

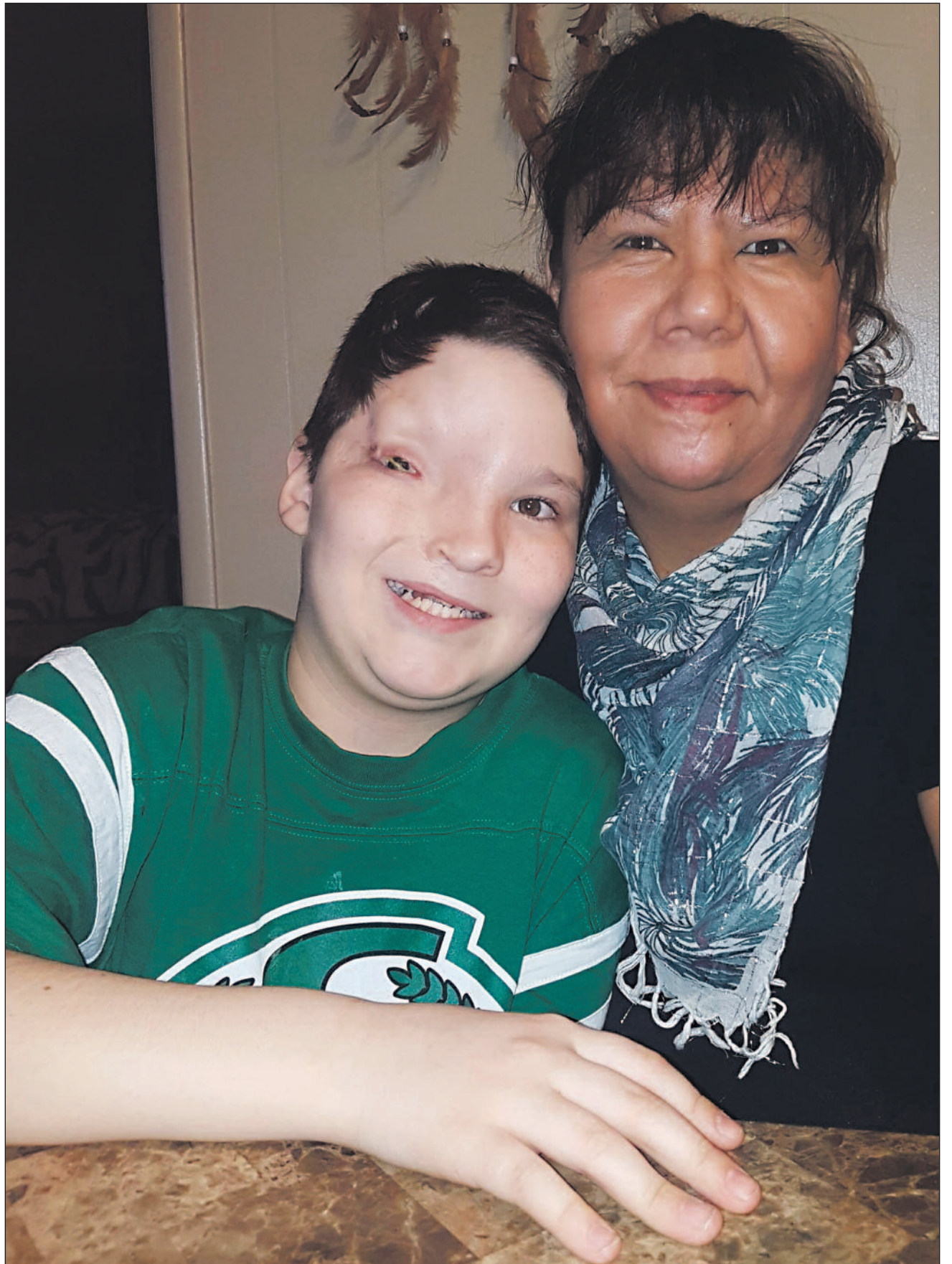
Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

Darnell's life-changing surgery expensive

Matty 'Darnell' and his adopted mother Trudi Mercredi are hoping to raise some funds so she can be with him in Toronto for his surgery.

(Photo supplied by Trudi Mercredi)



By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

Darnell needs surgery and his mom Trudi Mercredi wants to be there. But, man, is it expensive.

Costs of travel, accommodations and meals in Toronto are adding stress to the situation and a surgery that's not only required, it's something that she and her son want.

"He's going to Toronto for a major surgery which is reconstruction of his face," she said. "What they're going to do is (take) a piece of his skull from the back of his head and put it in the front of his face so he wouldn't (need) anymore surgeries down the road. The bone would grow as he grows throughout his face and where his brain is going to be exposed."

• Continued on Page 2



INSIDE



IN THE RUNNING?

White Bear Chief Nathan Pasap would like to see his community get involved in the cannabis industry.

- Page 3



SIXTIES SCOOP

Robert Doucette is taking the province and the federal government to court over the Sixties Scoop.

- Page 6



DEALING WITH TRAUMA

Nancy La Fleur's book provides a stark insight into the trauma that many Indigenous people have had to deal with.

- Page 7



TOUGH STORIES

It's not always easy being a journalist when your job is to report some of the grim details of cruel crimes.

- Page 8



BROADER HORIZONS

Nurse Shania Petit has found that travelling abroad has given her a great appreciation of her home community.

- Page 13

Health & Wellness Edition

Coming In March - Women's Issue

CPMA #40027204

Risky procedure necessary

• Continued from Page 1

Mercredi's 10-year-old son, Matty, known as Darnell, was born with a condition that caused his brain to stick out of place. He had surgery when he was two-years-old and doctors placed a plate in the area of his brain which halted the full development on his face. Mercredi said she is terrified of the risky procedure but she wants to honour Darnell's wishes to go forward with the surgery.

"He's looking forward to it because he's tired of people looking at him and staring at him," said Mercredi, originally from James Smith First Nation but now currently living in Melfort. "Some people call him (down). They're mean and say he's a freak (and ask) 'why does he look the way he looks?'"

When Mercredi heard that Darnell was considered for the reconstructive surgery, she thought of what the costs would be for travel, accommodation and meals. With the amount and date of surgery unknown, it's something that she wants to be prepared for.

"The surgeon told me the surgery is covered. It's just the flights, accommodations, the meals and the ways of getting around. I imagine taxis are not cheap over there," she said. "I'd like to take someone along with me, because I am taking my other boy out of school at the time when it does happen."

Darnell is a kid who enjoys playing archery at his school – a place where he feels comfortable and unjudged by his peers. Mercredi said in his school nobody looks at Darnell funny and no one criticizes him.

"This kid has a very beautiful soul and if anybody were to sit down and have a conversation with him, you'd never see that disability," she said. "Just by having a conversation and being around him, it's like his (visible facial) disability is not even there."

Mercredi wishes people would see Darnell who he truly is and hopes with the success of the reconstructive surgery the stares will finally end.

"Darnell just wants a normal life and to look normal," she said. "I don't know what to do. I really don't know. I'm going to have to cross my fingers, I guess."

Mercredi reached out to her home community of James Smith Cree Nation but had no luck as the community's budget is tight. She hopes to obtain resources through the Jordan's Principle which is a federal legislation to support essential health services to Indigenous children. If that plan falls through, Mercredi has no other ways of coming up with the funds and would hate to reschedule his needed surgery due to lack of funds.

Mary Culbertson appointed new Treaty Commissioner of Sask.

The Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) along with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN)

and the Government of Canada made a recent announcement of the appointment of Mary Culbertson as the new Treaty Commissioner of Saskatchewan.

"We are excited to welcome Mary Culbertson as the new Treaty Commissioner and look forward to working with her as we continue down the path of Treaty fulfillment and Reconciliation," said Harry Lafond, OTC executive director in a statement posted on the OTC website.

According to a biography found on the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada website, Culbertson is a member of the Keeseekoose First Nation in Saskatchewan and has almost 20 years professional experience working in the federal, provincial and territorial governments and with Indigenous organizations.

Culbertson brings her extensive experience in public and community service and background in family, criminal and Aboriginal law as well as dispute resolution to the position.

Culbertson begins immediately and will serve as commissioner until January 28, 2021.



MARY CULBERTSON

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– Morgan Kalk, Business graduate

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White Bear would like to be part of cannabis scene

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

Like it or not, the cannabis industry is right around the bend. Not just about smoking weed in the basement and playing video games, the emerging industry is about cultivation, medical benefits, economic opportunity, and sure, a little bit of video game stuff.

This new opportunity is being met with trepidation in some sectors, and open arms in others.

The Saskatchewan government announced in early January that 60 Saskatchewan communities will be issued permits to sell cannabis after it becomes federally legalized in July 2018.

Three of those 60 communities are Onion Lake Cree Nation, Lac La Ronge Indian Band and Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation – the only three First Nation communities chosen by the province. The thing is, some communities not included want in.



Chief of White Bear First Nation Nathan Pasap wants his community to have a cannabis dispensary for health and economic development. (Photo supplied by Chief Nathan Pasap)

who are interested in it.”

Chief Pasap expressed his interest in having a cannabis dispensary in his community to create an economic development opportunity. He is still consulting with his membership on the idea of possibly having a cannabis dispensary and cultivation in White Bear.

“The economic development side (will) create jobs. There are profits that could go to addiction awareness, sports programs, financing other businesses, and poverty reduction,” he said. “The benefits of cannabis are becoming a local distributor for medical users, getting rid of drug dealers and dealing with cannabis that is laced with other drugs and quality control.”

Chief Pasap and councillor Dez Standingready are currently conducting research on the topic of cannabis and

creating a file to be shared amongst the other councillors and their membership as not everyone may be in favour of the idea.

“There are a number of drugs in our communities all over Saskatchewan. We have to be aware of that,” said Pasap. “The best thing to do is to have knowledge in regards to dealing with these drugs ... we need to educate our youth and our membership on the harms and the addictive elements that are associated with them.”

Another avenue where education on cannabis will be available is at an upcoming conference about Indigenous Inclusion in the Hemp and Cannabis Industries that will be held in Saskatoon on March 19 and 20 organized by Kawacatoose First Nation and Digital Buffalo Ltd.

Cheryl Maurice is the CEO of Digital Buffalo Ltd, a company that deals with business and training with the cannabis sector for Indigenous peoples. She said there’s still misconceptions about cannabis and how the product can benefit people.

“At our conference we have an international company that’s interested in doing a presentation and possibly exploring the options of cultivation specifically focusing on hemp growth,” she said. “We’re looking into the different components of training and employment as well. We still have to explore the partnerships.”

Dr. Kathleen Thompson is working with Maurice and Digital Buffalo Ltd. on planning the upcoming conference. Thompson has been consulting to the legal cannabis industry primarily working to make sure people with disabilities and different minority groups have inclusion in the cannabis sector.

She said there has been excellent research around the world on the medical benefit of cannabis which has been shown to help people who have diabetes, arthritis and is also a useful exit tool to help individuals step down from drug and alcohol addictions.

“We now have over 10,000 studies that indicate there’s very strong evidence that cannabis is helpful for people who have multiple sclerosis in terms of lessening their seizures,” said Dr. Thompson. “Also helping people with neuropathic head pain ...we know that cannabis is very helpful for people undergoing chemotherapy.”

Once the current research on the health and economic benefits of cannabis, Chief Pasap hopes the information will be enough to educate and convince his council and membership to an unanimous decision on moving forward with obtaining an on-reserve cannabis dispensary.



From left, Cheryl Maurice of Digital Buffalo is hosting a conference on the hemp and cannabis industry with Kawacatoose First Nation Chief Dennis Dustyhorn and medical cannabis consultant Dr. Kathleen Thompson. (Photo supplied)

From inputs to insights.

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Time to be you and love it

Indigenous people in Canada have the worst health indicators of the entire population.

This is not shocking considering the historical trauma that First Nation and Métis people in Saskatchewan have faced. Dislocation from land, theft and abuse of children, suppression of language and culture and alienation from the economy that has led to widespread poverty.

Trauma impacts the brain and entire nervous system. Childhood trauma is also seen as the leading indicator of addictions in adults. And poverty finds people living in food deserts or unable to afford healthy food. This lack of proper nutrition makes people more susceptible to viruses and diseases like diabetes. Lots of challenges.

But there are ways you can help your health with minimal cost and there are simple things you can do to extend your life span and start feeling better physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. Here's a few helpful tips that have seemed to work for me and those close to me.

Get thee to a counselor

Almost everyone has some trauma in their background. Some more than others. An important start to any health care campaign is to get your brain straight. And confront some demons. Try a counselor. Dump everything on them. Get out your pain. See how it influences you. Eats you.

A good counselor can help you tame that beast and understand your self better. Helps you understand your addictions and how to better deal with them. That's a big step.

Quit smoking

Simple right? Kidding. I know how hard it is. Multiple quitter here. But after three days of hell, three weeks of little twitches and three months of not smoking, you will be fine. You won't stink. You will be able to smell and taste food. Your blood pressure will drop and your lungs will start to recover and you will save thousands of dollars and extend your life.

Get thee to a doctor

Gentlemen, if you are over 40, go to the doctor and get your prostate checked. The procedure is simple and a little uncomfortable but oh so important. Men mostly die from heart attacks or prostate cancer. You can prevent or treat both situations if you catch the issue quickly enough. Be proactive.

Over 50? Get your shingles vaccine at your next

prostate check up.

Watch what you eat and drink

Avoid processed and fast foods. Don't drink pop. An evening snack of a bowl of ice cream and a bag of chips is not a good thing. Replace those bad snacks with something lighter and healthier. Popcorn, maybe some nuts or raw veggies. Boring I know, but you won't have heartburn in bed anymore.

Speaking of heartburn

This is for all the beer drinkers out there. Beer

Now, I agree, beer can be a wonderful beverage, but keep it to one or two after hockey and not a 24 pack on the weekend and watch those chubby cheeks and puffy neck fade away to reveal your true pre-beer beauty. (This advice goes for all types of alcohol, but beer is the worst)



Move it or lose it

How hard is it to walk two blocks? How about eight blocks? If you are really out of shape, start with two and work your way up. Move those bones. Complacency leads to obesity and diabetes. Get out there and find your activity. It doesn't have to be the gym. It can be gardening, walking laps around the community or digging out the hockey equipment and skating with friends. Find an activity you are passionate about and do it. If you break a sweat, bonus.

Think cannabis

I have a friend who had chronic pain from old sports injuries. Opioids suck and are addictive. His doctor prescribed him some medicine derived from cannabis and it stopped his pain and with no addiction worries. He raves about it. This new and emerging medicine can be used for pain management for arthritis, anxiety and to treat diabetes to name a few.

This type of cannabis isn't about smoking a bong and watching Cheech and Chong, this is a significant advancement in access to medicine that offers hope to many with symptoms that 'modern medicine' hasn't been able to help. Great opportunity for business too.

Avoid the rage

Quit reading the comments on Facebook on Indigenous news stories. Just quit. Don't engage them. But where do they keep coming from ... they just keep coming! Who has the time those trolls have to drop hate? How? Oops, they got me going again. Just quit.

And love thyself

Figure out who you are and own it. Be you and love it. That's all that really matters.



makes you puffy. They don't call it a beer gut for nothing. It also messes up your digestion. If you drink lots of beer, I bet you have lots of antacids around.



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Just like Mom, I love my doctor(s)

I have always loved going to the doctor. It started when I was a kid going with my mom.

My mom went to the doctor about once a month: it was a poor woman's version of a spa day. Someone fawning over you, asking you questions about how you're feeling, a special table to lie on – and all for free!

I liked going because it meant missing school, hanging out with my mom one on one and getting to suck on those wooden popsicle sticks. I forgot the best part, the books. Our doctor had the best selection of religious books that money can buy.

I learned about Jesus and the fishes, Daniel and the lions, and Noah and the ark. Ever notice how every biblical character always has "a thing?" Everyone in the Bible is known for something; biblical people had their branding on point.

Our family doctor was a short dark-skinned man, Dr. Jachak, who was patient with all of my mom's aches and pains. From watching her with the doctor, I learned that doctors were there to answer all questions about the human body – why does my breath get short when I go above smoking a pack a day? How is it possible for someone to be allergic to mosquito bites? Is there a way to prevent my kids from getting lice every summer?

I had my own question – is there something I can eat to make me grow taller? (There wasn't.)

Dr. Jachak was our family doctor except for my dad who he would not see as a patient after a family misunderstanding. One of my sisters had

banged her head one day while pretending to be Hercules. Like she put a ring on her finger, yelled, "Hercules!" and then spun in a circle and fell into the wall. We all laughed at her and even acted it out over and over again that evening because we're classy like that.



The next day my mom was concerned about the size of her horn so she took my sister to the doctor. When the doctor asked her what happened, she told him, "My dad hit me." My mom tried to explain that she was just embarrassed from all the teasing but his mind was made up and my dad had to find a different doctor.

The only other doctor in the area was a different South Asian doctor who worked out of the same practice: awkward. My mom stuck by her doctor though – mostly because her medical file was probably too big to transfer to anyone other than the Mayo Clinic.

From my mom's close relationship with her doctor, I learned that visiting the doctor was some-

thing that you didn't need to be afraid of. As I became a young adult, in every city that I lived in, finding a doctor was always on my list of to-do's: after finding a place to live and discovering a cute guy to be the target of my unrequited affections.

I always looked for a female doctor because I have a female body with female parts. Like would you trust a mechanic who didn't even own a car? I found a female Indigenous doctor in Toronto who joked around with me about whether or not birth control would be covered by NIHB, "You'd think they'd make sure we had access to that!"

Then I had a tiny assertive female doctor in Saskatoon who talked me out of breast implants: "trust me, you don't want the kind of guys who are just into that." I did trust her but now I wonder, she was flat-chested after all.

Years later, in Edmonton, there was a tall brunette doctor with the cheekbones of a model who was always trying to get me to slow down my work schedule.

The only time I did not have a doctor in my adult life was when I lived in New York City. There I had only Air Canada health insurance which meant that I would hightail it back to Canada if I ever got sick or broke a bone.

Nowadays, my doctor is a Vancouver Island transplant with whom I gossip about the granola types out there who refuse to vaccinate.

As for my mom, she still takes her health seriously and now has two doctors.

Arts Board Deadlines

The Saskatchewan Arts Board announces the following deadlines for applications to programs that support the work of Saskatchewan artists and schools and communities wanting to engage in arts activities:

Independent Artists Program
March 15

Indigenous/Métis Art and Artists
April 15

SaskFestivals Program* – Annual
April 15

Artists in Communities* – Artists in Residence Projects
May 1

Artists in Schools* – Artists in Residence Arts After Hours
May 1

Prince Edward Arts Scholarship
May 1

For applications, visit: saskartsboard.ca

APPLICATIONS AND SUPPORT MATERIAL MUST BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE THE DEADLINE DATE UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.

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Kehler's new book a study in perseverance

**By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News**

Resilience and the stories of those who have fought through life's toughest challenges, is the subject for the latest book from author Allan Kehler.

Born Resilient is a collection of 17 real life testimonies from individuals who have persevered through adversity. Stories of addiction, violence, abuse, and grief are shared in order to bring to light valuable insights as to how individuals have learned to endure.

"I've always been intrigued as to why some individuals are able to rise above, and some aren't," said Kehler. "There's that line, 'blessed are those who struggle'. I wanted to think about some of the gifts that come from those times of struggle."

Kehler, an instructor of Mental Health and Wellness at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology (SIIT), has worked as an addictions councillor, consultant, and keynote speaker, in addition to

being an author. He was motivated, in part, to create Born Resilient in order to show the therapeutic nature of sharing one's story.

"There's nothing more sacred than a story. I think we're so quick to judge and too short with compassion. Often, someone is fighting a battle we know nothing about," he says. "I want people to understand that not only does everyone have a story, but I want to encourage and hopefully empower people to share their own story because that's what allows us to connect to each other and rise above our own challenges."

Kehler was able to gather stories from 17 different individuals with whom he knew personally. One of those individuals, Blanche Nickel, a teacher in the child care centre at SIIT, was approached by Kehler to share her difficult story of loss.

"Sharing my story was emotional. With my story, my children were murdered – it brought me back

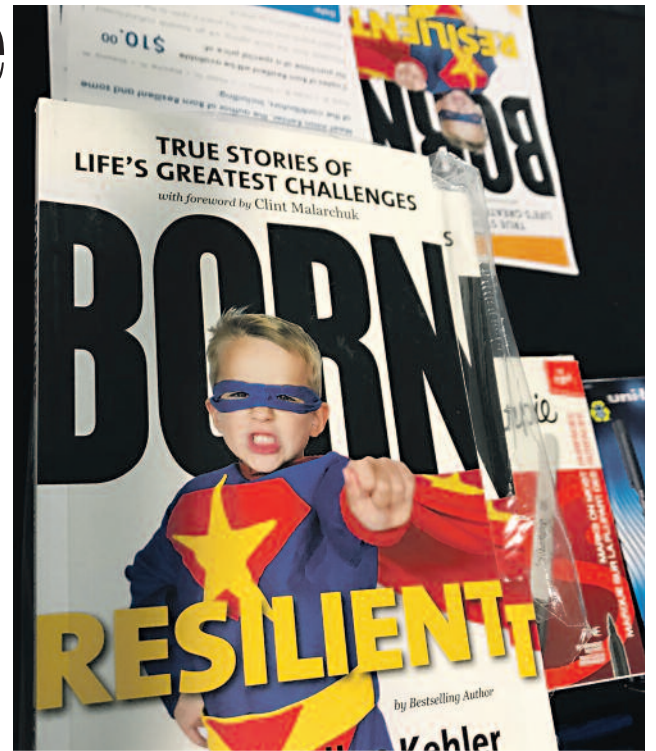
to that particular point in time; the trial, everything my family went through, and rebuilding my life," said Nickel.

Through sharing her story, Nickel hopes that her testimony and the 16 others in Born Resilient give hope to other's struggling with life.

"When writing my story, it was, in a sense, relieving to see it all on paper. Knowing what I had faced, and lived through," said Nickel. "I'm not a religious person, but I believe that it was the Great Spirit who helped me through so many difficult things. I hope this book can give others hope."

To learn more about the book, or purchase a copy, visit outfromtheshadows.ca

Allan Kehler signs his book, Born Resilient, for students at SIIT campus in Saskatoon. (Photo by NC Raine)



Doucette taking feds, province to court over Sixties Scoop

**By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News**

"I feel that the Métis people, as well as First Nations and Inuit people, are not being treated fairly. I'm not waiting another 111 years," was Robert Doucette's message to federal and provincial government in regards to the sixties scoop settlement exclusion.

Doucette, former president of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, is taking the federal and provincial governments to court for damages and compensation for survivors of the sixties scoop.

The claim alleges that government resisted and denied responsibility for loss of Métis identity and family during the scoop. He wants the courts to determine suitable compensation.

"Both levels of government are now playing the

same game of throwing a hot Métis issue back and forth, both denying any responsibility and leaving Métis people, our families, and our communities to heal themselves," said Doucette.

"Sixties scoop survivors (have) no choice but to defend ourselves and we will hold both levels of government accountable."

Last October, Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, issued an apology and \$800 million in compensation for sixties scoop survivors, excluding non-status and Métis people.

Doucette responded by filing a

Robert Doucette, outside Saskatoon courthouse, reads statement of claim against federal and provincial government. (Photo by NC Raine)

human rights complaint against Bennett, to which, he says, he has not received a response.

"I haven't heard a phone call, I haven't received a letter. I've phoned them at least three times a week, and keep getting the bureaucratic shuffle. Nobody says anything to me, so I'm frustrated," he said.

Doucette was taken from his family in 1962. The lawsuit claims that Doucette lost contact with his culture and identity, and was unable to re-integrate into his home community of Buffalo Narrows because of the cultural gap. Doucette used a baby

sweater given to him by his mother 53 years ago, to illustrate the impact that forced assimilation has had on families.

"It is a reminder of the failed, damaging, and tragic attempt by both levels of government to further their goal of assimilating Aboriginal people at whatever cost," he said.

Former Saskatchewan premier Brad Wall failed to issue an apology to sixties scoop survivors during his decade long tenure. Doucette filed a request for a formal apology from premier designate Scott Moe in his statement of claim.

"I want to tell premier Scott Moe that we are going to hold his government accountable," he said. "I would say to the Government of Canada and Saskatchewan, get ready because the flood gates are going to open."

"It is my hope that somewhere down the line that they would sit down and negotiate with us in a fair and equitable manner."



Family of Robert Doucette holds baby sweater given before he was taken from family in 1962. (Photo by NC Raine)

Book a reminder that traumas are still out there

By **Andréa Ledding**
For **Eagle Feather News**

Nancy La Fleur has written “Finding Lost”, a book about growing up around abuse, alcoholism, domestic violence and other traumas in a way that forges a path towards healing.

“I wanted to be creative so it is written through these five women. They have flashbacks or memories and those are my real childhood memories – it’s a mixture of fiction and non-fiction,” La Fleur explains, adding they told her story for her.

“I could have easily become any of the women that I wrote about – a homeless woman, my biological mother was homeless at some point in her life.”

La Fleur says she came to a point where she was tired of living with the negative emotions of trauma, and the book was her healing path forward. Many of the characters are “what ifs” of what could have happened to La Fleur. When she was in Grade 6 she stole some money and ran away to Saskatoon clutching an address she hoped was her aunt’s.

“I always think about “what if” – what if the taxi driver was in a prostitution ring – I was a trusting little character. Miraculously those things didn’t happen and led me to where I am now.”

She says writing the book was an emotional journey, and in the last part of the book she makes sense of the raw emotions of processing that trauma.

“It was quite healing. You never really recover from trauma but at least I have a sense now of understanding my healing journey,” said La Fleur, who uses her book and her experiences to connect with the children she works with as a school administrator.

“I wanted to make my story public. It’s sort of

shaking people up and saying this is still happening and we need to do something about, we need to work harder, we need to fight harder for these kids. I still see it today and it’s heartbreaking. So, I think my book kind of awakens or gives a realization of the realities of trauma.”

She feels a sense of urgency because over the course of 24 years of teaching it doesn’t seem to her like it’s gotten any better, and so the book isn’t really about her.

“I want this to be about the situation of children today, right now, what’s still happening,” she adds. “If you haven’t lived it, I don’t know if you can really understand it.”

Her own healing journey began with counsellors and psychologists but she really wanted to understand how to heal her spirit and what that looks like as an Indigenous woman. The sweat lodge was a key experience.

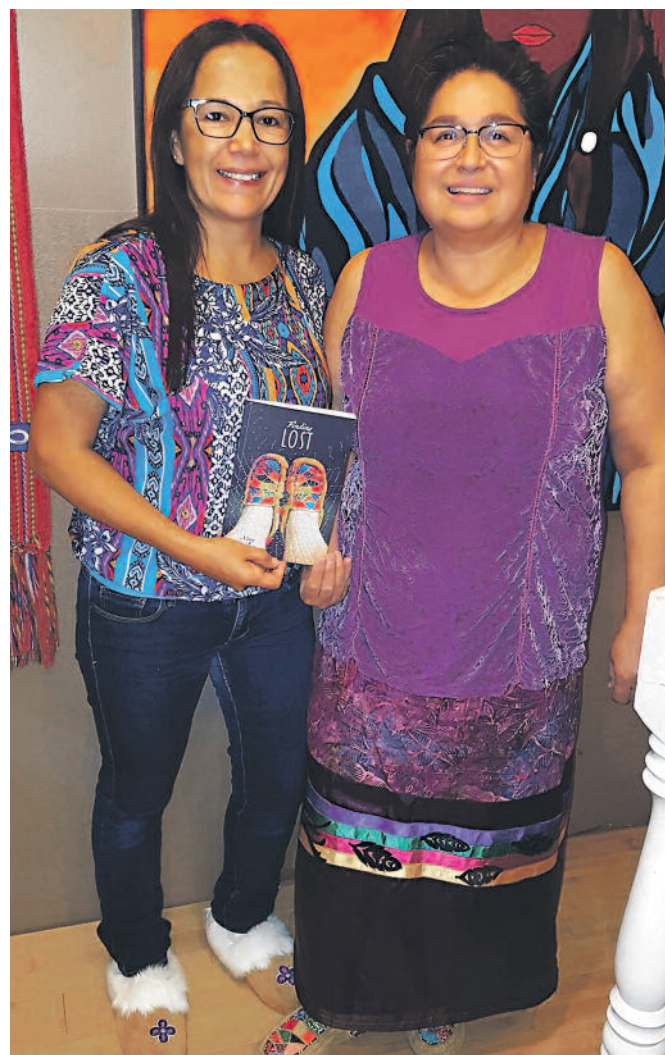
“I’d never felt anything so powerful, and it felt right. Why aren’t we using sweat lodges as a part of healing, what’s holding us back?”

Key to her own resiliency, and inspirational to her book, is the power of love and community.

“When I look back on how did this little girl survive in this tiny town of Weyakwin? What was it that nurtured me and built my resilience? And what it really was, was the power of love from these women that would take me into their homes and feed me and give me a bed to sleep in. None of them drank, they were all healthy loving mothers.

“This is powerful, the power of love and nurturing our children in our communities. That can go a long way.”

The book, which she describes as a quick and direct read, can be purchased online or at McNally Robinson in Saskatoon.



Chief Tammy Cook Searson of the Lac la Ronge Indian Band with a copy of the book Finding Lost and author Nancy La Fleur.
(Photo supplied)

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Journalists grapple with stress of reporting painful stories

By Angela Hill
For Eagle Feather News

Tragedy is nothing new.

In the last week of January, the trial of Raymond Cormier in the death of Tina Fontaine, 15, unfolded in Manitoba and details of Colten Boushie's death came from the Gerald Stanley trial in North Battleford.

For journalists who work to cover difficult news, there is a balance between their work and how they feel.

David Kirton, host of Saskatchewan Afternoon and the voice of Meeting Ground on News Talk radio, wanted to see the communities come together and healing take place before the trial, but as the week went on he reported the developments.

"Once I get into the heat of a story, I just remove myself," he said.

Betty Ann Adam is with The Star Phoenix and was a court reporter for years. Two cases stick out as among the most difficult cover. One was the testimony of a 15-year-old girl against her stepfather, a man who was terribly physically and emotionally abusive, Adam said.

The second was the trial of Brian Casement in the death of 21-year-old Victoria Nashacappo.

"All of these years later, I've never forgotten either of them and even speaking of them reminds me of the other harder trials that I've sat through, where I witnessed the evidence coming out about Indigenous women being murdered. It leaves you with a physical response," Adam said.

"There is also this rage, mixed with despair and grief."

Adam and Kirton said in the moments of hearing the worst, it's about getting the job done.

and people.

Willow Fiddler started with the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in 2016. Her second year saw the deaths of teens Josiah Begg and Tammy Keeash, and 34-



DAVID KIRTON

year-old Barbara Kentner, the latter who died six months after being hit with a trailer hitch thrown from a moving car.

"There was a period of about a few months at least, when all of this was happening that it was extremely overwhelming but of course as a journalist you just (move) along when these things are happening on a daily basis," Fiddler said.

"It wasn't until after when things started to quiet down a little bit after that ... I was finally able to take a breath, catch my breath and try and process everything that just happened."

Even after the initial incidents, the story is not over; Fiddler just covered the anniversary of Kentner being struck.

"You are revising these stories, these really just awful moments and watching people still struggle and finding ways of healing,"

Fiddler said that as an Indigenous woman she is familiar with many of the issues she reports on in Thunder Bay.

"I've grown up with these issues so I'm already familiar with the concerns you hear from family members," she said.



BETTY ANN ADAM

"It affects me too because it could easily happen to me, it could easily happen to my daughter, so there's that element that makes it more important for me to be able to cover these issues."

Fiddler says she takes care of herself by having a strong support system, both through the newsroom and her community.

Kirton and Adam have similar advice for other journalists; have someone to talk to. While covering the fighting at Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Kirton said he spoke with a colleague familiar with the story almost daily.

During the Casement trial Adam connected with another reporter in the courtroom.

"She and I sat there and listened to the evidence and afterwards, sometimes after work, and after the trial we had some good conversations, in which we were able to just debrief."



WILLOW FIDDLER

"You are making careful, accurate notes, and you are observing other people and it's all about doing the job of recording, documenting this information because you are the eyes and ears of the public," Adam said.

"You set aside your emotions in the moment as best you can."

It's about doing the job, but it's also a form of protection.

"You can't go in there everyday, allowing the pain that you witness to enter your soul," she said.

After 10 years of covering courts, Adam stopped. She now focuses on telling stories of Indigenous communities

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Recovery, trauma still a struggle in La Loche

By Chelsea Laskowski
For Eagle Feather News

La Loche is constantly retraumatized by the events of Jan. 22, 2016. The two-year anniversary of the north-west Saskatchewan rampage shooting passed recently, and the community is set to host sentencing for the shooter Feb. 23.

The shooter was 17 at the time of his offences and has already entered guilty pleas for killing four and injuring seven in the shooting that took place within a home and in the Dene Building high school. The sentencing will decide whether the offender is sentenced as an adult or youth.

The sentencing venue has yet to be decided, but the RCMP is already preparing. In late January, Staff Sgt. Greg Heuer told community members his job is to make sure the proceedings are safe for everybody regardless of the venue. He said in trying to help people heal, he is liaising to have supports available for community members.

"It is going to be tough. It's going to be hard for all of us," he said.

Still today, families struggle with voicing their emotions around the shooting. On Jan. 22, hundreds in La Loche gathered at the community hall for gospel music, food, and to spend time together. Most of those in attendance who took the mic were somewhat distanced from the trauma of the shooting. Charles Rabbitskin works at a treatment centre for addictions on Clearwater but has lived in the community for less than a year. He played a Cree drum song and spoke to the crowd.



Leonard Montgrand at his desk at the friendship centre.
(Photo by Chelsea Laskowski)

lives on a regular basis in this community," Mayor Robert St. Pierre said in an interview.

Rabbitskin, St. Pierre, and others in the community are aware of what happens when healthy coping mechanisms fail.

"People tend to close themselves off and a lot of times if there's an increase in drug and alcohol abuse, is that how they're compensating? They're drowning their sorrows, they're self-

sues," St. Pierre said.

A community wellness plan is now in place, and La Loche is in talks with BHP Billiton to offer community-led social supports. Residents are holding out hope that this will help the community

move ahead from the shooting.

"Incremental change in the community is the only thing that will make a positive social climate," said Friendship Centre Executive Director Leonard Montgrand.



Charles Rabbitskin performs a drum song on Jan. 22, 2018 at La Loche Community Hall.
(Photo by Chelsea Laskowski)

"When I walked in I felt the pain of everybody here because we can't help but to think about what had happened two years ago," he said. He said burying emotions means healing "takes a lot longer when you suffer like that."

The memories of the shooting are still fresh and are compounded by continual, preventable deaths of young people in the community.

"We tend to not want to reflect on that a lot of times because we're constantly dealing with tragic events in our

medicating. Is that how they're dealing with it?" St. Pierre asked.

Within La Loche, counselling services are available but people have had ongoing issues with having to repeat their stories to new counsellors and not having supports present right when they're in need.

"I know it's a lot of work and I can understand the dynamics of health and what have you and mental health. But we need mental health workers. We need people that can really help with those is-

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Mental health awareness – an Indigenous perspective

For me, I was not always aware of how much of my personal well-being had so much to do with what I was doing in life.

Taking care of yourself, putting yourself first is not always easy and especially as a mother, you have to make sure you are taking care of yourself if you are even going to have anything to give to your children. They need you at your best, not your worst and that is something we need to fully understand as parents.

It is better to make it easier on people than harder and not be so hard on ourselves. The world already does a very good job at doing that for us.

Everywhere we go, no matter where we look, and now with the power of technology, we are totally plugged into it 24/7, draining our energy. Images, ads, subliminal messages telling us we are not good enough. Always being told how to look, what to eat, who to be, since the get go, since we come out of the womb.

It is plastered on billboards, on magazines in the grocery stores, on television, movies, commercials ads, everywhere we look, consumerism is consuming us, in this capitalistic society we live in. We are literally marinated in Eurocentric Worldviews. That is also why everybody seems to be

adopting so much of the oppressor's worldviews and their ways to handle problems and life.

Trauma and tragedy come natural with life and unfortunately for many First Nations peoples it is life for us on the regular. It seems almost foreign to live life without trauma and tragedy. We have to try and get through what seems like barrier after barrier to get to any safe or comfortable places in this world, and society.

If you could have a degree in lived experience I know many First Nations who would have their masters and PhDs. Is it not life experience that makes us who we are?

That is why when we are going from one experience to another and not actually healing, it is affecting us and running us down and we consume and consume, things that are not healthy for us and our well-being. Therefore, we are not taking care of one another and no wonder why we have mental illness on the rise.

The entire world is out of balance right now with climate change, the

massive pollution happening to Mother Earth, the ocean, atmosphere, endangered species, and more and more issues and mental issues within society itself. Yet so many people continue to

live in denial and choose the oppressor's way of life.

You're not going to find who you are chasing in a bottle, becoming dependent on drugs, trying to be someone you're not. The system creates a dependency, but deep down inside all of us is someone who wants to detach and embrace who we truly are and be cared for and taken care of.

So, if we can at least begin with ourselves and be kind to ourselves, caring and loving to ourselves, taking care of those wounds in need of healing, before we move on to what's next too quick and then we can start taking care of one another and then those who need it most.

There is a suicide epidemic happening in Indigenous communities. There are MMIWG still being stolen from us every single day. They are still taking our children, apprehending them and putting them into their system. The

overrepresentation of Indigenous men and women incarcerated continues to rise.

The Justice for Colton Boushie movement is happening right now and it continues to show on its face that racism is alive and well in our communities and for some reason the justice system has never been on our side.

It is hard to live in a society that tried to eliminate your people and try to assimilate or make your people self-destruct, always pointing the finger and saying, hey you guys are doing this to yourselves. Always convincing you that you are not good enough for that job or good enough for this world. It's a feeling of complete hopelessness, a feeling I have felt before.

Mental illness is real and we need to take care of ourselves so we can take care of each other. It is up to us to show the future there is a good way to live life and it comes from letting go of a lot of comfort zones and things we think we know and embracing who we truly are and walking that path less taken to show those to come a better way. There is a lot of work to be done but not all is hopeless is what we need to remember and we are never alone when we walk with the prayers of our ancestors.

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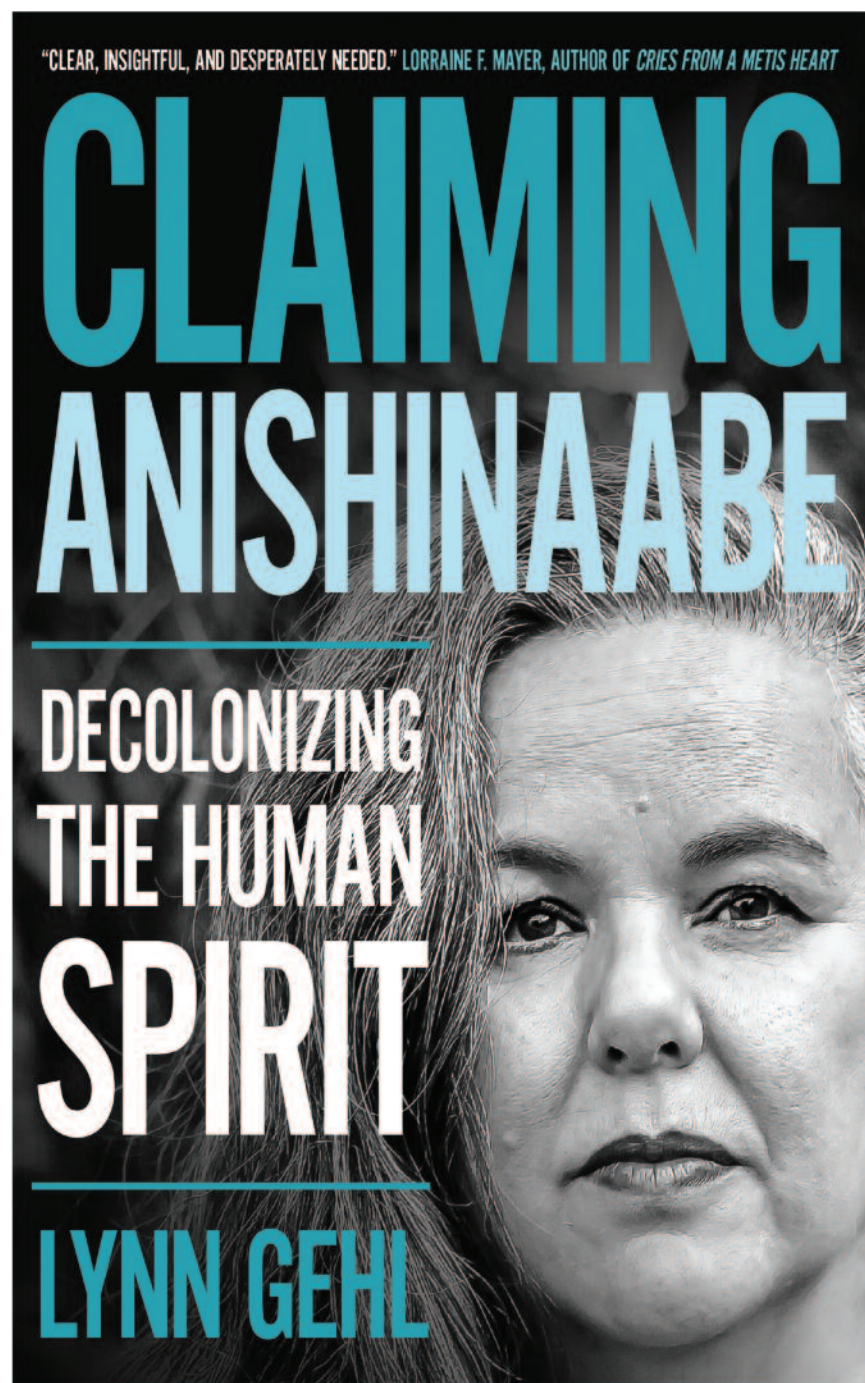
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St. Frances Cree school's success has facility bursting at the seams, expansion in the works

By Angela Hill

For Eagle Feather News

The parent advocacy group at St. Frances Cree Bilingual School in Saskatoon is looking ahead to April and the release of the provincial budget.

They have high hopes that their children's school will receive funding so they will be able to expand and move into a new facility.

The goal is to see renovations made or a new school built at the former Sion Middle School site, on 7th Street and Grosvenor Avenue, because there are concerns about space for changes at the existing St. Frances site.

Roberta McIntyre is one of the parents. She has one child in the school currently, with others either about to enter or finished.

"It's important for me, for my children, my grandchildren, to learn Cree, to learn the culture," she said. "Without them learning their language, without them learning their culture, they won't have a sense of identity."

She isn't alone with how she feels. In the past 11 years, the school has grown from about 80 students to more than 600.

"When we started there were 11 classrooms in the core of the building, but (now) we've got 14 portable classrooms on site," said Gordon Martell, superintendent of learning services for Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools (GSCS).

Martell said their successes, including receiving the 2017 Premier's Board of Education Award for Innovation and Excellence in Education, and many partnerships including with Saskatoon Tribal Council and educator training programs, has led to "a critical space shortage."

The addition of the portables has cut the playground space to half an acre, a space smaller than half a football field, and there is no dedicated space for a computer room, arts education, science programming or a cultural learning environment, he said.

"We have a closet, practically, for our elder in residence," Martell said.

The lunch program feeds about 400 students daily, but the kitchen isn't large

Roberta McIntyre is a parent who would like to see St. Frances Cree Bilingual School expand its facilities.

enough to accommodate people who want to come in and help, said McIntyre.

She thinks the worst part is the lack of space for all the parents and kids to come together for celebrations.

"We can't even put on events, Christmas concerts and stuff like that ... because we don't have the space."

So, the advocacy group formed to support the push for a new space. The parents have given tours to politicians and administrators and written letters.

"They've worked with us to bring stakeholder partners together to do information-sharing events, they've held, in conjunction with the board, consultation with the whole school community, so we've had hundreds of parents and children come out and add their voices to the needs at St. Francis," Martell said.

"They're just a wonderful group of very, very dedicated parents that understand the value of First Nations language learning and they're willing to stand up and support the program."

The new school is the number one priority for GSCS in terms of facilities, and it has been for a number of years. Martell said the Ministry of Education understands this, but he said GSCS is waiting to see if the funding follows. Without the financing, it will be up to the school division to make some difficult choices, he said.

"We are at crossroads here, a critical point, in that we can't add anymore portables," he said.

However, he hopes that doesn't mean they will have to deny any student entry.

"I suppose that's always an option, although not an option that we prefer. I really have a hard time, ethically, to deny a student Indigenous language learning. That's a tough one for me as an Indigenous person especially, that would be tough."



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Nurse finds inspiration abroad

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

The desire to learn from new cultures in order to better serve her community has led one nursing student from Buffalo Narrows to the Eastern African country of Uganda.

Shania Petit, 22, a fourth-year nursing student at Northlands College in La Ronge, is one of ten recipients of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Program. The scholarship is aimed to create a community of global leaders across Canada through cross-cultural exchanges.

This spring, she will spend three months in Uganda, a country noted for both its beautiful landscapes, and its extreme poverty.

For Petit, this is an opportunity for growth as a future healthcare professional.

"In nursing, I believe it's so important to be culturally aware and culturally competent," says Petit. "To be aware of your own culture so you're able to respect and understand others around you."

Growing up in northern Saskatchewan, Petit says the lack of healthcare services in the North was one of the catalysts to seeking a career in nursing. She believes Indigenous people need care from their own.

"There's a lack of those kinds of services, and I wanted to help with that," Petit says.

Nursing opened her eyes to how important it is to be culturally mindful. When she learned about the possibility of continuing her studies in Africa, she knew it would be a valuable opportunity.

"I love traveling and I love nursing, so being able to work and do what you love is the ultimate

goal. That's the direction I want to take my career."

The trip to Uganda will be Petit's second time traveling abroad for nursing. Last July, she spent two weeks in Norway as part of the Innovative Learning Institute for Circumpolar Health program, learning and connecting with Norway's indigenous Sami people.

"I gained perspectives on how their healthcare compares with ours, and found a lot of similarities with both of our Indigenous people," said Petit. "When I'm nursing in everyday life, I'm not judging or projecting culture onto anyone. The more I understand my own culture, the more it helps me to understand others through their culture."

In Uganda, Petit and her colleagues will first be sent to community placement sites for the first month. They will then work part-time in the community health centre while they collaborate on a community health project with members of the community.

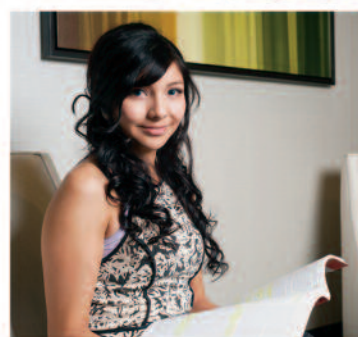
Uganda, a country with over 40 million people, is one of the world's poorest. With daily challenges in water supply, sanitation, and diseases like HIV, Petit says she expects nursing in Uganda to be much different than what she's used to in Canada.

"Connecting with global colleagues and seeing how they nurse over there, I think I'm going to come home with a very strong appreciation of where I live," she says.

"I want to eventually settle down in the North. I think with trips like this, I'm going to gain more diverse experience so I can bring it home and apply it here. I want to be a better nurse because of this."



Shania Petit at the cultural festival 'Riddu Riddu' in Norway, during her nursing trip with the Innovative Learning Institute for Circumpolar Health program.



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Lonechild tapped to head First Nations Power Authority

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

A new face at the helm of the First Nations Power Authority (FNPA) could mean impactful changes in energy and economic development for communities on the Prairies.

Guy Lonechild has taken over as CEO of the FNPA – a not-for-profit organization that supports the development of Indigenous led business opportunities in the Canadian power sector. Lonechild, a former Chief of the now Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) is no stranger to community development and is eager to initiate growth with the help of SaskPower and AESO (Alberta Electric System Operator).

“We have a new mantra here at FNPA: moving from vision to implementation,” said Lonechild. “When we discuss the relationship First Nations have had with SaskPower it historically hasn't been very positive. The reality is that the FNPA got its start from SaskPower, the FSIN and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council to embark on this journey together, where First Nations are becoming major players in renewable energy and development throughout Canada.”

The new CEO says that his vision for the future is to help mobilize wealth opportunities for First Nations. As such, the FNPA is involved in a variety of com-

munity-based projects, including a 20 megawatt flare gas set-aside developed in partnership with SaskPower and the

ities,” said Lonechild, adding that the set-aside programs, like the new one soon to be released for 20 MW of solar

“The impetus is there for First Nations and SaskPower to look for options to cut the rising costs of power bills, building much needed green infrastructure, and promoting community energy planning and conservation. One important goal is to facilitate viable projects – with the help of federal and provincial investments on utility scale for communities to become more sustainable which will include wealth generation opportunities for First Nations and their industry partners.”

Looking forward, Lonechild said FNPA has had the goal of going from a non-profit to a for-profit corporation within the next five years, which would ensure its own self-sufficiency and growth as a company.

“The sky is the limit and we're ensuring that we are a strong, trusted and efficient organization to bridge that gap between industry, power utility companies, and First Nations throughout Canada.”

Lonechild doesn't count out any possibilities of the FNPA, to grow, diversify into larger scale power production and transmission, while building on their current role as a key service provider to build much needed community capacity – jobs, training and education, he added, and that together, First Nations through the FNPA can build a much more prosperous future.



**Former FSIN Chief
Guy Lonechild is the
new CEO of FNPA**

Flying Dust First Nation to serve as a template for other communities, through a First Nation Opportunity Agreement (FNOA) with SaskPower.

“There are so many great opportunities in Saskatchewan and Alberta, to help reduce carbon emissions, but also to take hold of wealth generating opportu-

and the RFPs for wind are drawing the attention of many First Nations, allowing for wealth creation well into the future.

One key area for First Nations is renewable energy, as many First Nations in Saskatchewan pay higher power bills than adjacent cities, towns, and municipalities, says Lonechild.

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Indigenous Circle evolving after 'darn good run'

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

Doug Cuthand, Nelson Bird and Creeson Agecutay are known as the three faces of CTV's Indigenous Circle.

The show was an opportunity to showcase the voices of Indigenous stories in Saskatchewan. With over 5,000 members on the TV show's Facebook page and countless viewers tuning in every Sunday evening at 6:30, it became the most popular, albeit only Indigenous TV programming in the province.

But after 24 years, viewers of CTV Regina Indigenous Circle will no longer be seeing the show on Sunday nights. The decision is not to be confused with a show cancellation but it's evolving where Indigenous stories will be told in everyday news instead of slotted into one show per week.

J.C. Garden, the director of news and public affairs of CTV-Regina, said the news organization has expanded its news programming within the last year by adding a 5 o'clock newscast which provides them with more local programming space.

"We wanted to make sure those important Indigenous stories were making their way into our mainstream newscasts," said Garden. "The Indigenous Circle brand isn't going anywhere. Indigenous Circle is going to be completely incorporated into our main newscasts. That's where we feel they belong."

Looking back to when the show first started, Doug Cuthand was the first face of Indigenous Circle which began in 1993. He recalled thinking the creation of the show was a great way to showcase the voices of Indigenous people in

Saskatchewan.

"I thought it was a great idea. It was an idea that the time has come," said Cuthand, who is a freelance writer. "We had newspapers and radio programs but a good television show was beyond our reach."

A few years later, Nelson Bird took over the show where he enjoyed his role as a storyteller. He recalled watching Indigenous Circle before joining the team and saw himself sitting in Cuthand's seat.

"I remember watching Doug and I told my wife 'someday I think I want to host that show'," said Bird.

And that he did. Bird started hosting the TV show in July 1998 after he completed his undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Regina. For almost 20 years, he was the main face of CTV's Indigenous Circle. Five years ago, he became CTV Regina's assignment editor leaving Creeson Agecutay as the host and producer of the TV show.

The tiered faces of Indigenous Circle ended with Agecutay. He reflected back on a time watching the show with his mom and said "one day, I'm going to host the show."

"I watched (Bird) on TV when I was little. We'd grab our dinners and sit around the TV," said Agecutay. "I was inspired by (Bird) and seeing him on TV."

Over the years, the show fulfilled a mission to bridge the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to understand Saskatchewan's Indigenous peoples through the stories that were told. Bird said the most memorable part of doing the show is the people they meet.

"When the camera was put away, we actually had a chance to get to know people

and them to get to know us," said Bird. "Literally taking part in events whether I'm dancing or climbing a hill, doing all these things and laughing, that is what I'm going to remember the most about the show."

Even though the show is winding down, the Indigenous Circle



(Left) Nelson Bird and Creeson Agecutay on the CTV Regina Indigenous Circle. (Above) Agecutay and the first face of Indigenous Circle, Doug Cuthand. (Photo by Shana Pasapa)

now. It's just a matter of growth," said Cuthand. "It was a darn good run."

Agecutay said hosting and producing the show was bittersweet but he is glad he had the opportunity to fulfil his dreams.

"I hope I made the viewers proud and made everybody happy in the direction we took the show. I had a lot of fun doing it," said Agecutay.

Bird said Indigenous stories never end and need to be told. It was a job that he loved doing and it will be something that he will miss.

"It's still hard. I get choked up when I talk about the last show," said Bird. "This journey I was on is coming to an end, it's difficult."

The last Indigenous Circle episode will be shown on Feb. 18 where Agecutay and Bird will take viewers on a journey reflecting back on the shows throughout the years.



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Companies keen on workplace health

**By Chelsea Laskowski
For Eagle Feather News**

After signing a memorandum of understanding, a number of Saskatchewan-based companies are part of a movement to better understand the workplace health of Indigenous people.

Among those who have signed the MOUs with the Saskatchewan First Nations Safety Association (SFNSA) since last year are Bridges Health and Mosaic Potash, putting their MOU tally at 24 First Nations, organizations like FSIN, businesses and academic institutions. According to the SFNSA, those documents formalize a commitment to build on the strengths of both parties in order to enhance safety education and directives.

For Bridges Health, which has offices in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert, the conversation started back in October at a safety conference where Vice-President Leon Ferguson met with SFNSA founder and CEO Toby Desnomie. Ferguson said there was a desire on his end to get educated on First Nations culture.

"I think it's imperative for an organization like ourselves to come in with a clear mind and coming in with the intent to understand, not come in with intent to solve because we don't understand it yet," he said.

Bridges Health is focused on helping employees with illnesses and injuries,

who face sporadic work absences, as they navigate health, education and supports. Meanwhile, SFNSA's mission is to empower the province's 74 First Nations communities through promoting and supporting an injury-free lifestyle.

Some of the topics both Ferguson and Desnomie think are relevant to workplace health for First Nations people include geographical challenges, the remoteness of some communities, historical trauma, and lateral trauma.

"What we are doing is bringing them (Bridges Health) into the fold and starting the conversation surrounding these topics that First Nations people are moving through," Desnomie said.

Ferguson said he is passionate about learning more because he values Indigenous people in the province.

"There's all these different challenges that some of us can't relate to and it's not because we don't want to it's because we just don't know. And I think that there's a lot of opportunity for us to become more aware of those challenges," Ferguson said. "We can't forget that people are struggling with different things. For us we have a focus on the workplace so we have to truly understand what's going on behind the scenes as well."

One benefit Desnomie said SFNSA will get from the partnership is a better understanding of mental health. Already,



Saskatchewan First Nations Safety Association founder and CEO Toby Desnomie signed an MOU with Bridges Health Vice-President Leon Ferguson to help Indigenous employees access services to deal with historical and lateral trauma.

(Photo supplied)

Desnomie and Ferguson have discussed how mental health contributes to the health and safety of the worker, and how that can be tied into rules, regulations and practices within the workplace. Bridges Health already has a practice of educating employees about mental health and equipping them with Mental Health First Aid.

Desnomie said further meetings with Bridges Health and the other groups they have signed MOUs with will help

inform a future First Nations Mental Health Strategy the SFNSA is working towards. Desnomie has 20 years' experience in the occupational health and public safety field but the SFNSA is still fairly new, having launched in the summer of 2016 with its home base in Fort Qu'Appelle.

Overall, Desnomie said his goal is to give a voice at the table for First Nations workers when it comes to occupational health and safety.

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There are two positions available. Each position is to provide services to a maximum of 40 hours per week at a set rate of \$30.00 per hour.

Service agreements can be picked up at the Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre.

Advisors/Elders must obtain a Criminal Record Check (for vulnerable sector) prior to being awarded this contract and obey all rules and regulations while at the centre.

Send resumes to:

Deputy Director of Programs: Diane Houk
Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre
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Saskatoon, SK S7K 6L3

Resumes will be opened in public at the above address at 1:00 p.m., February 23, 2018.

Parties wishing to view the facility or requiring further clarification to assist in their submission can contact the Deputy Director of Programs at 306-956-8803.

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Dr. Alexandra King to chair Indigenous Health at U of S

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

The University of Saskatchewan has welcomed Dr. Alexandra King, Cameco Chair of Indigenous Health, with a traditional pipe ceremony to usher in her role in improving Indigenous healthcare in Saskatchewan.

King, who is from Nipissing First Nation in Ontario, will serve for five years as the first Cameco Chair of Indigenous Health in the province. An internal medicine specialist, teacher, and mentor, King will work directly with Indigenous communities throughout the province to understand their healthcare and wellness needs.

"I'm in the process of settling in, forming relationships, and trying to understand what the health priorities are of Indigenous people here in Saskatchewan," said King.

Her position involves community-based research, the instruction of new physicians and changing the way established doctors in the province practice medicine. She says that focusing on Indigenous healthcare allows one to explore the issues unique to the people of this province.

"We look at health within a holistic manner; the physical as well as the spiritual and mental," said King. "You can look at Indigenous wellness within the context of a particular First Nation, or an inner-city core, so it gives a lot room to explore different aspects of wellness."

Indigenous people have a life expectancy that is 15 years shorter than non-Indigenous Canadians, while infant mortality rates are two to three times higher, and diabetes rates are four times higher.

As such, key areas of focus early on, says King, will include the provincial HIV epidemic, rising hepatitis C

rates, and diabetes. King also wants to draw attention to issues such as those living with boil water advisories, children in care, and the mental health impacts of racism. The federal government has pledged to eliminate all long-term boil water advisories on reserves by 2021.

"Most people don't think immediately of issues like boil water advisories when they think of health, but these are fundamental to how we live our lives, and you can only imagine the impact on people that go through this year after year," she said.

In order to serve the diverse communities across the province, King will also develop more education to ensure cultural appropriate healthcare is available.

King said cultural safety practices will examine power imbalances between a patient versus monolithic systems and the individuals within it.

"Whether you're talking about indigenous people, new Canadians, or LGBT individuals, when they're interacting with the healthcare system, they need to be doing so in a system that welcomes and accommodates them, not making one feel as if they're being discriminated," King said.

King took position of Cameco Chair of Indigenous Health in October 2017.

The position is funded by a \$1.5 million donation made by Cameco in 2006 and a \$3 million endowment raised by the Royal University Hospital Foundation.



Dr. Alexandra King, Cameco Chair of Indigenous Health, during chair announcement press conference in Saskatoon. (Photo credit: David Stobbe)

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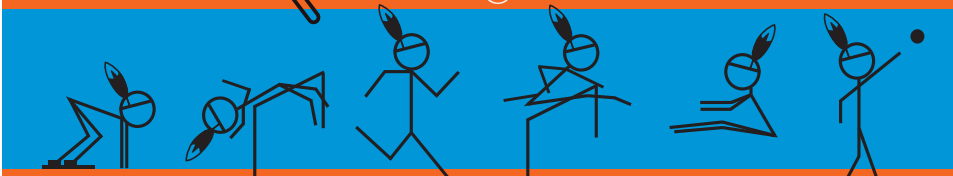
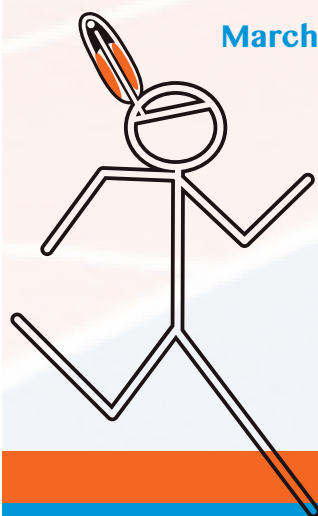
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Council enthusiastic about City's sixth urban reserve

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

The City of Saskatoon and Thunderchild First Nation have cleared a path to designate the First Nation's Retro Petro Gas Station and Convenience Store at the corner of Idylwyld Drive and 33rd Street as an urban reserve.

Mayor Charlie Clark and Chief Delbert Wapass, along with the Council of Thunderchild First Nation, signed the agreements at a special meeting of city council.

"I want to thank Thunderchild First Nation for choosing to invest in our community with the development of the Retro Petro and the establishment of an urban reserve at this busy Saskatoon intersection," said Mayor Charlie Clark.

"Our long history of establishing urban reserves has proven the shared benefits they bring in investment, job creation, and services that benefit the Indigenous community and all citizens of the community. Tangible partnerships like these are meaningful steps in the journey of reconciliation."

With soon to be expected approval from the federal government, this will be the sixth urban reserve created in Saskatoon since the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in 1988 turned a snow dump in the corner of an industrial area into what is now a thriving enterprise and office region.

The Retro Petro is located on a busy corner with many Indigenous families living in the surrounding neighbourhoods of Mayfair, Caswell Hill and City



(Right) Thunderchild Chief Delbert Wapass received a carving of a white buffalo from Saskatoon Mayor Charlie Clark. (Above) Members of Saskatoon city council and Thunderchild First Nation councillors applauded the agreement. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

Park. The several hundred students at the Saskatchewan Polytechnic campus across the road will also benefit from the urban reserve through jobs and cheaper products.

"We are very excited to finally conclude the urban reserve process with the City of Saskatoon," said Chief Delbert Wapass. "This would not be possible without the prayers and support of our Elders/membership and the hands-on support of our Mayor Charlie Clark and his Council."

"Today is a good day and the beginning of a new chapter in Thunderchild First Nation's road to economic sovereignty."

The signing event took place in Saskatoon City Council Chambers following a special council meeting where the urban reserve motion was passed unanimously. In front of several Thunderchild Band members, City staff and

interested citizens, the event was opened with a prayer by Thunderchild's oldest elder, Joe Jimmy. Members of Thunderchild's Council took seats in the middle of the Chamber while Mayor Clark and Chief Wapass addressed the crowd and offered comments.

"It is fitting on the 30th anniversary of our first urban reserve creation that we are celebrating this achievement today," said Clark. "People come to Saskatoon for opportunity and we want to be a welcoming host and partner. Every step we try to improve and to be good neighbours."

"This event can be tied to the signing of Treaties. That was about peaceful coexistence and working together," said Chief Wapass. "But we have challenges and poverty is everywhere. We have to come together to look out for people."

Thunderchild First Nation is an independent Cree First Nation located



northwest of Saskatoon near Turtleford. A signatory of Treaty No. 6, Thunderchild First Nation has 2,800 members. Approximately 1,300 members reside on the home reserve, and 1,500 members live in other communities throughout the province.

"Many of our people live in this city. There is so much history here," added Chief Wapass. "So, thanks to the City of Saskatoon. This reserve designation would not have been a reality and happen so soon if not for the work of the Mayor and the Council. So much will come from this."



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Whitecap, fed gov't move step closer to meaningful treaty negotiation talks

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

Whitecap Dakota First Nation and the federal government have signed the framework to an historic agreement grounded in reconciliation.

Signed at Whitecap Dakota First Nation in January, the agreement commits to exploratory discussions identifying ways to achieve meaningful and lasting reconciliation. According to the federal government, Whitecap was present at Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 discussions in 1870, but was not invited to sign those treaties. The framework agreement signed Monday will seek to find common ground among the two parties to work towards treaty negotiations.

"We know that this is the first step forward in self-determination, which is really a part of this journey to reconciliation," said Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs.

"This about the social, cultural, and economic sustainability," she said.

The negotiations should result in a more streamlined approach, explained Bennett, in which a term-sheet containing Whitecap's appeals will be presented to cabinet, who can then provide a mandate to get the First Nation what it needs.

"In what the Prime Minister calls 'recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership', this is the way that partners deal with one another, as opposed to the rather tilted power differential that existed for far too long," said Bennett.

A key element of the framework agreement going forward will be the means to formally recognize the relationship between Whitecap and the Crown, and acknowledging the significant contributions made by the Dakota in founding and developing the country.

"We want to take our rightful place and be a part of the economy," said Darcy Bear, Chief of Whitecap Dakota First Nation. "You look at Whitecap, there is still so much need here (including) economic development and creating a sustainable community so we're not reliant on government resources."

As a result of being left out of treaty negotiations, Whitecap Dakota received only 16 acres of land per person, opposed to those belonging to Treaty First Nations, who received 128 acres per person. Bear said he'd like to expedite treaty negotiations in order for Whitecap to be more sustainable, and expand its land base.

"What we're looking for out of this, certainly the benefits of the numbered treaties, and additional land base for Whitecap," he said.

Bear also said he would like to see the treaty result in capital resources for investment in the community, and resources for language and culture programming in Whitecap.

"When we get the capacity, we prove that we can be successful," said Chief Bear. "I think we set a precedent for other First Nations to follow, and if more First Nations can emulate what's happening here, we'll have a strong Canada."

The agreement states both parties will develop a negotiation mandate within 180 days. A forthcoming treaty would be the first treaty signed in Saskatchewan since the early 20th century.



Minister Carolyn Bennett, Chief Darcy Bear, and Councillor Dalyn Bear sign the framework agreement between Whitecap Dakota First Nation and federal government as Senator Melvin Littercrow looked on. (Photo by NC Raine)

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MOU will ensure increased treaty education and awareness

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

Saskatchewan schools continue to strengthen their commitment to reconciliation with a new agreement recognizing the importance of treaty education.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed recently by the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Saskatchewan

our commitment to work together for the benefit of all Saskatchewan students.”

Newly sworn-in Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson said that as she was growing up, she often felt an absence of treaty knowledge and education.

“There was not a lot of education on treaties (at schools), some com-

herent rights were, was when I was going to school in my own First Nation,” said Culbertson.

“It’s going to be amazing to see more education in our schools. This is the way forward.”



Treaty Commissioner Mary Culbertson, SSBA President Dr. Shawn Davidson, FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron, and SICC President Wanda Wilson signed a treaty education MOU at FSIN offices in Saskatoon. (Photo by NC Raine)

Indigenous Cultural Centre (SICC), the Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA) in effort to use education as treaty awareness as a vehicle toward the elimination of systemic discrimination.

“Our intention with the MOU with our institution is to create partnerships and relationships, and to create more treaty education and awareness in the classroom for all races and religions,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron during a press conference.

The MOU aims to embody the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, endorsing partnerships in the spirit of reconciliation.

“Everything we do as elected leaders and all levels of government have something to do with Inherent treaty rights, and we want to ensure that this is something all people in the classrooms understand and become more knowledgeable on to deter some of the perceptions and false attitudes,” he added.

The SSBA has recently passed several resolutions relating to treaty education, including a mandatory Indigenous studies class at the secondary level, adopted in 2017.

Last year also saw the call for all schools and board of education offices in Saskatchewan to display the Treaty 6 symbol.

“Our ongoing partnerships are very important in addressing shared responsibilities and interests in Saskatchewan’s education systems,” said Dr. Shawn Davidson, SSBA President.

“Joining together to sign this MOU is about

pletely non-existent. The only time when I could be surrounded by people who knew where I came from, what our treaty in-

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Métis history will gain importance in school system

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

Saskatoon Public Schools have committed to make Métis history a fundamental area of study for their students.

Representatives from the Central Urban Metis Federation Inc (CUMFI) and Saskatoon Public Schools signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at Westmount Community School recently, committing to the education of Metis culture and history in all public schools in the division.

"The signing of this MOU with the public-school board will ensure that Métis culture and history will continue to be taught in the public-school system," said Shirley Isbister, CUMFI President.

"We want our children to have a strong sense of pride in their culture while having a meaningful learning experience where they will be able to learn, grow, and connect in the spirit of reconciliation," she said.

The MOU outlines several intended outcomes, including providing education to support self-determination and holistic well-being of Métis people, fostering mutual respect for all people in their identity development, increasing graduation rates, offer programs and to increase the knowledge of Métis history and the culture competencies of all staff.

"Students have benefitted from our long-standing



Ray Morrison (L), Saskatoon School Board, and Shirley Isbister, CUMFI, signed a Memorandum of Understanding at Westmount Community School to improve Métis curriculum. (Photo by NC Raine)

relationship with CUMFI, which has allowed us to bring important lesson and educational experiences about Métis culture and history," said Ray Morrison, Chair for Saskatoon Public Schools.

"Advancing our collaboration will help the school division in the important work to realize reconciliation for all our students," he said.

With a gymnasium full of students at Westmount Community School, both officials spoke to the importance of diversity in a healthy community.

"Our school division believes in lifting up our young people. We have the means and opportunities to make a difference in students' lives, and want to ensure

all students are provided with fair opportunity to succeed," said Morrison.

Echoing his message, Isbister added that initiatives like this will help to eliminate racism from our younger and future generations.

"I believe that if we celebrate diversity and each embraces who they are in their culture, that that's how we're going to begin to work on eliminating racism," said Isbister.

"Children aren't born racist, we make them that way. We need to look at the spirit of reconciliation and how we can get children to learn about each others culture and celebrate them."



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NORTEP students welcomed into the fold at Northlands

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

Education students at Northlands College in La Ronge are celebrating being under one roof.

The students gathered on Jan. 17 at the Rock Campus at Northlands College for a grand opening lunch to welcome new and transferring education students.

Northlands College, as of July 31, has taken over the programs previously offered by the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) and Saskatchewan Northern Professional Access College (NORPAC). The grand opening marked the arrival of all former NORTEP students who were transferring.

"We're trying to make everything welcome – bringing all our students together so the former NORTEP students feel like they're a part of the Northlands culture," said Northlands President and CEO Toby Greschner.

"It's really about empowering northern people to be educated and take control of their own destiny."

The celebration included a blessing from an elder, a drum ceremony, and lunch to welcome the 41 students transferring from NORTEP and NORPAC. Northlands is now part of a bigger system that has more students and offers more choice, says Greschner, including high school teacher education, which meets a big need in the North.

"We're trying to get away from the way it was ten years ago, where the only game in town was NORTEP. You had to become a teacher. Now there's a wider range of options for students," he said.

Kristy Waite is a third year Bachelor of Education student who transferred from NORTEP to Northlands. She says that while the process was stressful at times, Northlands has been doing everything they can to accommodate the students.

"Northlands was more than helpful and continues to be more than helpful," said Waite.

The students who transferred from NORTEP are in the same building, the same classroom, and have some of the same instructors. The continuity is helping many students, like Waite, stay in the North.

"Ideally, I want to stay in the North," she says. "A lot of us were scared, we didn't want to move to the bigger cities, we wanted to stay near our northern communities, and that's what this provides."

Northlands looks to continue its expansion of program offerings and campuses in northern Saskatchewan, hoping to expand their reach to La Loche, Sandy Bay, and Cumberland House.

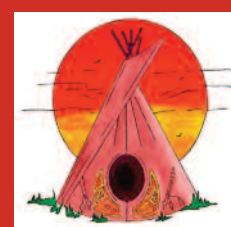
"We've always been in a trajectory to grow university program offerings. The numbers are growing," said Greschner. "We're developing this college, town, and college culture for students. We want to have 500 students registered in university classes in five years time."

And with adequate healthcare often a question in northern communities, Greschner says Northlands will continue to make training healthcare professionals a priority.

"If we don't have healthy people and healthy communities, we have nothing," he says. "We work hard to make sure students and community members are aware of able to access the health services they need, wherever they are."



Students helped tell the story to the media of the grand opening of the Rock Campus and official welcome of education students from NORTEP at Northlands College in La Ronge.



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Saskatchewan Polytechnic uses VR system to demonstrate trades at the Future is Yours Career Expo.

Students urged to invest in themselves

By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

For many young people, knowing which career path to follow and how to get there can be a difficult endeavour, particularly when answers to some of these more complicated questions are hard to come by.

At The Future is Yours Career Expo, employers and educators aim to answer questions, guide curiosity, and inspire young people from across Saskatchewan to take their future in their own hands.

More than 1,400 students from cities, towns, and First Nations across the province turned out on Feb. 6 to The Future is Yours, in what is Saskatchewan's largest career expo targeting Indigenous youth.

Students connected with 86 exhibitors from numerous industries and institutions, including universities and technical colleges, arts, music and media, communications, healthcare, potash, gas and mining, hospitality, law enforcement, armed forces, and more. The fair is hosted by The Saskatoon Tribal Council and sponsored by Nutrien.

Jolyn Sloan, Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the University of Saskatchewan, says that one of the key areas when connecting with students at the expo is addressing some misconceptions about post-secondary education.

"One thing that students (assume) is that it's really difficult to get into uni-

versity. We let them know that we calculate an average based on five classes, so if they have a 70 per cent or above, they can get in," said Sloan.

Law and nursing are the two areas of study drawing most interest from First Nations students at the expo, she says. But regardless of the discipline, the university is a place for students of all interests and backgrounds.

"I think it's really important to be a presence here. We let (the students) know that we have a high amount of Indigenous students that come to the U of S, and we have amazing programs to offer them," she says.

In addition to career exhibits, the expo also featured keynotes by professional basketball player Michael Linklater, former CFL player J.R. LaRose, a powwow, a performance by musician and activist Eekwol, and panel discussions from current post-secondary students and from industry professionals.

Mark Arcand, Chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, also spoke to the students, encouraging them to invest in themselves.

"The people of this city and this province are understanding that First Nations people matter," he said. "How many of you want to be successful? That's what this event is going to produce. There are people on the other side of that curtain who want to invest in you, but you have to be engaged. You have to ask questions."

Pechawis' powerful message of possibility

By Tara Campbell

Tia Pechawis is showing young Indigenous athletes anything is possible. The 16-year-old Mistawasis First Nation member is a standout volleyball, lacrosse and basketball player, who's competed among the best. As a member of Team Saskatchewan's first-ever all-women's lacrosse team to compete

and her community. In 2017 she received 17 school awards; and while some were in recognition of her athletic prowess, others included a nod for English language arts, mathematics, native studies, and citizenship. She also earned her way onto the honour roll.

She plans to carry on her



at the North American Indigenous Games, Pechawis has already found a place in the history books.

Along with her success at the international level, Pechawis has won handfuls of athletic awards locally, at Leask Community School. While the accolades are nice, it's not what she is focused on; Pechawis is far more interested in the impact her success has on athletes coming up behind her. She says she wants to be a role model to younger athletes, and "show them that you can do whatever your heart desires; and to play at a top level and be scouted for university teams."

Pechawis' determination and belief in herself largely comes from the person who inspires her most - her mother.

"She is the strongest person I know and has been there for me since day one," says Pechawis. "She has shown me that no matter how rough the road gets, you keep pushing because the outcome will be amazing and the work will pay off in the end."

Pechawis' resolve is on display beyond the athletic courts and fields, as her leadership and role modeling reach into the classroom

academic and athletic success at the University of Saskatchewan, where she will study to become a psychologist or social worker.

With all these positives in her life, Pechawis still isn't above moments of doubt - and she's not afraid to open up about it. She says there are times when she asks herself, "Is it really worth it? Am I good enough to be playing this sport? Am I a role model? Am I a positive leader for youth?"

Ultimately she always lands on a firm foundation of belief in herself; and she says being a part of a team has helped build that solid landing.

"I love the fact that I always have a second family when I play sports," says Pechawis. "I love that I can make new friends and that they have my back no matter what."

True to form, while talking about what team means to her, Pechawis comes back to her primary focus - young athletes.

"I love to think that we, as a team, are inspiring young athletes to keep pushing and follow your dreams."

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