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Award supports Indigenous students in heritage conservation

Now in its fifth year, the Indigenous Award in Heritage Resources Management (HRM) continues to help learners pursue heritage resource management courses at Athabasca University.

The award was inspired in part by the Calls to Action in the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, and in line with AU's ongoing efforts towards Conciliation. It aims to encourage people with Indigenous ancestry to explore courses in the HRM program at AU.

The program teaches the skills to identify, preserve, and manage heritage resources for careers in heritage conservation, planning, and management, or working in a historic place, museum, or archive. It is the only fully online program of its kind in Canada, accessible to students around the globe.

Dr. Shabnam Inanloo Dailoo, an associate professor and the director of the HRM program, said the TRC report prompted her to question what she could do as an individual, as a heritage professional, and as a member of the university community.

"For us in the heritage sector, it's really critical to understand those calls and to respond, because we work with people, culture, heritage, and history," she said.

"Understanding the TRC Calls to Action is a fundamental responsibility, and we must take deliberate action in response to them."

Inspired by Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Inanloo Dailoo reached out to AU's Nukskahtowin team, including Elder-in-Residence Dr. Maria Campbell, to discuss what kind of meaningful change would be possible in her program.

The result was increased collaboration between Nukskahto-win and the HRM program team, sharing resources and working to decolonize course materials and promote conciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

She was inspired to do more in 2021, when she heard the news that potential unmarked burial sites had been identified at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory.

"That was the moment," Inanloo Dailoo said. "I was really impacted by that."

After consulting with Nukskahtowin, she decided to donate some of her own money to create the student award. With contributions from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences – and from many colleagues in the heritage resources field across the country – the award is now open to Indigenous students across Canada.

"I think the beautiful thing about this award is it's not just for AU students," she said. "It's open to any Indigenous learners who can come to AU and explore opportunities here."

Making an impact

Students who have received this award emphasize its importance, and the impact it has had not just for them, but for their families and communities.

Samantha McCrea is a Métis woman and single mother in her early fifties who is working towards a University Certificate in HRM and a Bachelor of Arts in History at AU. She said the award meant she didn't have to choose between finishing her certificate and putting her long-term goals on hold to save money for her next course.



Dr. Shabnam Inanloo Dailoo, documenting the Cunningham House in St. Albert. Photo courtesy of Athabasca University.

"Instead, I can stay on track and continue building toward a future where I can work in archives or museums, focusing on Indigenous history and artifacts, and promoting reconciliation," she said. "I'm deeply grateful for this opportunity and for the generosity of those who make it possible."

Cassandra Zaugg said her long-term goal is to work for her Nation and support her people in their efforts toward self-governance. To that end she's pursuing a Bachelor of Professional Arts in Governance, Law, and Management.

She said the HRM course allowed her to explore how heritage knowledge and cultural stewardship can support Indigenous governance and self-determination—and the award means less stress about educational costs.

"Receiving this award brings me a huge sense of relief and encouragement," said the single mother. "It allows me to cover educational costs and focus more on my studies instead of worrying about stretching every dollar."

A 'reciprocal' learning experience

Inanloo Dailoo said the award has had a positive impact on so many learners—eight students have won the award since it opened in 2022. There's also a significant benefit to the HRM program and profession because these students can also teach their peers and instructors.

"Indigenous learners can contribute to the learning of other students, and to our learning as instructors and tutors," she said. "It's a reciprocal relationship, a shared learning journey, where we can learn from them as much as they can learn from us."

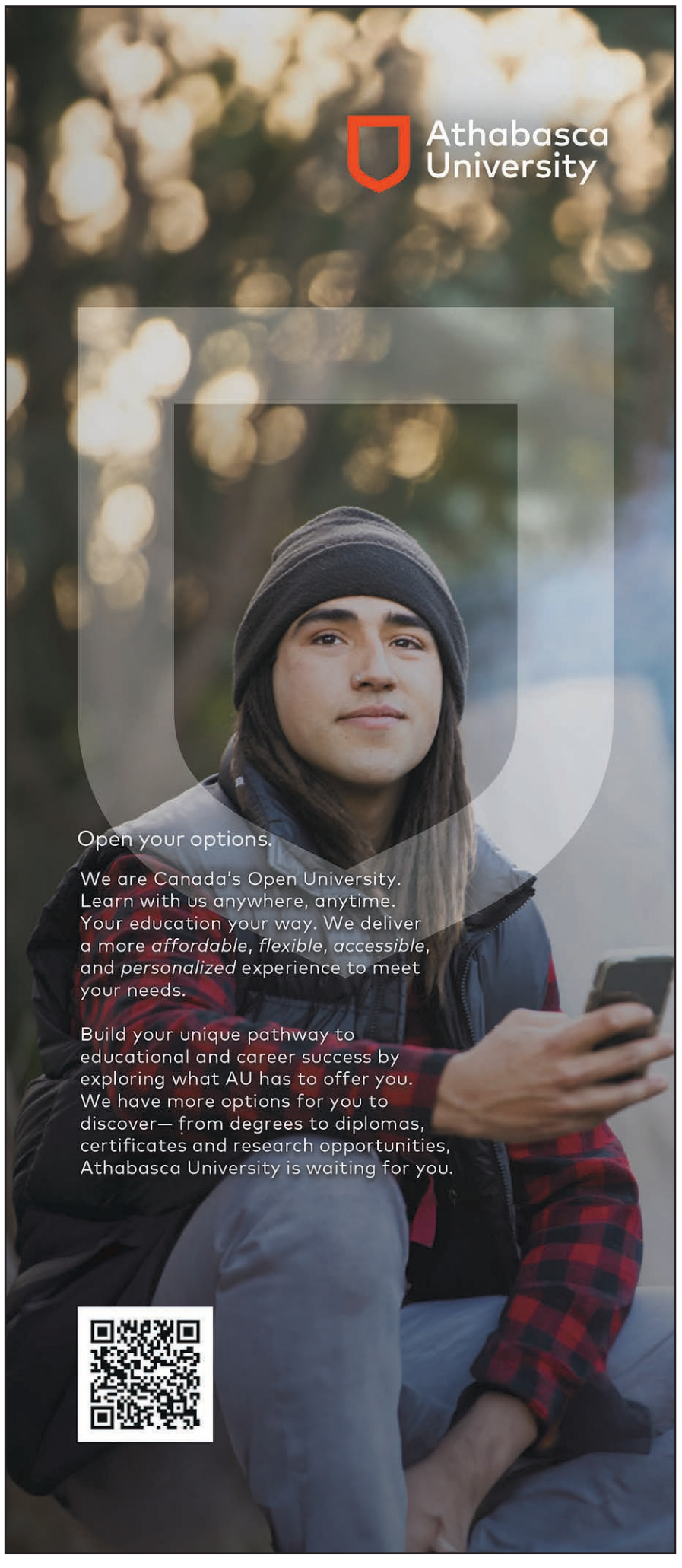
One way this happens is in understanding that words can have different implications in Indigenous cultures and settler cultures. The word education, for example, can have a negative connotation because of associations with colonial educational institutions.

"I was reminded that Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing things is not always called education," Inanloo Dailoo said. "Words and terms matter, and to be inclusive and respectful we don't always need to label things as education. It is about learning and transferring knowledge."

Similarly, heritage resources management often uses storytelling to describe the importance of a particular place, structure, or artifact. Choosing which stories to tell or not to tell, how to tell them, and who is telling them, inevitably risks excluding other stories.

Inanloo Dailoo sees this knowledge, and the inclusion of the perspective of Indigenous learning, as having the potential to improve the work of researchers, academics and practitioners in this area.

"I believe that Indigenous students and learners can become future heritage professionals and help us to advance reconciliation efforts moving forward."



Indigenous communities voted in referendum to remain in Canada

By Jeremy Appel, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Polling data from First Nations reserves and Metis settlements show that Indigenous people voted overwhelmingly and disproportionately in favour of Alberta remaining in Canada in the province's Oct. 19 referendum.

Ninety-seven per cent of voters at polling stations on or near reserves across Treaties 6, 7 and 8 voted against proceeding with a binding vote on Alberta independence, according to the dataset, which shows a total of 11,004 on-reserve votes for remain and 324 votes for a secession referendum.

The sample size for the Metis settlements is smaller, but shows 976 votes for remain and 88 for an independence referendum, representing a 92 per cent victory for remain.

Province-wide, remain received 75 per cent of more than two million votes cast, according to unofficial Elections Alberta results based on all but one poll reporting.

Matthew Wildcat, the director of Indigenous governance at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Native Studies, compiled the data by going through Elections Alberta's poll-by-poll breakdown, identifying stations in which the "vast majority" of voters would be Indigenous, given their proximity to reserves and settlements.

He told *Alberta Native News* that it's the closest proxy to determining how First Nations and Metis people voted on the independence question, since it's impossible to know how many Indigenous voters voted by advance ballot or at off-reserve polling stations.

"The main takeaway for me is that Indigenous Peoples have a consensus opinion on the question of Alberta separation," said Wildcat.

"I use the term 'consensus' very deliberately. I know it's not 100 per cent, but I'm using it from the standpoint of what I would call Cree political traditions around consensus."

In Cree political thought, Wildcat explained, consensus is not necessarily unanimous, but occurs when "an overwhelming viewpoint starts to emerge on something" and those who disagree "acquiesce to the larger group."

His data includes results from 60 polling stations across 35 First Nations, as well as seven polling stations across six Metis settlements. These polling stations were located in 14 rural ridings, many of which had relatively low votes in favour of remain.

He cautioned that the numbers aren't yet exhaustive and that there could be polling stations that he missed, particularly on the two Metis settlements that aren't included in the dataset.

But when it comes to First Nations, not every band offered polling stations on reserve, given the history of First Nations members being forced to give up their status in order to vote.

"Voting in Canadian elections has long been viewed with a great deal of suspicion," said Wildcat. There were likely more than double the number of off-reserve Indigenous votes as on-reserve, he added.



Siksika First Nation in Treaty 7 was the First Nation with the highest on-reserve turnout, with 1,482 votes cast, of which 99 per cent supported remain. The Blood Tribe had the second-highest on-reserve turnout, with 1,303 votes cast, of which 99 per cent were in favour of remaining in Canada.

The Blood Tribe and Siksika reserves are both part of the Cardston-Siksika riding, which overall saw just 56 per cent for remain, with 10,146 votes in favour and 7,734 votes against.

Between the Blood Tribe and Siksika polling stations, there was a total 2,744 votes for remain. Without those remain votes, the independence side would have narrowly won in that riding.

Little Red River Cree First Nation had the highest on-reserve turnout in Treaty 8 and third-highest overall, with 98 per cent of 1,077 votes cast in support of remain.

Little Red River's reserve is part of the Peace River riding, which saw an overall vote of 57 per cent for remain.

In Treaty 6, Samson Cree Nation saw the highest turnout, with 717 votes cast. Of these votes, 98 per cent were in support of remain.

Samson Cree's reserve is located in the Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin riding, which saw 65 per cent support for remain.

Gift Lake was the Metis settlement with the most votes counted, with 235 in favour of remain and five supporting independence, representing 98 per cent for remain.

Gift Lake is located in the Lesser Slave Lake riding, which saw 70 per cent of voters support remain. The Metis settlement with the second-highest turnout was Kikino, located in the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding. Eighty-seven per cent of the 199 votes at the Kikino Community Centre were cast in support of remaining in Canada, compared to 60 per cent of the riding's total.

Wildcat is skeptical that the scale of mobilizing Indigenous voters against the independence referendum can be replicated in future federal and provincial elections.

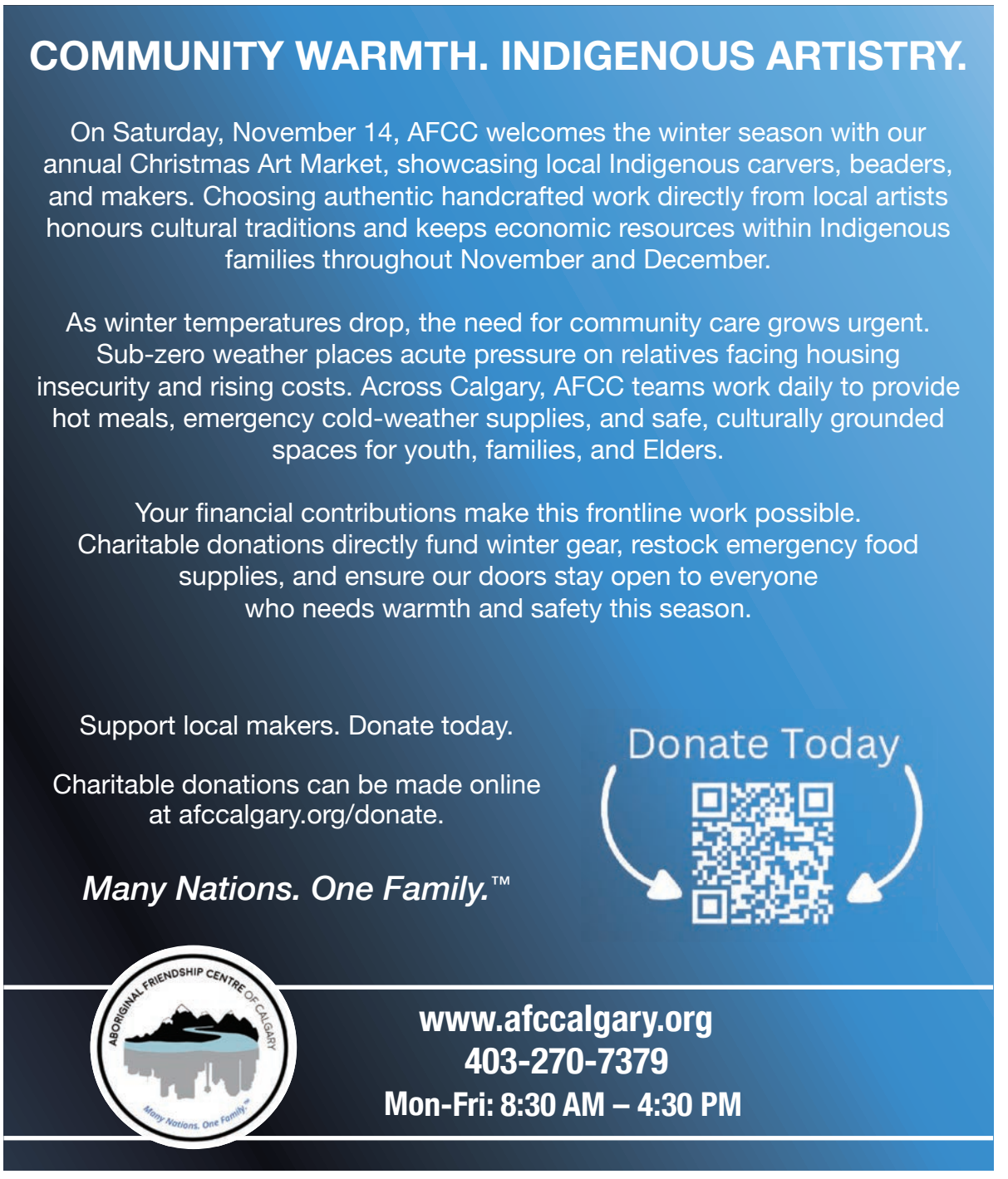
"I suspect that it will be a blip, because motivating people was an enormous concern about Alberta potentially separating from Canada and how that would be inherently undermining of Indigenous peoples' rights, political authority and political sovereignties," he explained.

Wildcat sees some hope in initiatives like Indigenous Rock the Vote, which could produce "a gradual increase of Indigenous peoples' participation in elections."

However, he cautioned that the first-past-the-post electoral system, in which each riding elects its own MLA or MP, makes the mobilization of Indigenous voters around a common political objective more challenging.

"There's probably not going to be a point at any time soon where First Nations people have the capacity to determine elections," he said.





A Remembrance Day conversation with First Nation Chiefs

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Maskwacis honoured veterans through two remembrance observances in November 2026: Indigenous Veterans Day on November 8 and Remembrance Day on November 11. Both gatherings provided opportunities for the Four Nations community to recognize Indigenous veterans, generations of military service members and those currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

On November 11, *Alberta Native News* spoke with Chief Desmond Bull of Louis Bull Tribe and Chief Izaiah Swampy-Omeasoo of Samson Cree Nation at an event that was held at the Maskwacis Veterans Memorial plaque in front of Peace Hills Bank. The conversation explored Indigenous contributions to Canada's military history, the treatment veterans experienced after returning home and the responsibility of today's generations to remember those who served.

Chief Bull began by explaining the distinction between the two observances, noting that they recognize different aspects of Indigenous history and service.

"These are two separate events, I believe. One honours not only the veterans during Indigenous Veterans Day but also our past warriors, including peacemakers and our ancestors who fought for a way of life," Bull said. "Today was more or less honouring those who served within the military itself during the wars, including World War One, World War Two, the Korean War and Afghanistan. It was a good day to honour and acknowledge those warriors."

For Bull, remembering Indigenous veterans also means recognizing a much longer history of Indigenous people defending their communities and protecting their way of life. According to Veterans Affairs Canada, more than 4,000 Indigenous people served during the First World War. During the Second World War, more than 3,000 First Nations members served, alongside an unknown number of Inuit and Métis recruits. Exact figures remain difficult to establish because Indigenous participation was not consistently recorded. (Veterans Affairs Canada).



Maskwacis Chiefs Joel Mykat, Desmond Bull, Ralph Cattleman and Izaiah Swampy-Omeasoo with Canadian Armed Forces Master Corporal Seth Longjohn.

Bull reflected on the experience of Indigenous soldiers who served alongside other military personnel and Allied forces. He said they fought as equals on the battlefield, regardless of their nationality or background.

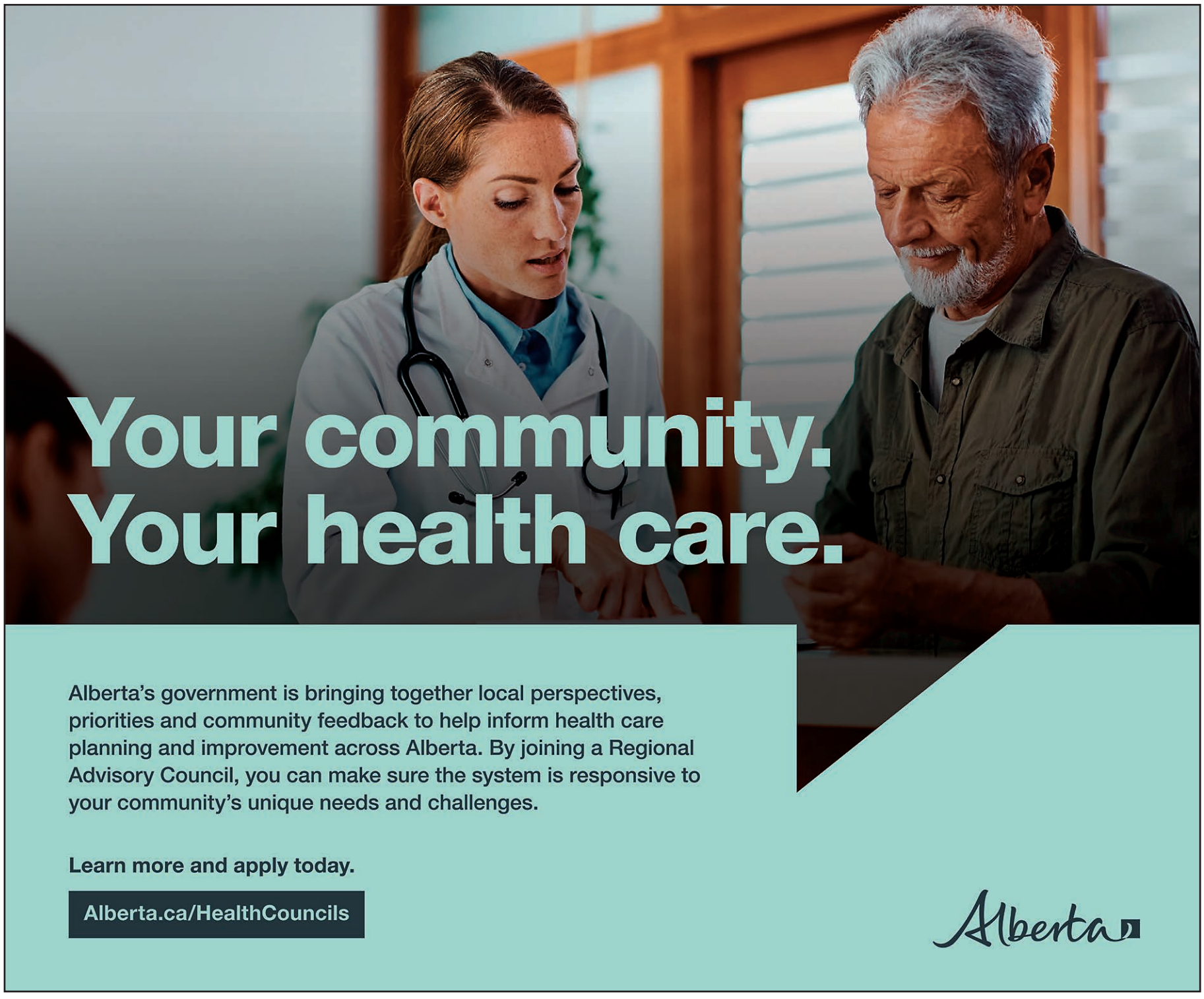
"They fought alongside other countrymen and other countries in the Allied forces against tyranny and fascism. More importantly, they fought as equals on the battlefields. It didn't matter what country they came from or what nationality they came from. They were treated as equals in that brotherhood," he said.

However, Bull said that sense of equality did not continue when Indigenous veterans returned home. "But that's where that brotherhood kind of stopped for Indigenous warriors and Indigenous veterans."

He described the unequal treatment First Nations veterans experienced, including barriers to benefits and opportunities available to other Canadian veterans. "When they came home, they were not treated like the other veterans who had participated in Canadian wars. They didn't get land entitlements, and they didn't even get the opportunity to continue voting," Bull said.

Historical records document unequal access to veterans' benefits. Veterans Affairs Canada notes that many First Nations veterans faced barriers to receiving pensions, grants and other benefits

Continued on page 11



Saddle Lake Cree Nation is achieving educational sovereignty

By John Wirth, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Educational sovereignty could soon be coming to the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, ᐅᓂᐦᑭᑭᒃᐦᐱᐢᓂᐣ as the Saddle Lake Education Authority seeks international accreditation for its K-12 schools through the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC).

Authorised by a precedent-setting mandate from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation Chief and Council, Onchaminahos Elementary and Kihew Asiniy Education Centre (High School) are positioned to become the first accredited First Nation K-12 schools in Canada.

The pursuit represents a massive paradigm shift in how Indigenous education is measured and validated.

"The federal government funds First Nation schools on-reserve, they do not do accreditation—they're not a Ministry of Education," explains Dr. Diana Steinhauer, one of the key leaders guiding the accreditation process. "The province has a Ministry of Education, and they accredit all public schools, faith-based schools, and private schools, but they have no jurisdiction on-reserve. So for us to initiate this process is setting a pathway, essentially."

WINHEC accreditation is globally recognized, created by and for Indigenous people, and founded within an Indigenous frame of reference.

"WINHEC accreditation is globally recognized, and it's for our people by our people, and founded within an Indigenous frame of reference," Steinhauer emphasizes. "Accreditation assigns quality assurance so that learners and parents have confidence in the school. What is unique about WINHEC accreditation is that schools are reviewed to reflect the identity of the community it serves. In the case of Saddle Lake, the schools are assessed with the addition of these indicators: nehiyaw language, culture, and addressing intergenerational harms our people have suffered as a result of the colonial project."

For the people of Saddle Lake and its next generation of leaders, this historic change is about healing, reclamation, and holistic well-being. Saddle Lake is actively dismantling the legacy of colonial schooling and replacing it with an educational sanctuary built on the Cree way of life.

Under this framework, students moving from kindergarten through Grade 12 meet provincial curriculum standards while receiving a firm grounding in Nehiyaw Tapisiniwin—the pursuit of living a good life.

Dr. Steinhauer outlines what this transformation looks like for a child moving through kindergarten to Grade 12 under the new framework: "Essentially, they will meet the Alberta provincial curriculum standards, but in addition to that, they will have a firm grounding in Nehiyaw Tapisiniwin… And that is essential for identity. That's essential for grounding them in who they are, their belonging, and that will enliven it and ensure success in whatever endeavour they do after Grade 12."

She adds that accreditation offers an assurance that students won't be held back when stepping into their future callings. "The accreditation just is an affirmation and assurance to the community… that what Saddle Lake Education Authority is providing in their schools will ensure seamless transition from Grade 12 to post-secondary of their choice… as well as if they decide not to go into post-secondary, they choose rather to go into trades or enter into employment immediately. All of that is absolutely within their reach."



Saddle Lake Cree Nation Chief Dale Steinhauer with the WINHEC panel.

Crucially, this cultural foundation offers a way to break generational trauma. "You know, we've been subject to the colonial project for generations. Within our schools, we are addressing that so that we can break those cycles in the future," says Steinhauer. "Our children won't be pulled back by those cycles any longer. So that's really empowering—emotional, spiritual, physical, mental well-being and growth."

The rigorous process behind this shift has been years in the making. While community education

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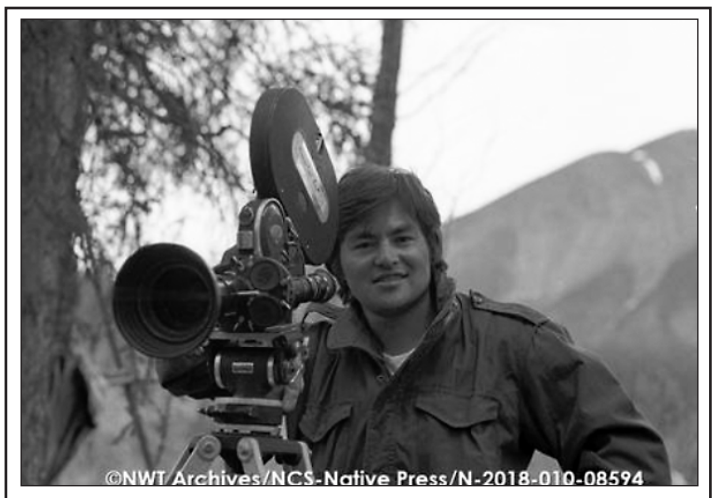
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Raymond Yakeleya: His spirit will be forever remembered



Raymond YAKELEYA
June 25, 1954 – August 19, 2026

Raymond Yakeleya, a pioneering Dené filmmaker, television producer, author, and storyteller, has passed away.

Raymond is survived by his loving wife, Deborah Salo; sons, Ryan Yakeleya and Aaron Adams (Amanda); daughter, Joline Kenny; grandsons, Trey Yakeleya (Charlotte), Logan Adams, Leevi Adams, granddaughters Lillian Adams and Cailey Kenny; and great grandson Van Yakeleya; as well as siblings, Annie (Jules), Danny (Noi), Carl (Judith), Norman (Sheryl), Valerie (Edwin), Gary, and Dwayne (Crystal); as well as numerous nieces, nephews and other extended family.

Raymond was predeceased by his grandparents, Harriet & Noel Gladue, Daniel & Adele (Menacho) Lennie, Johnny & Elizabeth (Blondin) Yakeleya; parents, Edward Yakeleya & Laura Lennie; and sister, Diane.

Raymond was very close to his wife Deb's family and leaves to mourn his passing, Deb's dad and stepmom, Vilho and Leona Salo; brother, Darrel; stepbrothers, Frank (Angela) Bosscha and Jeff Bosscha; as well as Deb's nieces and nephews. Everyone that met Raymond became a dear friend!

Raymond hated to miss a party, so at his request there was no funeral. Instead, Raymond and his wife hosted a 'Celebration of life' on August 16, which was attended by many family and friends and included a lot of laughs, tears and sharing of memories. Thanks to event coordinator Matthew at The Common in Edmonton for a great party!

Originally from Tulita (formerly Fort Norman) in the Northwest Territories, Raymond dedicated his life and extraordinary career to amplifying Indigenous voices and ensuring the preservation of traditional oral histories. Operating through his Edmonton-based company, Earth Magic Media, he became a cornerstone of Indigenous media in Canada.

Bill Stewart, now deceased, and Carol Chapelski were instrumental in the success of Earth Magic Media and, as Raymond always said, "They all had fun doing it!"

Raymond's groundbreaking career in television and documentary film-making spanned over four decades. Having studied photography and television production at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and attending the UCLA summer cinema program, he combined formal expertise with a deep commitment to his heritage.

His award-winning work screened at international festivals and was broadcast on major networks such as APTN, CBC, Bravo, and PBS. Key highlights of his cinematic legacy include:

• *The Last Mooseskin Boat* (1982): This iconic documentary honoured the traditional culture of the Shuh'taotine (mountain) Dené.

• *We Remember* (1979): A documentary series, featuring the testimonies of Elders from the Slavey and Loucheux communities in the Mackenzie Delta, which received an award at the 1980 American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco.

• *Earth Voices*: A magazine style series that profiled Aboriginal People from Alberta and Northwest Territories, ranging from politicians, social activists, performers, artists, musicians to former drug addicts.

• *From the Spirit* (2005-2009): A television series that profiled the diverse and rich talents of Indigenous artists across North America.

Many of Raymond's programs were used as content provider for the Alberta Department of Learning from Grades 4 to 12; the Northwest Territories Department of Education; the Universities of Calgary, Lethbridge, British Columbia and Simon Fraser; the Alberta College of Design; the Banff Centre and Aurora College.

Raymond's work was deeply personal, driven by a profound responsibility to his ancestors and elders. In 1974, he spoke at the MacKenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry led by Justice Thomas Berger, which began his work on elevating the voice of his People. Then, in 1994, just before her passing, his grandmother, Elizabeth Yakeleya, asked Raymond to "Tell the story of what happened to our People". Raymond fulfilled this promise faithfully, documenting the impacts of history on First Nations communities and ensuring that future generations would know their own heritage.

Beyond the camera, Raymond was an accomplished author and editor, working closely with Lorene Shyba of Durvile & Uproute. He brought Indigenous narratives to literature through children's books such as *The Tree by the Woodpile* and *The Rainbow, the Midwife and the Birds*. He also co-edited critical historical anthologies, including *We Remember the Coming of the White Man* and *Indigenous Justice*.

An advocate for media equity, Raymond fiercely championed the need for Indigenous Peoples to control their own narratives. He famously noted: "Indigenous Peoples need to have a voice in mainstream media in order to tell our stories, our way. With the passing of many of our Elders, the telling of these stories has become more important."

His spirit will forever be remembered in the landscapes he held dear, echoed in his poetry like *The Mountain, the Wind, and the Wildflowers*, and immortalized through the stories he beautifully preserved for the world.

Arrangements entrusted to Connelly-McKinley Downtown Funeral Home.





Heather Bouchier brings Indigenous fashion to 'Project Runway Canada'

By Chevi Rabbit , Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

For Edmonton fashion designer Heather Bouchier, fashion has always been more than clothing. It is a creative expression shaped by family, culture, personal inspiration and a legacy she did not fully understand until she was already building a career of her own.

Now, Bouchier is preparing to take that creativity to a national audience as a contestant on the second season of *Project Runway Canada*, premiering November 20 on Crave.

For the designer, the opportunity represents years of dedication, but also something much bigger: the chance to bring greater visibility to Indigenous designers and encourage the next generation to pursue their creative ambitions.

"I was always into fashion as a kid," Bouchier said.

Her interest eventually led her to the Academy of Fashion Design in Saskatoon, where she studied in 2001. At the time, she was pregnant with her son and raising him as a single mother.

She recalled having to make a decision between pursuing hairdressing or attending fashion school. "I was trying to decide. I really like doing hair too. I wanted to start doing hair. So it was either hair school or fashion school, and I chose fashion school."

That decision became the beginning of a career that would take her to fashion shows and major events across North America and beyond.

Bouchier's creative process often begins with something ordinary. Inspiration can come from a movie, a television show, an object or even the shape and colour of a tree. "Usually it just starts with a thought in my head, or something that I've been inspired by, whether it's a movie or a TV show, or just something on a day-to-day," she explained.

From there, she begins sketching, imagining the finished garment and finding materials that will bring the design to life. But some of her most meaningful inspiration comes from much closer to home.

Bouchier credits her family as her greatest source of inspiration, particularly her late grandmother, Edna Rose Seeseequasis. She said she discovered only after beginning her own career that her grandmother had been a master seamstress.

"When I found that out, I was like, 'Oh, that makes a lot of sense.' That's something that's in my DNA, and I didn't even realize it all this time."

According to Bouchier, her grandmother travelled to First Nations reserves in Saskatchewan during the 1960s and 1970s, teaching young women how to sew. She compared her grandmother's work to the workshops and cultural programming offered in communities today, where people share practical skills such as sewing, ribbon skirt-making and other forms of traditional craftsmanship.

"My grandma used to do that back in the day," she said.

For Bouchier, learning about her grandmother's accomplishments gave her own fashion journey a deeper meaning. "She was like a pioneer," she said.

The discovery strengthened her connection to her family's creative history and helped her recognize that the skills she was developing had a connection to the generations before her.

She also designed a custom gown for Tia Wood's *Juno Awards* appearance, working with stylist Jason Pillay. The design featured a large rose on the back, inspired by her grandmother's middle name. Bouchier had originally considered incorporating horsehair into the gown but ultimately decided the design was stronger without it. The rose became a meaningful tribute to her Kokum, bringing family history into a contemporary red-carpet design.

When Bouchier stepped into the *Project Runway Canada* workroom for the first time, the experience was difficult to put into words. As someone who had watched both the Canadian and American versions of the fashion competition, seeing the workroom and its familiar branding was surreal.



Fashion Designer Heather Bouchier.

She described the moment as one that gave her goosebumps. "It was a very special moment."

Although she had already shared aspects of her life on social media, participating in reality television introduced a different level of public exposure. Bouchier said it took time to adjust to the cameras and the unfamiliar environment.

She also recognizes that appearing on a national platform can bring criticism and potential racism, particularly in the current political climate. "Racism isn't unheard of, especially on these kinds of platforms, and that's definitely something to consider when you're feeling vulnerable," she said.

Despite those concerns, she remains proud of what she has accomplished and what the opportunity represents.

Following the cast announcement, Bouchier said she was overwhelmed by the support from her family, friends and Indigenous communities. "I get emotional about it and really happy, like, to be representing Indigenous designers."

Continued on page 10

About our cover art

The vivid painting that appears on the cover of the November edition of *Alberta Native News* is titled 'Sedna Sea Goddess." It is a creation of Inuit artist and cultural teacher Gordon Riffi.

Riffi explains that the Sedna Sea Goddess is the central goddess of sea life in the Inuit culture. Legend has it that she was a human woman stranded by her family at the bottom of the sea. The marine creatures took pity on her and saved her by sharing their attributes - a tail, flippers and sea lungs. There she became the most powerful spirit who rules over all marine life in the area.

"Sedna Sea Goddess" by Gordon Riffi is available for purchase at WakinaGallery.com.



Inuit artist and cultural teacher Gordon Riffi.

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Indigenous leaders challenge Ottawa's Fast-Tracked Consultation timeline

By John Wirth, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

As the Prime Minister's office fast-tracks the Pacific Link oil pipeline under new major projects legislation, First Nations leaders warn that a two-month consultation window compromises free, prior, and informed consent.

In a bid to distance Canadian energy interests from the USA, PM Carney and Premier Danielle Smith announced that through the "Pacific Link oil pipeline," Canada will have its first "National designation" from its major projects office. But not everyone embraces the news. The weight of it haunts the future of Indigenous communities' access to clean drinking water and should not be rushed.



Buffalo Runner © by Linus Woods at Wakinagallery.com

Prime Minister Mark Carney eagerly pledged that his major projects agenda would not compromise Canada's obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. But actions speak louder than words, and the First Nation communities were given less than a fiscal quarter to decide the fate of their ancestral home.

The Assembly of First Nations told The Canadian Press (CP) in a statement that the government is "predetermining outcomes and approving projects in advance of meaningful consultations. The government's decision today is coming only 12 days after the consultation deadline. As we have said on many occasions, First Nations support economic development and prosperity for all, but not at the expense of our rights, the planet, and the government's legal obligations to our people."

Construction is expected to begin nine short months from this consultation deadline. A streamlined oversight committee and reformed laws have paved the way for a prior, free (but not properly compensated), and malformed (whatever is decided, it will arrive prematurely) consent that is reminiscent of touching the pen while the government scribe implies consent during the initial treaty negotiations.

As reported by CP last month, the UN declaration is cited in the pipeline consultation document, which says Ottawa's engagement efforts were designed with those principles in mind. The document notes that more than 130 Indigenous communities could be affected by the pipeline route and that the Major Projects Office sent a letter in July to begin consultations.

Indigenous communities warned during those consultations that their participation would be held back by summer harvesting, ceremonial gatherings, and wildfires, which threatened many communities and forced evacuations.

The office then extended the consultation deadline from Aug. 28 to Sept. 18. The document says the office held over 140 meetings with representatives from more than 110 Indigenous organizations and communities. During those meetings, many community leaders said they lacked information they needed to make informed decisions—things like routing, engineering and design, environmental effects, marine shipping, emergency responses, and impacts on Aboriginal and treaty rights.

Responding to these concerns, the document notes: "The GIC is satisfied that these processes provide an appropriate framework through which

Continued on page 10

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Chiefs call for stronger Treaty relationships and resource revenue sharing

By Chevi Rabbit, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Treaty Chiefs representing Treaties No. 6, No. 7, No. 8 and the Blackfoot Confederacy are calling on the federal and Alberta governments to strengthen Treaty implementation, establish a permanent Treaty table and address longstanding concerns over resource revenue sharing and the unfinished business of the 1930 Natural Resources Transfer Agreement.

The Chiefs attended the First Nations–First Ministers Meeting on October 26 in unceded Anishinaabe Algonquin Territory, bringing a united message about the importance of honouring Treaty commitments and recognizing First Nations as sovereign rights holders and Treaty partners.

"Our Treaties established the foundation upon which Canada and its provinces were built," the Chiefs stated in a news release. "Canada's prosperity will be contingent on the relationship that is built with Treaty First Nations and the commitments that Canada makes in upholding those Treaties."

The Chiefs emphasized that Treaties are international covenants and living agreements that guide the relationship between their Nations and the Crown. They maintain that First Nations are rights holders and Treaty partners, rather than stakeholders, and that their inherent and Treaty rights cannot be diminished by federal or provincial policies or legislation.

They also stressed that no organization has been authorized to represent their Nations or negotiate arrangements on their behalf without the express free, prior and informed consent of the Nations that hold those rights.

The Chiefs are calling for a permanent, standing Treaty table involving the Governments of Canada, Alberta, Treaties No. 6, No. 7, No. 8 and the Blackfoot Confederacy. They say the table must have a clear mandate, dedicated resources, established timelines and an agreed-upon date for its first meeting.

The proposed table would focus on Treaty implementation, resource revenue sharing, the protection of lands and waters, and meaningful First Nations participation in major economic development projects.

The Chiefs argue that economic participation must extend beyond opportunities to acquire equity in projects, emphasizing that resource revenue sharing is a Treaty obligation that requires direct discussion.

The Chiefs identified the 1930 Natural Resources Transfer Agreement as a longstanding issue requiring attention through direct, Treaty-based discussions. The agreement transferred administrative control over natural resources to the Prairie provinces, a change the Chiefs say occurred without their consent and contributed to generations of First Nations being excluded from the wealth generated by resources within their territories. They are calling for the unfinished business of Treaty to be addressed, including matters arising from the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement of 1930.

The Chiefs maintain that meaningful economic partnerships must recognize Treaty obligations and ensure First Nations benefit from the resources and economic activity taking place on their traditional territories.

The Chiefs also addressed the Indian Act, stating that any discussions about the legislation must take place directly with First Nations as rights holders. They called for a process grounded in free, prior and informed consent that respects their inherent rights, Treaty relationships, sovereignty and jurisdiction. Their position reinforces the importance of First Nations having a direct role in decisions affecting their governance, rights and relationships with the Crown.

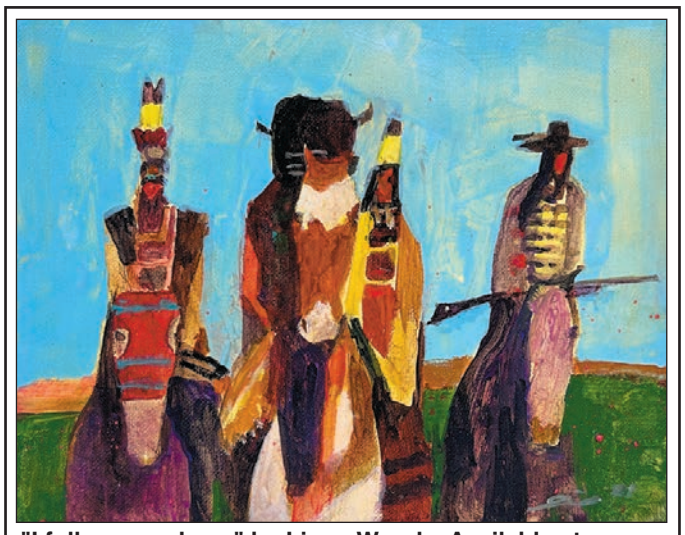
The Chiefs cited the defeat of the Alberta separation referendum as evidence of the strength and importance of Treaty relationships. According to the news release, Treaty First Nations stood together in defence of their rights and Canada's unity, with some Nations pursuing legal challenges while others mobilized to influence public discussion and the outcome.

"Our goal was to defend our Treaty rights and support the unity of Canada," the Chiefs stated.

They also criticized the federal government's absence in supporting Treaty Nations during the effort to keep Canada together. "You're welcome, Canada," the Chiefs added.

The statement highlights their position that Treaty Nations play an important role in Canada's constitutional and political relationships and should be recognized as partners in decisions affecting the country's future.

The Chiefs also expressed concern about Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's absence from the First Nations–First Ministers Meeting. While acknowledging that certain provincial premiers had spoken about the importance of their relationships with Treaty First Nations, the Chiefs criticized Smith for not attending the meeting to participate in discussions.



"I follow you down" by Linus Woods. Available at Wakinagallery.com

The news release linked her absence to Alberta's decision to appeal a court ruling recognizing the province's duty to consult First Nations in relation to the separation referendum. Rather than continuing to challenge its constitutional obligations in court, the Chiefs argued, Alberta should work directly with Treaty Nations to rebuild trust, respect their rights and strengthen the Treaty relationship.

They emphasized that Alberta has a duty to uphold the Honour of the Crown and called on Canada to ensure that its own obligations to consult First Nations are upheld. The criticism reflects the Chiefs' broader position that governments must move beyond statements about reconciliation and demonstrate their commitments through meaningful engagement and action.

The Chiefs said their Nations are seeking commitments that deliver measurable results and create prosperity for present and future generations. They argued that Treaties should not be viewed as obstacles to Canada's economic development, but as partnerships that can contribute to a stronger and more prosperous country.

"Our Treaties should not be seen as obstacles to Canada's prosperity, but as partnerships that will build a stronger, united and prosperous Canada," the Chiefs stated. "Treaty is the foundation that will keep Canada intact."

They are seeking commitments that go beyond promises, emphasizing the need for clear timelines, measurable actions and a renewed commitment to honouring Treaty relationships.





Heather Bouchier cont. from p 7

She is also sharing the season with fellow Indigenous designer Dillon James Hayes, a Métis designer from Kamloops, British Columbia.

While competing on television is a major milestone, Bouchier hopes the opportunity will create possibilities beyond her own fashion career. She wants to use her platform to promote Indigenous designers, encourage arts programming and help young people see fashion as a legitimate career path.

Through her work with the Indigenous Empowerment Fashion Collective and Edmonton Indigenous Fashion Week, she has already been involved in producing and curating fashion events. Now, she hopes to expand that work by connecting with First Nations communities, discussing barriers faced by Indigenous and Two-Spirit people in the arts, and encouraging greater investment in creative programming.

Bouchier believes young people should have opportunities to explore their interests, whether those interests involve fashion, design, music or other creative pursuits. She also wants to challenge the idea that pursuing a career in the arts means having to leave one's community.

Her message extends to Indigenous people living both on and off reserve. "You can still follow your dreams and live within the spaces that you don't always think that you can," she said.

She hopes to see more emphasis placed on arts and fashion programming within First Nations communities, creating opportunities for young people to discover their talents and develop their skills without feeling they must leave their homes to succeed.

For Bouchier, representation is not simply about being seen on television. It is about making room for others to imagine themselves in spaces they may not have previously considered possible.

Bouchier is quick to acknowledge that her career has not been built alone. She credits her husband, Louis, her family and friends for supporting her throughout her journey. "My husband Louis, he's basically financed my career since I started," she said.

When she was learning to sew, Louis purchased her sewing machines and continued supporting her creative ambitions. She also recognizes the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity for helping elevate her work through artist residencies, creative opportunities and access to new techniques. Her experience there included exploring 3D printing and incorporating modern technology into traditional materials and techniques, including dentalium shell work.

The Banff Centre's support helped her expand her artistic practice while connecting with other Indigenous artists. Today, Bouchier continues to develop her own designs while producing fashion shows, teaching workshops and mentoring others. She hopes to maintain that work while making the most of her growing public profile.

"To me, this is the biggest platform that I've received so far, and I'm hoping that I can use it in the best possible way… the best positive way, while still maintaining my own design and my own work," she said.

As she prepares for her television debut, Bouchier carries with her the support of her family, the memory of her Kokum Edna Rose and the encouragement of Indigenous communities cheering her on.

Her journey is a reminder that creative talent can be nurtured across generations, that fashion can be a powerful form of storytelling, and that young people should be encouraged to pursue their dreams wherever they call home.

For Bouchier, the runway may be national, but the inspiration begins with family, culture and community.

Indigenous leaders

cont. from p 8

potential adverse impacts on Aboriginal and treaty rights, including specific concerns already raised in consultation, can be further addressed before any final federal authorizations are issued."

ANNews has closely monitored these pipeline developments through multiple administrative changes and documented the stance which First Nations leadership has taken. However, the intent behind the script never changed.

Indigenous leaders have maintained a stalwart position that their ideas of free, prior, and informed consent do not align with the federal administration's, and until these points are resolved, no level-ground negotiations can take place.

Cold Lake First Nations Chief Kelsey Jacko said while Carney has talked about building a new relationship with First Nations and partnering on major project development, the pipeline announcement Thursday does not reflect those intentions.

"Yesterday the Treaty 6 chiefs shared grand entry with the prime minister, and I spoke to him briefly and invited him again to our nation," said Jacko, referring to Carney's participation in an event to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. "Today, the leaders of the Nations and communities that will be heavily impacted should have been in the room. This runs right through our territory."

Fort McKay First Nation Chief Raymond Powder said he was feeling both excited and concerned about the pipeline's designation.

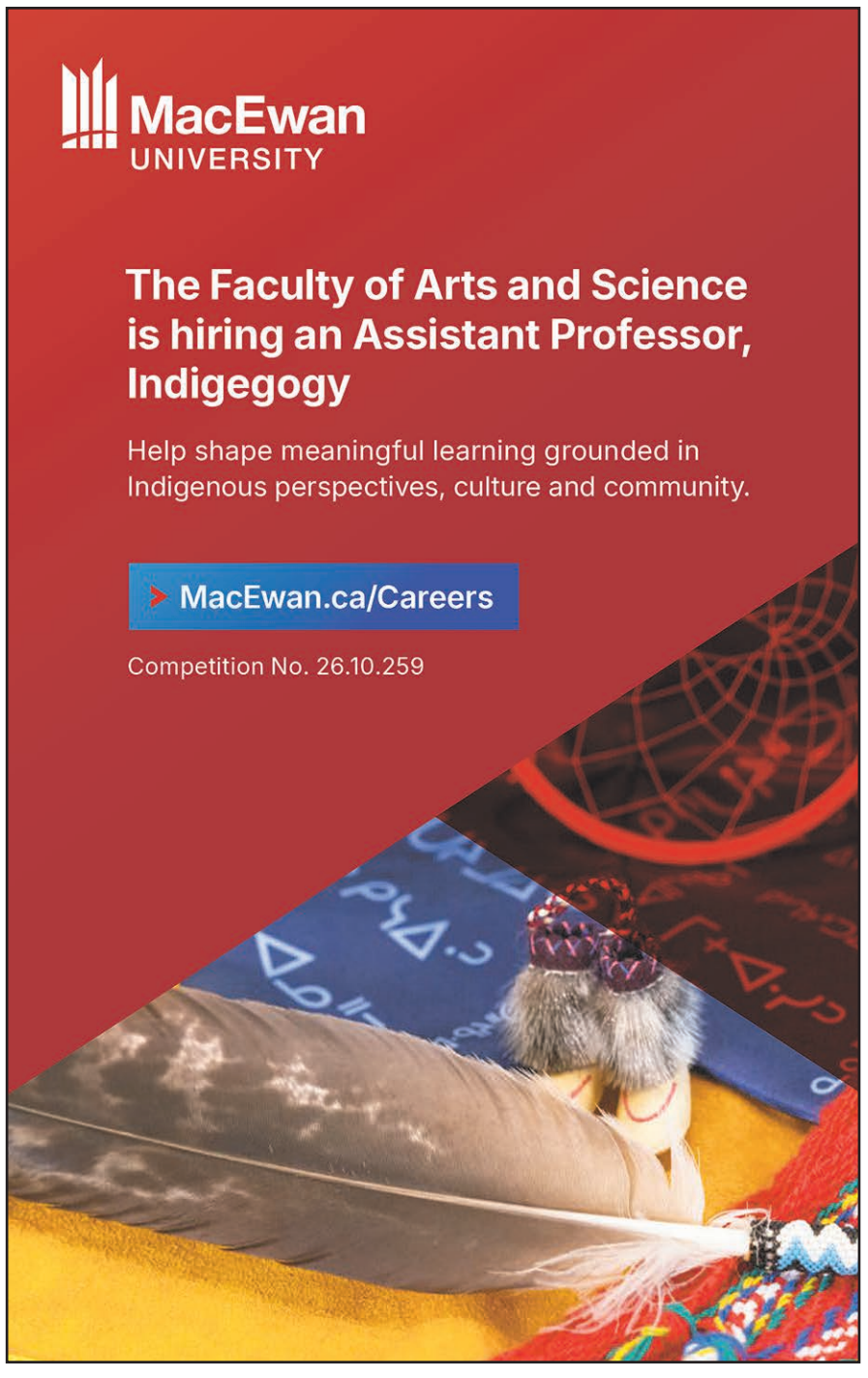
"We're excited that we get the opportunity to be a participant for the equity stakeholders and also really, really seeing the area for Fort McKay First Nation to continue to sustain the growth in our nation," he said after the announcement.

"The areas of concern, of course, are always the challenge of the ecosystems and really being harmonious with the environment and balancing with the economy."

He said he has been working with the federal and provincial governments on the consultation process and described it as meaningful.

"We've had some respectful conversations," he added.

"Of course, there are some complexities and some challenges, and we're really addressing those with the federal and provincial governments and my brothers and sisters in the five First Nations within this region."





Remembrance cont. from p 4

because of their legal status under the Indian Act. First Nations veterans returning after the Second World War also did not receive the full benefits available to other veterans under the Veterans' Land Act. (Veterans Affairs Canada)

Bull said recognition of Indigenous military contributions came too late for many veterans who had already passed away. "I realize that it was finally recognized over 20 years ago that First Nations had made a contribution. But for me, 20 years ago, probably the majority of the veterans who fought in those wars were already gone," he said.

Despite the delay, he welcomed the acknowledgement of Indigenous veterans and their role in Canada's history. "But it's good they acknowledged them. It's good they're finally recognizing them and letting them know they played a big part, not only within Canada but even across North America."

Chief Swampy-Omeasoo offered another perspective, focusing on the importance of honouring veterans through Cree values, particularly respect for those who put their lives at risk to protect their families and communities.

"We had a beautiful memorial service for our veterans, our past veterans and our current serving military. The Four Nations community came together to honour them," he said.

When discussing why Indigenous veterans deserve recognition, Swampy-Omeasoo connected their service to the responsibilities Cree people have toward one another.

"I believe it boils down to the fundamentals of who we are as Cree people: using respect and living our lives with respect for everyone, especially those who fought to keep our community safe," he said. "Most importantly, they went to fight for our mothers, our nieces, our nephews, the kids, the women and the children of the community."

He emphasized that those who made sacrifices to protect their communities deserve recognition and respect. "People who do that, I think, are 100 per cent deserving of every type of recognition that we have as Cree people."

Swampy-Omeasoo also spoke about the responsibility of First Nations leadership to address historical injustices and ensure the experiences of Indigenous veterans are not overlooked. "I think it starts with legal battles, and I think it starts with setting up bilateral tables with the federal government," he said.

He raised concerns about racism within the Canadian military, including sexual violence and harassment against Indigenous women and systemic problems with how those matters are investigated. He also questioned how First Nations veterans were treated after serving in the First and Second World Wars, saying they did not have the same access to Veterans Affairs Canada as other returning soldiers.

"Veterans Affairs Canada actually offloaded the legal responsibilities it had to veterans who served the Crown to Indian Affairs, which at the time was responsible under the Indian Act and what is now Indigenous Services Canada. And if that's not a slap in the face. I don't know what is," Swampy-Omeasoo said.

The conversation also extended to contributions beyond human military service. Bull believes Remembrance Day should recognize animals that played important roles during wartime, including horses that transported soldiers and supplies, dogs that helped detect explosives, birds that carried messages and cats that helped control vermin aboard military ships.

Both chiefs emphasized the importance of carrying these stories forward so younger generations understand the sacrifices made by those who came before them.

Swampy-Omeasoo offered a final message about the importance of remembering family, history and ancestors. He said, "Remember your ancestors because the only reason why you're here is because of them."

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Notice of Application

NRCB Natural Resources Conservation Board

www.nrcb.ca

NOTICE OF APPLICATION
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION BOARD

NRCB APPLICATION NO. 2401

Proposal to Expand the Chin Reservoir near Taber, Alberta

The St. Mary River Irrigation District (SMRID) has filed an application with the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) for approval to relocate the Chin East dam in order to expand the Chin Reservoir near Taber, Alberta. The project's western limit is in SE-26-7-16-W4, and the new dam and eastern limit are within SW 23-7-15 W4 and NW-14-7-15-W4 approximately 15 km south of Taber; and

TAKE NOTICE that:

1. The NRCB has reviewed the SMRID application, including the supplemental filings, and determined the application to be complete.
2. The NRCB will now consider the application. The NRCB may approve the proposed project without conducting a public hearing if it does not receive a written objection by a person that the Board considers may be directly affected by the project, or who has a bona fide interest in the project review.
3. A person making a written objection must explain how the proposed project may directly affect them and provide enough supporting information for the NRCB to assess whether the objection has sufficient merit to be considered at a hearing.
4. The application and all supporting information are available on the NRCB website project page: https://www.nrcb.ca/natural-resource-projects/natural-resource-projects-listing/446/chin-reservoir-expansion-east-dam. (Under section 24 of the NRCB's Rules of Practice, all documents filed in this proceeding must be placed on the public record unless the Board orders otherwise, subject to the *Protection of Privacy Act*).
5. Anyone intending to submit a written objection must do so no later than January 14, 2027. Objections must be emailed to Janet Harvey, Senior Communications and Board Reviews Specialist, at janet.harvey@nrcb.ca.

Any correspondence or information filed about this project and application will be posted on the NRCB website project page.

Dated at Calgary, Alberta, on November 10, 2026.

Bill Kennedy, General Counsel
Natural Resources Conservation Board



How a Wildland's Firefighter turned experience into a new career path

After years of physically demanding work in wildland firefighting, George Courtorielle knew he wanted a career that would be easier on his body while still building on the practical strengths he had developed in the field.

"(Firefighting) is a lot of hard, dirty work," he says. Over time, he'd seen what the long-term

impacts could look like. "I've seen other firefighters work like I did for their whole lives and at the end of it, they didn't have too much to show for it except for broken bodies."

That realization – along with the unwavering support of his wife, Helen, who is a school principal who obviously prizes education, herself – led him to the Power Engineering 4 th Class program at Northern Lakes College, and a more sustainable career path. The transition felt natural; the same problem-solving mindset and discipline that helped George succeed in wildfire response translated well into power engineering. Just as important, the online technology came easier than he expected.

"NLC's technology wasn't difficult for me, no," George says, when asked about certain aspects of online learning. His years in wildland firefighting had already made digital communication part of everyday work. "Computers and emails and all that stuff – we always used that, so it was easy to start my classes."

One of the most unique parts of George's NLC experience was the highly personalized support he received. George reports having enjoyed a highly individualized learning environment, with quick instructor responses and one-on-one guidance throughout the program.

"The instructors were actually really good," he says. "They'd respond within a day or so anytime I had questions."

For George, that level of direct support made the transition back into education feel manageable and confidence-building. It also led quickly to employment.

After graduating, George moved directly into a maintenance role with Heart River Housing, applying his new credential in a way that fit both his skills and his long-term goals. Today, his career has continued to grow into a building operator management role with Harvard Developments, work he says is a much better fit for his life and future.



NLC Grad. George Courtorielle.

For prospective students considering a career shift later in life, George's advice is grounded in both practicality and courage.

"My advice would be to maybe dip your foot into different trades," he says. "Try it out and see what you like and look at where you want to be in the future. Especially for our Metis and Aboriginal people, I'd say don't be afraid to try anything. Don't be afraid to fail. If you don't try, you've already failed."

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

Saddle Lake cont. from p 5

laws were passed following years of foundational development, the formal WINHEC accreditation process itself spans a structured four-year journey initiated in 2022.

The path to international accreditation follows five rigorous phases: First, a Letter of Intent. Submitted with aligned membership fees to the Board of Accreditation. Second, an Eligibility Application. Documentation and proposal review to advance to candidacy. Afterwards, a Self-Study: A comprehensive self-analysis – culminating in a detailed 78-page review – examining community goals, operations, and achievements.

Next, a Visiting Committee conducts an intensive on-site review featuring classroom observations, community interviews, and preliminary findings. This has just happened in Saddle Lake on October 23.

Finally, if successful, the Accrediting WINHEC Board Ruling quickly follows.

With the recent completion of the international site visit, the WINHEC Accreditation Board will make its official determination and notify the Nation by letter in December. If approved, the formal handover of the accreditation certification will take place at the WINHEC Annual General Meeting in July at Six Nations Polytechnic.

"Because there is no accreditation of First Nations schools on-reserve at the moment, we are setting a precedent for others to follow if they so choose," Steinhauer reflects.

Saddle Lake will secure a cultural future for its own youth while blazing a trail for First Nations across Turtle Island looking to break free from conventional colonial educational frameworks and reclaim true educational sovereignty.

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