our students to balance work and family and to access their classes from anywhere.\*

*What's stopping you?*

**CONTACT US!**

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



**APPLY FOR A CREDIT PROGRAM** on Wednesday, May 13 and we'll waive the \$50 application fee.

*\*Requires internet access. Some Supported Distance Learning programs have onsite components.*



**VIEW OUR PROGRAMS**

## YOU BELONG AT CALGARY PUBLIC LIBRARY



Get a free Library card - FREE for all residents of Calgary and surrounding Indigenous communities.

- Indigenous Services
- Programs
- Books and eResources
- Events
- Arts and Culture
- And more!

[calgarylibrary.ca/join](http://calgarylibrary.ca/join)



# Indigenous groups criticize Canada-Alberta draft co-operation agreement

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Several First Nations and Metis groups have joined Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation (SLCN) in voicing their opposition to the draft co-operation agreement between Prime Minister Mark Carney and Premier Danielle Smith that critics argue weakens environmental oversight of major infrastructure projects.

Public submissions to the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada include letters from the SLCN, the Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations and First Nations Major Projects Coalition, as well as the Athabasca Chipewyan, Cold Lake, Duncan's, Frog Lake, Mikisew, Montana and O'Chiese First Nations.

The Fort McMurray Metis Nation, which is a member of the Otipemisiwak Metis Government, and the Lac La Biche-based Lakeland Metis Nation, which is not, also made submissions.

The draft co-operation agreement aims to introduce a "streamlined assessment approach that defers, whenever possible, to provincial processes for projects and activities that primarily fall within Alberta's exclusive legislative jurisdiction."

"When a proposed project is primarily within provincial jurisdiction, Canada will recognize Alberta as best placed to consult with Indigenous Peoples," reads section 7(1) of the draft agreement.

For projects that are built on federal land, Carney pledged to incorporate "Alberta's environmental assessment and regulatory process

requirements into the federal assessment," with a maximum timeline of two years for reaching a decision.

In March, SLCN Chief Sheldon Sunshine wrote a letter to Carney calling the prime minister's tentative agreement with Smith, which builds on their November 2025 memorandum of understanding, a "dangerous mistake" that represents "appeasement" of Smith's "separatist agenda."

The Canadian government has co-operation agreements for environmental reviews with Ontario, B.C. and New Brunswick, but Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations Grand Chief Joey Pete argues that the draft agreement with Alberta "is more concerning in several important respects, especially on consultation, clarity, and accountability."

"Alberta's confidence in its own system cannot be the measure of whether federal responsibilities have been met where Treaty rights and matters within federal jurisdiction remain engaged," wrote Pete in a March 27 submission to the Impact Assessment Agency.

"Alberta's own consultation and regulatory systems remain a serious concern for many First Nations, especially on environmental protection, cumulative effects and the practical consideration of Treaty rights."

On April 3, *Canada's National Observer* reported that Environment Alberta is exempting celebrity businessman Kevin O'Leary's proposed



Riders © by Linus Woods is available for purchase at [wakinagallery.com](http://wakinagallery.com).

"Wonder Valley" data centre on Treaty 8 land from an environmental review, despite the amount of water and natural gas its proponents plan to use.

For the proposed Pathways carbon capture and storage hub, also slated for Treaty 8 territory, the Alberta Energy Regulator allowed the Oil Sands Alliance (formerly Pathways Alliance) to submit more than 100 separate applications for each part of the project, enabling its proponents to circumvent a full environmental review.

"In summary, the Confederacy does not oppose coordination between governments. What we oppose is an agreement that risks turning coordination into reduced federal accountability," wrote Pete.

In its March 27 submission, the First Nations Major Projects Coalition (FNMPC) notes that Alberta isn't itself a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which the Canadian government signed into law in 2021.

UNDRIP refers repeatedly to the right to "free, prior and informed consent" (FPIC) for projects on Indigenous lands.

The draft agreement refers to Canada's support for UNDRIP as "non-binding."

When Canada is considering using provincial processes, the federal commitment to UNDRIP must be considered alongside the constitutional and procedural requirements of the Crown's duty to consult," wrote coalition VP of environmental services, Riannon Ball.

The FNMPC board includes former Fort Nelson First Nation chief Sharleen Gale, Cold Lake First Nations Chief Kelsey Jacko, Gameti Chief Doreen Arrowmaker and Gitksan Nation Hereditary Chief Aluuxw Robert Blackstock.

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in Treaty 8 argues in its March 25 submission that the draft agreement "departs from constitutional norms by elevating provincial primacy, constraining federal discretion, and weakening protections for Indigenous rights"

"A regulatory approach focused on consolidation, substitution, and administrative efficiency risks prioritizing speed and uniformity over the substantive, rights-based engagement that FPIC requires," wrote Athabasca Chipewyan's executive director of Dene lands and resource management Lori Cyprien.

Fort McMurray Metis Nation warned that "this draft agreement risks eliminating the federal role in regulatory and impact assessment projects in Alberta almost entirely."

"It is totally inadequate for Canada to hand over jurisdiction and authority for these matters on Alberta's word and without meaningful oversight and accountability," reads the community's March 27 letter to the Impact Assessment Agency.

Lakeland Metis Nation president Linda Power wrote on March 25 that the provincial regulatory framework is "often structured around regulatory efficiency and may not fully reflect federal obligations to Indigenous peoples."

**BEN CALF ROBE TRADITIONAL POW WOW**  
 Saturday, May 9, 2026  
 Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre — Indoor Field House | 11000 Stadium Road NW

**Prayers FOR Peace**  
 NITOTAMÂTÂN PĒYÂHTAKĒYIMOWIN

ANCESTORS | MOON | RAIN | WIND | SUN | MOTHER | FATHER | CHILDREN | STARS

**Pipe Ceremony ..... 9:00 AM**  
**Grand Entry ..... 1:00 PM**  
**Closing ..... 9:00 PM**

**Registration opens at 10:00 AM**  
*Only the FIRST 8 Drum Groups registered will be paid*

**EMCEES**  
 HAL EAGLETAIL — TSUUT'INA NATION, ALBERTA  
 ELMER RATTLESNAKE — MOUNTAIN CREE CAMP, ALBERTA

**ARENA DIRECTORS**  
 LLOYD CARDINAL & GEORGE DESJARLAIS

**HOST DRUM GROUP**  
 BLACKSTONE SINGERS

FREE admission and parking | Close to the LRT | Crafts and concession on-site  
 BRING YOUR OWN CHAIRS AND WATER BOTTLES | ALL ARE WELCOME! BRING A FRIEND  
 SECURITY ON-SITE AT ALL TIMES | RANDOM SECURITY CHECKS  
 BAGS AND STROLLERS MUST BE CHECKED | NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

FOR MORE INFORMATION: contact Betty Letendre at [elizabeth.letendre.ta@ecsd.net](mailto:elizabeth.letendre.ta@ecsd.net) or Michelle Tidridge at [michelle.tidridge.ta@ecsd.net](mailto:michelle.tidridge.ta@ecsd.net)

Edmonton Catholic Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools Student Services, and all other partners are not responsible or liable for any injuries that may occur or for any lost or stolen property during this event. Parents and guardians are solely responsible for the supervision of their children.



Treaty Chiefs, citizens and allies gathered in downtown Edmonton for a Defend the Treaties Rally while lawyers for First Nations argued in court against Separation. Photo by Paula Kirman.

## Court grants stay in counting separatism petition signature

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Court of King’s Bench has ordered the chief electoral officer not to count signatures for a separatist referendum petition until the court decides whether the petition was properly initiated.

Justice Shaina Leonard issued her ruling in favour of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) and the Blackfoot Confederacy’s request for a stay in the counting of petition signatures on April 10, the day after arguments wrapped up in the First Nations’ application for judicial review.

Leonard emphasized that separatist organization Stay Free Alberta can continue collecting signatures for its referendum petition and that her “decision has no impact whatsoever” on its May 2 deadline.

“Specifically, the Chief Electoral Officer shall not certify the petition results or make a referral to the Minister of Justice until the Court has ruled on the Application by ACFN and the Blackfoot Nation,” she wrote.

According to Stay Free Alberta, the organization behind the petition drive, they’ve already amassed the approximately 178,000 signatures required to initiate a referendum.

ACFN and the Kainai, Piikani and Siksika bands of the Blackfoot Confederacy named the provincial Crown, chief electoral officer Gordon McClure and Stay Free Alberta CEO Mitch Sylvestre as respondents in their lawsuits, with their arguments heard on April 8 and 9.

“While Ottawa sleeps, Alberta’s first inhabitants are doing everything we can to save confederation,” said ACFN Chief Allan in an April 10 news release welcoming Leonard’s decision.

“We shall never allow our Treaties to be broken, and we will never bend the knee to foreign tyrants or their useful idiots.”

Separatist leaders have met with U.S. State Department officials three times to request support from U.S. President Donald Trump, who has advocated annexing Canada, U.K. newspaper the *Financial Times* reported in January.

Among them was lawyer Jeffrey Rath, who represented Sylvestre in court this week. Rath told right-wing YouTuber Rachel Parker in March 2025 that he would like to see Alberta become a U.S. territory.

Chief Adam emphasized in his statement that ACFN is fighting for “all Albertans, especially children and youth, who deserve to grow up in a country that respects the rule of law and recognizes the supremacy of the constitution.”

Earlier in the week, the court heard from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation (SLCN), which named the provincial government, federal government and McClure as respondents in their case, which is unrelated to Leonard’s Friday ruling.

SLCN is seeking an injunction against the section of the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, or

Bill 14, passed by the provincial government in December, which removes a prohibition on unconstitutional citizen initiatives from the Citizen Initiative Act.

The legislation received royal assent after Court of King’s Bench Justice Colin Feasby ruled that the separatists’ first effort at collecting signatures for an independence referendum couldn’t proceed because of the Citizen Initiative Act’s provision prohibiting initiatives that could violate constitutional rights.

As a result of Bill 14, McClure approved a second separatist referendum petition with a slightly reworded question.

The ACFN and Blackfoot nations’ lawyers argued that as a representative of the Crown, McClure had a duty to consult with First Nations prior to approving the petition, since the court had already determined that an independence referendum would put their Treaty rights at risk.

The provincial government and Sylvestre’s lawyers each argued that First Nations’ Treaty rights aren’t at risk through the collection of signatures.

Orlagh O’Kelly, SLCN’s lawyer, said in a statement that she and her client are “delighted” that Justice Leonard imposed a “limited pause to consider this momentous case on its merits.”

“We’re looking forward to the court’s final decision on this harmful process, set in motion by Alberta without any authority under our Treaty,” added SLCN Chief Sheldon Sunshine in the same statement.

“We also expect Alberta will follow this court order and not move the goal posts on us while the court deliberates.”

In order to obtain a stay, the First Nations’

lawyers had to demonstrate that a failure to do so would cause “irreparable harm” to their clients. They argued that this harm would primarily take the form of an erosion of Treaty rights.

Justice Leonard emphasized that she wasn’t yet ruling on whether the Crown, as represented by the province, had a duty to consult at this stage in the petition process.

However, Leonard ruled that the First Nations “have provided evidence of harm from lack of consultation and harm to Treaty relationships.”

She agreed that failure to grant a stay would inconvenience First Nations more than granting it would inconvenience the respondents.

“The alleged harm is irreparable and ongoing. In contrast, the Stay sought is for a short time” and only goes into effect once the petition signatures are submitted to the chief electoral officer, wrote Leonard.

In an interview with the *Canadian Press*, Sylvestre’s lawyer Jeffrey Rath questioned how quickly Leonard reached her decision, noting that it came less than 24 hours after three days of arguments concluded.

“I suspect that it’s just going to motivate our volunteer base and our canvassers and Albertans even more to get out and sign the petition,” said Rath.

Leonard said she intends on having a decision on whether the chief electoral officer acted appropriately in permitting the referendum petition within the next month.

“All parties who have participated in this matter, and the public, are entitled to have this process completed as expeditiously as possible,” she wrote.



**WATERSTONE**  
UNDERGROUND SOLUTIONS

**UNDERGROUND INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTIONS BUILT ON EXPERIENCE**

Delivering water and wastewater systems from concept through completion

Phone: (780) 447-2222  
16910 129 Ave NW,  
Edmonton AB



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



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

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

Volume 43, Number 04, April 2026

ISSN #08294135

www.albertanativenews.com

EDITOR: Deborah Shatz

ADVERTISING:
Dan Moser 780-421-7966

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

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

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



# First Nations rally in Edmonton against separatist petition

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

First Nations chiefs from Treaties 6, 7 and 8 spoke at an April 8 rally in Edmonton's Churchill Square, across the street from the courthouse where lawyers for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) and the Blackfoot Confederacy were attempting to halt the collection of signatures for an independence referendum.

"We gather here today in the heart of Treaty land to raise one message so loud, so clear that no government, no institution and no power can ignore it," said Chief Sheldon Sunshine of Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, whose lawyer made arguments against the separatist petition in court the previous day.

"The Treaties are alive, the nations who signed them are still here. They're still strong."

ACFN Chief Allan Adam told attendees that the reason why the Canadian government "sits there and does nothing" as Alberta's government empowers the separatist movement is that First Nations are the "true government ... of this land."

"Canada and Alberta are only corporations to work with us," Adam said. "They have no right to determine where we're going or what we're going to do as First Nations people. We determine where we're going, where we live, and what we do on a day-to-day basis, because we determine this is our homeland for now and forever."

The separatist movement represents a "group of individuals" who want to "extract the resources" without constraints, he added.

"The resources are protected by environmental laws. Those environmental laws are protected by aboriginal laws," said Adam. "In order to exploit the natural resources, they have to go through us."

He warned attendees not to "be tricked" by the appearance that the provincial and federal governments are in conflict.

"Canada is with them. They don't say it, but they go hand in hand," Adam said.

The three Blackfoot nations joining ACFN in asking the Court of King's Bench to order a pause in the collection of separatist petition signatures are the Piikani, Siksika and Kainai bands.

Piikani Chief Troy Knowlton, who serves as the president of the Blackfoot Confederacy, met with

Premier Danielle Smith and some cabinet ministers on April 7.

"I was able to tell her face to face, your separatism agenda is nothing more than political fantasy," Knowlton told rally-goers.

"You allow the white supremacist racists and bigots to be able to come out of their homes and yell and scream, 'I don't like First Nations. I don't like immigrants, I don't like Blacks.' She sat there with her head down as I told her this."

The UCP government's neglect of Treaty rights means that "First Nations are united more than ever in our existence," he added.

Confederacy of Treaty 6 First Nations Grand Chief Joey Pete said that he often reflects on the "roads I drive on, the concrete I stand on, but what's under that?"

"That's our land," he said to applause. "When you're out there hunting, fishing, doing ceremony, everything, when you connect back to the land, you are the land."

The rally was attended by local NDP MLAs Brooks Arcand-Paul, Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse, Janis Irwin and David Shepherd, as well as former NDP MP Blake Desjarlais, who now serves as Mayor Andrew Knack's chief of staff, and former deputy premier Thomas Lukaszuk.

Arcand-Paul, a lawyer from Alexander First Nation, told reporters that Premier Smith needs to be beyond meeting with chiefs and actually address the substance of their concerns.

He noted that Alberta Environment is planning on exempting celebrity businessman Kevin O'Leary's AI data centre proposed for SLCN's traditional lands from an environmental review, despite concerns Chief Sunshine has expressed about its impact on nearby Little Smoky River.

"[First Nations] are constantly going to the courts because this government does not listen to our chiefs," said Arcand-Paul.

Calahoo Stonehouse, a former band councillor for Michel First Nation, said that the rally represented a "movement of love."

"It's love for the land, love for the water, love for the people, love for our province and love for this country," she said.

Catch the Magic Castledowns Bingo Association
12222 - 137 Avenue, Edmonton, AB
780-457-4670
Start Times:
Afternoon: 12:00pm • Evening: 6:00pm
Late-Night: 10:05pm
Our Pots:
Loonie Pot 1 • Loonie Pot 2
Full Card Insurance • Odd/Even
• Double Action • Crazy C • Houdini (Late-Night)
Tuesday is Half-Price,
Wednesday is Player and Guest of the Week!
Last Saturday of every month
is our Bonanza Month-End Special!
Play the Starburst to win a \$100 Ticket!
Ticket for our \$20,000.00 Bonanza Blitz.
The next Blitz will take place
on July 3, 2026.
Tickets are on sale 4 weeks prior
to the day of the event.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM
Alberta Native News
#206, 8944 182 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5T 2E3
Name \_\_\_\_\_
Address \_\_\_\_\_
Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_
SUBSCRIPTIONS
\$67.20 per year
\$116.55 for two years
(includes GST)
U.S. SUBSCRIPTIONS
\$86.25 per year
\$161.00 for two years
(no GST)
NOW

Soapstone Carving for Sale
"Polar Bear" original soapstone carving by Anthony Antoine.
Measures 9" in length, 4" in height and weighs 5 lbs.
Available for purchase at wakinagallery.com

# Keegan Starlight on art, identity, and public legacy

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

When the Calgary Flames approached Keegan Starlight in late 2025 about an Indigenous Celebration logo and jersey project, he says the opportunity felt both unexpected and deeply personal.

For Starlight, a lifelong Flames fan, the collaboration connected professional recognition with personal history.

“I’ve been a Flames fan since I was a kid and my whole family has watched the Flames games, you know, forever. So, it was awesome.”

But beyond the NHL connection, he says the project carried a broader responsibility: how to represent Indigenous communities in a way that felt inclusive and non-restrictive.

Starlight says his relationship with art began early, long before he understood it as a career path. “My journey as an artist has really developed over the past 20 years,” he says. “I think it started when I was really young – around Grade 3.”

He explains that, at the time, he struggled with focus and restlessness and had not yet been fully diagnosed with ADHD. “I had a hard time focusing and sitting still. The only thing that really helped me was art.”

Art, he says, became a way to create structure and control. “It gave me a way to sit down, focus, and take control of something for once. That’s really where it all began for me.”

Starlight describes his upbringing as deeply traditional, shaped by ceremony, land-based living, and family teachings that continue to guide his work. He also recalls a childhood rooted in land-based practices. Those experiences, he explains, shaped his approach to discipline and work.

He and his brothers and sisters were raised to be hard working. A lesson from his father continues to guide his practice today.

“Don’t half-ass things, right? Just make sure that you’re doing it to the full of your extent, even if it’s not perfect. Just keep on working at it.”

He adds that his understanding of discipline was shaped by both tradition and education. “And my dad had a huge impact on how I was in terms of dedication.”

Starlight says his artistic style has changed significantly over the years, beginning with illustration and comic-inspired drawing. He later moved into portrait work, where he explored ideas around identity and spirit.

The old saying, ‘don’t take a picture of me, you’re stealing my soul’ resonated with him. “So I wanted to turn it on its side and be like, I’m giving the soul back to the individual by doing portraits and, you know, giving my spirit back to them.”

He continued that work into his mid-20s before shifting direction. That shift led him toward painting, particularly animals and land-based imagery. “So then I started getting into painting, and I started doing more of animals, you know, really trying to bring the spiritual side, the connection of the land into the painting.”

Over time, he developed a multidisciplinary practice spanning illustration, portraiture, landscapes, still life, and animation. “That was my thing – trying not to stay backed into a corner. I like to have a bunch of options in terms of being an artist.”

In recent years, Starlight’s work has entered major public spaces across Calgary, including a large installation at the BMO Centre. That stunning image also appears on the cover of this month’s *Alberta Native News*. “It’s kind of surreal,” he says. “Growing up, I always wished that I could have my artwork even just viewed for a day.”

Seeing his work integrated into public spaces, he says, remains emotionally significant.

“Sometimes I have to kind of sit back and take it all in, but I’m very honoured at the same time.”

With the Calgary Flames Indigenous Celebration project, Starlight says the design process required balance – both visually and culturally. He explains that blending the Flames’ identity with his own artistic language came naturally in some ways.

“It was a pretty easy blend. A lot of our colours that we use within our outfits and our designs are fire colors, right?”

At the same time, incorporating additional tones and visual elements required refinement. “Trying to blend the other colours, like the pinks and the teals and everything, was a bit more of a challenge, but it worked. It told the story quite well.”

He says the collaboration process itself was straightforward. “As soon as I gave them the first design, they loved it. They had a few minor things that they wanted to change, but there wasn’t much. They were really easy to work with.”

For Starlight, the broader goal of the work is not to impose meaning, but to encourage engagement. “I want to inspire people. I’m not looking for them to read into a certain message... I would like my work to inspire people to just branch out and try new things, like the Flames.”

Starlight says navigating different expectations is one of the most challenging parts of being an artist. “It’s just trying to find the happy middle between everything, and it’s difficult, but I think once you get in that way of thinking, it becomes easier.”

He adds that inclusion across sports and arts is improving but still evolving. “The nice thing about what the NHL is doing is that they have so much more inclusion now. We’ve seen it with Edmonton. We’ve seen it with Vancouver.”

He encourages young artists and creatives to recognize opportunity in their own communities. “If you just look closely to your town and show your talent, it doesn’t necessarily have to be art. It could be dance. It could be singing. The inclusion is there.”

While he acknowledges progress is ongoing, he says it is still meaningful. “It may not be exactly where we need it to be right now, but it’s definitely there.”

For Starlight, that visibility is also about courage. “I think that



Artist Keegan Starlight and his son, with Flames defenceman Zach Whitecloud, wearing jerseys with the new Flames Indigenous logo, designed by Starlight. Photo supplied.

should be an inspiration in itself; take a risk, the worst thing they can say is no.”

Starlight says his journey has been defined by persistence, setbacks, and growth. “I’ve had more failures than I’ve had successes, and it’s part of the game.”

He encourages emerging artists to stay grounded in purpose despite self-doubt. “You’ve gotta step up and you’ve gotta do it for you.” He adds that imposter syndrome is part of the process – but not a stopping point. “You’ve just gotta fight through it.”

For Starlight, the broader message is about resilience and collective pride. “Whatever anybody else does out there, the Indigenous community is gonna be proud.”

**WHAT STIRS YOU**

**COULD STIR YOU TO FOSTER**

**A FOSTER KID NEEDS WHAT YOU HAVE. AND WE DON'T JUST MEAN A SPARE ROOM.**

**ALBERTA FOSTERS**  
ALBERTAFOSTERS.CA

# Dakota House is inspiring Indigenous youth across Canada

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Actor, author, and CEO of Going M.I.L.E.S. (Motivate, Inspire, Lead, Empower and Succeed), Dakota House has dedicated his life to inspiring and mentoring Indigenous youth across Canada. Growing up in a small northern Alberta community, House once believed the world ended at the surrounding hills. When his mother moved the family to the city seeking a better life, House found himself living just half a block from Skid Row, in one of the city’s highest-crime areas. By grade four, his classmates had already cast their judgment: he was “least likely to succeed.”

“They said I was going to be a product of my environment,” House recalls. “But for me, that only lit a fire. I decided I would never be what anybody expected. And today, that fire drives everything I do.”

Even in those early years, his mother and grandfather shaped his path.

“Growing up, from childhood into my teens, I didn’t really have role models to look up to – aside from my mom and my grandpa, Dan House,” he says. “My grandpa was a huge influence on me.”

He speaks proudly of his mother’s professional and personal influence.

“My mom worked for Native Counselling Services of Alberta, and she herself was a facilitator. Not only were her morals and values of high quality, her teachings – that she passed on to me – have extended into my work and the words and teachings I pass on to the future leaders that I work with.”

Another unexpected but powerful role model

came from outside his immediate world.

“Another role model that I had was Bruce Lee, and he really influenced me to get into martial arts. Following his philosophies really helped to shape me and keep me in shape – lol.”

House first rose to national prominence as Trevor “TeeVee” Tenia on *North of 60*, a series that became a cultural touchstone for Indigenous audiences. Over his career, he has appeared in *Dreamkeeper*, *One Dead Indian*, *The X-Files*, *Heartland*, and *Blackstone*, and authored the children’s book *Dancers in the Sky*, rooted in Cree tradition.

“Some of us don’t answer our calling. There always feels like a void in our lives because we are choosing to try and fill that calling. But that’s the call from our ancestors. That’s the call from Creator. We’re survivors. We’re warriors.”

Drawing on the strength and courage of Indigenous ancestors, House frames every challenge as an opportunity to honour heritage and move forward.

“Since first contact, countless Indigenous people have been lost, displaced, or disconnected from their identity. Yet what runs through our veins is the courage of our greatest warriors and the spirit of our ancestors. Every trial we face is a chance to carry their legacy forward. We are not defined by what tried to hold us down – we are defined by our determination, our heritage, and our actions.”

“With what our people have been through – the intergenerational cycle, residential schools, first contact, colonization – it’s hard not to be caught



Actor, author Dakota House is mentoring Indigenous youth across Canada.

in the program we’re born into. That program, set up by government and corporations, is built on isolation, segregation, separation, assimilation, and colonization. It’s manipulation, shaping us to believe what they want us to believe. But awareness of that gives us power to rise above it.”

“When the chips are down, when you’re facing racism, discrimination, or every reason to quit, and you still move forward, not letting anything hold you back – that’s the true measure of strength. It’s not about the easy victories; it’s about continuing to push when nobody is watching.”

For Dakota House, philosophy isn’t just words – it’s a way of life. He believes in action over excuses, awareness over apathy, and legacy over self-interest. His guiding principle is that every challenge, setback, or negative voice is an opportunity to learn, grow, and lift others as you rise.

“Life will always throw obstacles in your path,” he says. “What matters is how you respond. You can let it stop you, or you can use it to fuel your next step. Awareness of your history, of your strengths, and of the wisdom in your community gives you the tools to move forward with intention and purpose.”

House also emphasizes that success isn’t measured by personal achievement alone. It’s about impacting others, sharing knowledge, and inspiring those who come after you.

“Every time you rise above doubt, every time you turn challenges into steps forward, you’re showing someone else that it’s possible. That’s how change happens – one action, one choice, one person at a time.”

This philosophy became the foundation for Going M.I.L.E.S., which he has led for more than 20 years.

“Through Going M.I.L.E.S., I use my skills to inspire, motivate, and empower young people. Our life story can be someone else’s survival guide. If you can rise, they can rise too.”

House and his team travel nationally, delivering interactive workshops that engage Indigenous youth in hands-on learning, leadership development, and community-building activities.

From being underestimated in grade four to mentoring youth across the nation, Dakota House’s journey demonstrates that heritage, discipline, and purposeful action can transform doubt into achievement.

“Our life story can be someone else’s survival guide,” he reflects. “By moving forward, staying true to yourself, and lifting others as you rise, you create change that lasts generations.”

For bookings, visit [www.goingmiles.org](http://www.goingmiles.org).

**REGISTER TODAY:**

[UNITEDINTREATY.CA](http://UNITEDINTREATY.CA)

[INFO@UNITEDINTREATY.CA](mailto:INFO@UNITEDINTREATY.CA)

**May 4th - 6th, 2026**

**Edmonton Inn in Edmonton, Alberta**

**UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRIT AND INTENT OF TREATY**

The United in Treaty event is designed to bring together Frist Nation leaders, scholars, Elders, and community members from across Canada in a shared space of learning, dialogue, and unity.

UNITED.IN.TREATY | UNITED.IN.TREATY | UNITED IN TREATY | INSPIRE GROUP OF COMPANIES

**Visit us online and follow us**

**@ABNativeNews**

# Dreamspeakers Festival returns to Edmonton

By Troy Dumont, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Dreamspeakers International Indigenous Film Festival returns to Edmonton this week, running April 15 to 19, 2026. One of the longest-running Indigenous film festivals in the world, Dreamspeakers has been a cornerstone of Indigenous storytelling in Canada since its founding in Edmonton in the early 1990s. This year's festival brings together films, workshops, and an artisan market, creating a space for audiences to connect, reflect, and celebrate Indigenous voices from around the globe.

Dreamspeakers describes its mission as empowering and amplifying Indigenous storytellers. Its vision goes further, imagining a vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable Indigenous community where creativity and identity can be freely expressed through the arts. The festival's programming draws together filmmakers, media artists, industry professionals, and community members from across the globe.

In the past, Dreamspeakers has featured Indigenous filmmakers from Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico, and this year's lineup continues its global reach. Among the featured works is *ENCHUKUNOTO (The Return)* by Laissa Malih. This first female Maasai filmmaker returns to her family's village to explore how climate change and modern life are affecting Maasai traditions. Another featured film is inspired by the legend of Goddess Hina. *The Source of Life (Te Puna Ora)* follows three Tahitian women on the island of Mo'orea fighting to keep their beach out of private hands, determined to protect what so many other islands have already lost.

This year's festival will feature more than 30 films, including shorts, feature films, documentaries, and animations. In-person screenings will take place at Landmark Cinemas in downtown Edmonton from April 16 to 19. The festival opens on April 15 with a free screening of

*Nika & Madison* at Metro Cinema at the Garneau. Fresh from its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, the film will be presented as part of National Canadian Film Day in hopes of launching the week with energy and momentum.

The festival extends beyond film, with an Artisan Market at City Centre Mall and a series of workshops hosted at Kakio Studio Cafe, an Indigenous-owned performance space and café. The programming includes a short-form content workshop covering tools and techniques for platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, as well as a film pitching workshop led by Indigenous filmmaker Joshua Jackson, whose film *Hey, Viktor!* was named one of Canada's Top Ten by TIFF and won Best Dramatic Feature at imagineNATIVE.

On the evening of April 18, the festival moves outdoors with *Light Strikes: Walk of Honour*, a multimedia event at Amiskwaciy Waskayhkan Ihtawin (Beaver Hills House Park) in downtown Edmonton. The experience weaves together live music, film, dance, and art to trace a journey from pre-contact through colonization, resistance, and reclamation. Musical acts, dancers, and installations will be scattered throughout the park.

For those unable to attend in person, the festival's full film lineup will be available



virtually starting April 20 on a pay-what-you-can basis. Virtual tickets include a 24-hour viewing window once playback begins.

Dreamspeakers is supported by the Edmonton Arts Council, Telefilm Canada, and the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund, among others, whose backing helps sustain one of Canada's most important Indigenous cultural events. Now in its fourth decade, the festival remains a space where Indigenous storytelling continues to find new audiences and new ground.

The Dreamspeakers International Indigenous Film Festival runs from April 15 to 19 in Edmonton. Tickets and the full program are available at [dreamspeakers.org](http://dreamspeakers.org).

## Groups criticize cont. from p 6

"A cooperative approach must not result in the downloading of federal responsibilities or reduced accountability to Indigenous Communities," wrote Power.

Lakeland Metis, the submission notes, isn't "currently formally recognized by the federal government," but is undergoing the process of establishing the "credible assertion" of its rights with the provincial government.

Mikisew Cree First Nation (MCFN) in Treaty 8 argues that the draft agreement represents a "nail in the coffin to MCFN's ability to protect its Treaty and Treaty rights, leaving the Nation at the mercy of impotent and racially discriminatory provincial processes."

"It demonstrates a willingness to make the public interest 'the government of Alberta's interest' at the expense of First Nations but also the many Albertans who believe in sustainable development and take their Treaty obligations seriously," reads MCFN's March 27 letter to the Impact Assessment Agency.

In a March 27 submission, O'Chiese First Nation's chief and council argue that the draft cooperation agreement was "unilaterally created" by the prime minister and premier "without our consent in our territories."

"This Draft Agreement does not strengthen impact assessment. It weakens it," the letter concludes. "This Agreement cannot proceed in its current form."

The Impact Assessment Agency also received submissions from the Alberta Wilderness Association, No CO2 Pipelines Alberta, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), the Mining Association of Canada, the Oil Sands Alliance, Capital Power and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The N.W.T. government wrote that it has previously been involved in federal impact assessments for projects in Alberta that could have "transboundary effects" and signed a 2015 agreement with Alberta "to maintain the ecological integrity of the aquatic ecosystem."

Lorraine Seal of N.W.T.'s Environment and Climate Change Ministry notes that the draft agreement "addresses only projects that physically cross a boundary and does not speak to transboundary effects."

She added that B.C.'s finalized cooperation agreement requires consideration of transboundary impacts and Ontario's "goes further by explicitly providing for downstream considerations in the co-ordination of potential assessment conditions, decision-making, and permitting."

While broadly supportive of the agreement, CAPP argued that the federal government should go further in offloading regulatory processes onto the Alberta government.

"Work should be undertaken to ensure that all environmental protections and consultations undertaken by provinces are not

duplicated by federal requirements," wrote CAPP VP, sustain-ability, external relations and Indigenous affairs Patricia Brady on March 25.

CAPP's submission included a copy of a February 2026 report the lobbying group submitted to federal Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali, entitled, "Cutting Red Tape to Unleash Canada as an Energy Superpower."

RIVER CREE  
RESORT AND CASINO  
BROOK, ALBERTA

WE ARE

HIRING

ARE YOU A CHARISMATIC, OUTGOING, AND ENERGETIC PERSON?

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

WHAT CAN YOU ACHIEVE AT RIVER CREE RESORT AND CASINO?

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

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

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

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

FORWARDSUMMIT.CA

# Where Our Voices Lead the Way Forward

A gathering of Indigenous leaders, communities, and partners shaping the future—together



## FORWARD SUMMIT west

Hear from Indigenous Leadership  
Share knowledge and experience  
Connect with others across the country  
You belong here

May 13–14, 2026  
Grey Eagle Casino, Tsuut’ina Nation  
Save 10% on registration with code: **ABNN10**

(Group tickets available at <https://forwardsummit.ca/registration-2025/>)

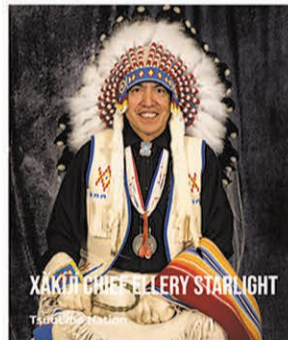
Join 1,000+ participants and representation from 300+ Indigenous communities



**KLUANE ADAMEK**  
Kluane First Nation, Yukon



**GEENA JACKSON**  
Executive Producer, Core Judge  
Bear's Lair Indigenous Initiatives



**XAKIH CHIEF BELERY STARLIGHT**  
TsuuT'ina Nation



**BOBBIE RACETTE**  
TsuuT'ina Nation



**RAYLENE WHITFORD**  
Director, Canative Energy



**HILLARY THATCHER**  
Executive VP, Indigenous & Northern  
Infrastructure, Canada Infrastructure Bank

### 100+ speakers shaping conversations and partnerships across Canada

Across our Nations and communities, important work is happening every day—building partnerships, creating opportunity, and advancing economic reconciliation in ways that reflect our values.

Forward Summit – West in Calgary, brings our people together to share, learn, and strengthen the relationships that move our communities forward.

**Grounded in community. Guided by our voices. Moving forward—together.**

THE FORWARD SUMMIT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALBERTA NATIVE NEWS

