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## reCONNECTION with Mother Earth

Vegetables hang to be dried over night with the Tipi that children built earlier that day in the background.

By **Liam O'Connor**  
of **Eagle Feather News**

On a cool Fall evening, as the leaves begin to change colours, a culture camp is being led by Elder Tim Eashappie at the Brightwater Science, Environmental and Indigenous Learning Centre, located 10 minutes north of Saskatoon near Beaver Creek.

Here, Eashappie leads a group of students from Lawson Heights Elementary School in various Indigenous activities over a span of three days. The students will do everything from making tipis, drying vegetables to make soup, playing traditional games, and more.

The purpose of the camp is to connect the students with the land, but also the teachers.

"It's teaching the teachers how to be an uncle, how to be an aunt, how to be a grandfather, a grandmother," said Eashappie. "To build that relationship

with those First Nation kids instead of ostracizing them."

"In the past, when they used to sit at the back of the classroom, [now] bring them up, [so] that [they] can be part of the class. [Let's] work together to build that relationship."

What Eashappie is doing out at Brightwater is a part of a lifelong dedication to teaching. He received his Bachelor of Education from the University of Saskatchewan and has been teaching in or out of the classroom, one way or another ever since.

Eashappie's ability to communicate Indigenous teachings to youth is somewhat special, according to Lawson Heights Principal Jennifer Brokofsky.

"He has a gift for taking knowledge and ideas and making them and being able to transmit them to students in a way that resonates with them," said Brokofsky.

*continued page 2 ...*

COURTNEY-DAWN ANAQUOD

## LEAVING YOUR MARK

"I wanted to be able to represent my First Nation and Métis culture on that runway. I wanted to give hope to others, opening doors and paving the way for other generations to come, like our ancestors did."

- page 5

October 2022 is our

## Role Model Theme

November 2022 Issue:  
Veterans, Remembrance Day



IVAN ISAAC

## Sharing the Past

"It was more or less sink or swim in those places," said Isaac. "We were just kids who basically raised each other."

- page 8-9



CHRIS ROSS

## Balancing Work & Home

"So, I've always had an immediate connection from an entrepreneurial standpoint, and the more I got to know him, he's just a good human being."

- page 10



# Learning from the land

... continued from page 1

Eashappie explained that he owes it all to his grandparents and that he does it for them. He sees the land as important as one's mother and, in an analogy he expressed, if people wouldn't let a stranger come into their home and hurt their own mother, then we shouldn't let people do that to the earth.



Elder Tim Eashappie mixes his western education and traditional knowledge to connect with children and those interested in learning about First Nations culture. (Photo by Liam O'Connor)

It was Eashappie's grandfather who helped guide him to come out of a dark time in his life after Eashappie attended Residential School in his youth. Eashappie said he went through a period of anger and hatred for three years, and that he went looking for the priests who once taught at his school. He said his anger existed like this until his grandfather told him, "enough is enough."

"I had to rethink and understand my own self, why I was hating so much, right," said Eashappie. "And so, those old people helped me to understand that [I had] that inside me to forgive."

It was from that point that Eashappie began his road to where he is today, where he

shares the knowledge he learned from his grandparents.

"This way, I'm giving back to the whole community as part of sharing with everybody about how important land is."

At its core, the camp is an unconventional environmental class and Eashappie hopes it will connect with students more than teaching in a classroom would. Eashappie is concerned that with the current climate crisis, if there isn't proper education that gets youth to care about the earth, then irreparable damage will be done.

"Right now everybody's going to Mars and to the Moon," said

Eashappie. And I always say, "'good, go' because when they're all gone, we'll still be here because this is our home, we ain't going anywhere."

"That's why it's so important that we teach young people why Mother Earth is so important and understand how important those gifts are to us."

Eashappie taught the children how to dry vegetables, to preserve them, because it's Fall and, this way, they can preserve their food for winter. Then, the morning after the students sleep in the tipis they built, they'll make soup from the vegetables they dried the night before.

After the students were finished arranging the vegetables on strings to dry, they played different games coached by Eashappie, who said the games are designed to teach them not to get angry at each other or at a game itself, but rather to learn to work together and have fun.

Brokofsky visited the camp one of the mornings and said she's always learning from Eashappie and his coaching was one of the first aspects she picked up on.

"What I found really unique, is that oftentimes in education, we look to minimize or even prevent conflicts, just to keep everyone happy," said Brokofsky. "And Tim's approach, at least in that game, was to create conflict and then coach them through it. And I thought that was actually a way better way of doing it."

Eashappie is hopeful that through this program, and with the continued support of the Saskatoon Public School system, that they can achieve their goal of getting the students to care more about the earth and environment by connecting them to the land.



Corn drying on wooden racks, which is a traditional method for preserving food the students learned at the camp. The corn was then made into soup the next day. (Photo by Liam O'Connor)



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# A new parternship opens opportunities for a northern First Nation

By NC Raine  
of Eagle Feather News

A new Indigenous-centred business venture is set to make significant waves in economic and career opportunities in the trades for a northern First Nation.

Birch Narrows Dene Development Inc. (BNDDI) announced in mid-September that it will be taking majority ownership of a new business venture with Impact Energy Services, creating new opportunities in the mining and industrial sector. BNDDI, the economic arm of Birch Narrows Dene Nation, will own 51% of the new firm, with Impact Energy owning the remaining 49%.

“This is an exciting opportunity for BNDDI to participate in our province’s valuable mining and industrial sector,” said BNDDI CEO Anthony Clark.

“I think this agreement captured the sentiment of how industry wanted to work with their communities and actually partner with us as true partners, to see that multi-level benefit taking place between community and industry,” he said.

Clark said that Impact Energy was chosen as a partner for its willingness to embrace the potential of Indigenous people and communities, as well as for their record on safety, quality, and customer service as an electrical and instrumentation contractor.

Impact Energy, which provides electrical and instrumentation services for buildings, job sites, and homes, currently operates out of three locations: Kindersley, Rosetown and Saskatoon.

“We’re building a company that the people of Birch Narrows can be proud of and excited about for years to come,” said Boyd Kampen, Impact Energy President.

“I feel like we’re blazing a trail for environmental, social, and governance best practices in the construction industry. We also think we’re bringing a new standard in construction, in how we can create meaningful Indigenous partnerships,” he said.

The new company, in its first few years, will focus on investment into business opportunities and growth. Included is a mutual benefit



(l to r) Anthony Clark, BNDDI CEO, Jonathon Sylvestre, Chief of Birch Narrows Dene Nation, and Boyd Kampen, Impact Energy President, sign the agreement on September 15 in Saskatoon. (Photo supplied)

agreement signed last year with NexGen Energy Ltd, a B.C. based company that is seeking to develop its Rook I uranium mine project, which is located at Patterson Lake in northern Saskatchewan.

“This partnership [between BNDDI and Impact Energy] will bring many opportunities through employment, skill development, and training in our community,” said Jonathon Sylvestre, Chief of Birch Narrows Dene Nation.

Sylvestre said the ownership stake in the company will allow Birch Narrows to keep their land-based activities “100% projected,” as well as important culture and traditions, he said.

When articulating what this all means for the community, Clark said this type of industry creates generational opportunities.

“Birch Narrows is a very young demographic. There’s a lot of students who have just graduated. So the opportunities this provides for the youth to enter this field and have apprenticeships, it’s significant. And that starts to generate those opportunities for generations to come,” he said.



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# Groundbreaking partnership builds capacity for First Nation communities

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A new partnership between First Nations Capital and Infrastructure Agency of Saskatchewan (FNCIAS) and Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) will bring more jobs, build capacity and improve infrastructure management with First Nation communities in Saskatchewan.

Together, FNCIAS and SIIT are developing a training program tailor-made for public works leadership alongside member First Nations in the form of programming and training for their members as public works managers. The program is the first of its kind in the province and brought industry experts together with academia for curriculum and program development with the end goal of students being job-ready when they finish.

“This is an opportunity for current and future generations to enter potential public works management roles and, instead of short-term jobs, they are working towards long-term careers at home,” said Drew Pearson, CEO of First Nations Capital and Infrastructure Agency of Saskatchewan.

As part of SIIT’s commitment to continuous improvement to meet the training needs of Saskatchewan’s Indigenous communities, SIIT identified the need to cultivate capacity in the area of public works by designing a new curriculum and program to meet this demand. FNCIAS committed funds to support the adaptation of the public works and address needs at the community level while investing in the exploration of ongoing training and development opportunities for FNCIAS staff, member First Nations and Tribal Councils.

“SIIT is a well-established FSIN educational institution with a history of delivering strong programming that is innovative and demand-driven to workforce development in First Nation communities,” said Pearson. “The strategic partnership between our two institutions will support and develop candidates,

and the Public Works Manager program aligns with our organizational values of collaboration and innovation while ensuring we are creating community prosperity.”

FNCIAS was created to address the critical issues surrounding community housing and infrastructure programs through collaboration with First Nations, Tribal Councils and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and to facilitate the transfer of control, delivery and management of First Nations housing, capital and infrastructure funding and services in Saskatchewan.



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# Courtney-Dawn Anaquod

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Embracing her culture and her talents has taken dancer and performer Courtney-Dawn Anaquod not only across the Prairies but across Canada. But one stop on her journey she was not expecting to make was New York Fashion Week.

“When I found out, I was overwhelmed with emotion. It was a dream come true,” Anaquod told Eagle Feather News.

For context, a model walking in New York Fashion Week is like a musician playing at Carnegie Hall — it’s about as big and prestigious as stages (or runways) get. What is particularly notable about Anaquod is that, as fast as her modelling career goes, she’s barely gotten started.

This past September, Anaquod both danced and jigged as part of New York Fashion Week, walking in the International Indigenous Fashion Show for Indigenous designer Sandra Froher in her “Mother Earth — the Rooted One” collection.



**Courtney-Dawn Anaquod in Times Square during New York Fashion Week. (Photo supplied)**

quod took her to a modelling call in Regina, where she was sought for commercials and photoshoots. But because of financial issues, the opportunity fell through.

“I was heartbroken, but my dad always told me, ‘one day it will happen. You will be a model. You will be everything you ever dreamed of.’ I never gave up hope,” she said.

Many years later, in 2019, Anaquod’s modelling was kickstarted when she was asked to pose for Métis designer Christine Tournier. After a few more projects, including walking in Regina Fashion Week, Anaquod was nominated for Model of the Year in the 2020 International Indigenous Arts and Fashion Awards — the winner of which would go to New York for Fashion Week.

Naturally, Anaquod won the award — one of the bright spots in an otherwise challenging year.

“I didn’t even know what to say when I won. 2020 was a hard year. I lost my husband that year. So being able to do this meant a lot.”

With the event postponed two years because of COVID, Anaquod finally was able to make her New York fashion debut this September. And made the most of the opportunity.

“Two days before we left, it was confirmed I would be opening the show, doing a performance in the middle of the show, and ending the fashion show. It was an honour,” she said.

In what might’ve been a first in the 70-year history of New York Fashion Week, Anaquod both walked the catwalk and performed a jig during the fashion show. Her performance got a spirited reaction from the audience, which is a rarity at a buttoned-up fashion event.

“She brought it. And she brought it very well,” said Chelsa Racette, founder and executive director of International Indigenous Fashion Week.

“She had so much confidence, and [her performance] got such a great

“Some of the models there asked if I was nervous before I went up. My response was, ‘no.’ I felt very confident, like I was meant to be there,” said Anaquod.

Anaquod, from Muscowpetung Saulteaux Nation, and who has First Nation and Métis roots, has carved out a well-established place as a jigger, performer, and teacher in Saskatchewan, in part through leading the Qu’Appelle Valley Square Dancers. But modelling was always something pushed to the backburner. When she was 15, Anaquod’s dad, Donny Anaquod

response and got the audience involved, which I’m sure made them feel good. It gave them more of a connection,” said Racette.

It’s empowering those personal connections that fuels Anaquod, she said. Dancing and sharing her personality and culture during New York Fashion Week wasn’t just a rarity for the event, it was a spiritual moment for Anaquod herself.

“I knew that I wasn’t walking alone. I was surrounded by our ancestors, our loved ones,” she said.

“I wanted to be able to represent my First Nation and Métis culture on that runway. I wanted to give hope to others, opening doors and paving the way for other generations to come, like our ancestors did.”

Equally special to Anaquod is that she was able to share the experience with her father, Donny, and her cousin, Rosanna, who drove with her to New York and recorded her jigging in all eight states along the way.

Anaquod is already scheduled to join Racette in Cannes, France next year for another fashion show. But until then, her focus will remain on what she believes she was born to do: dance.

“Dancing is the centre of who I am. It’s a gift to be able to share that,” she said. “Dancing has been so healing for me, with all the challenges I’ve gone through. It’s everything to me. Literally everything to me.”



**Courtney-Dawn Anaquod in Times Square during New York Fashion Week. (Photo supplied)**



**Courtney-Dawn Anaquod in Times Square with her father Donny Anaquod and her cousin Rosanna Anaquod during New York Fashion Week. (Photo supplied)**



**Courtney-Dawn Anaquod walked the runway and performed a jig during New York Fashion Week in Spetember. (Photo supplied)**

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# New medical facility on Muskeg Lake urban reserve celebrates grand opening

By NC Raine  
of Eagle Feather News

The Lakeside Medical Clinic, a full-service medical facility located in the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation urban reserve in Saskatoon, hosted its grand opening on September 28.

"We created a beautiful, functional health care facility that's a joy to work in and provides medical care to hundreds of people every day. People from all walks of life, and all backgrounds," said Dr. William (Bill) Haver, founder of the Lakeside Medical Clinic.

"There's no limitations on the people that we can treat here," he said.



**Dr. William (Bill) Haver, founder of the Lakeside Medical Clinic. (Photo supplied)**

The Lakeside Medical Clinic has been providing primary healthcare in Saskatoon since 1981, with locations previously on Acadia Drive and College Park Drive.

According to Haver, about five years ago the clinic needed to address their physical space issues, which led them to construct a new and better facility that enabled them to work with those who have different specific needs.

After forming a relationship with Muskeg Lake, their new medical facility opened in August 2020.

"This building was designed, built, opened, and is operating

during a global pandemic, that still continues," said Haver. "We had to face some huge hurdles."

The new building has a two-floor family medicine facility with 32 physician offices, 68 exam rooms, and two procedure rooms, as well as staff and conference rooms. The main floor houses the urgent care facility, which has 10 exam rooms, two procedure rooms, a dictation area, and a lounge. The building also houses a pharmacy, medical imaging, physiotherapy, bracing/orthotics, dentistry, optometry, and ear, nose and throat specialists.

Perhaps most importantly, the clinic is located on Canada's first-ever urban reserve.

"Thirty-four years ago, the anniversary of the first urban reserve was a really important step in reconciliation. It happened right here on this territory," said Saskatoon Mayor Charlie Clark.

Since the facility opened, Clark said he and his family have personally used it for accessing healthcare.

He said the vision, years ago, from the leaders at Muskeg Lake enabled developments like this to occur.



**Lakeside Medical Clinic, located at the Muskeg Lake urban reserve in Saskatoon. (Photo supplied)**

"When this building was coming up, Harry Lafond (former Chief of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation) said at the time, 'People could've decided not to do this. They could've found a thousand reasons not to sign an urban reserve agreement ... but they chose to see strength in one another.' I've thought about that a lot," said Clark.

"By seeing each other's strengths, we can do so much better than what we're doing on our own. And the result of that vision, of that partnership, of that risk-taking, that willingness to try something new – now we have this beautiful medical clinic here," he said.

Clark said cities across Canada continue to phone his office, as well as Muskeg Lake and Lafond, to find out how they accomplished what they now have at Muskeg Lake urban reserve.

Going forward, leaders from Muskeg Lake said they still have vacant land that will continue to be filled up by more projects.

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# “Lighting each others fires”: Teachers and staff visit several students’ home communities for National Truth and Reconciliation Day

By NC Raine  
of Eagle Feather News

A simple yet charged idea motivated the North East School Division’s (NESD) plans for Truth and Reconciliation Day: Give teachers a direct insight into life and culture in Indigenous communities.

“I think that sometimes our students, who have grown up in First Nation communities, might feel like their teachers might not understand them, because they’ve never been to their communities,” said Stacy Lair, Director of Education at NESD.

“So making that connection, seeing their teachers in their home communities, will be significant.”

On September 30, the teachers and staff from the NESD — some 330 individuals — travelled in groups to one of four neighbouring First Nation or Métis communities to learn about their culture, their history, and their contemporary lives.

It was an experience dreamed up by Sharon Meyer, NESD First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education consultant, and member of Beardy’s and Okemasis Cree Nation, as a way for teachers to become more intimately familiar with their Indigenous students.

“I had the mindset, why are we trying to bring people to us all the time? Why don’t we take these teachers to the First Nation communities because many of them have never been on a reserve yet and we’re trying to teach about reserves,” said Meyer.



**Staff of Central Park Elementary School in Nipawin, part of North East School Division, wear orange shirts to support National Truth and Reconciliation Day. (Photo courtesy of Stacy Lair)**

The four Indigenous communities that participated by hosting NESD teachers were Cumberland House Métis Nation, Kinistin Saulteaux Nation, One Arrow First Nation, and Muskoday First Nation.

Each community, or school within that community, planned their own events for the visiting teachers. At Cumberland House, a Residential School Survivor shared

her story, speaking on healing and hope, before a video was screened that captured the natural beauty of the entire reserve from aerial footage. Finally, the teachers went hiking in a historic area in Cumberland House that’s not even open to tourists.

At Kinistin Saulteaux, teachers listened to talks about First Nation education, then went through workshops that students often do in their School in the Bush program. Finally, they hosted a round dance for the teachers.

At One Arrow, they held a mini powwow then listened to speakers, including the youth entrepreneurs who are part of the popular Fireweed Artisan Boxes.

And at Muskoday, the teachers rotated through workshops about ribbon skirts and how colours are used; how Elders participate in schools and lessons; and a drum group presenting on their craft. Then, a special film created by Meyer and the Muskoday community was screened.

The film is a five-part, 36-minute film on contemporary life at Muskoday. Meyer produced the film through a grant from the Ministry of Education.

“Students are supposed to learn about Indigenous life and culture, but it’s hard to find material,” said Meyer.

“People talk about First Nations like they are in the past. We made this film to make people aware that First Nations are contemporary. We live modern life.”

The five chapters of the film consist of explorations into: Chief and Council decision making; the role of a Chief; influence of the Treaties; Muskoday Community School; and Muskoday traditional lifestyle. The film is curriculum-length and will be made available to all educators who want to use it.

Meyer said the goal of this film and Truth and Reconciliation Day alike is to be immersed in educational experiences that increase our understanding of our neighbours.

“I don’t want Orange Shirt Day to be about colouring an orange shirt in class. I want to build powerhouse relationships,” she said. “I think we are really doing something. We’re lighting each other’s fires.”

Similarity, Lair hopes that the 300 plus teachers who participated in these neighbourly community visits have returned with knowledge and enthusiasm that rubs off on the young minds in their classrooms.

“Any time we have the chance to dip our toe in someone else’s world, that opens our eyes to new perspectives and broader worldviews,” said Lair. “The students will then hopefully feel and experience that through conversations with their teachers.”

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# Keeper of history: A graduate from the class of 1998 shares his story

By Kerry Benjoe  
of Eagle Feather News

Despite what many have come to believe, Canada’s last Indian Residential School closed its doors in 1998 and not 1996 as previously stated in many sources, including Google.

In 1884, the Residential School located in Lebret, SK opened its doors and was operated by the Roman Catholic Church and funded by the federal government. It did go through name changes and control was eventually turned over to the Starblanket Cree Nation. The school’s closing was recorded in an



Ivan Isaac a member of Whitecalf Collegiate’s class of 1998 says connecting with his culture has made him. (Photo supplied)

article written by Trevor Sutter with the headline, “Deal struck to close province’s last residential school” and was published on July 2, 1998.

Ivan Isaac proudly sports an orange medallion when he dances powwow because it serves as a reminder of his own story as a Residential School Survivor.

He graduated from Whitecalf Collegiate in 1998 and is among the very last students to be in an Indian Residential School (IRS).

Isaac entered Lebret in Grade 7.

“I was what you called a lifer,” he said.

Isaac was at the Marievel IRS in Grade 2 then the Gordon’s IRS.

He was happy to go to Lebret because it had a reputation for sports excellence.

“I didn’t have a problem per se,” said Isaac. “For other students who didn’t play sports, they kind of had it rough. We didn’t get special treatment, but we got to do things. If you played sports, you got to go off the grounds.”

When he started his senior year in high school, he had no idea it would be the last year the school would operate.

Back then, Isaac was obsessed with hockey and that’s all that mattered to him.

The caption of his Grade 12 yearbook photo says, “Ivan’s future plans include playing Junior ‘A’ hockey with hopes of winning a scholarship and furthering his education.”

He was so fixated on that goal he quit school and moved to pursue hockey.

“I thought I was going to be a superstar hockey player and that was it,” said Isaac. “I didn’t care about anything else.”


Fortunately there were people who did.

Fran Quewezance spent 16 years at Lebret as a boys supervisor and was known as Franny.


“He came out (to where I was) and drug me back to the school and made me graduate, so I’m really, really thankful for Franny,” said Isaac.

For the most part, his time in Lebret was good.


“I had a few rough encounters, but I’m sure everyone did; nothing that would make me very, very upset,” said Isaac.




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He experienced both the good and the bad at Residential School and it's left him with mixed feelings.

"When I started, it was our people doing harm to our own people and student-on-student abuse was happening a lot when I was a little kid," said Isaac. "I didn't have a very good first few years at Residential School but the ending was good."

Although he misses his classmates, there are moments when he's still triggered.

"It was more or less sink or swim in those places," said Isaac. "We were just kids who basically raised each other."

He said, back then, Residential School was the only option for many kids like himself.

"I remember in Grade 4, I went to a (public) school and I absolutely hated being an Indian and I wanted to be white," said Isaac. "I hated the smell of grease bannock because it made me feel poor."

So he returned to Residential School.

"I don't mind talking about some of this stuff because it's good to educate people but it's tough to remember some of the things that happened," said Isaac.

He admitted to abusing alcohol and drugs as an adult to help him cope.



**The street that led to the Lebret residential school, which was demolished in 2000 all that remains is the old school gymnasium and hockey arena. (Photo by Abreana Deneyou)**

However, things turned around seven years ago after meeting his fiancé Lianda Tanner.

"It's amazing what you can do when you have a strong support system," he said.

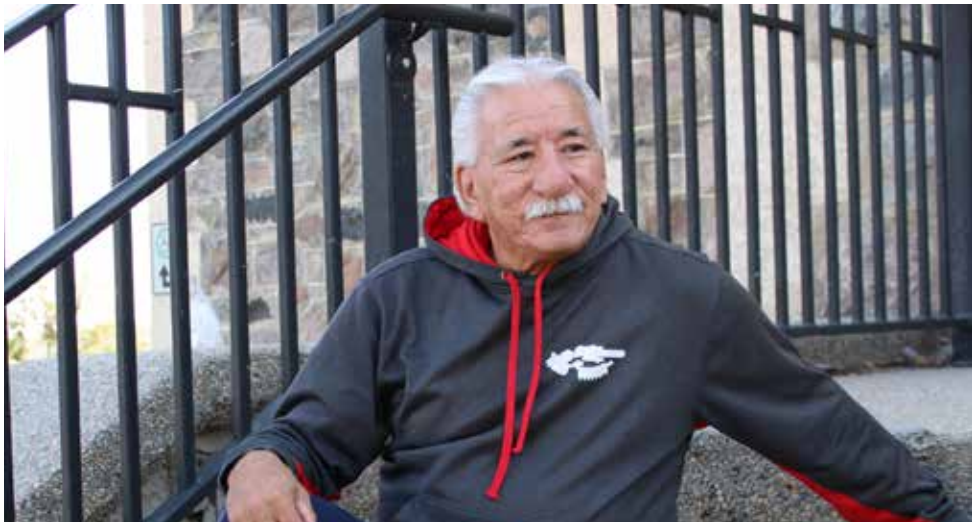
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Around the same time is when he began his healing journey. He started



**Fran Quewezance sits on the church steps in Lebret; he was a staff member at the residential school from 1982 until it closed in 1998. (Photo by Abreana Deneyou)**

attending ceremonies and received his spirit name. Isaac has now dedicated his life to becoming a better man emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually.

About two years ago he decided he wanted to dance powwow and began working on his regalia.

Tanner has noticed a big change in Isaac, which she believes is a direct result of him making the decision to reconnect with his culture.

Over the summer he stepped into the dance circle.

Isaac said it was a powerful moment for him and it just felt right.

"When he is out there, it looks like he has been dancing his whole life," said Tanner.

His natural abilities have not gone unnoticed.

In fact, Isaac placed third in his category at his very first powwow.

However, for him, it's not about winning. It's about healing his spirit.

Not only has he reconnected to his culture – he has discovered his calling.

"I want to help kids with no voice," said Isaac.

He knows what it was like to feel helpless as a child.

"We used to have to do cross country, run for fruit like apples just to eat in Gordon's," said Isaac. "I used to tell people, 'I'm hungry. I want to eat.' They would say, 'No you have to go run 5 kms first.'"

He doesn't want other young people to feel that same pain.

"I didn't have a voice when I was a kid, so I want to be a voice for the kids now," said Isaac. "I'm going to scream for them too."

He says reconnecting to his culture through dance and ceremony is saving his life.

"I'm so blessed right now," said Isaac. "Our culture is the way. I'm not going to stop."

He's thankful for his experiences because it's an important part of history that shouldn't be forgotten.

Isaac says everyone who has gone through Residential School has a story and you can't assume you know it.

"Sit and listen to Survivors."

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Saskatchewan



# Chris Ross and the importance of presence in fatherhood

By  
of Eagle Feather News

Chris Ross managed to blaze a path in the video production, magazine, and multimedia world for other Indigenous youth to follow and look up to. In his eyes, while proud of these accomplishments, there is no greater accomplishment than his family.

Ross and his four sisters were raised by a single father, Allen Ross, and Chris spent most of his early life travelling around Saskatchewan, living in various cities, and attending different schools. While navigating this nomadic lifestyle across the Prairies, he attributes everything he knows about being a good father to watching his own.

"He was a big influence in my life about becoming a father, and how to be a father. He was like a basketball coach, he was a teacher, he was an entrepreneur, [and] he was a mentor," said Ross. "He really inspired a lot of kids and mentored a lot of kids who grew up to become really good people, and really positive people and leaders."

Like many people in their youth, being unsure of what they want to do with their life is not uncommon. Ross contemplated what he wanted to choose as a career path but said he always had the entrepreneurial spirit at heart and that's what led him to his first idea, a magazine called GenX, which later turned into the more successful version, RezX.

He started RezX in his 20s but got away from it in his 30s. From there, Ross worked odd jobs here and there until meeting his wife Tasheena and welcoming their first son Creeseaux. This is where Ross decided to make the jump into RezX all-in.

"I got like, nine months to prepare for this dramatic change in my life," said Ross. "So, that was like, well, I already have RezX, and I've always thought this was a really good opportunity to turn that into a business, but to take it real serious this time."

Ross expanded and started RezX South and RezX North, which covered different regions, then another multimedia company after his second son Indie was born, called IndigenX.

Since then, Ross attended Saskatchewan Polytechnic, made a critically acclaimed documentary called "Keep Going my Daughter" and has now settled into an associate producer role at Access Communications, where he works on various projects and shows.

Above all accomplishments, Ross makes it clear that family and raising his two sons with his wife is the aspect of life he most looks forward to, and also according to a former coworker and friend, Paul Burch, who says Ross is a champion of his family.

"You don't often get business guys celebrating their family life, both their wife and their kids the way that Chris does in and around his businesses," said Burch. "So, I've always had an immediate connection from an entrepreneurial standpoint, and the more I got to know him, he's just a good human being."

Ross says he doesn't sit on boards or committees, he tries not to travel that much for work and he, ultimately, just wants to spend time at home with his boys.

"My dad has taught me just being there for them and just being present and trying to live a healthy lifestyle for them," said Ross.



**Chris Ross, his wife Tasheena and family.** (Photo supplied)



**Creeseaux and Indie Ross.** (Photo supplied)

Along with the importance of presence in their lives, Ross also believes in tradition and giving his sons a sense of identity, which he did by growing out his hair. Ross thought that it was possible his children might be the only students with long hair or that they might even be the only Indigenous kids at school, so it was important to him that they could come home from classes and see their father with long hair and feel like it's normal.

"Why our people used to have long hair a long time ago, and how that was normal for everybody," said Ross. "I just wanted them to have something to be proud of and it started off with me, that's why I wanted to just grow my hair."

When asked about racism in Saskatchewan and what it's like to face that as a parent when raising children, Ross says it exists systemically within the province and thinks you must give your kids the proper tools to prepare for it.

Ross hopes to live up to his late father, who passed away a few years ago, but said those are going to be big moccasins to fill.



**Chris Ross with his children Creeseaux and Indie.** (Photo supplied)

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# MN-S aims to bring community together with new Métis cultural centre

By NC Raine  
of Eagle Feather News

A new cultural centre, providing a valuable resource for the Métis community in northern Saskatchewan, has opened its doors in Prince Albert.

The Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) Western Region 2 has opened a new office, event centre, and cultural space on Central Avenue in Prince Albert, across from the Northern Lights Casino. The 15,000 square foot space, which was last a Home Hardware retail location, will serve as an all-purpose community gathering place, said Western 2 Regional Director Sherry McLennan.

“We want to be able to bring people together. Métis are a very social people — it’s all about family, relatives, and kinship. So we were able to secure a space that we can actually bring the community together without having to rent halls,” said McLennan.



**Ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration of the new MN-S Western Region 2 Centre in Prince Albert. (Photos by Corinne Isbister)**

McLennan said that previously they were renting out three spaces — an office space, a warehouse to keep things like COVID-19 cleaning supplies, and a storage unit, in addition to renting out community centres to host events. Now, all of this is contained under one roof, which works out to costing around the same amount, she said.

“It’s a big deal because we have one of the biggest Métis regions in the Métis Nation. It will serve a lot of our people,” said McLennan.

There has already been a significant amount of interest in holding events and partnering with the Centre to hold educational sessions, said McLennan. They have had discussions with the Prince Albert Police Service, the RCMP, the Ministry of Social Services, and the Prince Albert Teachers’ Association about holding meetings there or delivering programming on Métis culture. They will



**Métis dancers perform at the ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration of the new MN-S Western Region 2 Centre in Prince Albert. (Photo supplied)**

also continue to hold their own events and programming, such as language revitalization programs.

It’s a space designed to be welcoming to everyone.

“I invite everyone to come here. Métis or non-Métis, whoever you are, stop by and have a coffee with us. You’ll always be welcome,” she said.

McLennan also said she hopes the centre will be a place of healing. As a proud Prince Albert native, she said she knows the city has some “negativity” surrounding it and its reputation but hopes the new centre, and the services it provides, can be an agent of change.

The building will have offices for the staff, a board room, a space for Elders and seniors to gather, a space for youth events, a community hall, and a fenced-in outdoor area.

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# The Truth and Reconciliation chat with Evan Herman

By Marjorie D.L. Roden  
of Eagle Feather News

October 1, 2022 saw the game between the Edmonton Oil Kings and the Prince Albert Raiders, with the Raiders donning their special edition “Orange Shirt Day” jerseys, most of which had already been sold for charity two days before gametime.

Conversations, no matter one’s age or how awkward they might become, are the backbone to truth and reconciliation. Before the game took place, freelance journalist Marjorie Roden had the opportunity to chat with the Raiders’ Evan Herman. The honest, level-headed 20-year-old forward is one of the team’s assistant captains, and this is the ensuing conversation.

RODEN: How do you feel about the Raiders’ orange jersey design that you’ll be wearing on October 1, and why?

HERMAN: I think it’s good. It’s a whole truth and reconciliation thing. It’s a big step (forward) from the last few years here. You know, it’s good. I think a lot of the guys are excited. I know with me, I am proud to represent the Métis community doing it.

RODEN: That leads to my next question. This jersey has so many symbols on it, including the medicine wheel, the red hand (for MMIWG), the bear claws, eagle feathers, the tree, and of course the Métis sash. Which one of those symbols means the most to you and why?

HERMAN: You know what? I like them all. I mean, they all tie into each other and like I said before, it’s all about reconciliation and that’s good, and I think we’re taking the right steps forward here.

RODEN: There isn’t one there that jumps out at you? Because I know reconciliation has left the Métis out, a lot, in past years.

HERMAN: I mean, it’s just the whole concept, to think about, is good. You know what? I can’t really pick one out, but I know the jersey design is really, really neat and they did a really good job designing it.

RODEN: It’s very inclusive.

HERMAN: It sure is, yes.

RODEN: If someone were to question the importance of the “orange shirt day”

and “every child matters,” if they did it in a less than kind way, how would you react diplomatically to that?

(Herman lets out a bit of a grunt with a bit of a startled look in his eyes)

RODEN: Do you need an example?

HERMAN: Yeah.

RODEN: I was wearing this shirt\* at a craft fair about a week and a half ago, and this guy comes up and is like “Heh heh, that shirt’s funny! That’s a funny joke!” I was like “No, this is not a joke. This is about children who never came back.” He was like “Heh heh, oh well, you know, they’ll get over that, that kind of people!” I just looked at him and said “We aren’t getting over it anytime soon.” So if you had to face a similar situation - and I’m sorry to lay that on you...

HERMAN: I don’t know how to answer that one. It’s a tough one.

RODEN: I know. I had a hard time staying diplomatic myself.

HERMAN: Yeah. I really don’t know what to say (in that situation). It’s hard for me to say something because you never know.

Many thanks to the Prince Albert Raiders and especially to Evan Herman for taking the time to allow for this conversation to take place. No matter one’s age, finding a way to a peaceful co-existence in this great nation will not happen overnight. Truth be told, facing those very uneasy topics and sharing perspectives on those topics to find an empathetic understanding of those awkward subjects is the honest path to reconciliation.

And on another note, the Raiders won the game over the reigning WHL champion Edmonton Oil Kings with a handy 5-1 score, with 4 of those goals coming in the first period.

\*The shirt was an orange one with the words “And they whispered ‘They found us’” in a circle of black feathers, designed by Princess Heart Designs in Prince Albert.



**Writer Marjorie Roden wearing the shirt that started an awkward confrontation, leading to future conversations that may help with reconciliation. (Photo by Marjorie Roden)**

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# Indigenous people must be protected from criminal oppression

Healing begins with safety and most people are safe when they feel safe. Sadly, crime is everywhere and getting worse. As a result, there are fewer and fewer places where people can feel truly safe. Saskatchewan has the highest crime severity rate in the country along with the highest homicide rate. Although a great deal of emphasis is placed on crime, little is mentioned about the Indigenous victimization rate, which is also the highest in the country. People need to be protected and sadly, too often, they are not.

Innovative approaches are constantly being developed to deal with the underlying causes of crime but an equal effort needs to be placed on protecting people in the here and now.

Recently a high-risk sex offender was released into Regina North Central. He is a career criminal with a long history of sex offences against young girls. North Central is mostly Indigenous and is one of the country's worst crime-infested neighborhoods. Young Indigenous girls are vulnerable at the best of times and crime often goes unreported. It's an ideal hunting ground for a sex offender. Why was he released when everyone knew full well he was

going to re-offend, and why was he released into Regina North Central? If this happened in a more prosperous neighborhood, a righteous outrage would follow and heads would roll.

Most recently, the James Smith Cree Nation experienced one of Canada's worse mass

suspected his rage fueled by dangerous drugs would result in so tragic an outcome. He later died by his own hand.

Another extreme example is in Meadow Lake earlier this year. Two women had fingers cut off as punishment for what is widely thought to be a drug deal gone wrong.

What was once unthinkable has become all too real.

Social conditions have drastically deteriorated over the past 30 years. No one truly knew how bad it would become. In some urban areas and First Nations, street law has replaced existing law. Drugs, gangs and organized crime are becoming entrenched and many people live in silence and fear. In another time, warrior societies policed First Nations. Today, gangs calling themselves warriors commit crimes, which need to be policed. Among traditional people, respect means caring; on the street it means fear.

In so many ways, it is a world turned upside down. It is a time when the best that could happen and the worst that could happen are both happening at the same time.


The innocent need protection from increasing violence. They need to be heard.



## Breaking Trail

John Cuthand

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As part of its mandate to regulate the practice of law in Saskatchewan in the public interest, the Law Society recognizes the importance of high quality adjudications for professional discipline matters that require a hearing. The Law Society has appointed an independent Hearing Administrator to lead a process to select a roster of diverse and well-qualified individuals to populate Hearing Committees.

The Hearing Administrator is seeking applications from those interested in being considered for appointment to the Law Society of Saskatchewan Hearing Committee Roster (the "Roster"). People appointed to the Roster will form a pool of adjudicators who may be assigned by the Hearing Administrator to carry out adjudicative responsibilities typically as a member a three-person Hearing Committee.

The Roster will consist of between 20-30 individuals and include an approximately equal mixture of Law Society Board Members (Benchers), members of the Law Society, and members of the wider public. Appointments are for terms of three years and may be renewed. When participating in a hearing, a per diem is paid and expenses are reimbursed.


The Law Society and the public it serves will benefit from a Roster comprised of people with a diverse set of skills, experiences, and perspectives. In line with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Equity Program, we encourage applications from equity-seeking groups. This includes candidates who are Indigenous, women, persons with disabilities, from racialized groups, 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, and others who hold unique and complex lived experiences.

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# Jamin Mike

Recently, I moved to Toronto to work for The Toronto Star (The Star) as one of just two Indigenous reporters in the newsroom amidst a sea of established journalists and editors. It's not easy moving to a ginormous city, especially coming from a Saskatchewan rez – a place where I was raised among relatives.

But I hope being open about this transition will let other Indigenous peoples know it's OK to take big steps and there's nothing wrong with following your dreams.

"I became a true nehiyaw when I realized the universe is my home and not just the reserve where the government put my people," said an Elder at First Nations University during my first semester at the school.

In those days, I was young, ambitious and struggling emotionally. I carried, and sometimes still hold, the same baggage too many Indigenous students carry – Intergenerational trauma, self-doubt, and a strong sense of imposter syndrome.

Just the other week, I walked into the newsroom of The Star for the very first time.

I panicked and instantly felt insignificant and like I didn't belong. I began to create scenarios in my head of being gossiped about by my people, the hate mail I would receive from the public, and the mistakes I would inevitably make.

It was then I had to remind myself of the words the Elder shared.

I see his words as a message from the spirit world telling me not to limit myself and to dream for our ancestors who never had my same opportunities.

But don't get me wrong – I am not writing to save anyone or act like I have the answers.

As a nehiyaw, I want to be genuine, do deadly things, and show people it's OK to embody that.

I landed in Toronto on Sept. 14 during the night. Immediately, I noticed the air felt different from home – more humid, more industrialized.

Friends picked me up and, although it was late, there were people everywhere and the city lights were mesmerizing. I had been to big cities before to attend different conferences over the



Photo of Jamin Mike. (Photo supplied by Denita Gladue)

years so it wasn't too much of a shock.

But this time I will live here for a while.

I do miss the quiet of kookum's house on the rez, where my loved ones live. I also miss the lodges, the songs, the feasts and everything else, but sometimes we have to make sacrifices in life to pursue our dreams.

My first piece for The Star was an accumulation of profiles on Truth and Reconciliation Day featuring young Indigenous leaders currently liv-

ing in Toronto, asking what "reconciliation" really means to them.

To my shock, it made the front cover and was well received by the Indigenous community over here.

The 47 hours of work was well worth it because I made deadline.

I am grateful my editor rewarded me with some time to catch up on my sleep because one hour of sleep was not cutting it.

It's weird to think this rez kid has the potential to work for the most extensive distribution newspaper in all of Canada.

That is something I have yet to embrace fully.

With this first experience under my belt, I'm learning what it takes to do this job. I know, by watching others, there will be more stressful and trying days yet to come.

Sweetgrass is becoming my most powerful tool, and smudging every morning is grounding me amid the pressure I face.

I hope you can follow me as I learn and write about it. I want nothing out of this column but to encourage people to tell their stories and be honest. So, this is me. This column is just a sliver of what I have to say. Here you go and take what you need.

Jamin Mike is Willow Cree from Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation who is pursuing a career as a journalist. He is currently a reporter at the Toronto Star and is the latest Eagle Feather News columnist. Jamin invites readers along his journey of growth and career building in his column about being an Indigenous reporter from the rez working in Toronto

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# Long-standing office and IT services business acquired by Indigenous-owned investment company

By NC Raine  
of Eagle Feather News

Prince Albert Photocopier will now be able to provide everything from IT management to air cleaners to people who want to support Indigenous business in central and northern Saskatchewan.

Optek Solutions LP (Optek), an IT Services company owned by Athabasca Basin Development (ABD), Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies (PBGC), Kitsaki Management and Aebig Investments have acquired the Prince Albert Photocopier Ltd (PAP).

PAP has provided office needs in central and northern Saskatchewan for more than three decades. Throughout its years of operation, it has evolved from just mechanical paper copying to managing IT services and web design.

“A lot of their offering is very much in synergy with how we do business,” said CEO of Optek, Kevin Aebig. “It seemed like a really good fit from the onset.”

PAP’s long-standing reputation as a dependable office service and supply leader is what drew his attention to the company.

Aebig said Optek has been working with the owners of PAP to come up with an exit strategy that would work for everyone including PAP’s existing team of 16 staff members.

“They have done a lot to build their business up over the years and are now looking to enjoy their retirement,” said Aebig.

According to its website, PAP has always had a service-oriented goal and has evolved from originally providing mechanical copier services to current-day where its system engineers provide digital, mobile, remote, and cloud-based solutions.

The transition of ownership has been relatively smooth for Optek and its investors.

“As a group, we are very excited to work together to acquire PAP and build on the excellent foundation established nearly 30 years ago by Dan Fenton and Carolyn Fenton,” said Geoff Gay, CEO of Athabasca Basin Development and a representative of the ownership group. “As investors, when we looked at PAP, we all saw a successful, established business and we look forward to supporting the company as it continues to provide excellent service to its customers.”

Although Aebig has experience in the services that PAP provides, he is looking forward to the work that needs to be done for a successful transition.

“There’s a lot to learn about this particular business. There are a lot of differences between Optek and PAP by virtue of geographic location and service options. Once we figure out all those little nuances we are going to see what the best approach is.”

According to a news release, Dan Fenton will stay on during the company’s transition. He is happy to be working with not one but three very successful Indigenous-owned investment groups.

The fact that this group of businesses already owns over 35 businesses, including an IT Services company provided the Fentons with some reassurance the company they started will continue to thrive.

“Carolyn and I felt this was the right group to take good care of the company and help take it to the next level,” said Dan.

The CEO of ABD is equally excited about the future.

“We look forward to supporting the company as it continues to provide excellent service to its customers,” said Gay.



(l to r) Geoff Gay, CEO of Athabasca Basin Development, Gary Merasty, CEO of Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies, Dan Fenton, founder of Prince Albert Photocopier, Kevin Aebig, CEO of Optek Solutions, Ron Hyggen, CEO of Kista. (Photo supplied)



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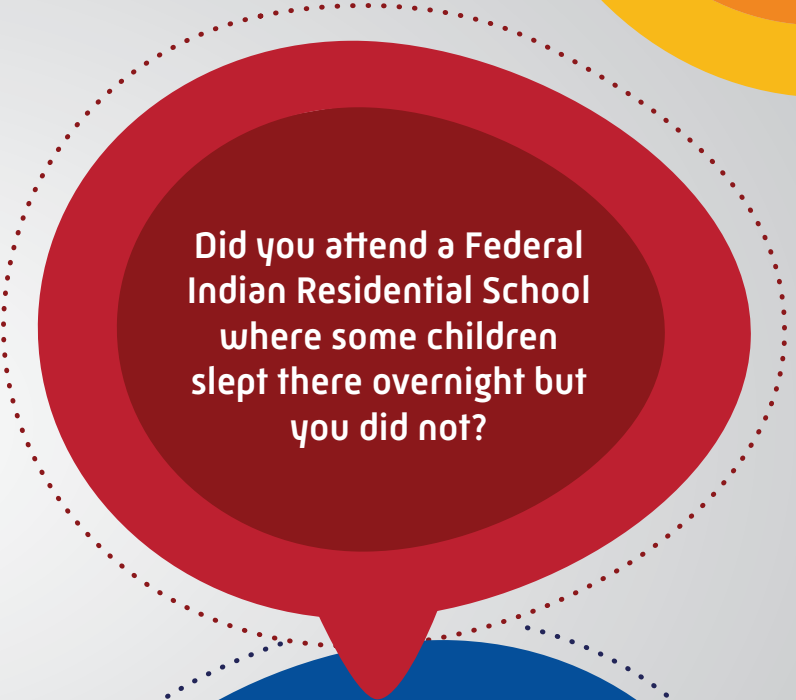




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