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Indian Residential School Survivors like John Brady McDonald believe collecting stories from all survivors has become increasingly more important in the wake of recent discoveries at former Indian Residential School site. He said finding physical proof of a child's remains has been difficult to process because it brings up his own memories of being a small child in a residential school setting. McDonald, an artist, activist and artist was at the Prince Albert Indian School Residences from ages four to nine.

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

Although the Star Blanket Cree Nation (SBCN) released the results of its initial ground search, the team says, the work is far from over as it begins the next phase.

In January, the First Nation announced it had discovered more than 2,000 anomalies, the jawbone of a small child, as well as underground rooms and tunnels.

Sheldon Poitras, SBCN Indian Residential School Ground Search project manager, said the next phase includes gathering the stories and, one day, to create a virtual library.

"I think it's important to document the truth," said Poitras. "Document what happened and give former survivors an outlet to share their experiences."

Ideally, he would like to see a museum with

guided tours of the excavated tunnels, as well as a wellness and mental health centre built on the site.

Poitras believes compiling a complete history of the school is necessary because it's Indigenous history that future generations need to know.

The residential school located in Lebreton was one of the first institutions the federal government opened in 1884 and it was the last to close in 1998. During its 114 years of operation, a total of three schools were built on the site and were known by different names, including the Qu'Appelle Indian Industrial School, St. Paul's High School, the Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School and Whitecalf Collegiate.

Poitras said the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation expressed interest in helping SBCN not only gather survivor stories, but house them within its infrastructure.

However, after community discussions, a new idea formed.

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Christine Tournier

MAMOA APPROVED

"Colleen said from her view, Momoa seemed to be very grateful and excited to receive the medallion. He then opened and read aloud a letter that Tournier wrote to him explaining the meaning of the piece."

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February 2023 is our

Health Issue

March 2023 is our:
Women's Issue



ÎLE-À-LA-CROSSE

Île-à-la-Crosse Survivors

"We all have a moral, ethical responsibility to settle the claims of the Métis residential school system."

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SASKATOON TRIBAL COUNCIL

Creating more safe spaces

"We have a lot of happier people; they actually now have their own space," said Arcand. "So each area, we call them pods, have their own TV room, stuff like that. So now they get to relax in their own area, and be in a safe environment."

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Survivors are making certain residential school history is not forgotten

... continued from page 1

“Let’s design our own data collection and storage source and keep it internal,” said Poitras.

Members of the public are also encouraged to contact the SBCN ground search team to share their stories.



Sheldon Poitras (pictured right) is not only overseeing the Star Blanket Cree Nation’s Indian Residential School Ground Search Project, but he is also a former student. He attended the Qu’Appelle Indian Residential School from the late 1980s until the early 1990s. Poitras says it has been a survivor-led project from the start. Most of the people doing the hands-on work still have a clear memory of the school grounds, which has helped in phase 1 of the ground search where more than 2,000 anomalies were recorded. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe for Eagle Feather News taken at the announcement of the team’s initial findings on Jan. 12, 2023).

Some have already approached the team, including a man who said in the 1960s he was contracted to seal up four underground rooms and another who said he didn’t like to dredge the lake near the school because he always brought up bones.

Poitras wants these stories documented because they’re equally important.

“This is a survivor-led project,” he said. “We have a lot more insights and a lot more experience to know what to do.”

Poitras graduated in 1991 after spending five years at the school.

“I have a really tough time explaining to people that I was in the school, but it was operated

elements of residential school there.”

Author John Brady McDonald says sometimes it’s difficult for survivors of his generation to claim the title of survivor because he struggled with it himself.

In 1984, McDonald was four years old when he began living at the Prince Albert student residences. Although the students were bussed to the local public schools, they lived at the residences.

“I wasn’t taken away from my community,” said McDonald. “I wasn’t forcibly removed. But at the same time, I still suffered the same cultural deprivation, the same loss of language. Witnessing and experiencing a lot of the abuse that went on in that building.”

He lived there until 1989.

McDonald says he’s still coming to terms with his experiences and that survivors from his generation and younger have every right to share their stories and not feel like they are taking up space.

“It’s not a trauma competition,” he said. “We’re both sufferers of the same disease. The symptoms might have been different, but it’s the same disease, and we should be holding each other up and supporting each other.”

McDonald says it’s becoming increasingly more important to gather survivor stories.



John Brady McDonald at age six. When he was four years old he began living at the Prince Albert Student Residence, which was once the All Saints Indian Residential School. The school housed primarily students from the northern communities and although they were bussed to schools in Prince Albert, the students lived at the residences throughout the school year. McDonald said the residence was still very much a residential school when he was there. (Photo supplied by John Brady McDonald)

“We’re going to come to a time when we’re the last people with the first-hand knowledge (of being in those places),” said McDonald. “It’s our responsibility to share for those who aren’t here anymore and for those who aren’t quite ready to share it.”

People who want to document their stories of the Lebret residential school can contact the SBCN IRS Ground Search Project directly at 306-334-2206 or by email at Gerard.wolfe@sbcnirsproject.com, Sherrie.Bellegarde@sbcnirsproject.com or Scott.mcnabb@sbcnirsproject.com.



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Île-à-la-Crosse Survivors are tired of waiting and are taking action

By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News

Survivors of the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School that housed Métis children in Saskatchewan have filed a class action lawsuit against the governments of Saskatchewan and Canada.

The group of survivors seek recognition, justice, and reparation for the years of harm the students suffered while attending the school. The lawsuit was filed by six survivors and generational survivors in late December, after what the Île-à-la-Crosse survivors' committee reported were many unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with both the provincial and federal governments.

"The Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, on behalf of the Métis community in Saskatchewan, supports the new class action lawsuit and joins the plaintiffs in urging both governments to negotiate," said Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) Vice President Michelle LeClair at the lawsuit announcement at Dakota Dunes Resort Hotel on January 24.

"If we can't reach an early resolution to this, the plaintiffs will pursue this litigation rigorously, and we as the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan support this wholeheartedly," said LeClair.

The Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School was open from the 1820s to the 1970s when the school burnt down. The generations of survivors have reported cruel living conditions at the school, and suffered physical, sexual, and mental abuse by the staff. Well documented is also the loss of language, culture, and identity of the survivors as a result of the abuse at the school. Approximately 1,500 children total attended the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School.

"We suffered the same trauma as (those at) all the residential schools. The agenda was to take the culture out of the child," said Louis Gardiner, the lead and named plaintiff in the class action lawsuit.

"We lost everything. Language, culture, and identity. All we ask for is to be treated fairly as survivors," he said.

Gardiner, who was five years old when he began attending the school, said he was separated from his family, given a number rather than using his name, was forbidden from speaking Michif, and was regularly physically abused.

"We need to tackle this together, as one Métis family," said Gardiner.

The committee said that survivors were not included in the Indian Res-

idential School Settlement Agreement because the school didn't qualify as a residential school. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed with Ottawa in 2019, but the committee said no meaningful progress has been made. No statements of defence have yet been filed.

"We all have a moral, ethical responsibility to settle the claims of the Métis residential school system," said Duane Favel, mayor of Île-à-la-Crosse.


"It's heartbreaking that we're still struggling to get recognized as Métis residential school survivors who suffered the same abuses and trauma," he said. "We need to bring closure to Île-à-la-Crosse."

The lawsuit is brought on behalf of all First Nation, non-status, Inuit, and Métis people who attended the school at any time, as either day students or residential school students. The lawsuit also includes claims on behalf of close family members of survivor class members.

LeClair said the effects of the school is still clear in the province today. "You see the harm in our communities. You see the suicides. You see the abuse of drugs and alcohol. You see beautiful communities but you see the loss of language and culture. The grieving for the land. That was a result of this residential school. And that hasn't been acknowledged," said LeClair.




Survivors and close family members of survivors who attended the Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School seated during a news conference. They have launched a class action against the province and the federal government and are seeking recognition, justice, and reparation for the years of harm the students suffered while attending the school. (Photo supplied by the MN-S)



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A Métis beadwork and clothing artist from St. Louis, Saskatchewan, received the job of a lifetime recently

By
for Eagle Feather News

Christine Tournier was asked by her good friends, Colleen and Clint Rud-
derham, to make a beaded medallion, which
would be gifted to Jason Momoa on set of his
current project called See.

The idea for the medallion came to be when
Clint got an unexpected acting gig for the pro-
duction, See. Clint suffers from a degenerative
eye condition that's left him legally blind, but
when Colleen spotted a casting call for vision-im-
paired actors, she brought it to his attention.

See is dystopian series set in the future where
humans have lost their vision.

"I wanted him to do this to show him that,
you know, there's still life out there," said Col-
leen. "And it'd be important for him to recognize
that he can still have the ability to do a lot of
things in this world, despite getting that kind of
diagnosis."

Tournier said they all wanted to make this
piece unique and memorable for Momoa be-
cause of his Hawaiian background. She aimed
to intertwine the two cultures, with an emphasis
on the land.

"The main part of the work is a turtle, so
that's of course representative of land and Indig-
enous culture and also significant in Hawaiian
culture," said Tournier. "And then she also want-
ed an eagle, a teepee, and a feather to represent her background."

Colleen said from her view, Momoa seemed to be very grateful and ex-
cited to receive the medallion. He then opened and read aloud a letter that

Tournier wrote to him explaining the meaning of the piece.

"I grew fondly of him for standing up for Indigenous peoples across the
country, across the world, really for all Indigenous people," said Colleen.
"And I think that's why I admire him so much, that's why that piece needed to
be meaningful."



Close-up shot of the medallion that was given to Jason Momoa. The beadwork and design were meant to tie together both Métis and Hawaiian cultures. (Photo supplied)

From a young age, Tournier remembers her moth-
er sewing and learning the basics from her, but after
enough time she carved her own path and eventually
started SS River Designs.

Tournier said she draws inspiration from her close
connection to the South Saskatchewan River, which
runs through St. Louis. She also has deep cultural
roots in the area.

"My mom and dad live on the end," said Tournier.
"My mom's cousin lives on the original homestead
where our ancestors would have homesteaded in the
late 1800s and then fought in the [resistance]."

Coming out of high school, Tournier said there
wasn't that much of an Indigenous or Métis fashion
industry compared to now. She pointed to how Indig-
enous beading and leatherwork didn't get the recog-
nition of being couture, but now they are starting to
receive that level of appreciation.

For Indigenous Fashion Week, Tournier was se-
lected to participate in Cannes, France, alongside the
film festival in May. She'll be presenting a new line of
clothing and offered a sense of what to expect.

"Looking at some historical beadwork from the
late 1800s as far as some of the styles of flowers and
some of the colors, but yet they still kind of have a

modern feel," said Tournier. "And this one is definitely a grandmother collec-
tion, but it'll be a bit of a surprise as far as not your typical grandmother kind
of thing."

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Saskatchewan

The fight to free two sisters gains momentum

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

A chorus of happy birthday during an impromptu birthday celebration complete with a small cake and presents has left the supporters of Odelia and Nerissa Quewezance hopeful.



Odelia Quewezance experienced her first birthday surrounded by friends and family for the first time in many years. She turned 51 the same day she and her sister were in court requesting to be released on bail while they await the Federal Minister's decision on whether a miscarriage of justice occurred in their case. In 1994, the sisters were convicted of second-degree murder with no possibility of parole for at least 10 years. Although they have maintained their innocence, three decades later they are still prisoners. Innocence Canada is advocating for their release. (Photo by Ron Dalton)

Although they have maintained their innocence, after almost three decades they remain incarcerated.

Three years ago, David Milgaard urged Innocence Canada to help the sisters and, after reviewing their case, the organization got involved.

Milgaard was wrongly convicted of murder and spent 23 years in prison before gaining his freedom. He died last year.

On Jan. 18, the sisters were at the Yorkton courthouse for a bail hearing.

Ron Dalton, co-president of Innocence Canada, was there with Win Wahrer, director of client services, along with a Toronto lawyer and some local lawyers to support the sisters.

During an hour-long break, about 20 people gathered in one of the rooms in the courthouse to celebrate Odelia's, the elder sister's, 51st birthday.

Dalton said it was the highlight of an otherwise emotional day for everyone.

"Odelia sat there with her family, her sisters, her cousins, her nieces and nephews and her legal team," he said. "I had to stand back and look at this crowd gathered and hope and pray their future holds a lot more gatherings like that for them, just the simple things that we all take for granted."

Odelia is currently living in a half-way house in Regina while Nerissa remains in prison. Dalton said bail doesn't mean the sisters are free because they'll have conditions to abide by while they wait for the federal justice minister's decision.

"The minister has already decided that there's a potential miscarriage of justice in their case," said Dalton.

However, it could take years because after the federal justice minister decides a miscarriage of justice has occurred, the case moves on to a second stage and this is where the minister will grant a remedy.

The options are to overturn the conviction, order the provincial court of appeal to review the case again, or to uphold the conviction and leave matters as they stand.

"So that's the process that we're in now," said Dalton. "But it could take three or four years. Is our best guess-timate."

Dalton said the judge in this case has been fair and listened to both sides, which leaves him hopeful.

"The fact that they survived 30 years of incarceration in very difficult circumstances, I'm hopeful in the current climate, now that we're starting to look at the effects of intergenerational trauma," he said. "In our view, they've been there much longer than they should ... they've been kept in cages and in captivity. I hope that you never have to feel what that's like. I've had a taste of it, and I don't consider that I've gone through anything near the type of ordeal that these two sisters have."

Dalton said in many ways the sisters have been able to thrive and are known to help other people in their community, whether it's in prison or outside of prison.

The judge reserved his decision and adjourned court until Feb. 23.



(left to right) Nerissa Quewezance, Win Wahrer, director of client service for Innocence Canada and Odelia Quewezance on Jan. 18 in a Yorkton courthouse room. Wahrer is holding a small hand-crafted gift the sisters presented to her. (Photo by Ron Dalton)

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Teacher turned storyteller

*By Andrea Bellerose
for Eagle Feather News*

Jasmyn Albert is participating in this year's Aboriginal Storytelling Month and she couldn't be more excited.

Albert, a Saskatoon artist and educator, is relatively new to the speaking circuit. However, she has taken her class to storytelling events in the past, so she knows all about it.

"I grew up in Saskatoon, attended high school here and got my Bachelor of Education through ITEP (Indian Teacher Education Program) in 2019," she said.

Albert is not in a Saskatoon classroom this year for Storytelling Month, but that's not stopping her.

"Right now, I work with a company called Connected North where I bring education to Northern and isolated communities," she said. "So I provide curriculum that they may not get and bring different cultural activities to these communities, such as beading, ribbon skirt making, starblanket teaching, to name a few."

Albert tells her own stories, but also teaches storytelling to her students to enhance their learning.

"The way I do it is in all of our teachings and all of our cultures; sometimes there are stories and simple things for why we offer tobacco and smudge," she said. "Sometimes there are trickster stories or the stories of the willow and things like that. My personal classroom involves telling stories the way I was told as a kid."

When asked if there are certain stories Albert is telling over and over, she responded with a procedure she does.

"I do a lot of teepee teaching and the story of it and understanding the 15 poles and what they mean," she said. "Each teepee pole has a value and a reason why it is part of our home and our structure."

Albert describes how she doesn't call herself a storyteller, but as someone who shares her culture and traditions. She feels that the term "storytelling" has an element of fiction to it. But she shares that telling stories is beneficial,

particularly for her students.

"For my Indigenous students, I see a spark in their eye and they find connection; they get to learn about their culture. For my non-Indigenous students, I get to break down those negative ideas about Indigenous people and culture. It is beautiful, deep and strong. Many think it is dead and that we all lost it, but we still have a lot of our strong traditions."

For what makes a good storyteller, Albert keeps it simple.

"When you are sharing stories to kids you want them to be happy and present your story energetic, proud and confident."

On Feb 28, Albert is joining her kokum Mary Lee for a virtual storytelling session, which starts at 6 p.m.

"I love sharing," she said. "My kokum taught me everything. It is always exciting when I get to share with her. We will be talking about some teepee teachings and stories from a long time ago. Learning what your teaching was the old-fashioned way; I learned my culture from my kokum."



Jasmyn Albert (left) with her kokum Mary Lee. The pair are teaming up for a storytelling session later this month. Albert is a long-time supporter of the event. As an educator, she usually takes her class to events, but this year Albert has made the switch to storyteller. (Photo supplied)



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The **Île-à-la-Crosse** Residential Boarding School was operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese, largely funded by the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan, and remained in operation until the mid-1970s.



For over 100 years, Métis children were taken from their loving homes and forced to attend the school. They've reported stories of sexual and physical abuse and neglect perpetrated by the priests and instructors just like those experienced in other residential schools across Canada.

Île-à-la-Crosse Survivors - have not been recognized.

A new action filed in court is hoped to prompt both the Federal and Provincial Governments to at last meet with Survivors, work toward a resolution and recognize the harms they suffered, failing which the matter will go to court.

Each day we lose more Île-à-la-Crosse School Survivors. We must act now to acknowledge their story and allow them to move forward and heal.

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Governments – settle this now. Recognize. We stand with our Survivors. Their strength is our strength, and the strength of the Métis Nation is with them.

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Learn about the proposed class action lawsuit and how you can add your voice for the Survivors' cause.



Historical Photography - Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan; A10430, A3105



Indigenous Storytelling Month hits a milestone

By Andrea Bellerose
for Eagle Feather News

It is the 20th anniversary of Indigenous Storytelling Month in Saskatchewan. Although storytelling and oral history has been passed on for generations, this formal recognition was created in 2004 by the Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples (LSSAP).

It started as an event with a couple hundred participants but has grown exponentially over the years, with events all across the province attracting up to 30,000 participants.

Jessica Generoux, a librarian from Treaty 6 Sturgeon Lake First Nation, is one of this year's organizers.

The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Project (SAS) includes several different library systems.

"(Seven) public and regional libraries in Saskatchewan work with their local In-



During Indigenous Storytelling Month, storytellers from across the province spend time with young and old sharing the age-old tradition of storytelling. Traditionally, storytelling only happened once snow was on the ground, so 20 years ago it was decided to host an Indigenous Storytelling event during the month of February. Pictured is Rhonda Donais telling a story to a class at St Michael's School. (Photo supplied)

igenous communities to provide their storytelling programs," said Generoux. "Local storytellers use those library systems to share stories and to share the knowledge contained within the story."

In December 2022, the provincial government declared that February is the official month of Indigenous storytelling.

"Culturally when the snow has hit the ground, it has been a very old custom to gather together and share stories to learn culture and language and teachings. Winter-time is very important," said Generoux.

Despite the growth of the event over the years, she says the vision has remained the same.

"I think that we are focused on quality partnerships and programming and, for the past 20 years, the SAS project has always been at the grassroots level," said Generoux. "Big hitters like the University of Regina and Southeast Regional Library System have been involved, but the project and the program has always focused on the grassroots level. It is designed that way so anyone can get involved and the cultural protocol of storytelling is respected and the nations they come from are recognized."

Over the years some events do attract larger crowds. Several community feasts were held at various locations on Feb. 4 to help kick off this year's event.

One of the SAS highlights is a storytelling session with Dene author Tenille Campbell set to take place at the Moose Jaw Public Library on Feb. 25.

Generoux has noticed that more and more young people are starting to get involved with storytelling.

"The cultural revitalization process going on through storytelling and seeing younger storytellers emerge sharing traditional stories speaks to the intergenerational impact of storytelling," she said. "Younger people are stepping up to the plate to become storytellers to take care of story bundles, bundles of teaching, that have been passed down in families and communities. The cultural leadership of youth is on display."

Generoux said SAS has evolved into something important to the people of the province.

Storytelling can be healing, especially in this time of what is going on in ground searches at various residential schools.

"This project has been instrumental in implementing or responding to the TRC Calls to Action," said Generoux. "The importance of storytelling in cultural revitalization and healing is helping as we move forward."

Visit www.lssap.ca/storytelling for more information and the full calendar of events.

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Listening to our grandmothers

By Marjorie D.L. Roden
for Eagle Feather News

An idea originating from an IndieGoGo campaign two years ago has grown into something bigger, with a broader audience.

Singer/actor Andrea Menard and Prince Albert Artist-in-Residence Leah Dorion have teamed up to create feminine guidance cards that use traditional lessons.

“(Menard) wrote it, and then she licensed images from me to kind of bring her card deck of meditation cards to life,” said Dorion, adding “She featured my art to go along with her teachings.”

“These were the independent version that I did through an IndieGoGo campaign,” Menard said of the original deck. “I found out how expensive they were to print. I went ‘Oh man, I’m not a publisher, this is expensive.’”

Bringing her long-time friend on board in Dorion was a no-brainer.

“Andrea and I have a long history together because she’s originally from Prince Albert and we grew up together,” Dorion said.

“We went to (Carlton Comprehensive) High School together. We’ve stayed connected, and she (Menard) did a pre-run. Then she got a publisher from the states. Mango Publishing will be re-releasing the cards in the spring.”

The new version is to include Dorion’s artwork, because she has updated a few of the images.

“It’s rebirthing her project, and it will be to a way bigger audience,” Dorion stated.

The cards, which Menard refers to as “an Indigenous version of oracle cards,” were meant as a teaching tool to be used at her Sacred Feminine Learning Lodge in British Columbia.

“They’re like a deck of motivational cards,” said Dorion. “You know, the



Leah Dorion in Wanuskewin at an art show displaying some of her art. (Photo by Curtis Breaton; supplied by Leah Dorion)

cards are deeper diving and it has a whole set of traditions that are more focused on positive thinking and motivational thoughts.”

She was impressed with the concept so she wanted to get involved.

“I just think what’s so cool is it’s simple, beautiful wisdoms that take us back to basics, and the simplicity and beauty of them is all sacred feminine things,” said Dorion. “They all work together.”

The previous deck of 52 cards held several lessons from “the grandmothers,” explained Menard.

“My idea (was) to help bring the concept to more people, and to help people be more gentle on themselves, and more gentle on the planet,” she said. “The cards are all about gentle messages about connecting with the Earth, the birds, your body, your four sacred bodies (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual), your emotions, your mind, all of it. It’s like getting in touch with the quiet parts of yourself, and honouring all the things we take for granted.”

What else can the creators of these cards say regarding them? Dorion responded, “I would say it has a really Métis point of view. It takes values from both (Indigenous and settler) worlds, the lived experience... it’s a beautiful stew!”

The IndieGoGo edition cards are now scarce. Menard is selling them “in bundles, where you have to get the (card) reading.”

However, the new cards will be sold at a cheaper rate because they’re not a limited edition.

“They’ll be global,” said Dorion. “Hopefully, they’ll go all over the globe and these Métis girls’ work will get out there. That’s what I hope.”

The original seeds from the Sacred Feminine Wisdom Cards are available online (with a card reading as part of the package) at <https://sacredfeminine-learninglodge.com/wisdomcards>

The updated cards will be available for sale May 9 on Amazon.



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Big donations bring YWCA closer to its goal

By Liam O'Connor
of Eagle Feather News

Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC) is providing a \$3-million grant to support the YWCA Centre for Women and Families project.

“Our government is proud to provide further support to this important project,” Minister responsible for Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Gene Makowsky said in a news release. “This will connect women and children in vulnerable situations to a safe, stable, and affordable place to live, as we continue to work with our valued partners at YWCA Regina to provide affordable housing to families in need.”

During the Grey Cup weekend, the YWCA received a \$1-million dollar donation from Mosaic that will go toward the new community cafe and employment program in their new facility being built.

“Mosaic is honoured to be a positive force for change in Regina by partnering with the YWCA on this transformational project,” said Mosaic CEO Joc O’Rourke.

The cafe and kitchen will be one of the job opportunities for women to build an employment history.

The new 85,000 sq ft YWCA Regina Centre for Women and Families is looking to “decolonize” the typical nature of shelters and bring women and families out of the cycle of trauma.

In a press release from the YWCA, the new facility will offer “wrap-around services” to address barriers that have long kept women and children in crisis.

Services to be expected at the facility will feature community multipurpose rooms, communal kitchens, and indoor and outdoor playrooms. In addition, there will be other drop-in supports and a healing lodge.

YWCA CEO Melissa Coomber-Bendtsen believes the healing lodge is a great addition to the new location because it offers a sense of identity.

“Having access to Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and ceremony, and Elders, and medicine is a huge important addition in the center,” said Coomber-Bendtsen. “Because that also gives a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, and you know, that other piece of kind of, hope, to help with healing that we don’t currently have in our facility.”

The hope with this new centre, according to Coomber-Bendtsen, is that

it will offer more of a sense of community than traditional shelters.

“Thriving healthy community is such an important part of a person’s capacity to see hope,” said Coomber-Bendtsen. “And then potentially heal from traumas.”

C o o m b e r - Bendtsen said that the YWCA wants \$9 million from the community to help fund the new building. Also according to her, the cost of the new facility has increased from its original expected budget of \$45 to \$63 million because of inflation.

The new YWCA centre is expected to be completed in the fall of 2024. When completed, the YWCA Regina Centre for Women and Families will provide 68 affordable housing units for women and children, as well as 40 emergency shelter spaces that are funded by the ministries of Social Services and Justice.

YWCA Regina helps families reach their full potential by addressing the complex issues that women and communities face. It provides childcare, shelter and housing, community programs, family support programs, and outreach services.

Approximately 80 per cent of the women who come to them are fleeing violence. Saskatchewan has the highest rate of domestic violence and sexual assault in Canada, with 90 per cent of the victims being women and girls.



Members of the YWCA in Regina were pre-sented with a cheque for \$1-million during the Grey Cup weekend in Regina from Mosaic. The money brings the organization one step closer to its major capital project goal. Everyone was in good spirits after the announcement. (Photo supplied by Melissa Coomber-Bendtsen)

Incentive Packages for Healthcare Workers



The Government of Saskatchewan is offering one of the most generous incentive packages in Canada for healthcare workers who fill hard to recruit positions in rural and remote areas. Packages ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 will be paid over a three-year period with a matching Return-of-Service agreement.

These packages will be designated for certain positions such as: Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Registered Psychiatric Nurses and many other professional areas.

For more information on location and eligibility visit:

saskatchewan.ca/HHR

saskatchewan.ca/HHR

Saskatchewan

New shelter is a success according to organizers

By Liam O'Connor
of Eagle Feather News

The Saskatoon Tribal Council's (STC) newly opened homeless shelter, located at 415 Fairmont Drive, has been fully operational for a few days.

There were some concerns surrounding the new shelter, such as transportation and location — STC Chief Mark Arcand said that the new location has been a huge success since opening and reflected on what the last few days looked like.

"We have a lot of happier people; they actually now have their own space," said Arcand. "So each area, we call them pods, have their own TV room, stuff like that. So now they get to relax in their own area, and be in a safe environment."

Arcand said that the people staying at the shelter typically never had a



The Saskatoon Tribal Council's shelter located at 415 Fairmont Drive is functioning despite earlier concerns regarding its accessibility, but everyone is very happy with the new shelter. Each occupant lives in their own pod complete with a bed and television, which is different from traditional shelters. (Photo supplied)

safe environment to live in before and feel valued.

"When we look about why it's important, the (purpose of the) investment is to actually have adequate, proper spacing for people to feel valued."

"When they feel valued, they're actually going to hopefully make some better decisions that we can support."

STC was given \$390,000 through a grant from the Saskatoon Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) and, while Arcand is grateful to have received that money, he indicated that they would need more funding to keep the facility running.

"That investment of 390,000, it would probably cover five weeks for us because we're spending about 330,000 a month at our current location."

An aspect of the funding agreement that Arcand wished he didn't have to fulfill, is that it only allows the shelter to be open from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m.

"Kicking people out from a warm facility because of certain rules and regulations is not acceptable," he said. "And we've got to change those rules and regulations to actually meet the need for people."

SHIP's communication coordinator, Brenna Sych, responded in an email and said that they are unable to provide comment on funding for the shelter in the future because the money is awarded through applications.

Arcand expressed how this facility is different than the regular warm-up shelter and that it would need more money to continue to support the quality of life for people they wish to provide. At the shelter, besides the 15 staff members, expenses include three meals a day, showers, laundry, and pods for privacy.

Colleen Taylor, a poverty advocate at the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, supported the idea of a more permanent location with resources and safety readily available compared to the warm-up locations.

"One of the difficulties for people who are living with homelessness is being able to get around to the various resources," said Taylor. "So, everything under one roof makes a huge difference for people."

At this point in time the shelter has reached its 106 maximum capacity for bed spots, but it still has enough space for an overflow area where people can keep warm and access resources at the shelter.

The Indigenous Apprenticeship Initiative is accepting proposals until MAY 25, 2023.



The Indigenous Apprenticeship Initiative (IAI) program creates awareness for apprenticeship training and encourages participants to consider a career in the skilled trades. The IAI is now accepting proposals for innovative projects, including apprenticeship courses, mentoring projects, career exploration and more.

For more information:

306-933-5388

saskapprenticeship.ca/indigenous-apprenticeship



Saskatchewan
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Important conversations between cultures about culture and diversity

By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News

Elder and Professor Willie Ermine is hoping to spark conversations about marginalization in our contemporary society. Only, he wants the discourse to take on a different and more forward-thinking tone.

“We keep re-hashing our victimization. If this discourse continues – that we’re always people that need help, that need healing, that need recovery – then that’s not a very good place for us to be in. We should shine our better angles, our better side of life,” Ermine told Eagle Feather News.

This was one of the key points Ermine shared at the 2023 “Threads: Cultural Conversations” virtual conference, held this January by the Saskatoon Open Door Society. Ermine was one of the five keynote speakers, and 55 speakers in total, to share their wisdom on culture, diversity, and building a better global community.



As part of the Threads: Cultural Conversations virtual conference, 55 different speakers were invited to share their message. Pictured: Two women dressed in their traditional regalia sit down and have a conversation about culture and race. (Photo supplied by Threads)

“I want people to stop and reflect. In broader society, it’s all skyscrapers and shopping malls and busy cities, this whole idea of what society is about, and somewhere in there, we’ve become forgotten people,” said Ermine. “We have an important place. Not as victimized people but people who can articulate their knowledge. We have so many gifts and treasures to offer our communities. We need to stop this marginalization.”

Ermine, who is from Sturgeon Lake First Nation and was an assistant professor with the First Nations University of Canada, is no stranger to asking bold, philosophical questions. One of his queries to those at “Threads:” what happens after healing?

“Everyone is telling us we have to heal and recover, but what do we do after we heal? What’s the grand purpose of all this?,” said Ermine.

“We’ve haven’t really sunk our fingers into all those treasures in all our Indigenous nations. We have them but were made to forget about them. We need to look to a new paradigm for us to get beyond victimization and really sink into the riches because there’s so much there.”

This was one of the many messages of communal growth and understanding at “Threads.” The conference, now in its third year, was held on Jan. 25 and 26, and attended virtually by a reported 1,229 individuals in locations spanning the globe, including across Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and North America.

The theme of this year’s conference was “Perception,” explains one of the conference organizers, Anita Ogurlu.

“How we perceive each other, how we are taught, or learn through institutions, who we consider a friend, a foe – often these perceptions or judgments are made erroneously, so our idea (with “Threads”) is to question our assumptions and explore how we all perceive things in many different ways,” said Ogurlu, the cultural bridging facilitator at Open Door Society.

The conference had no shortage of diverse perspectives, with the other four keynotes alongside Ermine being: Grammy-nominated, Hong Kong-born composer Christopher Tin; Somalia-born Canadian Minister of Housing, Diversity, and Inclusion Ahmed Hussen; Canadian actor and Canada’s Consul General in Los Angeles Zaib Shaikh; and former Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Dr. Maryann Francis – the second African Canadian to be named Lieutenant Governor in Canada.

“At this conference, we try to avoid silos. This is not an academic conference, it’s not a settlement conference that has its own set of buzzwords that are pertinent to a sector of settlement, and it’s not an Indigenous conference,” said Ogurlu.

“It’s a mixture of all those. We want Indigenous, non-Indigenous, newcomers, everyone. We are trying to weave us together as diverse people, sharing this time and space in history together.”

Since its beginnings three years ago, “Threads” has been about discussing complicated issues in our society, but focusing on the hopeful and the positive rather than the misconceptions and the problems.

“We try to give a hopeful message to model how we can be now and in the future. We’re trying to create positive race relations. Anti-racism sometimes recreates racism because we’re talking about all the bad things we’re doing to one another,” said Ogurlu.

“So, we’re trying to shine on one another, to show what might become when we open our hearts and minds and learn from one another.”

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A one-of-a-kind business enterprise has launched in the province

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

The first Indigenous-owned investment firm is being created by Nekaneet First Nation Chief Alvin Francis and Council partners, along with Meckelborg Financial Group.

The firm is called the Wiyotisiwin Investment Management Company (WIMC). Wiyotisiwin is a Cree word that means “to be prosperous.”

In a press release, Francis said, “for far too long there has been a disconnect between First Nations and wealth management.”

Nekaneet partnered with WIMC so the First Nation could have more control over their trust investment and have a say in where and what they are investing in.

Francis’ ultimate goal is to create generational wealth for First Nations.

“Now, with this investment company, we get to (make) our own choices, but still go by the policies and guidelines of your trust,” said Francis.

As First Nations move towards the path of self-determination and becoming self-governing, wealth management is an integral element

they must take under consideration.

Francis thinks it’s time a local company has a vested interest in making money for First Nations.

“Now that the federal government is settling these trusts, there’s going to be billions of dollars out there,” he said. “And we want to ensure that the future is taken care of by our own people.”

The firm will focus on managing First Nations’ trust settlements and accessing revenue and capital amounts that are held in Ottawa.

Meckelborg Financial Group, an investment firm in Saskatoon, has been working to help build WIMC for several years.

“Wiyotisiwin Investment Management Company is an innovative solution to building and acquiring wealth in Indigenous communities,” said Richie Stanviloff, a partner at Meckelborg. “This new company is a true step towards reconciliation as we look towards building intergenerational wealth and investment management for First Nations across Canada.”

Francis is hopeful they’ll eventually be able to attract Indigenous finance graduates to come and work at the firm.



(seated left to right) Ritchie Stanviloff with the Meckelborg Financial Group, Nekaneet Chief Alvin Francis and Rob Woods co-founder of the newly formed Wiyotisiwin Investment Management Company (WIMC) during the official launch. The group plans to create an opportunity for First Nations to take control of their own finances and ultimately help them to create generational wealth. WIMC is a first of its kind of investment company.



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Some Saskatchewan comedians are making their national debut on APTN

By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News

What started out as a simple, comedic website ran by a few friends has now become a full comedy show on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN).

The minds behind the new APTN comedy show, The Feather News (no relation to this paper), are Ryan Moccasin, Muskwa Lerat, Shawn Cuthand, and Danny Knight – all of whom are proudly from Saskatchewan. Their passion project-turned-APTN show is to debut on Feb. 14 on APTN Lumi, and consists of six comedic, sketch-based episodes.

“I feel excited, but relieved at the same time,” said Moccasin, the show’s executive producer. “We’ve spent a long time putting our hearts and souls into making this comedy show. To see this finally come to fruition and sharing it with the world is exciting.”

Although they think it’s funny, they have to wait and see how the public responds to their brand of comedy.

“So we’re a bit nervous too,” said Moccasin.

The show might be grounded in comedy, but it uses laughs as a gateway to explore some serious cultural and social issues. Season one of the series looks at subjects like false claims of Indigenous identity, protests, systemic racism, and social media activism, among others.

“I think it will raise some eyebrows,” said Moccasin. “There are sketches that have some shock-value. But APTN gave us guidance and showed us where some red flags were.”

He references an episode that features a fake interview with “The Pope,” where he’s talking to individuals from First Nations in Saskatchewan. They wrote the sketch even before realizing the real pope would be making a trip

to Canada.

“It’s never our intention to deliberately offend or fool people,” said Moccasin. “When we write satire or comedy, we always try to punch up. There’s nothing more democratic than seeing the high and mighty spoofed. But we never punch down.”

Moccasin, Cuthand, and Knight are all stand-up comedians, which is how they met and started The Feather.

The initial idea behind the new show was to provide an Indigenous voice responding to contemporary issues and stories in our society, said Moccasin.



A group of Saskatchewan comedians are set to take their comedy act to the small screen with their new TV set to air on APTN and Lumi this month. (Photo supplied by APTN)

“When you look at Canada through the news, they don’t paint a very happy picture of us,” he said. “So we really want to share the Indigenous experience through comedy, satire, parody, sketches. Humour is very important to us as Indigenous people.”

The Feather News went from comedy blog in 2018, to a site with YouTube shorts and fake articles, to a site with longer and more elaborate comedy sketches. Their goal, whether broadcast over APTN or posting on their blog remains the same: use comedy to heighten the cultural consciousness in Canada, especially with respect to Indigenous people, explains Moccasin.

“I hope we can present a more nuanced angle to issues in Canada, like when it comes to our relationship with the RCMP, or how taxes on reserves work,” said Moccasin. “The comedy can disarm people at first, then they can start talking about the issues after that.”

On Feb. 24, the team behind the new TV show will host a night at The Roxy Theatre in Saskatoon, where they will screen two episodes as well as perform a stand-up set.



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February is First Nations & Métis Storytelling Month. Check our website for information on these and all other library programs. New for 2023, you can also create your own program guide!

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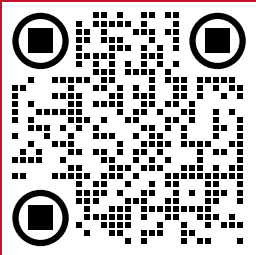
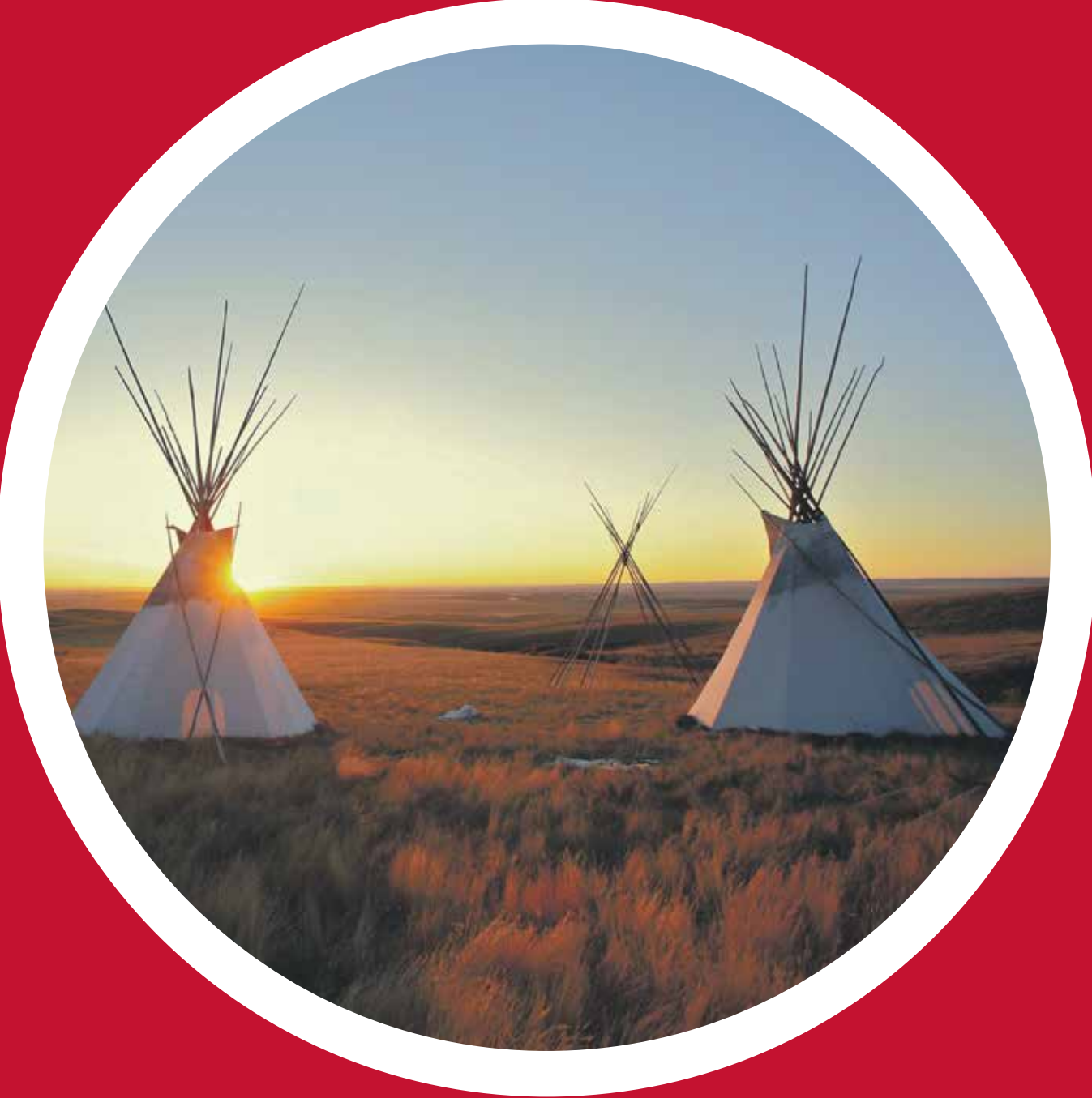
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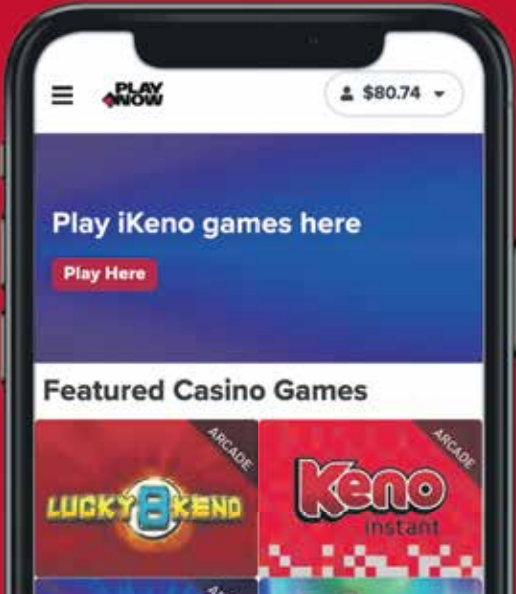


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