

Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

Indspiring event for young and old

Gabrielle Scrimshaw from Saskatchewan Elizabeth Zarpa from Newfoundland and Labrador and Graham Kotowich of Saskatchewan acknowledged the crowd after they were presented with their youth awards at the 20th Annual Indspired Awards hosted in Saskatoon in March.

(Photo courtesy Indspire)



Show attracted array of talent to Saskatchewan

By Andréa Ledding
For Eagle Feather News

Saskatoon recently played host to the 20th annual Indspire (formerly National Aboriginal Achievement) Awards at TCU Place. Televised nationally by APTN and Global, the awards were hosted by multi-talented Darrell Dennis and Cheri Maracle, along with many prominent co-presenters such as celebrity and activist Candy Palmater, and Wab Kinew, who sang a combination hip-hop/drum song to honour the three youth nominees.

Talented musicians Terri Clark, Sherry St. Germain, and Burnt Project 1 featured songs on-stage during the evening, while a dance-infused number from A Tribe Called Red rocked the crowd with their combination of traditional pow wow music and electronic dance/DJ music.

Their spectacular opening number was backed by a group of 20 traditional fancy, jingle, grass, and a hoop dancer choreographed by Jacob Pratt, and was a real show-stopper ... or starter, depending on how you look at it!

The Sid Buckwold Theatre was packed with gorgeous and excited community members who could be seen lining up afterwards to get their programs signed

and photos taken with Wab Kinew, Darrell Dennis, or Indspire recipients such as Theoren Fleury.

The show itself ran smoothly with the hosting, entertainment, dancing, music, video clips sharing the background of each recipient, and on-stage presentations to recipients with the newly designed award. A pre-show gala was hosted by Shell Canada, while BHP Billiton hosted a post-show gala where guests mingled and enjoyed complimentary food and drink.

The 2013 Indspire Award recipients are: Jacqueline Guest, Alberta – Arts; Charlie Evalik, Nunavut – Business & Commerce; Winston Wuttunee, Saskatchewan – Culture, Heritage & Spirituality; Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, British Columbia – Education; Lloyd (Sonny) Flett, Alberta – Environment & Natural Resources; Ruby Jacobs, Ontario – Health; Viola Robinson, Nova Scotia – Law & Justice; Duane Smith, Northwest Territories – Politics; Gail Cyr, Manitoba – Public Service; Theoren Fleury, Manitoba – Sports; Graham Kotowich, Saskatchewan – Métis Youth Award; Gabrielle Scrimshaw, Saskatchewan – First Nation Youth Award; Elizabeth Zarpa, Newfoundland and Labrador – Inuit Youth Award; Alex Van Bibber, Yukon – Lifetime Achievement Award.

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MADE THEIR WE DAY

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Piapot's Alyssa Kaiswatum is playing softball in Minnesota these days and loves mixing up her pitches.

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Welcome to our
Women's Issue

Coming In April - Arts & Entertainment Edition

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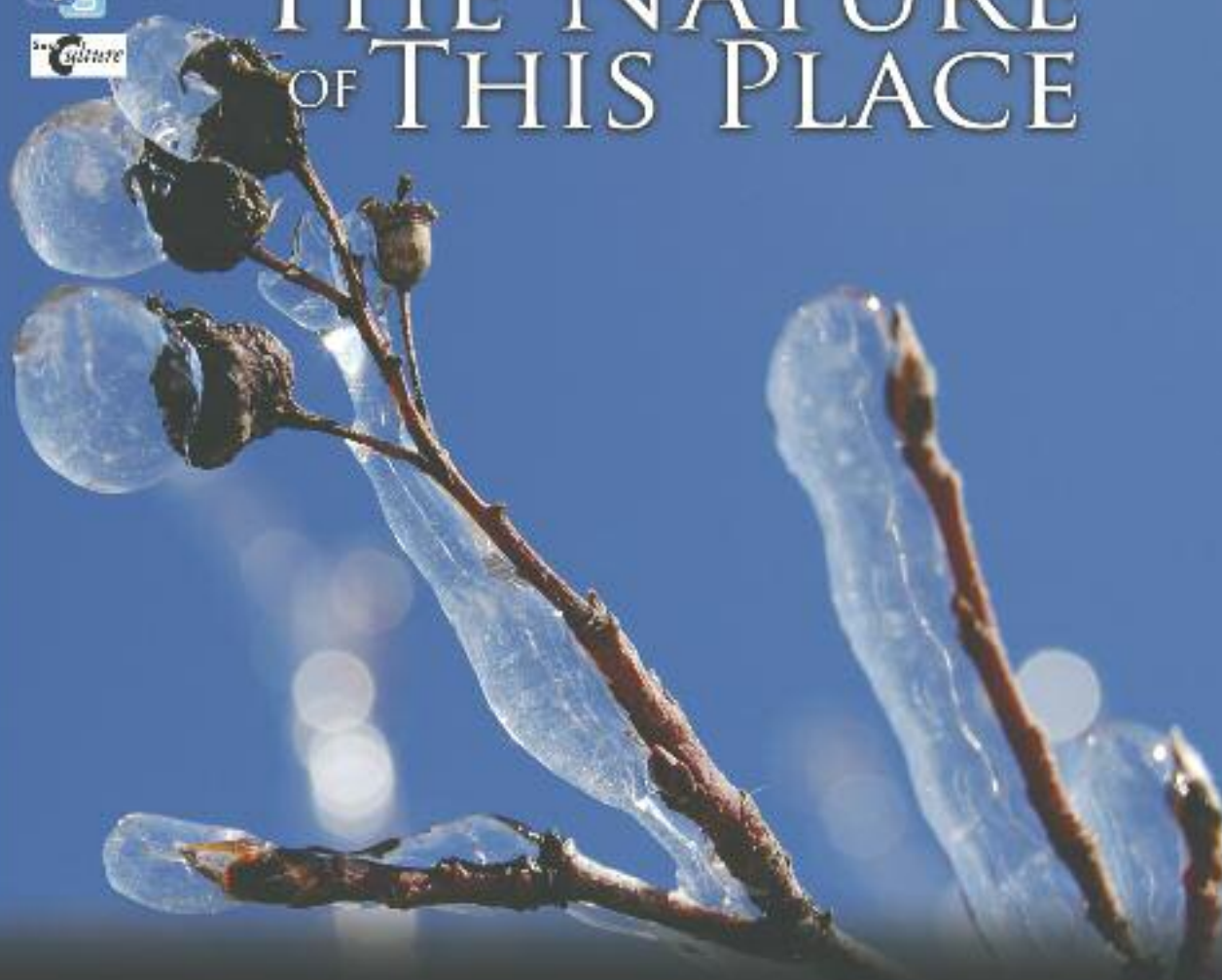
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Laryn Oakes performs to honour murdered jingle dancer friend

By Darcy McKenzie
For Eagle Feather News

A talented traditional dancer, 16-year-old Laryn Oakes is answering the calling as a role model for today's First Nations youth.

Oakes is an accomplished powwow dancer who has been honoured with a highly distinguished traditional ceremonial position within the powwow community.

In November 2012, Laryn Oakes competed in and won the Miss Manito Ahbee pageant. The award and pageant represents missing and murdered Aboriginal women throughout Canada. The Miss Manito Ahbee pageant is in memory of Sherisse Houle who went missing and was a murder victim.

For Laryn Oakes, the Manito Ahbee pageant became a more personal pursuit as one of her best friends, Tonesha Desjarlais Walker, also a jingle dancer, was murdered in July 2012 while visiting Edmonton.

"That should have never happened to her. She was looking forward to graduating high school and excited about her future. What happened to Tonesha was what pushed me to compete for the Miss Manito Ahbee pageant and win, in her honour," Oakes exclaimed.

A competitive powwow dancer, Oakes was never one to seek the spotlight or prestigious awards and honours. The Miss Manito Ahbee pageant crown, however, was different because of her friend, Tonesha, but also what the pageant and crown could translate to other First Nations youth struggling to find their way in today's overwhelming world.

"Today's youth need to know who they are – know their culture and language. We are the next generation of leaders and role models and schooling or education is one of the most important parts of our life – don't let anyone tell you that you can't because you can," is Oakes' message to all young people.

In honour of her crown as Miss Manio Ahbee and her friend Tonesha, Oakes is competing in two powwow season opening events – the annual Denver, Colorado powwow in March and the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico in April where Laryn has been named Lady Head Dancer, a unique honour especially for a youth.

"It is such an honour to be named Lady Head Dancer at the Gathering of Nations. I will do my best to represent Miss Manito Ahbee, my community of Nekaneet First Nation and my family," Oakes said.



Laryn Oakes intends to use her position as Miss Manito Ahbee to raise awareness of murdered and missing Aboriginal women.



Laryn Oakes was recently crowned Miss Manito Ahbee. The pageant is in memory of Sherisse Houle who went missing and was a murder victim.

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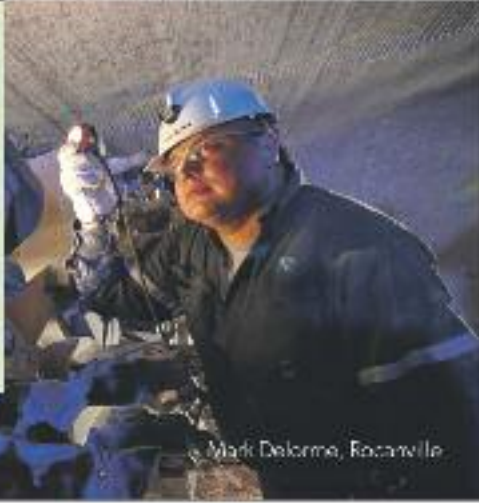
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Don't be buffaloed ... we're going daily, sorta

Welcome to our Women's issue and our 15th Anniversary edition. We are doing nothing special to celebrate our big day other than this paragraph ... sure it is a nice milestone but we intend to hit many more and will save the cake and fireworks for the big 25th.

Thanks must go out to our advertisers, readers, writers and printer who make the effort every month worthwhile.

We have noticed one thing over our years and that is it is very frustrating, as a monthly paper, to sit on news stories. Sometimes it is three weeks before we can print a story.

The economics of being a weekly or daily paper don't work so we have been trying to figure out an alternative.

The best way to deliver timely news nowadays is the Internet. We are currently in the process of building an online version of Eagle Feather News that will deliver daily news, sports, weather, obituaries, a calendar of events and pretty much everything you need in a daily paper. The process is arduous and quite involved and we don't know exactly when we will be launching because we want to do it right, but we fully intend to have it going before too long.

There is so much going on in the Aboriginal community in Saskatchewan that it needs this type of service and we want to be the ones to deliver it to you with our network of great writers and columnists. Stay tuned.

We need a national inquest into the extremely high numbers of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. According to published reports, there are over 500 cases. If there were 500 cases of missing and or murdered white ladies, or even men, there would be outrage, inquests, headlines blaring and an all out attack on the root causes. But sadly, the government cares more these days about defending its picks for the Senate than figuring out solutions that will alleviate the oppression of Aboriginal women in Canada. Sad.

If we had our druthers, our first step would be to convince some First Nation and Métis men to quit abusing their partners. That is a simplistic notion, but sometimes we are our own worst enemies.

...

A Senator that is doing good things though is Saskatchewan's own Senator Dr. Lillian Dyck. She is very involved in helping families that have lost or missing members through Iskwewuk E-wichi-witochik" (Women Walking Together) and is a regular voice for accountability in the Senate. You should hear her talk about disgraced Senator Patrick Brazeau! This lady knows her stuff. Senator Dyck's life has been captured in a play that is coming to Saskatoon in April called Café Daughter written by the amazing Cree playwright Kenneth T. Williams. Next month we will have a feature on the play and the Senator's life. It is an amazing tale indeed.

...



Senator Lillian Dyck

A white buffalo has arrived at the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo. The white buffalo is sacred to many First Nation people. There have been

rumblings from some quarters that it is sacrilege that this bison is locked up and on display and there have been others saying that proper protocols have been followed and it is nice to be able to visit the legendary animal and have people learn about First Nation culture at the same time.

Regardless of the controversy, for sure we are taking the kids down to see the buffalo. The Forestry Farm Park and Zoo is one of Saskatoon's greatest places to take the kids. This white buffalo only adds to it.

...

There is some good news and some bad news out of Regina this month. The bad news is some idiotic gang members took video of a beat in ... the animalistic ritual where a young man or woman subjects themselves to a beating orchestrated by their alleged friends and soon to be allies in the gang.

The video circulating on Facebook shows a young guy beat unconscious by five or so idiots who happen to think this is cool. It is disgusting to watch and impossible to watch all the way through. The good thing is the police watched the video and are now pressing charges of assault against the morons who did the beat in.

We hope this can actually help those kids get the help they need ... in jail.

Sadly, that is all they know. Sympathies go out to anyone who thinks this is a way to roll and the young people who are left with no family options that are better than willingly letting people beat your head in.

The good news is there are young people that are prepared to risk life and limb for others. Karli Weiss-Delorme and her boyfriend Huey Creely made good news in Regina recently. As they walked home from an appointment, they saw smoke pouring from a house and heard



cries for help. They quickly ran into a house that was engulfed in smoke and found an elderly lady in the entry way, confused and in panic.

They led her out, extinguished the flames in her hair and got her seated on a nearby parked car when they realized she had no shoes. These quick thinking and acting young people certainly deserve the kudos they are receiving from the family of the woman they rescued. Good job Karli and Huey.

...

Lastly kudos go out to the fine folk at Egadz. They finally have a home to call their own as they bought a building on 1st Avenue North in Saskatoon and renovated it to fit their needs.

This organization offers invaluable services to youth at risk. One of their most successful programs is the My Home concept that gets young people into safe, supportive and affordable houses as they finish their schooling.

The new location will house their programs and over 100 staff and has big windows and a sunny main area that just says "welcome."

Good job to donors PotashCorp and the Saskatoon Foundation that kicked in for a great new kitchen. Go check this place out.

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Old photos hint at values that kept us strong

There are so many teachings and stories about Indigenous women's lives I had a hard time deciding what to write about this month. Much of my time lately has been buried in archival research studying historical photographs from northern Manitoba so I decided to share two of my favorite pictures.

They grabbed my attention because they capture a moment in time from way back and are monuments to our grandmothers who have long since left this world.

Neither of these pictures alone tells us much about women's lives because they are posed shots – someone asked them to stand still and look at the camera. But they still have the power to teach us and keep memories alive.



Mothers and Babies, Maria Portage, MB c. 1920
Credit Archives of Manitoba, R.T. Chapin Collection, #128.

The three ladies from Fisher River are striking. The hard outdoor work of their lives is

well worn on their faces, strong bodies, and everyday clothes. One looks bored, the other curious and the third looks a bit impatient. Their head scarves and their home-made dresses, store-bought sweaters, along with their beautiful hand-tanned wrap-around moccasins and moccasin rubbers, suggest they are dressed for work and not in their Sunday best. Perhaps they were impatient at being taken away from their work by this silly photographer.

The mothers and babies were photographed in the 1920s. The moms are clearly proud of their children, so, too, are the little girls proud of their home-made dolls. Like the grandmothers, these women have the look of hard workers. It is striking that the babies are not very small, some were probably already walking but are kept in their tihkinákana while their mothers work.

The women and children in these two pictures are beautiful. They radiate pride and dignity, and remind us that beauty comes from within, not from name-brand clothes and make-up. They took pride in their ability to feed and look after their loved ones to the best of their ability under harsh conditions.



Photographs not only capture a moment in time they also prompt the recall of our own memories, they act as “mnemonic devices.” A mnemonic device aids us to remember, it assists the memory. These two photos raise a lot of my own memories about women in my life who are no longer among us. They remind me of old grannies and great aunts who used to wear those long dresses and moccasins, who were hard workers and had dignity and pride in their accomplishments and family. They exemplified the values of hard work, generosity, humility, pride, love and compassion. These values that



L-R Bella Bagg, Helen Bushy, Annabella McKay. Fisher River Cree Nation, Koostatak, MB c. 1938 Credit Fisher River Cree Collection.

kept us strong as a people are worth striving for today and passing on to our own children and grandchildren.

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Law-making in Canada a complex process

The many issues relating to Indian and Métis people that are being brought to the forefront of public attention and debate cover the entire spectrum of law and law-making in Canada.

Most readers will be familiar with the sources of law in statutes or acts of Parliament or the provincial legislatures, and familiar, too, with judge-made law which is based on specialized analysis focusing upon precedent. The latter category of law is often called the 'common-law' system for reasons having to do with its origins in British legal history.

The third, and presumably the least-known source of law comes from political action. Where folks identify things or actions that really matter to them, and insist on them for a long time, the law might well come around to giving legal effect to these things or actions. There are a number of ancient examples in obscure areas of property law where the law has recognized the insistent use of the lands belonging to others as legal rights, such as the right to walk on lands or to take things from the land.

But the important area of development for First Nation and Métis rights lies in the area of constitutional law, where the boundary and the relationship between law and politics is most evident. Where certain political actors are concerned, such as elected politicians and appointed Governors, their actions can

transform into practices, conventions and ultimately law that becomes binding.

In a sense it can be said that in this area what is the law is what the political actors can do and get away with! Think of the manipulation of the power of Parliament by prime ministers, and actions by governors-general in decisions about the legitimacy of government acts.

Here I want to show that recent issues in the spotlight exhibit the workings of the first two familiar sources of law, but that the third source of law too must be considered in assessing prospects for potential ways of deciding the place of aboriginal peoples in political decision-making in Canada.

Statute law-making has been in the forefront of confrontation and protest over such bills as Bill C-45 and Rob Clarke's private member's Bill C 428 on amending the Indian Act. These laws are made by Parliament and the protestations are directed at the government of the day that under Canada's undemocratic system actually controls Parliament.

Judge-made law is frequently in the news, mainly in cases on aboriginal rights where the judges invent the law, and, a critic might fairly say, unfairly so in the case of First

Nations and Métis people's rights when compared to the rights of others such as linguistic minorities. The regrettable

Canadian situation, where appointed judges get to decide the fundamental rights of aboriginal peoples is a result of the failures of the First Ministers Conferences on

Aboriginal Constitutional Reform of the 1980s and the Charlottetown Accord which attempted to define those rights in forums where representatives of Aboriginal peoples and governments met.

As the late Jim Sinclair made clear in his famous speech in 1987 First Nations and Métis people are not going away. One of the fascinating things to observe in the future is how the indigenous leaders' insistent political action might be transformed into practices that become acceptable and ultimately binding on governments. The legitimate role of the leaders is helped by the Constitutional recognition of their role in any negotiations on parts of the Constitution, such as s.91(24) of the Daniels case fame.

What sort of practice might emerge? An obvious one would be the recognition that no legislation is enacted without consultations and negotiations with the Aboriginal people

whose interests and rights are affected. Presently it is impossible for the federal government to legitimately enact any statute pertaining to such interests.

The situation is reminiscent of the illegitimacy of anything the Mulroney government could do following Oka, which led him to appoint the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1991. Mulroney was fond of the image that negotiators must be prepared 'to put some water into your wine'.

The idea that the political action of Aboriginal leaders can lead to constitutional changes might borrow from this image to say that the political action can change water into wine, where the wine is the law. No one can draw water however from the poisoned well of current Aboriginal-government relations.

Alternative political action is needed. On the government side actions can range widely including a new Royal Proclamation and changes to federal institutions.

As for 91(24), the leaders of both sides can expressly change it by having a First Ministers Conference, as is now provided for in the Constitution Act 1982. The Daniels case, which was reviewed here briefly last month, has been appealed by the federal government.

There are options to letting the judges go on to decide the issue instead of the legitimate representatives of both sides. But don't hold your breath on this one.



Comment
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Support for families of missing women

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

Darlene Okemaysim-Sicotte and Myrna LaPlante recently received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for co-founding "Iskwewuk E-wichi-witochik" (Women Walking Together) to spread awareness of those missing, and to support their families.

"I became involved after my Aunt Emily Osmond (LaPlante) vanished from her home in September 2007," said LaPlante. "To date, Aunt Emily has not been located and we continue to search for her."

"Our family also has another missing person, Cody Ridge Wolfe, age 17 was last seen at Muskowekwan First Nation, Lestock, on April 29, 2011 and we have been intensely involved in this search as well. To date Cody's disappearance remains unsolved."

She says she will continue to raise awareness, keep these topics in the news, educate the community, and let families know there is support available.

"I encourage communities to support activities related to missing persons and violence against women and children," she noted, adding a thanks to Senator Lillian Dyck for the nomination and to community members, friends and family who have expressed their congratulations. She feels shy and humbled to be singled out, and accepts the award on behalf of the whole organization.

"It was very humbling, I was thrilled to have worked with Senator Dyck throughout the last seven years, and my thoughts immediately went to the mother of missing Karina Bethanne Wolfe, Carole who is deaf, that this work is for her, for Gwenda Yuzicappi, to the Smokeyday family, to Herb and Pauline

Muskego, to the Nashacappos," noted Okemaysim-Sicotte.

"The volunteer work we do and especially on my end is to give wholehearted sincere support for their missing loved ones. It was gratifying to know that there are colleagues and friends who dedicate their lives to the injustices that happen in our native communities, in particular to the families of the missing."

Iskwewuk E-wichi-witochik is comprised of core members and friends from all walks of life, men, women, students, professors, a senator, people of religious faith, and retirees, explained Darlene, including Priscilla Settee, Mary Anne Assailly, Helen Smith McIntyre, Marlee Ritchie, Val Arnault-Pelletier, Rita Bouvier, Lorraine Pura, Rachel Fiddler, Senator Lillian Dyck, Christine Smillie, and Kathie Pruden-Nansel.

"It came in response to the 2004 response for the Stolen Sisters report that was researched by Amnesty International and the Native Women's Association of Canada.

In (Saskatoon and Saskatchewan) there were a high number of missing indigenous women, girls, aunts, sisters, mothers reported and on file with RCMP and Saskatoon City Police Services. We met for the first time in October 2005 at the White Buffalo Youth Lodge. There were over 50 people and we decided to plan an event to support the families of the missing."

Currently a core group of about ten women along with many supporters, they received the City of Saskatoon Living in Harmony Award from the Cultural Diversity and Race Relations committee in 2008. Okemaysim-Sicotte hopes that the country will hold a national inquiry into those missing, and that the limited federal program



Myrna LaPlante and Darlene Okemaysim-Sicotte were each awarded the Queens Jubilee Medal for their work in helping families of missing Aboriginal people.
(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

to support families of missing persons will be expanded.

"We do our work with the support of our families, husbands, sisters, aunts, daughters, sons, community, politicians, and the

general public," said Okemaysim-Sicotte, adding that the focus is on "these families who endure day in and day out the reality that a person they love dearly is nowhere to be found."



JUBILEE MEDALISTS

The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation and the Native Women's Association of Canada are celebrating ten years of service at the local, provincial, national and international levels. They have a mandate to support and assist Aboriginal women and their families in the social, economic and political spheres through education, advocacy, research and resource sharing. They recently took this special opportunity to honor six outstanding Saskatchewan Aboriginal women who received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. The Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medals were presented to (from left to right) Linda Head – Mistawasis First Nation, Judy Hughes – Yorkton, Julie Pitzel – Prince Albert, Sylvia Popowich – Yorkton and Karon Shmon – Saskatoon. (missing is Lori Whiteman).

The medals were presented at CUMFI Métis local in an intimate reception for family and friends.

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The doctor is in ... Prince Albert that is

By Morgan Beaudry
For Eagle Feather News

Some life events are so huge, so important, that you can't wrap your head around them until you tell someone else.

"I called my parents as soon as I knew and then got a call from my boyfriend who is halfway around the world doing an emergency medicine elective in South Africa," said Danielle Desjardins.

The big news? Soon-to-be Dr. Danielle Desjardins was officially 'matched' with a residency program in Prince Albert and, in just over a year's time, will be a fully-qualified doctor of family medicine.

"Matthew is super excited because he likes P.A. and my parents are also pumped to have me living at home!"

Desjardins' 'match' is both an ending and a new beginning in her professional journey. The matching process is like a cross between a job interview and blind date. During their final year, medical students rate their preference of hospitals and specialties where they'll complete one to five-year residencies. This is the last stage to becoming a doctor in a particular field. The programs, in turn, rate their applicants and both sets of information are fed into a computerized system that determines the match. Desjardins applied to 16 programs, had her heart set on two, and serendipitously one of those two was her match.

For Desjardins, this professional journey is coming full circle, taking her right back home to where her dreams of becoming a doctor began.

The youngest of three children, Desjardins grew up on farm just north of Prince Albert.

"I think I decided that I wanted to be a doctor as early as Grade 4," Desjardins said.

Her family has always been squarely behind her, encouraging and supporting her when she changed her field of studies three years into her physiology degree.

"I was originally working towards optometry and was even accepted when I found out, just ahead of the deadline, that I was accepted to medical school," said Desjardins.

"It was a big surprise to my family. Optometry is an 8-to-5 kind of job and medicine has long hours and is tough on your quality of life."

Desjardins is part of the growing trend of women outnumbering men in medicine. While there are still specialties that are still considered to be more 'male' or 'female' skewed, the medical profession itself has become a very female-friendly career choice.

"When I was applying to residencies, some of the programs emphasized how willing they are to accommodate pregnant students and students with young families", Desjardins said.

"There is an emphasis on ensuring there's a quality of life so that you can balance being a mom while becoming a doctor."

On the other hand, family medicine is the kind of practice that allows doctors to deliver a wide variety of care, including delivering babies, which is a part of the job Desjardins really cherishes.

"It's important for women to be in medicine. They tend to be in touch with patients' feelings, and they take more time to delve into underlying issues and hear patients' thoughts," said Desjardins.

It's hard for 25-year-old Desjardins to imagine a time when women were a minority in professional fields like medicine.

"I was just listening to a podcast about the gender gap – it's incredible to think how women had fewer rights



The luck of the draw saw Danielle Desjardins get to go home to P.A. for the last stage of her medical training.
(Photo by Morgan Beaudry)

compared to where things are now. The work of strong women has paid off and done great things."

Desjardins had no shortage of women role models in her life including her mother, a teacher, and her sister, a social worker who Desjardins credits with introducing her to women's issues. Although the journey towards starting a family hasn't started yet, Desjardins has already

mapped out just what sort of role model she wants to be.

"I hope to bring up my children in a supportive environment that treats women equally and teach them that they can be anything they want to be," Desjardins said.

"If I have a little girl and she wants to become a carpenter she's welcome to do that.

"You should become what you are passionate about."

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Violence against women can't be tolerated

Well folks, Saskatchewan has pulled into the front in the race to see which province is the most violent to women and girls. Ever sick!

On February 25, 2013 Statistics Canada released a report that found violence against women in Saskatchewan was approximately double the national rate. Shame!

Considering that the statistics only represent assaults that are brought to the attention of the police, the actual numbers are higher and even more disgraceful for Saskatchewan and all of us who live here.

The problem is so widespread, an article in an American magazine states that if the numbers we see in domestic violence were applied to terrorism or gang violence, the entire country would be up in arms, and it would be the lead story on the news every night.

Why do men hit and why do the women stay in these abusive relationships? We need to reinforce the message to girls and women that violence against them is always unacceptable and they should seek help and report it when it happens. "He loves me; he just had a bad day at work." "He's frustrated because he couldn't find a job."

Ladies we need to stop making

excuses for why our men hit us – there is no reason and no excuse. Violence against women is a violation of human rights.

We all have a responsibility to end the violence against women and girls in our communities. I'm ashamed to say that I have witnessed assaults and did nothing about it. I told myself it was none of my business. Truth be told ... I was scared. I survived a violent relationship and seeing the



Years ago there used to be the "rule of thumb" which stated that a man could beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb! How messed up is that? There was a time when women were considered the property of their husbands; those days are long gone. No one has the right to abuse women and girls or anyone for that matter. All women have a fundamental right to live in safety and security

General Secretary said: "There is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities; violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, and never tolerable."

What do you think we are teaching our children when they see their Mom or Kohkum getting beaten up? I'll tell you! We get generations of children who think it's a normal behaviour.

These children will grow up and they will beat or get beaten; we have to put an end to this vicious cycle.

Violence against women won't just disappear, but progress is possible.

We need to support the development of solutions and strategies at all levels of government to address this issue.

Through leadership, advocacy and education we can work together and engage our communities to end violence against women and girls.

Mexican proverb: "The house does not rest on the ground, but upon a woman." So take care of your women, love and nurture them.

Keep your letters and emails coming.

We need to reinforce the message to girls and women that violence against them is always unacceptable and they should seek help and report it when it happens.

assault brought back those feelings of helplessness. I retreated to my cave – my safe place.

As I heal I know that I need to step up and help these women.

without fear of violence, abuse or oppression in their relationships.

In 2008 the United Nations launched a global campaign to end violence against women. In his report the United Nations

Send your questions or comments to: Sandee Sez c/o Eagle Feather News PO Box 924 ST Main Saskatoon, S7K 3M4 or email sandra.ahenakew@gmail.com



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Muskeg Lake mom, daughter find strength in family

By Roberta Cross
For Eagle Feather News

“The amazingness of my family” is the first thing Bev Lafond talks about. What comes next is an amazing story of strength, humour and love.

In early 2011, Lafond’s six-year-old daughter, Bella Arcand, had a massive seizure late at night.

“It was terrifying,” she says, “I started screaming for my sister Kaila to call 9-1-1. She was so freaked out she dialed the TV remote.”

The doctors didn’t know what was wrong, and it wasn’t until Bella suffered another seizure in a swimming pool and almost drowned that the serious testing began.

Despite being on three different medications and receiving treatment monthly, Bella was suffering up to 30 serious epileptic seizures a day. She also had a continuous motor seizure, where her left leg, tongue and stomach were constantly in seizure. She couldn’t walk or play like before.

A specialized medical team diagnosed Bella with Rasmussen’s Encephalitis (RE) in February 2012. RE is a rare brain disease, with only a few hundred known cases in the world. It affects healthy children between two and ten years. No one knows what causes it. Standard anti-seizure medicines and treatments don’t work on RE. So the only known “cure” is radical surgery called a hemispherectomy.

That big word meant a big choice for Lafond – to agree to have the right side of Bella’s brain removed.

“It was gradual steps to understanding what the hemispherectomy meant,” says Lafond. “At first, I didn’t imagine her going to university or driving. Then I met parents whose kids had graduated and got their licenses after the surgery.”

Bella, now almost eight years old, had 10-hour brain surgery on January 30, 2013 in Edmonton. The operation started late because Bella hugged and kissed 14 relatives before she went in.

“I think it blew the nurses away, they’d never seen so much family in a waiting room.”

The surgeons were precise and the surgery was a success.

But recovery is hard work. Her brain is re-wiring, finding new ways to do familiar things. Bella has lost movement and vision on her left side. She has to learn to use her left side again, including standing and walking.

To everyone’s amazement, Bella kicked a ball with her left leg two weeks after surgery.

Bella works with a language therapist, physiotherapist and occupational therapist at a rehab hospital in Edmonton. She also goes to school for an hour a day with the other patients. Right now she speaks in short sentences, and mostly energetic

words.

“Stand!” She announced on reaching that milestone in physiotherapy.

Bella’s courage is obvious. Last week, a nurse told Lafond that Bella was progressing faster than any child she had seen in a 30-year career.

Getting to meet Bella is a privilege. She has never met a stranger. She’s totally genuine.

Doctors, nurses and visitors have to watch out for her jokes and tricks. Lafond was raised part of the time by her grandmother, Alphonsine Lafond, and she recognizes her granny’s determination and honesty in Bella.

“I miss my grandma but feel I’ve got a part of her in B.”

Bella’s strength and spirit keeps her family going. During this illness, she has never asked “why” or “why me?” She also has conquered her fear of needles. She’s gone from being scared of them, to now telling the nurse “I’ll watch!” as it goes in her arm.

“If she’s this strong,” says Lafond, “I have to be that strong.”

Lafond has another amazing daughter, Ava, full of personality and fun. She is a very good sister, helping and looking out for Bella. She’ll say, “Mom, you go help Bella.” Lafond thinks “it’s amazing that Ava can say ‘my needs don’t need to be first.’ Most adults can’t do that, let alone a six year old.”

Because of non-stop hospital visits and medical trips to Edmonton before the surgery, Lafond’s paid leave at her job has run out. But that doesn’t stop her.

“If Bella needs to be here for five months, with my sister Kaila and my family, I can do that. I don’t want her to miss out on anything. I want her to have every chance to succeed.”

Kaila and her daughter Hailie moved in to help.

“I’m a single mom,” says Lafond. “I’m alone but I’m not, I’ve got my sister Kaila, and the rest of my family, and my other siblings – Bonnie and Bill – that always help out, no matter what.”

Lafond’s mom, Carol Lafond, and her dad, Len Leask have been with her through everything. Both sides of the



Bev Lafond with her daughters Bella and Ava.

family blurr and blend together to create an amazing network of support.

“Family support and the visits weren’t expected, but it feels normal. Now I’m in the hospital, I see it’s not the norm. Other families don’t have what we have. I’m beginning to see how fortunate I am to come from this family.”

Lafond is grateful for all the

support from community at Muskeg Lake Cree Nation and the surrounding communities, plus her family in Marcelin, Leask, Blaine Lake, Saskatoon and Edmonton.

A casino night in Marcelin and a steak night in Saskatoon have raised funds to pay Bev’s expenses. Distant family and strangers are making donations.

“I’m amazed at the compassion that we still have as a community, beyond my home community of Muskeg.”

She recognizes that the support “is also for Ava, to be able to stay in her own home. I’m not worried about selling our house, or more.

“I’ve had to learn to ask for help, I’ve had to learn to accept help, and to live with uncertainty.”

Lafond says she needs to remind herself that “they’re not helping me, they’re helping Bella. And she deserves the best.”

All through her illness and treatment, Bella has been positive and brave.

When she was asked what this article should be about, Bella called back “fun!” Asked what was fun about her experience, she replied “swim!” (Bella’s physiotherapy moved into the pool that week.)

This little girl and her family have a lot to teach us about facing our challenges with spirit and courage.

For more information on RE, visit www.rechildrens.org

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Human rights hearing into Aboriginal child welfare policies underway in Ottawa

By Fraser Needham
For Eagle Feather News

The Assembly of First Nations and a child advocacy group are taking the federal government to task over what they say are woefully inadequate welfare policies that are forcing many Indigenous children into foster homes.

The AFN and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada have taken their complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in a 14-week hearing that began on Feb. 25 in Ottawa.

AFN National Chief Shawn Atleo says the high number of First Nations children currently being transferred into foster care is at a crisis level.

"There are more First Nations children in care today than during the height of residential schools," he says. "This is completely unacceptable. Equity for First Nations children and families is essential and necessary to create safety, security and to ensure our children have the opportunity to succeed."

The AFN estimates that provinces fund child welfare rates at about 22 per cent higher than what the federal government currently provides for First Nations children and says this is forcing many into foster care

that shouldn't be. The organization's latest numbers for 2006 estimate there are about 27,000 First Nations children in foster care nationally.

The human rights complaint was originally launched by the AFN and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society in 2007 and FNCFCS executive director Cindy Blackstock says after years of lobbying efforts that have gone nowhere, it was felt there was no choice but to take the federal government to the human rights tribunal.

"This case was filed as a last resort after successive governments failed to implement the solutions that would help First Nations children stay in their families," she says.

"The government of Canada needs to do what caring adults do as a matter of course – put children first and end the inequities. We cannot, as a people or a country, afford to discriminate against children as a matter of public policy."

When contacted last week, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development said since this case is currently before the human rights tribunal, it won't be making any specific comments. However, the department did provide this response via email:

"The Government of Canada believes

that the best way to ensure First Nations children and families get the support and services they need is by working together – with First Nations, provinces and territories – and not through the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The Government of Canada will continue to work with First Nations to ensure that children and families have the supports they need to lead healthy, safe lives. Protecting women and children on reserve is a priority for the federal government, and we'll continue to take concrete steps that result in real progress for both women and children. As this matter is before the courts, it would be inappropriate to comment further."

In the past, the government has argued welfare funding for First Nations children has increased by as much as 25 per cent since 2007.

Kyle Prettyschild, the executive director of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations health and social secretariat says 2012 numbers show there are currently about 4,100 First Nations children in foster care. Of these, approximately 2,976 – or 73 per cent – are with families off-reserve. He says the preference of the province's 18 Indian and Child Family Services agencies is to keep children within



Cindy Blackstock

the community and within an Indigenous setting but this option is not always available and they are forced to look outside and within the province for foster families.

He also says that with about a \$24 million shortfall between what Saskatchewan First Nations receive for child welfare funding compared to what the province provides, under-funding is playing a role in why some First Nations children are ending up in foster care.

"There are funding discrepancies to what Aboriginal Affairs provides on-reserve to what the province provides off-reserve," he says.

"This is where the gap is showing that there is more needed in on-reserve services when it comes to child welfare. More in the area of preventative services."



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Indspire's Métis Youth Award winner inspires through dance

• Continued from Page 1

Milling around in the lobby afterwards, Eagle Feather News chatted for a few moments with Graham Kotowich's father, who was proud as could be of his son, who was being honoured with a Métis Youth Award for his outstanding achievements in dance. A professional ballet dancer who began dancing at age seven, he successfully auditioned for the National Ballet School summer dance program in Toronto at age twelve, later

training at the Royal Ballet School in London, England, on scholarship at age 18 before returning to Toronto's National Ballet School.

He was then offered a contract with an English ballet company where he has been dancing the past four or five years. Career highlights so far include performing for the Royal Family at Buckingham Palace, and teaching and demonstrating in ballet workshops aimed at raising youth awareness.

"His mother was a dancer for many years," explained the senior Kotowich, and so when Graham's sister began taking lessons, it seemed natural for him to join in.

"Yes, it was a lot of driving over the years to lessons and recitals, but it was worth it."

Kotowich is a fine example of the Indspire recipients and the role modeling each of them gives to the community — a lot of hard work and dedication and

investment, determination in spite of obstacles, and a willingness to work towards success for not only themselves, but the larger community they are a part of.

It was another celebration of Aboriginal achievements — not just the individuals singled out, but the communities they come from and work for, and the heritage they are a part of and are carrying on to the next generations — so here's to many more to come.

Indspire visit not all glitz and gala

Besides the big production and honouring of award recipients, Indspire is all about youth. The Indspire: Soaring Youth Career Conference also took place over a couple of days.

The basement of TCU Place was taken over for a high level career fair. Employers came from across Canada to recruit and inform the next generation of the labour force. The big hit at the career fair was the Potash Corp Facebook picture opportunity. Students, and employers, could don the garb of a miner and pose with their favourite chunk of potash and it was immediately uploaded to their Facebook account for all their friends to see. There were also giveaways, draws and information sharing.

A special luncheon was held with guest speakers including hockey legend and award recipient Theo Fleury. The students were lucky enough that some recipients and high profile Aboriginal people from across Canada sat at their table and shared a meal with them.

Students also toured the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology and SIAST where 150 students, from Grades 9 to 12, received hands-on experience, as well as knowledge of the post-secondary setting and support services. The students participated in interactive SIAST program demonstrations and learned about the SIAST Aboriginal student services that support First Nation and Métis students in their education.



Octavia McKay is a Grade 11 student at Oskayak High School in Saskatoon. She took advantage of the Potash Corp Facebook photo booth at the Indspire: Soaring Youth Career Conference to get her picture taken as a miner of the future holding onto that pink rock that helps feed the world. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

This Matters...

New Democrats

"remain committed to building a new nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. The cornerstone of this relationship is real cooperation and meaningful consultation that fully respects Aboriginal rights.

We need to act now and help realize the potential that exists within dynamic young First Nations communities."

Thomas Mulcair,
Leader of Canada's New Democratic Party
January 24, 2013

Saskatoon Rosetown Biggar
New Democrats



Inspiration for Indspire production came from many sources

By Tyrone Tootosis
For Eagle Feather News

Congratulations to 2013 Indspire Award recipients and Saskatchewan's own Winston Wuttunee, Theoren Fleury, Graham Kotowich, Gail Cyr and Gabrielle Scrimshaw.

As a Cree Assiniboine artist, I served as the Cultural Advisor and Community Liason to the Executive Producer and Co-Executive Producer for the NAAF Awards in 2005 and 2010 and again for the newly named Indspire Awards in 2013.

Singers and dancers from our dance company, Great Plains, performed in this year's Awards and I want to say a special thank you to Henry Gardypie, Brad Crane, John Noon, Donnie Speidel, Nathan Pelly, Sheldon Wuttunee, Larynne Oakes, Ron McNab, Mallary Oakes, Bobby Badger, Terrance Goodwill, Michelle Whitecalf, Bradly Goodwill, Ted Bison, Marcus Petaykan, Rod Belanger and TJ Warren.

This was Indspire's 20 Year Anniversary year and this year's theme was 'Modern World: Traditional Values'.

Co-Executive Producer of the Awards was my good friend, Jennifer Podemski whose initial vision captured much of what became the stage. Conceptualizing the elements and components of the stage for the Awards is to a certain degree a collaborative effort between Jennifer and myself with approximately a year in planning time.

This year's theme for the Indspire Awards acknowledged our modern day world which we've infused with traditional values in the retention and maintenance of

our respective languages and cultures. It is with respect and humility that I offer the following brief summary of the 2013 Indspire Set / Stage:

In summary, the tipis/poles on the stage represented the following foundation of Values: Obedience, Respect, Humility, Happiness, Love, Faith, Kinship, Cleanliness, Thankfulness, Share, Strength, Good Child

Buffalo" and since 1985 Indspire has awarded over \$49 million in scholarships and bursaries to over 14,000 Aboriginal students. Lining each side of the stage were artificial grasses and bullrushes and they were strategically placed to serve as a reminder of the surrounding landscape of a nearby creek and the plants that grow around a buffalo jump.



A Tribe Called Red rocked the opening number on the stage that took a year to create.

Rearing, Hope and Ultimate Protection. The 38 huge golden eagle tail feathers on centre stage represented Honour, befitting of the 14 outstanding Recipients of the Indspire Award who've made outstanding contributions in each of their respective journeys.

The four full-sized Buffalo on stage paid homage to the modern day First Nation adage, "Education is our

Our First Nation story, culture and history is, in many ways, connected to the story, culture and history of the Métis Nation. A further honoring of our Métis brothers and sisters was the far from subtle incorporation of a Métis Sash serving as a border for the two huge screens on each side of Awards Stage.

Lastly, I've been deeply inspired by the history of Chief Poundmaker and it's his Plains Cree name Piytikwahanawapiyin that is highlighted in Cree syllabics on the edge of the stage. After the Awards and Gala 'was a wrap', I was gifted by Indspire with not only the Cree Syllabics but also with all 38 golden eagle tail feathers that we used on the Awards stage.

I guess I'll find a way to use these 'props' as there's always another show on the horizon.



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Our federal leaders and tips for the lady readers

Whilst deciding what to write this month, I turned my enormous mind to a subject where it is not necessary to know anything, but where the attitude of knowing everything comes in very handy. So when the subject of politics cohered in the vast expanse of my brain thingy, certain thoughts came to mind about our federal leaders.

Such as ...

"She's a fine specimen of a water bug on the surface of life"

On Rona Ambrose, Minister for the Status of Women. I am informed she has opened up all women's uterus for public debate in Parliament. I have no idea how that is supposed to work.

"One of the most freakishly benighted organic life forms it has been our utter lack of pleasure to have haunt Parliament"

On disgraced Conservative, Bev Oda, after she got punted for, among other things, falsifying federal documents. Also she ordered \$26 orange juice on a government sponsored junket in France.

"A massive intellect rivaled only by Fisher-Price garden tools"

On Senator Patrick Brazeau, professional brown-noser to, and fall guy for, Harper. He was tossed out of the Senate for an alleged sexual assault on his girlfriend, because her politics weren't right. While many in Indian country were high-fiving in glee, we gotta think good thoughts for his ex-girlfriend and for his children who are victims of this megalomaniac.

"Not content with denying him a moral compass, in a fit of irony the Creator endowed him with the ability to speak"

On Mike "The Real Puff'd Daddy" Duffy, appointed to the Senate by Steven Harper. Recently the Duffster, Pamela Wallin and Patrick Brazeau were investigated about spurious claims to their housing allowances.

"If he were any more stupid we would have to water him twice a week. Failure has gone to his head"

On disgraced mental giant, Thomas Flannigan,

chief architect of Aboriginal policy for Harper.

Recently the Would-Be-Commandant of Indians suffered a catastrophic meltdown when he admitted seeing nothing wrong with the ogling of depictions of naked children. This guy is responsible for Conservative policy on all things Indian.

"He is a man of terrific abilities, all of them corrupt. He shines and stinks like roadkill"

On Bruce Carson, advisor and hand-holder to Steven Harper. Mr. Carson has been linked to fraud, corruption and influence peddling while attached to Harper's office.

Later, he had the audacity to try to steer government contracts on First Nation water projects to his girlfriend, a former prostitute.

...

I seem to recall a wise old man saying that, just for

practice, the Creator made the moron.

Impressed with that prototype he mass produced it, so now we have the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

The jury is still out though on which was the Creators' greatest fumbles – the duck billed platypus, Thomas Flannigan as a righteous crusader for equality, or the CTF as an edifice for truth.

Now you may find this odd, but it's true: You CAN reason with someone appointed by Steven Harper. I've often reasoned with hamsters, too, and got the same delightful results.

...

I have just been reminded that this edition of Eagle Feather News is supposed to be about women. I know as much about women as I do politics. So here are some helpful tips:

Ladies, if you want to stop your man from biting his nails, make him wear shoes.

Ladies, if you find your man lying in your bed, gasping for breath and calling your name, you didn't hold the pillow down long enough.

Dirk says, I went to a mind reader. Only got charged half price. Who's awesome now!



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Gabriel Dumont Institute promotes women authors

International Women's Day was on March 8. This annual international event is more than a century old, and is observed in countries throughout the world. Since Time Immemorial, women have been our main culture keepers. Without women's cultural knowledge, the world's stories and other cultural traditions would be greatly impoverished, and humanity would lose vital gender perspectives key to

our survival as a species. Women, in particular, have been central to Métis identity since the beginnings of the Métis people. Since its inception in 1980, the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) has had a rewarding and positive relationship with its Métis, First Nations, and Euro-Canadian women authors. Below is a list of some of the talented women authors who have published books with GDI.



Cathy Littlejohn

Cathy Littlejohn

Cathy Littlejohn is a historian, teacher, and writer based in Saskatoon. With Ron Rivard, she co-authored *The History of the Métis of Willow Bunch*. For the last ten years, she has identified Métis soldiers to document their contributions. Her research has taken her from family documents, to local libraries, and to Europe's battlefields and war cemeteries. Through her travels and research, she has uncovered incredible stories of courage and perseverance. Her new book, *Métis Soldiers of Saskatchewan: 1914-1953*, is the culmination of these efforts.

Donna Lee Dumont

Donna Lee Dumont is a proud descendent of Peter Fiddler and his Cree wife Mary Mackagonne. She has been interested in art since her childhood in northern Ontario where she first sketched her environment. She feels fortunate to have painted in northern Saskatchewan with A.Y. Jackson, and to have studied Oriental brushwork with Szeto Kei in Vancouver. Donna Lee is retired from her career as a high school art teacher. The Institute recently published her book, *Peter Fidler and the Métis*.



Donna Lee Dumont

Lisa Bird-Wilson

Lisa Bird-Wilson has worked at GDI since 1997 in a variety of roles supporting and promoting Métis education. In 2012, GDI published her book, *An Institute of Our Own: A History of the Gabriel Dumont Institute*. In early 2013, Coteau Books published Lisa's book of short fiction, *Just Pretending*. She is currently at work on a young adult book that centres on Métis culture and the folklore of the Rougarou, and on a biography of the late Jim Sinclair, a Non-Status political leader from Saskatchewan.



Amy Briley

Amy Briley

Amy Briley is a graduate of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), and has been employed by GDI since 2008. Gregory Scofield taught Amy to bead, and she instantly fell in love with this art form. She has co-facilitated beading workshops for beginners and enjoys beading in her spare time. In 2012, GDI published her book and DVD guide (co-authored and developed with Gregory Scofield), *wâpikwaniy: A Beginner's Guide to Métis Floral Beadwork*. GDI will soon publish Amy and Gregory's new resource, *maskisina: A Guide to Northern-Style Métis Moccasins*.



Lisa Bird-Wilson

Leah Marie Dorion

Leah Marie Dorion is a Métis artist, author, curriculum developer, lecturer, and researcher. For eight years, she was employed in GDI's Publishing Department: as a Curriculum Developer and a Publishing Coordinator. She has authored and illustrated several books including *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick*, *Relatives With Roots*, and *The Giving Tree*. Leah is a visual artist, and an instructor at SUNTEP Prince Albert. She has just finished illustrating Wilfred Burton's *Roogaroo Mickey*, which GDI will release shortly.



Leah Marie Dorion



Maria Campbell

Maria Campbell

Maria Campbell is a highly acclaimed writer, storyteller, playwright, and filmmaker. Her broad body of work tells inspiring Métis stories with pride and compassion, with humour and sorrow, and with the same enduring spirit that keeps Métis history and culture vibrant. Through books, plays, and films, and through her ongoing work as an Elder, mentor, and community activist, Maria has made enormous contributions to both the Métis people and to Canada. In 2010, GDI published her book, *Stories of the Road Allowance People: The Revised Edition*. Maria is currently working on a Métis-specific cultural cookbook, which will be published by the Institute sometime in the near future.

Sherry Farrell Racette

Sherry Farrell Racette has produced a lasting legacy of highly acclaimed resources and award winning resources including, *The Métis: A Visual History*, *The Flower Beadwork People*, and *The Flags of the Métis*. She also illustrated the following books published by GDI: *Call of the Fiddle*, *Dancing in My Bones*, *Fiddle Dancer*, *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, and *Better That Way*. She is currently a professor appointed to the Departments of Native Studies and Women and Gender Studies at the University of Manitoba.



Sherry Farrell Racette

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Congratulations to Eagle Feather News on its 15th Anniversary!



Grade 11 Oskayak High School students Shanita Checkosis, Raylene Moosomin and Megan Weenie earned their way to We Day celebrations.

(Photo by Dawn Deguire)

Callout makes We Day for Oskayak High School students

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

We Day is an initiative of Free The Children, an international charity and educational partner, with a 17-year history of youth engagement. Saskatoon recently hosted a We Day event that inspired 15,000 students from across Saskatchewan.

Raylene Moosomin and Shanita Checkosis were two hard working students from Oskayak High School that earned their way to attend the event of rock stars, movie stars and motivational speakers.

"I got a lot of inspiration from the speakers. They were very motivating," said Moosomin.

About 50 students from Oskayak attended the event. They earned their way by selling We Love buttons to raise money to supply safe water to a community in Ecuador.

"Lil Jake the rapper with the stutter was my favourite," adds Moosomin.

We Day is tied to the year-long We Act program, which supports students and

educators with free educational resources, student-led campaigns and support materials to help turn the event's inspiration into sustained activation. The founder of Free the Children is Craig Kielburger, a high-energy guy who has been an activist since he was 12.

"I was impressed with the energy the Oskayak students brought to the event," said Kielburger who has written two best-selling books and travels the world inspiring children and doing charity work.

"They even made more noise than me talking into the microphone! They were outstanding and I was blown away by their passion."



Former Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief and Elder Joe Quewezance (above) opened the We Day event with a prayer and Kendall Netmaker inspired the crowd with his story of entrepreneurial success.

(Photos by Dawn Deguire)

We Day events across Canada have strong Aboriginal inclusion, always open with a prayer by a local Elder and have follow up and Aboriginal role models always included.

"Aboriginal involvement is really important to us," said Kielburger who noted that AFN Chief Shawn Atleo is a National Patron.

"We have a call to action and we celebrate the Aboriginal community across Canada. After this event we had Waneek Horn Miller visit with the students. Oskayak is actually one of our

more engaged schools. It is great to see."

At one point during the We Day event, Craig Kielburger boasted up the Oskayak students and their vastly improved graduation rates. The crowd went wild, as did the Oskayak students.

"That was amazing when he called us out," said Shanita Checkosis. "It was so exciting. It was great to be part of something like that, at that moment I was so proud to go to Oskayak."

We Day returns in November to Saskatoon. How are you going to earn your way?

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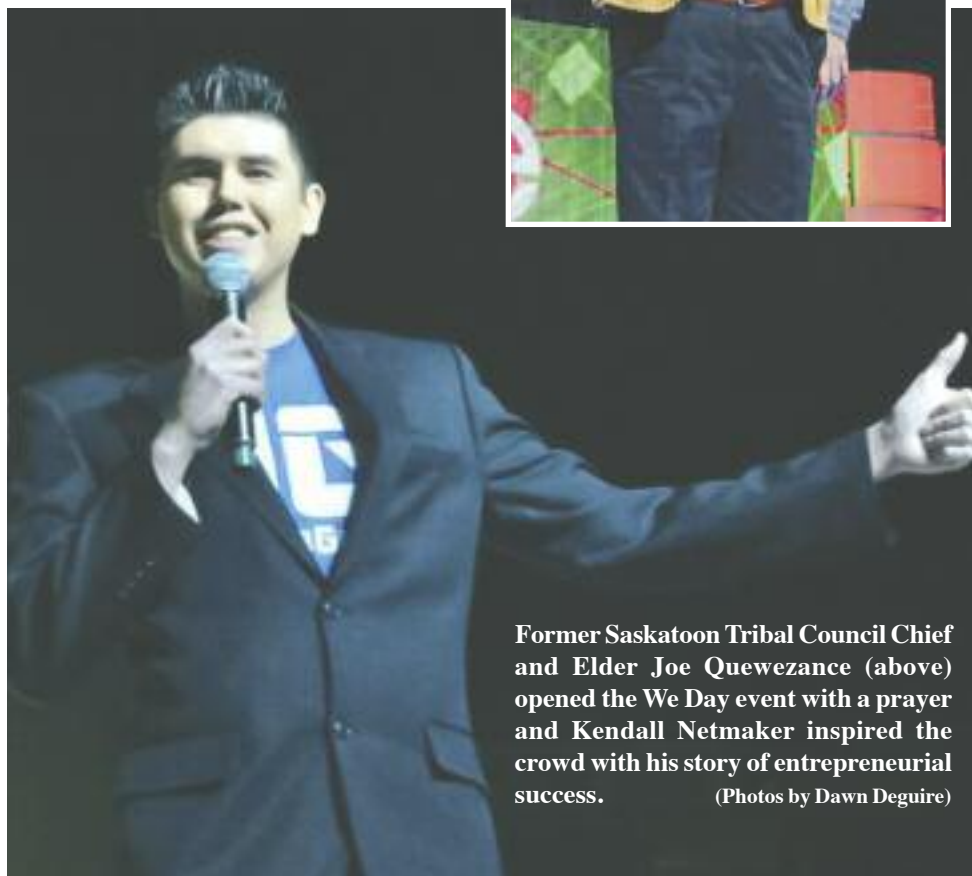
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Dream Woman grand part of aging process

I never imagined myself being 57. I turned that age recently and frankly, it amazes me. Back a handful of decades I couldn't see myself being 30 or heaven forbid, a crusty old dinosaur of 40. But here I am.

I can get a senior's discount in some places now and lawn bowling is starting to look really appealing. There's a touch of arthritis in one of my fingers, I don't run as fast as I used to and the term, old-timer's league, has a romantic resonance and alluring cachet.

I'm at a point in my life now where there's likely more years behind me than in front of me. I'm okay with that because it's been a thrilling journey up to this point and I've managed to learn a few things along the way to being me. I don't know if I would necessarily say that I'm wiser but I do confess to being less susceptible to being fooled – by others or more often by myself.

The trick of getting older is being able and willing to take the time to look back and see the trail. For me it's how I learn to appreciate the gifts that come my way and how the hand of Creator is taking care of my life. It's valuable.

I've made a lot of plans through my life and I'm more than glad that most of them didn't come to fruition. They say

that life is what happens when you're busy making other plans and that's startlingly true in my case.

Like the other day I was thinking about how my mind has changed over the years. I swore up and down that I was a dyed-in-the-wool bachelor. I believed that I couldn't possibly find someone who would 'get' me or the things that mattered to me most.

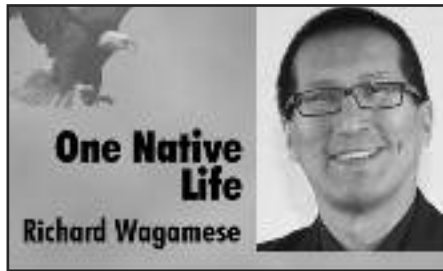
But I'm married now and living a darn good life. But there were times that I thought that I would never meet the one person who could make it all worthwhile.

That woman would be spectacular. Not only would she be sensitive to my needs but attuned to my dreams. I called her Dream Woman.

She was going to be the one who finally 'get' me, the one who understood implicitly the things that moved me, motivated me, thrilled me and made me the man that I was.

She would be the ultimate partner because she cared about everything important to me.

Dream Woman would care, for instance, that the starting infield for the



1965 Boston Red Sox – the year I became a fan – was Lee Thomas, Felix Mantilla, Rico Petrocelli and Frank Malzone. That would matter to Dream Woman

because, well, she was Dream Woman. I love baseball and I love the Red Sox and to me, Fenway Park (where I've never been) is the green cathedral of hope. She would know all that and be there with a crying towel when they lost and a hug, a kiss and a cheer when they won. Dream Women do that sort of thing.

She would also care deeply that the bass player for the '60s rock group Moby Grape was a guy named Bob Mosely or that the origin of the banjo was the Gambia River in Africa, made from a hollowed-out gourd and gut strings. Recorded music is one of my passions and Dream Woman would know that the Hanks – Williams, Mobley and Ballard – are part of the ongoing rhythm section of my life. Oh, and she would also know that Hawkshaw Hawkins wasn't a character from the L'il Abner comic strip.

Dream Woman would care

immensely that the 13 primary poles in a tipi stand for a principle meant to guide the lives of the family that lived there. She'd care that the ribs of a sweat lodge represent the same things to guide our prayers and petitions.

I always thought Dream Woman would be like that. She would be the female version of me, and the perfect partner because of it. She'd glean the spiritual connection between a knuckle curveball and an honor song and know that Kraft Dinner with a can of tuna thrown in is the ultimate bachelor's casserole. That's what the younger version of me thought was vital.

Well, nowadays I look at my wife, busy with the things that drive and motivate her, watch as she becomes, every day, a more fully fleshed vision of who she wants to be and I can't help but be thankful for her.

Her full life fills out mine. Her joy over the things she appreciates and adores have become important to me.

I see now that my Dream Woman doesn't necessarily need to care about things like baseball, music, books and the nature of First Nations politics and spirituality. It only matters that she cares that I do.

Ain't aging grand?



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Active Measures program helps determined Witchekan woman

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

Rachel Thomas of Witchekan Lake First Nation is a perfect example of how a new program called Active Measures has begun to show real results in changing people's lives on-reserve.

Thomas has eight children and had left home in her teens for the bright lights of Spiritwood where she intended to raise her first child. Of course, she struggled as any young mom would, in and out of school, and off and on PTA and welfare. In her late teens, she discovered her faith.

"I had nothing left, just nothing," she said. "I prayed really hard for God to help me and he did. And he has ever since whenever I needed help."

That help has led her on a journey that most people would never begin. It took her ten years to finally get her Grade 12 and she knew she had to get a good paying job to support her by then eight children.

"I felt sorry for my kids. We lived really poor. I was embarrassed to have their friends come over, we had nothing. The kids shared beds, I had no furniture and the house was rough. I wanted to be an electrician because I knew they get paid well," added Thomas.

So she headed off to Meadow Lake not even knowing where the school was. She eventually found it and by luck was able to interview and write the entrance test that day.

"Everything fell into place and I started school," she said.

Then came the difficult part. She would pack up four of her children and make the hour and a half drive every day to Meadow Lake to attend her course. The other children stayed with her mom or sisters. Eventually the schedule started to burn her out. By luck a new student residence opened and she was allowed to move into a furnished three bedroom place right beside the school.

"My marks went from 60s into the

80s after that."

She wound up passing with an 83 per cent. "Best feeling ever," Thomas said.

She started apprenticing for an electrician who worked on her reserve and was loving it. But then her children really needed a mom for a while and she resigned and spent time with her new baby and attended the Headstart program and focussed on her family.

That's when Sharon Ross met Rachel. Ross is Active Measures Co-ordinator for Agency Chiefs Tribal Council and once she met Thomas she was impressed.

"This girl has a can do attitude and when I interviewed her I thought wow," said Ross. "We got her into the Repair and Renovate Program and she took off. She was never late. She helped other students, never gives up and I never once caught her on Facebook during school! Caroline Atcheynum who is the Social Development Coordinator at Witchekan and me, we kept her going."

Thomas used skills she learned and the materials available in the class to repair and paint her house for her kids. Once she was done, she helped the other students fix their houses.

"My kids were so happy," said Thomas. "That made it all worth it. They would invite other kids to the house and say come see what my mom did!"

A computer program followed and now Thomas is working for Active Measures on her reserve inputting data and acting as an IT person for Sharon Ross who just doesn't like computers. Now that her kids are in a better place mentally and physically, she intends to get back into electrician work and earn her journeyman's.

"I'm really happy now," said Thomas. "The support of Sharon and Caroline has helped me. The support of my partner Abe Bear who was my pillar of strength in times of doubt and the love of my life, therefore I did find the pursuit to happiness. It is a known fact that nothing



From left are Caroline Atcheynum the Social Development Administrator at Witchekan Lake First Nation, Rachel Thomas and Sharon Ross the Active Measures Co-ordinator for ACTC who all show what can be achieved when people support each other and individuals never give up. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

in this world comes easy. My sisters and my mom made it all possible too.

"I have found that when you come to the end of a goal, there is a happiness that fills your heart. It is something that you have accomplished that no one can ever take away from you."

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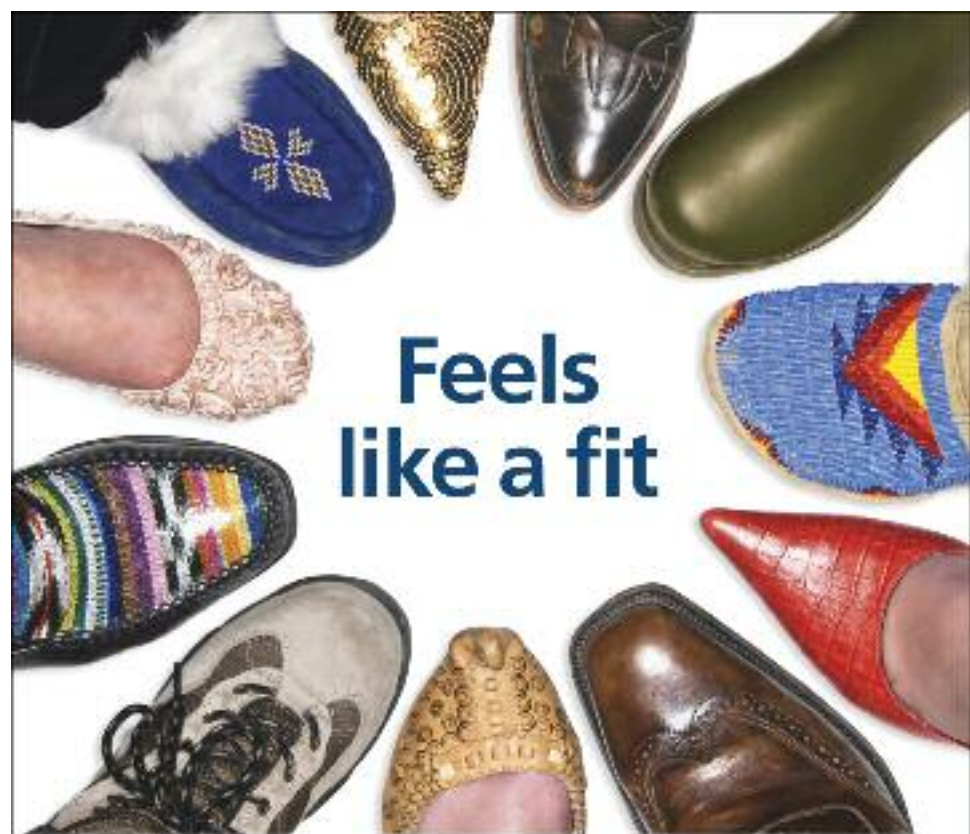
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Arts Board Deadline

The Saskatchewan Arts Board announces the following deadline for applications to a program that supports the work of Saskatchewan artists:

Indigenous Pathways Initiative - Grants to Artists
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Idle No More inspiration behind Circle of Voices production

The Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company has created another youth driven masterpiece for the stage.

Emerging Métis writer Sarah Vermette has collaborated closely with the youth from the Circle of Voices to write Hunger Strike.



Sarah Vermette

Inspired by the Idle No More movement, the play strives to inform all people that the Earth's natural resources are dwindling and this should not be taken lightly. Hunger Strike follows the story of a young pregnant girl named Sage, who is struggling to live in a world where healthy food, clean water and air are highly regulated commodities controlled by an oppressive 'utopian' government.

The play marks the end of SNTC's 2012/2013 Circle of Voices (COV) theatre training program. This is the tenth COV program since 1999, a unique culturally grounded program that pairs Aboriginal youth with cultural leaders and theatre professionals in the community.

TICKETS and SHOWTIMES: E. D. Feehan High School Theatre. 8 p.m. Evening Shows \$11 (March 7 – 15) 1 p.m. Weekday Matinee \$6 (March 11 – 15) Tickets available at the Rемаi Arts Centre Box Office, 100 Spadina Crescent East, Saskatoon, Sask.

Phone 384-7727 or book online at www.persephonetheatre.org.



The cast of Hunger Strike (left to right) Andre Bear, Avery Kewistep, Kodey Whitehead, Tala Tootoosis, Waylon Machiskanic and Katelyn Howe. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)



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Welcome to Mexcio, hope you're not thirsty

Day 1

We fly into Cancun with a planeload full of other freezing Canadians. Everyone on the plane is white except for my niece, Brynne, and myself (in case anyone was wondering if white privilege is in danger of being lost.)

We stand in a line to get off the plane, then another line to go through customs, then another for our bags, and then another to get our luggage x-rayed.

The smell of the ocean is wafting through the airport, but still I whine to Brynne, "I hope Mexico isn't one series of line after another." (I'm a privileged little princess, too.)

As a traveler, I'm conflicted by the desire to see something unsullied by tourism and the desire not to be robbed, beaten and beheaded (which seems to be a "thing" in Mexico right now)

I told my niece all the rules I'd read online: 1. Don't drink the water. 2. Don't drink anything with ice cubes in it. and 3. Seriously, don't drink the water.

Once outside the airport, it's so damned hot that my pale yellow skin sizzles like bacon.

I distract myself by listening to Mexican people speak; their accents are delicious. I want to eat their words. Perhaps that's just the Corona talking.

We are delivered to the dock where the driver leaves us. We are stranded in a sea of

Mexican people and much browner American tourists. We pull our suitcases to the dock and join a lineup that I hope leads to a ferry.

I don't speak a lot of Spanish, just the basics: "si", "non", "cerveza," and "Namaste."

My niece knows even less. Someone walks past her and says, "Hola" and she responds: "Lola."

After a ferry and a cab, we arrive at our resort and it's stunning. I don't want to brag but I've stayed in many Holiday Inns and this resort kicks the Holiday Inn's butt.

Our room looks like a kick-ass treehouse. There's a hammock on our balcony. Pretty much every world problem would be solved if everyone had one. It combines two basic human desires: the desire to be swaddled and the desire to swing back and forth.

Day 2

I remember a pool bar. Also I took these notes:

Niece* drunk: 5:46 p.m.

Aunt very drunk: 5:47 p.m.

*My niece is 22 for those of you who think I'm the worst person in the world.

Day 3

My niece drinks a glass of water – with

ice cubes! After a couple of hours, she seems fine, so I do the same. Nothing happens to me

either. I guess rez water has made us immune to whatever parasites are in Mexican water. Booyah!

There's a

dance show every night. We meet Francisco, who is like a Mexican Matthew McConaughey, because he's super laidback and because he never wears a shirt.

Because of the language barrier, when I ask questions people don't answer them. They just say something to fill the space after my question mark. As in, "Do you work here year round?" They answer, "Yes dancing is fun."

Fortunately I'm used to men never answering my questions.

I ask Francisco about the lizards. My niece is scared of them and avoids them like I avoid the guy from Wisconsin that I made out with on the second night: "Do they bite?"

Francisco laughs, showing off his super white teeth. "They have no teeth."

"See," I tell Bri, "Nothing to worry about."

Francisco doesn't stop there: "But their tails are like razor sharp whips."

Thanks Francisco.

Brynne asks me if the lizards can climb the trees. I tell her no.

We go to the disco and watch American teenagers get hammered to Katy Perry songs. I am enjoying my immersion into Mexican culture.

On our way to our room, a lizard falls out of a tree in front of us. My niece's glare tells me that she will never believe anything I say again.

Day 4

It's New Year's Eve. After midnight, a man dressed up as 2012 enters the dance floor. The crowd proceeds gently to punch and kick him. Some people are not so gentle; 2012 wasn't a good year for them.

Days 5-7

We do a lot of kayaking on the ocean. Brynne tries to tip the kayak while I scream. This occupies us for hours.

At some point, I try and fail to climb a coconut tree.

We learn some Spanish. It turns out that the "C" on the tap means hot and the "F" means cold. We took cold showers for four days because we thought "C" stood for "Cold" and "F" stood for "Fire-hot."

Lola, indeed.

Day 8

We spend the last day taking pictures of the Mexican sunset and fighting over the hammock.



Wesahkechak skits educate through humour

A few weeks ago, I accidentally stumbled upon two performers at a library auditorium. It was a very happy accident, I might add. Paul Daigneault and Kurtis McAdam lightened up the atmosphere of the half-filled room with hilarious and interactive Wēsahkēchak skits.

When they began to select members of the audience to participate in the skits, I sunk very low in my chair and avoided eye contact. However, I sure enjoyed the performances of those who were brave enough to go on stage and I was thrilled when Daigneault and McAdam agreed to do an interview for Eagle Feather News.

Daigneault and McAdam are both Aboriginal Correctional Program Officers at Saskatchewan Penitentiary and they understand the importance of learning one's cultural background. In fact, it is a mandatory part of their job to help inmates explore their histories, so teaching Wēsahkēchak skits complements their jobs nicely.

"It's directly related to our jobs because a lot of programs that have been developed talk about the history of Aboriginal people. We try to help the inmates learn their social backgrounds," said Daigneault.

"At first, the teachings just weren't coming across. People weren't being taught

their history so we started talking about it. We needed to find a way to get this out to the community, the history of Aboriginal people – creation stories, for example. People need to know where they came from so it was important to us to get that across as far as the Cree culture and that's why we started doing Wēsahkēchak skits," says Daigneault.

"When we first started out, our objective was to teach culture and create that awareness," said McAdam. "But the more that we started talking about the stories, we both realized that the objective was a little more than that because we started to learn more from the Elders and from the stories themselves.

"So our objectives changed after awhile, the more we realized it's not just about teaching. It's about creating awareness as to where everything started from, as well too. Also, each story has its own objective and that's what we try to emphasize."

They also stress that Wēsahkēchak, being a trickster, also brings a natural comedic factor to stories.

"Wēsahkēchak has always represented the sense of humour in people," said Daigneault. "I think it was Tomson Highway

in the '80s who said that what has happened with colonization is that it has suppressed Wēsahkēchak inside of us, pushed him down and he's not alive. What we're trying to do is bring that back to people so they know who Wēsahkēchak is and that Wēsahkēchak is inside. Every Aboriginal person has Wēsahkēchak. He's there and he's what has helped us survive."

McAdam is quick to add that adding humour makes learning much more effective.

"People retain more when you keep them active and keep them laughing – you make education fun. People will remember that. It always goes back to ceremonies. If you go to ceremonies and listen to Elders they are always laughing and joking around. They make it fun for you, relaxing, and you take your guard down. It's a safe place to be and you feel like you belong. It's a welcoming gesture, I suppose. When we do that with people, it's the same and the focus is the same."

Daigneault and McAdam have several different skits, with each running approximately 20-30 minutes, depending on how many audience members they recruit. Some

of the skits have themes that are suitable to specific audiences, like their 'Moose' skit which applies well to anti-bullying campaigns in schools, or the importance of protecting Mother Earth which is relevant to Idle No More gatherings.

"That's why we do our role play with the creation story, where Wēsahkēchak creates a new land," said Daigneault. "It's to show people that they need to learn to respect it."

They also understand the importance of passing on teachings, which is why they encourage young people to become involved and are actively teaching youth like McAdam's daughter, Ariel Rabbitskin, how to be storytellers.

"I hope one day our helpers, like Ariel, eventually take over, and they continue on. These stories, we hope one day will be carried on," said McAdam.

They have performed for schools, conferences, prisons, addiction centres and libraries, over the past two years and are open to bookings. To contact Paul Daigneault and Kurtis McAdam for their Wēsahkēchak skits, call: 1-306-940-2756 or email: paul.daigneault@sasktel.net.

If there's an artist, entertainer or event that you think should be featured in Eagle Feather News, give me a shout at:

snazzyjess@hotmail.com.

See you next month!





The Karate program at the Ocean Man Community Centre is helping to transform the lives of young people. (Photo by Diane Adams)

Ocean Man kids getting a kick out of martial arts training

By Diane Adams
For Eagle Feather News

Kids on Ocean Man First Nation are transforming their lives by kicking each other.

The reserve, just north of Estevan, is now home to a brand-new Karate club. That's where Ocean Man's young people are doing much more than getting fit, and having fun.

Every two weeks, the young people put on their black robes and coloured belts—and get a lesson in Chinese Kempo Karate. Today, 11-year old Arianna Johnson is here early. She's getting ready for her second tournament next week in Saskatoon.

"The (first tournament) was kind of scary," she said. "I got punched in the face a few times. I only got a few points, so I didn't get a medal ... But I'm trying to get a medal now."

Housed in their brand-new, multi-million dollar communiplex, Ocean Man's karate club started after one teen took a class from instructor, Ira Pylypuk, in Estevan. The band was so impressed, they found the money to send more students. After the bus was too full, they approached Ira, or "Sifu," to start their own club.

Sifu Ira and his girlfriend, Bridget Pottle, make the two-hour drive twice a month to Ocean Man. Together, they work with Ocean Man's 25 students—teaching them forms and sparring techniques. But the kids in Ocean Man are learning much more.

"It takes somebody with a pretty big heart, and a pretty big spirit to take a hit to the face and keep going," Pottle says.

"When you're sparring, that's what you've got to learn to do."

Carleen Daniels is Ocean Man's recreation director. She says the community had problems with vandalism and school attendance before Karate. Now they're nearly a thing of the past.

"We haven't had any incidents with the police, with broken windows or break and enters," Daniels said.

While it was a young man who started Ocean Man's Karate Club, the club is now mostly girls. Chief Gloria Shepherd says self-defense is on the minds of Ocean Man's young women—after the disappearance of a young woman from this community five years ago.

"I guess the last eyewitness to see her alive, they said she got scooped up in a car by some people. To me that's so frightening, to imagine anybody, any person overpowered and taken away in a vehicle," Chief Shepherd said.

"This karate program will prepare participants to know self-defense. They know how to take weapons away from people, like knives," she added.

Surely those self-defense skills will be valuable. But today, Arianna Johnson is not only preparing for next week's tournament, but learning leadership skills, too. Sifu Ira and Bridget have been so impressed, they now have her come in and help teach the younger students.

"I find it exciting to learn new stuff," Johnson said.

Apparently Johnson learns quickly. On March 2, at the tournament in Saskatoon, she competed in sparring. It was her second time sparring in competition, ever. She won a bronze medal.

In fact, every Ocean Man student at the tournament won a medal.

Sifu Ira says the students' hard work

and dedication paid off.

"We were proud of them all. They did awesome," he said.

Interested in uranium mining and milling? Apply for funding to participate in a CNSC public hearing

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) is providing participant funding for an upcoming public hearing to consider Cameco Corporation's re-licensing applications for the Rabbit Lake uranium mine and mill, the Key Lake uranium mill and the McArthur River uranium mine.

Who should apply for funding? Members of the public, Aboriginal Peoples and other stakeholders interested in taking part in the review of the re-licensing materials.

The CNSC may help pay your expenses to prepare for and participate in the hearings, which are tentatively scheduled for fall 2013 in Saskatchewan. Formal Notices of Public Hearing will be issued at a later date to confirm the dates and location.

The deadline to apply for participant funding is April 15, 2013.

For more information on how to apply, visit us on Facebook, at nuclearsafety.gc.ca or contact us by phone at 1-800-668-5284.

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Canada

FUTURE TRACK STARS

The Saskatoon Field House recently hosted the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Indoor Track and Field Championships. The popular annual event offers clinics for up and coming track stars on day one and a full out meet on day two. "It's very exciting to see the growth of the track meet over the past five years," said Jordyn Burnouf, board member of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Track and Field. "It's about providing opportunity and building the sport for our First Nations and Metis youth and communities." Burnouf, a medalist at the North American Indigenous Games in Cowichan, believes that track and field is a great sport because it is suitable for athletes with varied skills and abilities. "You don't have to be the fastest sprinter to be the farthest thrower, or the longest runner to be the highest jumper, there is something in track and field that can appeal to all athletes," said Burnouf. The Meet was a great chance for athletes to hone their skills for the upcoming First Nations Summer Games in Muskoday, and the much anticipated return of NAIG to Saskatchewan in 2014. This year the Championships were proudly sponsored by Areva, BHP Billiton, SIGA, and Cameco.

(Photos courtesy
Kim Burnouf)



Making a difference



 @camecocommunity



Kaiswatum tossing the heat

Name: Alyssa Kaiswatum

First Nation: Piapot

Sport: Softball

Position: Pitcher

Signature Pitch: Change-up

Nickname: AK47

Current Team: Dakota County Technical College Blue Knights (Minnesota)

Number: 7

Goz: What is the biggest challenge you face in staying focused on your goals?

AK47: The biggest challenge I face is adjusting to everyday life in general ... my time management. Getting assignments finished, getting to class and practice on time. This is a big city so driving great distance to get somewhere takes time. Back home I could drive across the city in 20 minutes!

Goz: What do you enjoy most about playing softball for a large U.S. college?

AK47: I enjoy the different atmosphere playing at a USA college. It's a lot different then back home. They really go all out for

softball practices, training techniques, different coaching, and receiving an entire softball wardrobe of uniforms including team clothing to wear when not practicing or playing games.

Goz: What do you dislike the most about playing in the States?

AK47: The only things I have to get used to are the kilometres are in miles and some of my favourite foods (are not here), example: poutines, Tim Hortons.

Goz: Do you find the competition to be higher playing for Minnesota in comparison to your past experiences?

AK47: I find the competition to be tougher in the states. In general USA women's softball is number one in the world. You have to hold your own.

Goz: What would you say is the highlight of your softball career do far?

AK47: My highlight of my softball career was playing in New Zealand. It was in fact the number one country I wanted to visit since I was little. Meeting different people, exploring the different culture and beautiful scenery was just amazing.

Goz: Who is your role model(s) or hero(s) and why?

AK47: My role model is my family. Each

and every one of them plays a specific part in my life. My late Kokum Gloria inspired me go big no matter what the obstacle and to follow my own path no matter what anyone says. Be a leader, not a follower.

Goz: When you're getting ready to head out on the field to close a tight game, what goes through your head?

AK47: What goes through my mind is: "(I) need to pitch every pitch like it's my last. Give it all I got. No matter what the outcome as long as I done my best."

Goz: Okay, here's the scenario ... you're up by one in extra innings at a National championship. It's a full count against the other team's slugger. Obviously it depends on the situation but with one pitch to go and the win is yours, what's your go-to pitch? Why?

AK47: Personally, it depends what pitches are working for me that day and I usually know the stats of the batter and throw them what they are weakest at. I would go for a change up. I love my change up.

Goz: What are your future goals?

AK47: To go as far as I can in my softball college career and earn a degree in Kinesiology. I would like to

pass on that torch to our First Nations youth and be happy for helping others fulfill their dreams.

Goz: What keeps you motivated to keep on tossing the heat?

AK47: I think of being a First Nation woman and going above and beyond to gain more experience, take opportunities no matter what, face fear and become a role model in the sport of softball. Also, throw the heat no matter how sore I am or how hot it is outside.



URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY Community Engagement



There will be guest speakers, giveaways and lunch provided for those that attend.

**Saturday March 16th 2013
9:30 - 3:30 at TCU Place**

If you have questions, please contact:

Brad Bird, UAS Coordinator
955-0762, uascoordinator@sasktel.net

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY OF CANADA



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For more info contact
Denise Kaiswatum
(306) 790-5950 ext 2200

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Everyone Welcome!



See a live broadcast on Access 7 on Saturday, April 6th, 7pm - 10pm



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