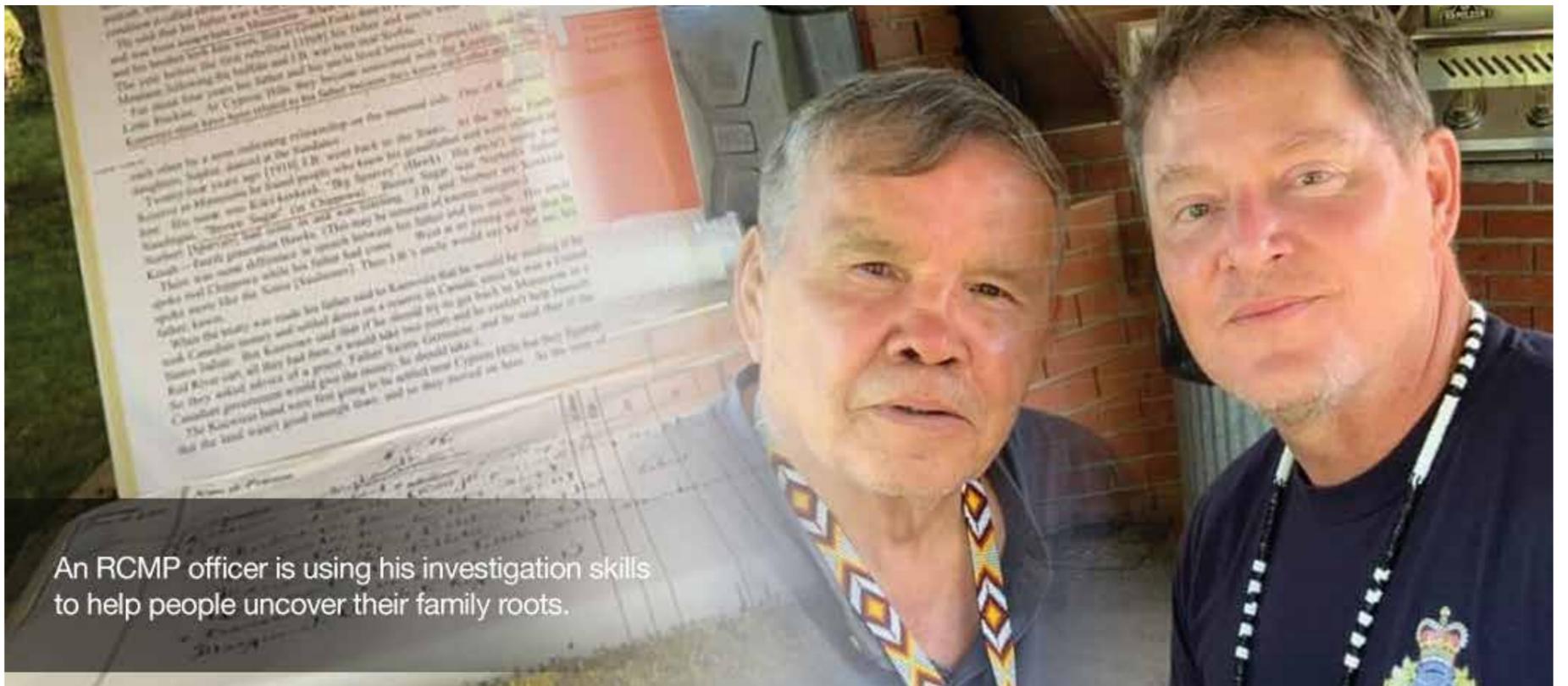


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An RCMP officer is using his investigation skills to help people uncover their family roots.

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

There's no denying RCMP Staff-Sgt. Dean Lerat loves a good mystery.

In his spare time, the self-taught genealogist likes to read complex codes of DNA to help him unlock the past.

"Once you know how to do it, it's amazing how much you can find out from just reading a few pages of genetic coding," said Lerat. "To me, it's like a crossword puzzle. If someone sends me a message and gives me some basic information – whether they're looking for their tree or a certain ancestor – the more information you gather the easier it becomes. It's like solving a puzzle."

As a member of the Cowessess First Nation, his goal is to construct a massive genetic map and family tree for the Treaty 4 area in Saskatchewan.

Lerat is well on his way.

About 100 people have recruited him to help them find their roots. He has also collected more than 200 DNA tests and has created a family tree for each one.

So far, the Treaty 4 family tree has 15,000 names listed.

"If someone does a DNA test and wants me to analyze it, I can look at their results and match them close, if not dead-on, with my tree," said Lerat.

The massive undertaking began close to home.

continued page 2 ...



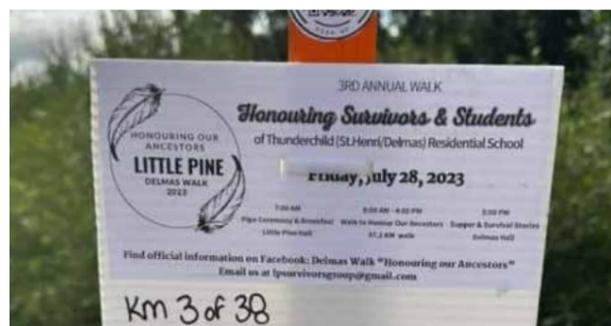
THE TREATY 4 RESURGENCE CAMP URBAN YOUTH LEAD

"I am really grateful for the people. To have met a lot of old people and Elders who gave me teachings that I am able to pass down to my family."

- page 16

August 2023 is our
Sports, Back-to-School, Powwow

September 2023 Issue:
Reconciliation Issue



THUNDERCHILD RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL A Walk in History

"I will love to see it as a heritage site, where people can pull over and get a little history lesson while they are driving down Highway 16,"

- page 6



HONOURING THE CHILDREN WALK-A THON Lebret: Last Indian Residential School

"I reflect back on that time all the time," said Chief Michael Starr. "Twenty-five years ago when we closed the doors it was a very emotional time."

- page 14

Tracing Treaty 4 roots one family at a time

... continued from page 1

For most of his life, Lerat wasn't curious about his Indigenous ancestry. He knew he was Saulteaux and a descendent of the famous long-distance runner Paul Acoose.

The only unknown was the identity of his maternal grandfather.

About five years ago, while stationed in Antigonish N.S., Lerat and his wife were sitting in a pub on St. Patrick's Day, when they made a friendly wager on who was more Irish.

The pair invested in some DNA kits and sent them off with no real expectations,

Little did he know how much his life would change.

Lerat's results revealed the missing piece in his own family tree – the identity of his mother's biological father. He and his mother were able to meet their long-lost family members.

The positive experience led him down the trail of genetic roadmapping and he decided to share his newly acquired skill.

"That thirst for knowledge and understanding of where I came from was the foundation for doing all this work," said Lerat. "It's just taken off from there."

First he helped his cousins create their own family trees.

But once Lerat moved back to Saskatchewan a couple years ago things picked up. It wasn't long before news spread, and others began sending him their DNA test results and requesting help to build their own family trees.

Being almost entirely self-taught, apart from a few pointers from work colleagues, he said, it's a complicated process to trace an individual's roots.

Lerat's first step is to read the chromosome segments from the DNA tests before accessing information on Ancestry.ca. He then cross-references the data with available online records for Indian Residential Schools, church documents, band lists and Elder testimony.

"I always warn people before I start that they might not be getting the answers [they] want," said Lerat. "Some have ended with disappointment and anger, some shock too. The biggest thing is to ensure everything I find is kept private."

Cowessess Chief Erica Beaudin said the work Lerat is doing is important because it's helping people reclaim their culture and identity.



Dean Lerat stands with his mother Joanne Lerat (left) and his grandmother (Misty Morningstar). Curiosity of his own family lineage was the start of his interest in genealogy. (Photo supplied by Dean Lerat)

"His work in using contemporary DNA tests helps us tell a different part of our history," she said.

Lerat has helped several Cowessess members impacted by the 60s Scoop reconnect and others better understand their family ties and tribal identity,

said Beaudin. In fact, many individuals who thought they were Cree discovered they are descended from Saulteaux or Dakota tribes.

Lerat estimates about 90-per-cent of Cowessess members are in fact Saulteaux.

Beaudin relied on his expertise to trace her own family history. She grew up never knowing the name of her father's father.

With Lerat's help that mystery was solved.

In addition to finding out who her paternal grandfather was, Beaudin also discovered she's a distant relative of L.M. Montgomery the author of Anne of Green Gables.

"In this whole process, [Lerat] is very respectful," she said. "Any time you have DNA and go generations back, there's a lot of skeletons in the closet. [He] is very open about sharing his skills but very confidential and cautious with how he goes about this kind of investigation."

Although Lerat is quite likely the leading amateur genealogist in Treaty 4, he is quick to shrug off any such designation.

He simply wants to do whatever he can to connect people with their roots.

"I'm constantly adding to this genetic road-map. I want to give the people the chance to find out who they are, or if they're lost, the opportunity to find home," said Lerat. "My goal is to have this all in place, so when I move on to the spirit world, I can pass this on to someone else to be that gatekeeper and continue to help people in the future."



RCMP Staff-Sgt. Dean Lerat during the Marieval Residential School Gathering for Survivors on Cowessess shares some of the genealogy work he does in his spare time for those interested in finding out more about their own family tree. (Photo supplied by Dean Lerat)

Providing love and light during a dark time

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

It takes more than a strong stomach and a thick skin to do what Jordi “Angel” Lavallee does for a living – and that’s a big heart.

“I can be in the prep room, alone at night, and have three or four bodies around me,” she said. “It’s not a big deal.”

The newly certified funeral director and embalmer from the Cowessess First Nation says her focus is to provide the best care and support for grieving families.

“I got into this because I wanted to help people,” said Angel. “And because I firmly believe no one has more respect for cultural protocols than we do. So, I think it should be us who are looking after our own people.”

Although her legal name is Jordi, her family calls her Angel. It’s a name she had long before entering her chosen line of work.

As a funeral director and embalmer, she knows her job is somewhat of a mystery to most people, but with any trade it has taken her several years of study to gain her certifications.

An embalmer preserves a body by draining some of the blood and injecting formaldehyde, which gives the body a more peaceful, natural look said Angel. To become an embalmer she spent two and a half years at Saskatchewan Polytechnic to get certified.

Angel, 26, then enrolled at Mount Royal College in Calgary to study funeral direction.

A funeral director arranges the details of a funeral, coordinates the preparation of the body, responds to requests, and communicates with the family, who often are in grief and don’t understand what needs to be done, she explained.

Angel chose to specialize in both disciplines because her goal is to help families from start to finish.

“What really made me want to get into funeral services is when my Mushum John passed away,” she said. “I saw him during his funeral, and he just looked so handsome and peaceful, like he was ready to go on to the spirit world. I just admired the way they looked after him and showed him so much respect. That’s what made me want to get into funeral directing and embalming.”

Naturally, when Angel started on her career path, it raised some eyebrows.

“People thought I was crazy,” she said.

However her mother Carol Lavallee wasn’t surprised at all.

“It’s an odd career to choose for a young lady,” she said. “But I was not shocked because she’s not what you call a normal young lady. She’s more daring and adventurous and thinks outside the box.”

Lavallee fully supported her daughter as she moved towards her goal.

“I was happy because she chose a career that very few Aboriginal people go into,” she said. “She’s very curious about all the different tribes and customs, and how to bury them properly.”

Carrying out those tribal customs with sensitivity is one of the most rewarding parts of her job, said Angel, but the job also comes with its challenges.

With two young children of her own – Johnna and Kohen – she struggles when arranging a funeral for a young person. To keep herself mentally well, Angel leans on her spirituality and culture to lift her through the darker aspects of her profession.

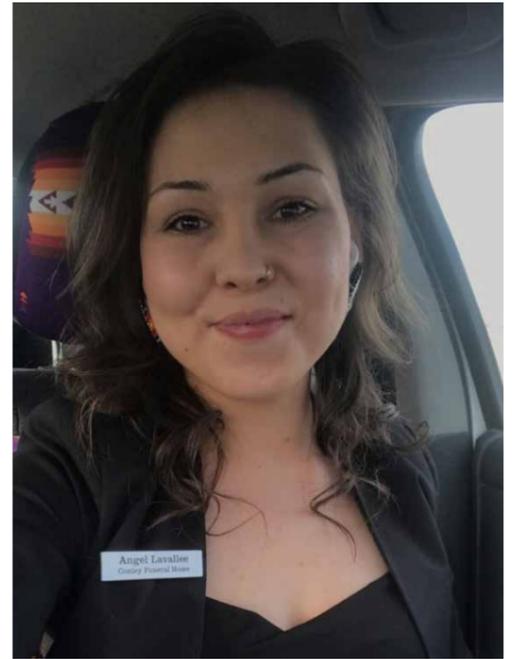
“The job can be very emotionally draining,” she said. “I smudge and pray every day to take the negative energy on its way. It’s hard at times, but I do my best not to (emotionally) take home my work to my kids and into my home.”

Being one of the few Indigenous funeral directors and embalmers combined with the cultural sensitivity and knowledge she brings to her job; Angel has become quite sought after for her services.

Elders often respond to Angel’s work with warmth and gratitude, said Lavallee.

One day, Angel would like to open her own First Nations funeral home in order to provide the best possible services for her people.

“It’s an honour when people request me to look after them,” she said. “I want to keep doing this work and keep helping people. To show every family the same level of respect, no matter who they are.”



Jordi “Angel” Lavallee is one of the few Indigenous embalmers and funeral directors in the province. Her unusual career choice stemmed from her desire to help her people during one of their most difficult times in their lives. Her mother says Angel has always someone who thinks outside the box. (Photo supplied by Jordi “Angel” Lavallee)



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Sharing the Land – Incorporating Indigenous Values

Indigenous worldviews are embedded in the spiritual, the same way they are embedded in the physical, mental and emotional. The life and way of being for an Indigenous person cannot be compartmentalized into sections, partitioned off when they participate in this or that activity.

If that occurs, then the Indigenous worldview, values, and cultures are being eradicated.

This is what Justice Murray Sinclair, and all reconciliation reports warn of, to be on guard for, cultural genocide.

Eva Marie Garrouette, speaking on radical Indigenism, says “It takes the stand that if the spiritual and sacred elements are surrendered, then there is little left of our philosophies that will make any sense.”

There is a relational component to being Indigenous that is reflected in how these worldviews were created, from interaction with the surroundings.

For businesses, they need to take Indigenous worldviews into account when constructing the values and viewpoints their company will have in Indigenous territories.

This begs the question, is the way most non-Indigenous companies do business the only way to structure business practices?

Is it exclusionary of the values within Indigenous worldviews?

Let’s start looking closer at Indigenous worldviews and how they can impact business concepts.

I will examine three Indigenous values and what they can offer to business solutions.

Oral tradition is the process of knowledge being passed on or changed via practice, and not just through written documentation. Oral tradition was the way Indigenous communities continued their teachings, history and education, one to another, generation to generation.

This runs contrary to how businesses pass knowledge on, which is via documents of policy and procedure, which are generally hard to change even with better practical knowledge on a subject.

Those same documents tend to override human compassion, in favor of keeping those rules intact. Indigenous knowledge thinks about the human factor inside of the teachings, which makes room for adaptation.

Human beings are part of a bigger ecosystem, where all things are equal including land, water, atmosphere, and animals. Indigenous people know all these are interconnected, like family, and help to replenish the world we live in.

Businesses must include a focus on sustainability of the lands they affect, as these lands are shared by so many for their life’s fulfillments. A company cannot act like this is replaceable because they have no plan for staying for generations.

Indigenous views on wealth do not focus on money, they are about relationships and care for the

community.

Businesses reward in a monetary manner.

Businesses must expand their focus concerning social responsibility, and what that can mean.

What are companies giving back to communities in the way of relationship building?

How are companies helping to support families and community development through reward systems?

There is so much more depth to Indigenous worldviews, mostly experienced through lived interactions, that we have not examined. I have only touched on an inkling of those value systems. I will examine these solutions in more depth in the coming months



In perspective

Jay Bird

Naawi-Ooden Treaty 1 to 11 Gathering

By Darla Ponace
of Eagle Feather News

Indigenous people gathered in Naawi-Oodena Treaty One Nations joint reserve in Winnipeg, Man. for the Treaty 1-11 Gathering.

The four-day began on July 23.

Leaders from the 11 Treaty territories discussed the youth, legal and political issues as well as international issues and communication strategies.

Other important topics included the Treaty framework and structure, land rights, access to healthcare and education. Reconciliation and the path towards healing was also discussed.

One of the speakers Robert Maytwayashing shared what an elder told him during a ceremony.

“Right from the beginning of time when we were first placed here as a people, we have always been very loved. Loved by our great Creator, and all our relations. And in turn we too as a people have been very loving...when we talk about these treaties and our partners that we got into these sacred agreements with...We openly and willingly offered to share our lands with them, because we are the true and original keepers of our land and we must always remember that.”

Elder Lawrence Henry, a former sundance Chief served on council for Roseau River Anishinaabe First Nation for 24 years, is an advocate of the old

clan government system. He said it was the original way of governing long before the treaties were signed.

“I’ve been involved in bringing back the clan system form of government for our people for our people,” said Henry. “And I am telling you, I am having the hardest time to convince our own people about going back to their own system which is the clan system. All the instructions are there for each clan

to do all the work that is needed to be done in each of our communities. So we need to pursue that as much as possible.”

He knows there’s still a lot of work that needs to be done to fully transition back the original ways before the treaties were signed.

Loretta Belrose Chief Administrative Officer for Treaty 8 Urban Child and Family Services spoke about Bill C92. She said it is an agreement to sign away the right to be sovereign and to have jurisdiction over First Nation children.

“How can we trust a government system?,” said Belrose. “Residential schools turned into Child Welfare. We’re not done, we’re still in Residential schools still today, We’re not done, we’re still in it,” said Belrose.

Discussions about Camp Morgan at the Brady Landfill, and Camp Mercedes at the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg, were also discussed at the

gathering. A blanket ceremony was performed to help raise some donations for both families.



Lebret walk, Chief Michael Starr. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

Taking care of business

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Thomas Benjoe, president and CEO of File Hills Qu'Appelle (FHQ) Developments is working to bring success and prosperity to the communities he serves by changing industry norms.

"I'm always challenging the status quo," said Benjoe. "We're not okay with just going with what everyone else is doing. We're always going to look at ways we can improve."

FHQ Developments is the investment, economic development, and Indigenous employment strategy branch of the FHQ Tribal Council, which aims to build businesses with a focus on sustainability, capacity development, and community impact.

"We changed the rules about how we do business and changed the rules of how our customers do business with Indigenous businesses," he said. "Which meant us doing a lot of work around Indigenous procurement policy and process."

For the last six years, Benjoe says his team is working to identify and remove barriers for Indigenous people and businesses to find success.

Previously, FHQ Developments would chase one big contract to the next, creating joint ventures to pursue the next contract. He said the model was unsustainable because the major projects would eventually end.

"We made the decision to change our business model to move away from joint ventures and towards limited partnership agreements that put a lot more onus on building capacity within our companies and building a real business with our partners," said Benjoe. "That change and shift allowed us to take more control of our businesses without having to invest a great deal of capi-



FHQ Developments President and CEO Thomas Benjoe has dedicated his career to changing how industry does business with Indigenous people and with Indigenous businesses. His visionary leadership is reflected in the several businesses FHQ Developments has launched, which have turned into million-dollar ventures. As a result, the 11 First Nations of the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council reap the benefits. The progress has not gone unnoticed, Benjoe was recently nominated as Economic Developer of the Year at the annual CANDO Conference. (Photo supplied by FHQ Developments)

Those results weren't just a one-off.

All the companies FHQ Developments has formed since that change have been multi-million dollar companies within the first year.

Most recently, Benjoe was nominated for a 2023 Economic Developer of the Year Award by the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) for the impact his work at FHQ Developments has made on Indigenous communities.

"It was really humbling to be nominated for the award," said Benjoe. "I think we're on a really strong path forward in showing what Indigenous business could look like across Canada."

He said they are hiring between two to ten people every week for different positions in their various companies or partner businesses, which in turn is creating career opportunities for Indigenous people. This is having a major impact on the local economy.

"It's about respect," said Benjoe. "We don't want our business community looking at us with our hands out looking for an opportunity. We are here to partner."

His desire to help build success for his local communities has always been his goal. In high school, he read an article about an Indigenous CEO creating opportunities for his people and it was then Benjoe knew what he wanted to work towards.

"I think it's part of our value system to be focused on the future – incorporating our culture and values into what we do," he said. "I think I get this work ethic and drive from my grandfather, who instilled those values in me."

Always looking ahead, Benjoe and his team are planning to release several Indigenous procurement tools – essentially a playbook on how to do it more effectively. They're not going to charge a consulting fee in hopes that non-Indigenous business use it as a template around building procurement policies of their own.

"This will significantly increase new contracting opportunities that Indigenous business can proceed towards," said Benjoe.



FHQ Developments CEO Thomas Benjoe was nominated for CANDO's Economic Developer of the Year. His team shared a post about the achievement along with a photo of him holding the finalist nomination award from CANDO. (Photo FHQ Developments Facebook Page)

tal."

The goal is to make certain business is set up to actually benefit Indigenous people for the long term.

The success of this forward-thinking has been well documented – last year, FHQ Developments made headlines for selling its IT services business, PLATO Sask Testing. An \$80,000 investment turned into \$1 million – a 1,150 percent return.

Gone but never forgotten

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

The Thunderchild Indian Residential School may have closed 75 years ago but the descendants of former students won't let them be forgotten.

"We're trying to create that awareness within our community by remembering and honouring our ancestors," said Sonia Pete one of the organizers of the Honouring Survivors and Students of Thunderchild (St. Henri/Delmas) Walk.

Having attended a residential school herself, she feels a sense of responsibility to carry the history forward.

The school was destroyed by fire in 1948.

Today, all that remains are the remnants the school's courtyard fountain and the stories passed down from the survivors.

"We're trying to honour all students that attended not only ... Thunderchild Residential School, but all survivors," she said. "There's elders today that are still with us that were in these schools. And there's a lot of students that didn't make it home. So, we want to remember those students, and we want to honour them. We want them to know that we know they were there."

Pete says every First Nation person in Canada has been impacted by residential schools in one way or another and the intergenerational trauma still experienced today needs to be addressed.

"There is hope we can heal," she said. "We can heal and make stronger communities."

Pete said the idea for the walk developed shortly after the Kamloops Indian Residential School's discovery of 215 unmarked graves.



A photo from the Saskatchewan Archives of the old Thunderchild Indian Residential School was in St. Henri. The school burned down in 1948. (Photo supplied)

Members of the Little Pine community gathered and together they decided it was time to raise awareness about the Delmas Residential School because if they didn't an important part of their history would be lost.

For generations stories about the school circulated among families, but with no remnants left of the building the public has no idea the school existed.

This does not sit well with Pete and other members of the volunteer committee.

"We would love to see a monument of some sort on the property because if you go to the property, you can kind of still see where the school was," she said.

"If it's something we can do, we will definitely try our best to get that done because I would really like to see something on the ground there... If you're just driving down Highway 16, you wouldn't know the school existed."

Pete said future generations have a right to know about all these schools and where they once stood because this is Canada's history too.

"I went to one, but I remember at the time, I didn't really think too much about it," she said. "It wasn't until I got to university that I actually learned the history in Indigenous Studies classes and really started to put everything into perspective ... So, when we had that community call to do something. I was there. I was there at the table, very excited to get going on things. And now



On July 28th walkers dressed in orange T-shirts walked nearly 40 kilometres in 30-degree weather from Little Pine Cree Nation to the site of the old residential school. After the walk they gathered to share a traditional meal. (Photo supplied by Candace Pete-Cardoso)

we're in year three."

The group made a four-year commitment to do the walk.

After next year, the committee may start working on getting a memorial placed at the site so the children will never again be forgotten.

Pete said their ancestors deserve to be acknowledged in some way.

"My dad's dad Ernest Kahmakotayo and his brother Anthony both attended that school," she said. "When we officially received the school listing last year, I found their names. 'It was like, 'Wow, this is real.' ... My late dad used to tell me stories like, that's where his dad went. And it was like a farming school."

Now those old stories take on a deeper meaning and Pete feels a personal connection to the school.

She doesn't believe the work to raise awareness will ever stop.

"I will love to see it as a heritage site, where people can pull over and get a little history lesson while they are driving down Highway 16," she said. "I am a big believer that people can learn and can always learn new things."



Sonia Pete wearing the black skirt is one of the organizers of the annual Honouring our Ancestors Walk. She stands with her cousin Sherisse Tootoosis-Quinney after the walk. One day, she hopes to have something to memorialize the school and provide visitors with some education about the old school. (Photo supplied by Candace Pete-Cardoso)

Jada Yee found his balance after he accepted his dual identity

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

What Jada Yee once thought of as a limitation – he now embraces as a strength.

He has carved out a place for himself in the province.

Yee is not only the first civilian appointed as chairperson for the Regina Police Service's Board of Police Commissioners he is also director of business for File Hills Qu'Appelle Developments and a lecturer at the First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv).

But, there was a time when he didn't think he belonged anywhere.

"I felt I was too Chinese for Indigenous people, and too Indigenous for Chinese people," said Yee. "I really struggled with that while growing up. I didn't know where I fit in. That weighed heavily on me."

As an Indigenous-Chinese, he found his place only after he began to understand and accept, himself.

Yee's struggle with self-acceptance led him to dropout of high school and he floated from job-to-job before giving school another shot. He enrolled at FNUUniv compelled partly by a desire to learn more about his identity.

"I learned [from Elders] that even though I come from two different cultures, to be proud of both of them," he said. "I look at them now, and see I am a product of two amazing cultures, [which] are very similar in many ways."

Around the time he was bouncing from job-to-job, Yee's now wife, Kristi, encouraged him to take a part time job as a security guard at Casino Regina. While there, Yee quickly climbed the ranks to become a casino manager by his mid-20s.

He said a University of Regina trip to Toluca, Mexico to study Indigenous populations completely altered his way of thinking.

"That trip changed my life," said Yee. "I was probably one of the youngest



Jada Yee is the first civilian to serve as the chair of the Board of Police Commissioner for the Regina Police Service. He was appointed earlier this year and is focused on raising the voice of those in the marginalized communities such as Indigenous people and newcomer populations. Yee is Lakota and Chinese. (Photo supplied by Jada Yee)

casino managers at the time – I had an ego. People were telling me I was the best thing that happened to the casino, and I bought that."

While in Mexico, he began to connect to the Indigenous worldview.

"I learned more about other Indigenous people's ways of thinking, what drives them, and their view of life," said Yee. "It's not about wealth, it's about what you're doing for your family, your people, and your kids."

Now, a father of four and husband, he infuses lessons and humility into



Jada Yee is Vice-President of Operation for the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council. (Photo supplied)

everything he does.

As the board chair for the Police Commission, Yee says one of his priorities is to be a voice to represent all communities, particularly Indigenous and underrepresented people.

Because he is arms length away from municipal politics it provides him with a unique insight into who he represents and how he represents them.

"Being a civilian is different from politicians because there's no agenda," said Yee. "That's why it's important, to me, to have a diverse board. With a politician, the waters could get muddy with agendas."

In other two hats he wears at FHQ and FNUUniv, his focus is to build up those around him.

He said the FHQ team works diligently to change the minds of big corporations when it comes to hiring and investing in Indigenous people.

For Yee, it's all about passing on the gifts that helped change his life.

"It's that circle of life," he said. "I've learned so much that I want to give back. I learn so I can teach. I want to do for these amazing Indigenous people what my professors did for me."

Yee says he's constantly learning things about both his cultures. It's this embracing of his roots, and his family, that keeps him pushing to make the world a better place.

"If I can make a difference in one person's life, then I'm happy," he said. "At the end of my life, I want to look back and say, 'I left this a better, safe, place for my children and grandchildren.' "



In addition to his position with the RPS and FHQ Developments, Jada Yee is also a sessional at FNUUniv. (Photo Credit University of Regina Photography Dept. supplied by Jada Yee)

Prairie Sky School takes a new approach to education

*By Memory McLeod
for Eagle Feather News*

Advocating for greater access to opportunity for Indigenous youth has been a life-long journey for Jacqueline Thompson.

Serving in various supportive roles has given her a unique perspective on how to engage young people in reconciliation-based education programs.

"It's fulfilling to be part of a team who are committed to educating in a way that puts truth and reconciliation first, whether they are in the classroom or on the land," said Thompson. "A lesson may begin with a meditation or land acknowledgement that integrates the history and cultural heritage of that place."

Prairie Sky School provides a land-based component, which aligns with curriculum standards and incorporates Treaty Education for Pre-K to Grade 8 students.

As part of its commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, it's offering 20 scholarships covering \$40,000 of costs such as tuition and travel to land-based teaching locations to Indigenous students.

"We do charge a tuition, being that we are only partially funded, but we are not a registered charity," she said.

The school is grounded in principles such as preserving the right of students to engage in current, global resistance movements.

The educators also support students holistically.



Kokum May Desnomie shares stories with the children at Prairie Sky School located in Regina. The school focuses on Reconciliation, out-door education and Treaty education. (Photo supplied by Jacqueline Thompson)

"They access the help that's there for Indigenous students through Jordan's Principle," said Thompson. "Sometimes we can get teacher aide support for individuals [with higher needs]."

The school is also working to decolonize education and address as many of the educational needs of the students.

"It's based on connecting with the land and how we are all [Treaty] people, and we are all land stewards," said Thompson. "They begin with planting and harvesting their own plants, they cook and bake together, to understand reciprocity to the land. You see kids in kindergarten making smoothies with fruits and veggies grown by the previous kindergarten class."

The school aims to build understanding about colonial impacts on the land and populations both past and present.

Thompson says the feedback she gets from families is positive.

A testimonial on its website from a parent really stood out for Thompson, which she wanted to share.

"We chose Prairie Sky because of their efforts on reconciliation, the connection with earth, and the intentionality of the teaching methods. We are



Artist Holly Yuzicapi shows parents from Prairie Sky School how to prepare porcupine quill for quilling and other art projects. (Photo supplied by Jacqueline Thompson)

happy that our kid understands the importance of connection to earth, learns different Indigenous languages and about the groups of people that coexist on this land (First Peoples, Métis, Settlers, Newcomers) and the role we all have towards mending this land. The school is very intentional in the teaching, and they often bring in experts on the topics they want to teach. Our kid has learned about respect for life and is gaining not only important life skills like cooking, navigating outdoors, and gardening, but also more confidence in their abilities. Our kid's emotional intelligence has increased along with their coping skills. We noticed that their vocabulary and articulation skills also improved through the creative play/learning style of the school. We appreciate that the school's intention is to work with the families to address the challenges that children face through their educational journey. We were very excited to join the community and have not been disappointed!" PSS Dad Gabriel Martinez - Software Developer.

Some classrooms have a waitlist, there is availability for applicants for grades 1-6.

"We welcome families who would not have access due to financial reasons and for families that do not have access to a vehicle, our scholarships can cover taxis," said Thompson.

For more information or to arrange a tour contact Executive Director Sara Joy Zimmerman sarajoy.zimmerman@prairieskyschool.ca or Indigenous Advocate jacqueline.thompson@prairieskyschool.ca.



Solomon Ratt a Cree storyteller shares his experience at residential school with children as they sit on a buffalo hide at Prairie Sky School for Orange Shirt Day also known as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. (Photo supplied by Jacqueline Thompson)

A young Métis athlete surprises herself with a double win at NAIG

By Darla Ponace
of Eagle Feather News

Thousands of Indigenous athletes from across Canada and the U.S. gathered in Halifax, to compete in the North American Indigenous games (NAIG) and Team Saskatchewan came out on top earning 175 medals.

Willow Fayant-Velychko, a member of the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan was one of the athletes who helped with the final medal count.

The 13-year-old competed in the U16 female rifling division and earned two medals.

No one was more pleased than Fayant-Velychko because when she competed in the Winter Games earlier this year, she didn't do well at all.

She is a pistol shooter, and trains with an airsoft pistol.

But when she tried out for NAIG she didn't know she would be shooting



Willow Fayant-Velychko, a member of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, sports the two gold medals she earned in Rifling at the North American Indigenous Games in July. (Photo supplied by Willow Fayant-Velychko)

a 22 rifle.

Surprisingly, Fayant-Velychko excelled at tryouts and was selected to represent Saskatchewan at the international competition.

"I really just wanted to try it for the experience," she said. "I didn't think I'd get anything, but I kept shooting everything each time. I expected that I might get a bronze, but nothing more."

Her steady hand and focus paid off.

Fayant-Velychko took home two gold medals in rifling.

"I felt really great about it and I felt really happy," said Fayant-Velychko.

She says the experience at NAIG has helped her confidence, because she's not as shy as she used to be.

Fayant-Velychko encourages other youth that want to get into a sport like hers or any other sport to just do it and, "to not give up too quickly if they fail, just keep trying, and continue on."

She also gives her family credit for making it possible for her to compete. The travel costs and accommodations to Halifax for the week was not cheap.

Fayant-Velychko's parents fundraised by making bannock sales, which her father described as, "very painful."

However, the entire family is thankful for all the support they received from their community.

The Saskatoon Tribal Council celebrated its second cohort of High School graduates of the Pathways program.

By Memory McLeod
for Eagle Feather News

Indigenous high school student in Saskatoon who need a little extra support to complete their secondary schooling can access the help they need thanks to Pathway program.

In 2019 the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) partnered with Pathways to Education Canada, the Saskatoon Public and Greater Catholic School Divisions to create a partnership, which is a source of pride for STC Tribal Chief Mark Arcand.

"The support provided by the program is open to Grade 9 to 12 students who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit and enrolled in high school within Saskatoon," said Arcand. "The focus is on the students, what they need to do well in school, to make those improvements, set goals and move toward them. We provide cultural support, elders who listen and give guidance. There is smudging in the classroom to begin, it really brings people, students together," he said.

The program was created in response to disproportionately low graduation rates and low student retention.

Pathways to Education Canada delivers programming to communities that face barriers to educational success for highschoolers. The program aims to support parents and students who face issues that may contribute to higher drop out or truancy rates, said Chief Operating Director Michelle Blackmon.

"Monday to Friday we work with the teachers during the day to find out what assignments and projects a student may be working on and get that feedback we need to provide the kind of assistance they need in our after-hours program," she said. "Each evening we provide a hot meal, our tutors are there. We are unique in this program because we don't only operate from one building, students from all over the city can attend on each side of the river."

It ultimately provides a sense of community through peer support and afterschool dinner and tutoring programs is fundamental to the success of the program according to Blackmon.

"Once a week we go on an outing for team building, to de-stress and have down time to process the week and celebrate some personal milestones," she said. "We also provide a monetary incentive for students toward graduation with a \$500 credit for each grade they finish, which is awarded to them upon



The STC Pathways graduates sit on stage to receive their Grade 12 Diploma. The students began the program during the height of the pandemic as Grade 9 students. (Photo supplied)

completion. It's designed to support relationship building. Our staff is dedicated to providing advocacy, counseling, mediation, and elders who listen and give good feedback."

Blackmon said she wants to see all students succeed and believes with a good support system they can. "We have been proud to see some of our grads receive prestigious scholarships and outside bursaries to recognize their academic success as part of our unique program," she said. "It encourages us to keep pressing forward toward raising the number of graduates."

The program is ongoing and in the summer, it provides bus passes for participants.

For more information about the Pathways to Education program contact Shawn Churchill, STC Corporate Communications Specialist, at 306-965-6100.

Reconciliation Ally

By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News

A network of land holders and users is working to uphold treaty rights for Indigenous people to hunt, fish, and gather on treaty land, without fear of punishment.

The Treaty Land Sharing Network (TLSN) was developed by Valerie Zink and Philip Brass in 2018 who saw the need for landholders to better understand their responsibilities as Treaty people and take concrete steps toward sharing land as Treaties intended.

"Around the time of the Colten Boushie trial, there was a lot of racism and calls for the no trespassing act. We wanted to do something to counter that ugly cultural environment in rural Saskatchewan," said Brass, member of Peepeekisis Cree Nation and advocate for Indigenous rights and environmental protection.

"If we're really in this so called Reconciliation era in this country, settlers who have the privilege to own land in Treaty territory need to actually honour Treaty," he said.

Currently, the TLSN on their website about 50 different available locations across Treaty 4 and Treaty 6, including brief descriptions of what users may find on the land, and contact information for each land owner. They are currently developing an updated map to facilitate the use of land in a more accessible way.

"We do have a rudimentary map that we've been using since we launched, but it's pretty out of date," said Zink.

"We're looking for some feedback right now from land users as we develop a more detailed map with updated locations and more information."

Zink said the TLSN hopes to have the new map printed and distributed to interested persons by this fall.

One of the land owners who has taken an active role with TLSN is Tom Harrison, a rancher who owns about 4,000 acres new Regina Beach. Harrison said he has hosted First Nations groups and programs on the land which have focused on subjects like agriculture and grazing management. When he stumbled across the TLSN, he said he was immediately intrigued with the concept.

"Around us, a lot of land is getting farmed and cultivated, but we are a few of the people in the area that



Carol Rose GoldenEagle, sits with drum during the Regina & Lumsden Regional Gathering. It was attended by Treaty Land Sharing Network members, friends from the Buffalo People Arts Institute and Alvin Francis. Participants toured the native prairie at the Lumsden Beach Camp, there were also poetry readings, storytelling, and songs. (Photo by Martha Robbins)

retained our wetlands and grass. We have a pretty strong environmental ethic, so (aligning) with the Treaties was important to us," said Harrison.

The use of Harrison's land has been modest, with about eight or nine users access his land per year, since joining two years ago. In addition to the educational groups, he's had users access his land for hunting, and herb and berry gathering, he said.

It's also fostered relationships with Indigenous land-users, he said.

"It's been a positive experience. One guy brought me a bunch of wall-eye from up north. And I'm on first name basis with some people I had never met before."

While co-founder Philip Brass acknowledges the relationships that the TLSN has created, he is no longer involved with the network due to disagreeing with steps land-users take to access land.

"For me, the most important thing isn't whether we show up and hunt or

Treaty Land Sharing Network – making relations



Carol Rose GoldenEagle, sits while the rest of the participants stand in a circle during the Regina & Lumsden Regional Gathering. Participants included members of the Treaty Land Sharing Network members, friends from the Buffalo People Arts Institute and Alvin Francis. (Photo by Martha Robbins)

not. It's about sending a powerful political and cultural message in this province by putting up a sign that says 'we respect the right of way for Indigenous people'. They haven't done that," said Brass.

According to Brass, potential land-users still need to ask permission to access land, which defeats the purpose of the network. Additionally, he said many hunters or gatherers don't possess the means, like internet or a cell phone, to communicate with land owners about accessing land.

"It's not a practical tool for Indigenous hunters, and it's not addressing the real issue," he said.

"It's a club where you go online and get permission. It's a club for land owners to say they've done something to work on Reconciliation. But it doesn't actually change anything."

Zink, who co-founded the network with Brass, said the users don't need to ask permission – that by simply joining the network they're agreeing to allow all land-users to use the land.

"We do ask that people phone members to notify members before they come because we feel that communication is essential in ensuring everyone's safety," said Zink.

Livestock, guardian dogs, other hunters, kids at camp are some of the reasons this communication is important, said Zink.

"It's not about asking permission, it's just about notifying land holders that you're intending to come so they can provide information about potential risks," she said.

"No one has had a negative experience to my knowledge. We're committed to keeping it that way to the greatest extent possible, and we really do feel that communication is essential to that."



Participants of the Regina & Lumsden Regional Gathering share a meal together. (Photo by Martha Robbins)

Drywalling by day and rugmaking by night

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

What started out as a hobby has quickly grown into a flourishing business. Chastity Shingoose-McNab discovered she has a unique talent for making rugs.

"It was just supposed to be a hobby, something to help me with my anxiety," she said. "I was just going to gift the rugs to my family, but this has ended up being something much bigger."

Shingoose-McNab, from Cote First Nation, has been operating her second business, Indigenized Rugz, since late 2022, but already she has created large rugs for First Nations in Saskatchewan including Muscowpetung First Nation, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and Cote First Nation. First Nations from Alberta and tribes from the United States have reached out to her.

"My uncle, from Cote First Nation, asked me to make a rug for them," she



Chastity Shingoose-McNab, a young entrepreneur, proves hard work can pay off. For the past decade, Shingoose has operated Extreme Trappers Taping, which is a mudding and taping business. During the pandemic she developed an interest in rug-making. She has turned her hobby into a second successful business. (Photo supplied by Chastity Shingoose-McNab)

said. "They posted it on social media and it just kind of blew up from there. People are finding me and making requests for quite large rugs."

Shingoose-McNab has always been fascinated by the production of rugs and watched rug-making videos for a few years before delving into the craft.

Entirely self-taught, her process starts with projecting the design on monk's cloth. She then traces it out on cloth to serve as a stencil. From there, she threads her yarn through a tufting gun to grate the rug, then works on the backing and trimming. The process can take her up to 40 hours from start to finish.

But says the most important step happens before she even starts a project.

"I was not raised in my culture, it was taken away from my family," said Shingoose-McNab. "My grandfather went to residential school and didn't want my mother to go through the same thing, so he took us away."

Reconnecting with her cultural practices is an important part of the creative process.

"So now, every time I do a rug, I do a smudge and pray, asking for guidance," said Shingoose-McNab. "I think that's how I'm able to do this so easily and naturally."

Despite her talent, the biggest challenge in producing rugs is time.

Shingoose-McNab also owns a business called Extreme Trappers Painting – a mudding and taping business that essentially protects drywall and im-

proves its look. Operating this business for a decade means Shingoose-McNab will sometimes work until the evening, at which point she will come home and work on her rugs until the early morning hours.

"I'm just really motivated by my step-kids," she said. "They are starting to take interest in learning these businesses as well. So I'm really just doing this for the youth and helping out anyone who wants to learn."

Shingoose-McNab hopes to open a studio in Edmonton, her current city of residence, where youth can come in and learn first-hand how to make rugs.

"When I was young, I had a lot of amazing mentors and support in my life," said Shingoose-McNab. "But I know some people don't have that. And there's a lot of young people suffering from depression and anxiety. So, I want youth to know there's something and someone out there for them."

The impact of something so simple, like making rugs, has changed her life and she knows it's just the beginning.

"I just can't wait to share my experiences with youth and anyone who wants to learn, anyone who might need it in the way I did," said Shingoose-McNab. "I think it can help a lot of people because I know it helped me with my anxiety and personal issues. I think it saved my life, to be honest."



Chastity Shingoose-McNab says creating rugs is fun. She takes a selfie by a rug during the second stage of the creative process, which is the tufting. (Photo supplied by Chastity Shingoose-McNab)



Chastity Shingoose-McNab creates small to very large rugs. In the first stage of the process, she traces out the design. (Photo supplied by Chastity Shingoose-McNab)

The Wandering Métis one year in and he's not done yet

By EFN Staff
of Eagle Feather News

Jason McKay also known as the Wandering Métis spent the year traveling around the province gathering important Métis history and recording it for others.

He uses both the oral histories and modern social media platforms to share and preserve knowledge about his people.

McKay began his quest last year during the 50th Anniversary of Back to Batoche Days. It is an initiative supported by Métis Nation- Saskatchewan

"The experience was great," he said.

While at this year's event McKay didn't have to do too much wandering. He is hard to miss these days because his SUV is covered with The Wandering Métis logo and other decals.

"I had a lot of people come up to me asking me what the Wandering Métis was about," said McKay. "It was great to share my story.

Reflecting on his journey there are a few moments that stick out with him such as being able to interview his mom.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I would interview my mother," said McKay. "That was one of my proudest moments of being the Wandering Métis, to be able to interview the woman who brought me into this world."

After a full year of travel, the work is not done.

The Métis have communities throughout the province that can be divided into three regions – north, central, and south.

"The Métis story from Stony Rapids down to Indian Head is very differ-



Jason McKay also known as the Wandering Métis poses by his Ford Bronco, which is covered in Wandering Métis logos. He began his journey to collect Métis stories in 2022 during the 50th anniversary of the annual summer festival. (Photo by Marjorie D.L. Roden)

ent," said McKay. "I've made it my duty to capture everything in between and just basically to learn who we are as Métis people."

Over the past year, he was able to travel up to La Loche and spend the weekend with the Ducharme Elementary School.

The community has a cabin the students from the school can utilize.

At the cabin, the students have an opportunity to be taught directly by the elders and knowledge keepers. Basically, the youths go out into the bush and learn how to live off the land by the experts.

"They learned what it's like to set traps for mink, martin, fisher, and lynx," said McKay. "They learned how to set nets underneath the ice for ice fishing. Sustenance living, as our Métis people have done for many years. So, the kids learn how to do that. For me, that was one of the most memorable moments I've had, to spend three days there with students and learning [alongside them]. It was great."



Jason McKay is hard to miss as he travels the province. (photo by Marjorie D.L. Roden)

He captured the La Loche Trapper School visit on a seven-minute video, which is available on the Wandering Métis YouTube channel. The other two episodes include the 50th Anniversary of Back to Batoche and the Rossignol Elementary School's Michif Festival.

Part of the work McKay is doing is to create more awareness in Saskatchewan among its citizens and the general public.

"It's important too for people to know who Métis people are," he said.

To share information, he is utilizing social media and he encourages people to find The Wandering Métis on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube.

"At least people can know who we are as Métis people," said McKay. "When they see the Infinity symbol, they can identify what it is and who we are as Métis people and, if I do a small part and I touch one person's interest, then my job is being done."

With files from Marjorie D.L. Roden



Last year, teepees were set up near the bison harvest demonstration at Back to Batoche. It was then, Jason McKay began gathering stories, which earned him the nickname the Wandering Métis. Some of his adventures can be found on YouTube. (Photo by Abreana Deneyou)

Unconventional Ribbon-skirt makers

*By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News*

Two Chief Paskwa Education Centre students funded their trip to South Korea by creating and selling ribbon skirts.

Although Dante Ketchemonia and RJ Keepness weren't able to secure summer jobs on their First Nations, they were willing to do what they could to earn some money.

Their grandmother Mary-Ann Ketchemonia, a retired school teacher and a talented ribbon-skirt maker, said when her grandson's told her they were selected to be part of the Aboriginal Youth Community delegation travelling to Seoul, Korea she knew the trip would be costly.

"I thought if I taught them to sew they could make some good money and I would be able to send them off without them breaking their mom and dad's bank," she said.

The boys joined AYC, which is a ministry, two years ago because their friends told them about it.

"It sounded cool so we just decided to go with them," said Dante. "It was cool we went to Vancouver."

They are even more excited they were selected to go to Korea for three weeks.

Mary-Ann said her grandsons are good at mechanics and fixing things, so she thought they could transfer those skills into sewing and she was right.

The goal was to raise \$1,000 they could split evenly.



Dante Ketchemonia left and RJ Keepness stand next to the grandmother Mary Ann Ketchemonia holding some of the skirts they made to sell for their trip to Korea. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

Together the trio set July 14th as a deadline to earn the money.

Every morning the boys would arrive at Mary-Ann's house to receive instructions on how to measure, cut, and construct the garments. After a couple quick lessons, they found their groove.

Dante is good at math so took on the job of measuring and cutting the fabric for skirts.

RJ, the quieter of the two, has an artistic eye and a keen sense of detail. He took charge of choosing the ribbon colours and sewing the skirts together.

"I think he's found his calling," said Mary-Ann. "He's one of the best sewers that I've ever had in of the classes I've taught. He's very, very precise."

Dante worked on the kitchen counter ironing, calculating, measuring, and carefully cutting out the various skirt patterns. While RJ occupied an upstairs bedroom that doubled as a sewing room.

Although Mary-Ann was concerned the boys might receive some backlash because they are boys sewing skirts, she said the opposite happened.

Several seamstresses purchased a skirt from the boys to show their support.

Mary-Ann said the boys took full control of the process and like a well-oiled machine they were able to make enough skirt sales to meet their target by their deadline.

Dante and RJ said they appreciated everything their grandmother taught them, and they enjoyed spending time with her before their trip.



Dante carefully cuts out some fabric on the kitchen counter-top at his grandmother's house. Mary Ann taught the boys how to cut out and construct a ribbon skirt. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

Both say they would continue making skirts if they were asked because creating the garments was fun.

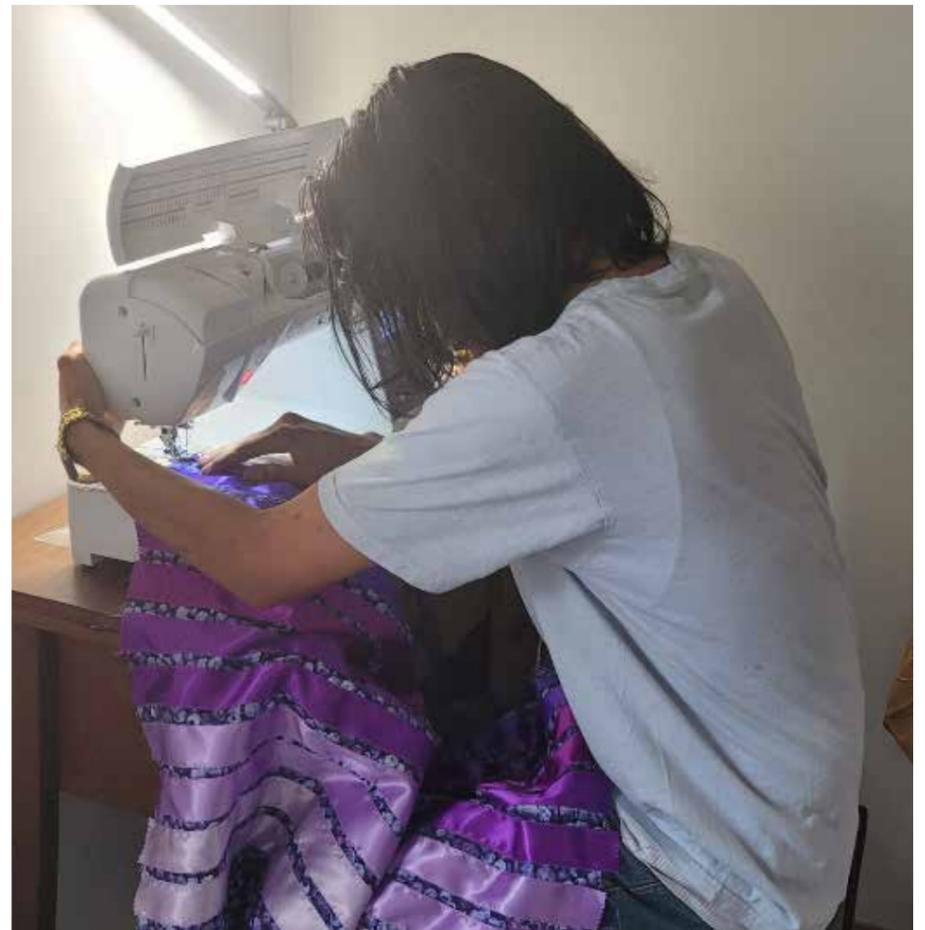
Dante is in his final year of high school and is considering his career options. He would like to learn a trade, maybe become an electrician.

RJ has a couple of years to decide but loves working with his hands and is considering a career in aircraft maintenance.

As for their trip to South Korea they were both excited about being in a new country, trying new food and learning about a different culture.

Although Mary-Ann was initially worried about them traveling so far from home, she would rather they travel and experience the world while they are young.

"I've been a teacher for 30 years, but it's about these two guys," she said. "It's been really, really beautiful having them around."



RJ carefully sews the ribbons on each skirt. Mary Ann said both her grandsons had skills they excelled in. She said RJ is a natural at sewing because he is both calm and focused. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

Milestone quietly remembered by leaders and community members

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

Twenty-five years ago, Canada's last Indian Residential School closed its doors, ending more than a century of operation.

While most people celebrated Canada Day, on the Wapiimoostosisi First Nation adjacent to the Village of Lebret, there was a different type of gathering.

Dozens of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants gathered in the Whitecalf gymnasium to prepare for the third annual Honouring the Children Walk-a-Thon.

Prior to the start of the 10-kilometre walk, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Chief Bobby Cameron had the crowd recite a short Cree prayer.

nîkân kihci-manitow kinâskomitinân miyo kîsikâw mêkwâc (first, Creator, we thank you. It's a good day right now.)

Cameron said residential schools nearly destroyed First Nation language and culture, which is why it's important to speak the language especially now.

The Indian Residential School located in Lebret began operating in September of 1884 and on June 30, 1998, the last child left the building for good.

During its 114 years of operation, it was known by the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School, St. Paul's High School and Whitecalf Collegiate.

In the final years, the Star Blanket Cree Nation took over the administration of the school.

Sonia Pete from Little Pine First Nation was there in 1998.

She remembers how surreal it felt on the last day.

"We were like, 'Wow, this is it. This is the end of this school.'" said Pete. "I caught a ride home with my friend from Red Pheasant, and we were one of the last ones to leave the school. We were walking around, and were like,

'Wow, you know, this is the last time we're probably gonna be here, all the kids.'" "

Although her experience was different from previous generations, she acknowledges her place in history.

"It's something that I hold dear to my heart," said Pete. "I can say, 'Yes. I went to residential school.'" "

It was a unique experience, and for her, she appreciates the many lifelong friends she made while there.

"When I would get lonesome, I just had to go up to the second floor and there was my dad's graduation picture in the hallway, and my uncle and my sister," said Pete. "So, it almost felt as though it was a part of our family because we all went there."



Lebret walk, Chief Michael Starr. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

all went there."

She said there was an overall sadness felt among students and staff because the school was closing.

"To this day, I still dream of that school," said Pete. "I can close my eyes and be there. I remember every detail of that school the hallways, the playroom and the big staircases."

As the last in her family to attend a residential school, she's now focused on making certain the history of these institutions is not forgotten.

Chief Michael Starr was on council when the school was still open.

"I reflect back on that time all the time," he said. "Twenty-five years ago when we closed the doors it was a very emotional time."

Starr said a lot of work went into changing the environment of the school and in the final years of operation positive things were happening.

"At the time we felt it was a good educational system," he said. "It was the prior years, that's when all the pain that we're aware of happened."

Back in 1998, we didn't want to close because we wanted to keep it moving forward to educate our young people, said Starr.

"It was probably the Creator's way of working with us," he said. "That's the way I look at it. To help tell us. 'What ever happened here we need it to come to a rest.'" "



Chief Michael Starr holding a walking staff, FSIN Vice Chief Dutch Lerat in grey baseball cap and FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron in blue hat at the start of the 10-km walk. (Photo supplied)

Although the school was demolished in 2000, the school gymnasium remains and has been repurposed into a community hall.

In 2021, after news of the 215 unmarked graves broke in Kamloops everything changed, he said, people began looking at the old school sites differently.

In January, the preliminary results of the school's ground-penetrating radar search identified more than 2,000 anomalies along with the jawbone of a small child estimated to be about 125 years old.

Starr said three years ago the walk was initiated by women in the community, but this year it was extra special.

"We are walking in honour of young children who possibly are here, and they didn't make it home," said Starr.

This is also about healing, he said.

"In this way we can bring all our people together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous from all nations together to have a good walk," said Starr.

Chief Cameron was joined by FSIN Vice-Chiefs David Pratt and Dutch Lerat for the early morning walk. He said it was important for FSIN to not only support Starr, but to honour all survivors.

"Basically, why we came here is to help with the healing part," said Cameron. "Healing is the path to Reconciliation."

He felt nothing but positive energy before, during and after the walk, which he sees as a good sign.

"I want to focus on the future," said Cameron. "The little ones (here today) have a solid legacy. A path of healing and wellness and a better life than many of us grew up with. And one day there will be a healing and wellness centre right on these exact grounds and every other residential school site."

Cameron said the federal government poured millions of dollars into constructing and maintaining the schools, so it should also invest to building healing and wellness centres.

He said one of the best parts of the day was hearing the children's laughter echo through the old school's gymnasium.

Nichole Thomson-Railton was one of the first participants to complete the walk and she was glad she did.

She wanted to support the cause and honour the many children who didn't make it home from residential schools.

Thomson-Railton said her mother and two of her sisters attended residential school in Lebret.

"It's just really important to me to give back to the community," she said.

Thomson-Railton was overcome with emotion after completing the walk because she walked for her family members impacted by residential schools.

"I was very honoured to be a part of it," she said.

The event is also an art fundraiser.

Last year, a mural was painted on the west side of the building.

Sheena Koop, nation builder advocate for Treaty Education Alliance, has been involved with the organizing committee since it started.

As an ally, she sees the walk as an opportunity to bring people together. She invited members of her church to participate, and they did.

"It's so poignant, you know on July 1st to be wearing orange and following Indigenous leadership and especially those women," said Koops. "They're just so, powerful and humble and real. It's been such an honour."

She said the community of Star Blanket is so welcoming and kind, so when she was asked to be part of it, she said yes immediately.

Many of the walkers raised money through pledges, which is going to support a local youth art project.

The Online News Act and Eagle Feather News

Some may have noticed there haven't been any Facebook posts from Eagle Feather News.

As the editor, it is my job to share what is going on and what readers can expect in the coming months.

In June, the federal government passed Bill C-18 also known as the Online News Act.

What does this mean?

This act means social media giants such as Meta and Google will have to pay news sites for the content they share online when someone clicks on a story through a link.

The government says some sort of revenue sharing needs to happen to make certain Canadian news continues to exist.

Meta and Google say this act is unworkable because it is basically amounts to a tax on links with no recognition for free marketing.

Media outlets, such as Eagle Feather, have been sharing our content on social media to generate traffic back to our website and to reach a broader audience.

Every time a person clicks on an Eagle Feather story, it generates traffic to our website. We then can take those unique page visits to potential advertisers to show them how large our reach is online. Larger numbers could spell more advertising revenue for Eagle Feather, but is not guaranteed.

Meta and Google say helping to generate traffic should be enough and do not want to share any of the revenue they receive. The reality is increasingly more advertisers are directing their advertising dollars from news sites and newspapers to social media, so even if the traffic is directed to the sites the advertising dollars have already been spent.

At the present time Meta and Google do not share advertising revenue with news sites when they share news content produced by journalists.

Shrinking advertising revenues means shrinking newsrooms because there is less money to pay staff.

This is also true at Eagle Feather News.

We currently operate on a minimal budget and have no full-time or part-time staff writers. We rely on freelancers who we pay for through ad sales.

The social media blackout is about more than just money.

It means important stories are no longer easily accessible to the public.

We at Eagle Feather pride ourselves on being able to tell the "good" news stories.

Mainstream media delivers the hard news stories, which are needed

but what ultimately happens is the public only sees one side of Indigenous people. With fewer and fewer journalists in each newsroom it means there is less opportunity to do features on Indigenous people.

This is where Eagle Feather comes in. We fill that niche because we focus on all the good things happening in our communities.

We are more than just our trauma.

We choose to highlight our successes in business, health, sports, politics, art, music, education, language and culture.

We are determined.

We laugh.

We love.

We dream.

Eagle Feather has been providing positive Indigenous content for more than 26 years and at the present time we have no intention of stopping.

In fact, we are the only provincial newspaper. We service even our most isolated communities with a paper from September to July. In August we produce a digital newspaper.

Normally, we would start sharing our content on Facebook after the paper is published. In the past it is not uncommon for our stories to be shared hundreds of times.

Currently, our Facebook Page has been disabled, so we are trying to figure out how we can get our amazing stories out to the public. On Google it has become increasingly more difficult to find our content.

Our website is still operational www.eaglefeathernews.com.

The news blackout on social media sites has occurred in other parts of the world such as Australia. In that instance an agreement was reached, so I remain hopeful something similar can happen here in Canada sooner rather than later.

Currently news broadcasters and newspapers are requesting Canada's Competition Bureau to investigate Meta's decision to block news content on its digital platforms and describe the move as anticompetitive. The social media giants

Until some type of agreement can be made, I urge everyone to check our website daily for new stories or subscribe for an online copy of the paper.

The team here at Eagle Feather will be looking at alternative ways to share our content online.

To those who continue to choose to advertise with Eagle Feather News, you are appreciated by the team, the freelancers and the communities we service.



Editor In-Chief

Kerry Benjoe

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Saskatchewan's most widely distributed newspaper

20,000 avg website visitors per month

10,000 papers distributed province-wide

15,000 followers on all social channels



www.eaglefeathernews.com

Urban youth learn on the land

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

The Treaty 4 Resurgence Camp for urban youth was a success and organizers couldn't be more thrilled.

Jessica Gordon, founder of Ancestral Connections and senior director for Indigenous Relations for YWCA Regina, said the vision for the camp began long before she registered the organization as a non-profit.

"Growing up I noticed a lot of families and youth didn't have access to ceremony or their language," she said. "My parents lived the values, but they didn't necessarily go out to ceremonies. So being an Indigenous youth living in the city for the majority of my life I realized there are so many other youth who were like me."



Youth from the Treaty 4 Resurgence Camp receive a lesson on survival from one of the educators. (Photo supplied by Jessica Gordon)

Gordon was also one of the founding members of Idle No More and it was then she realized how important it is for Indigenous people to utilize and connect to the land.

"I am exercising our jurisdiction and our Treaty and Inherent rights to the land," she said.



Jessica Gordon organizer of the cultural youth camp sits inside a teepee and shares why she decided to start the camp (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

Gordon said this year everything just fell into place. First she applied for a grant with the support of the YWCA then connected with the Comeback Society who provided the land-based educators then found youth eager to learn.

For a week the Treaty 4 Resurgence camp set up at Kanookimaw beach.

Shaye Big Eagle, 17, was one of the campers and she left feeling very grateful.

"I am very appreciative of how we came especially from the first day to the last," she said. "I am really grateful for the people. To have met a lot of old people and Elders who gave me teachings that I am able to pass down to my family."

Big Eagle plans to share what she learned with her younger siblings and with others who are interested.

She learned about the camp through her aunt Alicia Monroe

who is also the CEO of the Comeback Society.

"She knew I wanted to learn more about our culture so she brought me on," said Big Eagle.

Prior to the camp, the only access she had to her culture was through a couple classes offered at her Regina high school.

Big Eagle says being able to come out on the land and be surrounded by Elders and Knowledge Keepers is amazing and believes many urban youths could benefit from this type of learning environment.

"So much of this knowledge is being lost," she said. "It's very hard to retain especially nowadays with barely anybody who knows this knowledge."

Darrian Agecutay, Cree language instructor, said he was happy to be part of this year's camp because it's something he would have enjoyed as a youth.

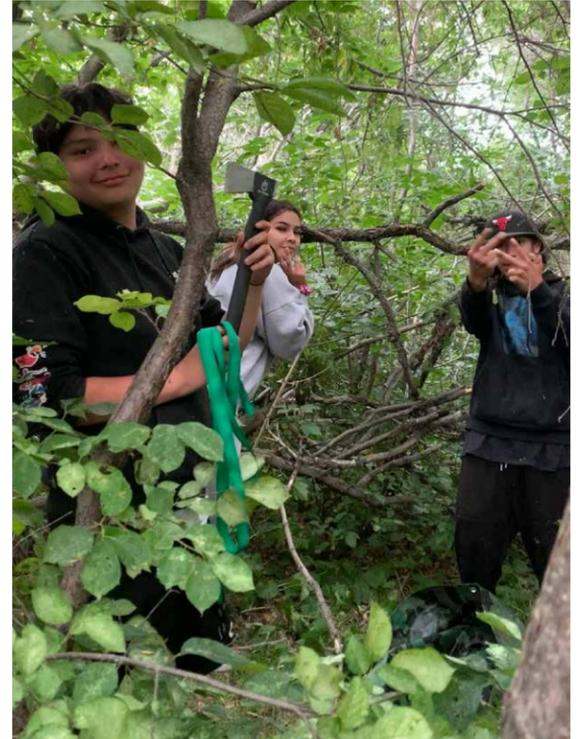
Although he grew up on the Cowessess First Nation, he didn't grow up around ceremony.

However, as he got older and learned more of the Cree language it opened up a whole new world to him.

Agecutay said everything is connected and it all starts with being on the land. Language comes from the land and one needs to know the language to truly understand the depth of ceremonies.

He said the youth are very fortunate to have this opportunity while they are still young.

Gordon sees the possibilities of the camp and in the near future she wants to create a school based on the same principles of land usage, connection to ceremonies, language, Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Ideally, she would like to provide a safe place for young people to live, learn and grow.



Some of the youth participants in the bush gathering wood as part of their outdoor survival teachings. (Photo by Jessica Gordon)



Darrian Agecutay sits with one of the hand drums the youth made during the camp. Agecutay was the Cree language instructor and storyteller. He said youth camps that bring youth on to the land to learn are essential for language revival. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)