

Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

Caring Colleen needs help herself

Colleen Hamilton works on standing up under the watchful eye of her Physical Therapy Assistant Sarah Holowatuik at the City Hospital Rehabilitation Centre. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)



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Health & Wellness Edition

Coming In March - Women's Issue

CPMA #40027204

**By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News**
SASKATOON – Colleen Hamilton thought her lowest point was when the surgeon told her she would have a 50 per cent chance that she would walk again.

Later, her physiotherapist told her “You have to find a new place to live. You will never walk again.”

“I was in shock,” said Hamilton, a tireless community advocate who has worked for years improving the lives of people in Saskatoon.

“I realized our lives would never be the same again. I cried for days. Then I decided to fight.”

It all started on a Monday in November.

She fell at home a few times. She left work at Child Hunger and

Education Program (CHEP) on Tuesday because of pain in her legs. By Sunday she was rushed into surgery at Saskatoon’s Royal University Hospital.

Two operations later, Hamilton was left with a metal rod and someone’s hip bone fusing her spine in the middle of her back. She had a decompression of the D-5 to the T-10 of her spine.

“I was humbled by the fact that someone’s hip was helping me sit,” said Hamilton. “But basically I was just happy to be alive. The worst part is the pain.”

Hamilton has made her name in Saskatoon with her work at CHEP. Passionate and admittedly stubborn, in the past 13 years Hamilton has pioneered many community part-

nerships that help fill the gaps in current programs. She loves her community work and uniting organizations on a shared mandate.

“Creating a partnership is like dating an organization. When programs start, it is like a marriage. You have to work hard and communicate,” said Hamilton.

“And when those marriages fail, the community and kids suffer. CHEP has true partners. I love to see someone smile when they see things get better and to see people for who they are and not what they were labelled.”

Her commitment to the community is now paying Hamilton back with an outpouring of support for her and her husband Gary.

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Colleen won't take her disability lying down

• Continued from Page One

"It is not cheap being disabled," said Hamilton. "Wheelchairs start at \$5,000 and I need a special bed and we had to move to a wheelchair accessible house. Thank God for Gary, he has been amazing."

She is also on 32 different prescriptions of over 60 pills a day. Insurance coverage only goes so far.

Husband Gary is worried about the challenges of the future, but he knows his wife is one tough cookie.

"Seeing her upset hurts me," said Gary. "She was always helping everyone and it is hard for her to accept help. But she doesn't quit. When the physical therapist asks her for one rep, she gives them two."

Her work ethic is apparent in her dedication to rehabilitation. For the past few weeks her home has been the seventh floor of Saskatoon's City Hospital. She spends about three hours a day at the rehab centre working with a mixture of occupational and physical therapists and assistants.

Ultimately the goal is to walk again, but for now they focus on little things like standing up, moving one toe at a time and practising moves like getting into and out of bed. She is still paralyzed at the waist.



Gary has been a rock of support for Colleen spending time in the hospital and taking her to rehab where he cheers her on and helps with the process.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

"It was very hard off the start," says Hamilton. "But the staff has so much patience and they deal with all kinds of people with different needs. I am so impressed with the staff on the seventh floor. They are wonderful and we tease each other."

Rehab is not easy. She likens the process of physio to falling in a lake of cold water.

"It pushes and pulls muscles and the tingling and aching and muscle spasms are the worst," she adds.

"The pain breaks me down and I

count down the time to my next pill."

Pain aside, Hamilton wants to get better and continue her good work and be there for the community and her three children, eight grandkids and great grandchild.

"I want to advocate for the disabled now. I didn't realize the challenges."

More rehab is in store and she expects to be released on March 21 and will then move into a new place Gary found. She hopes to get back to work at CHEP in modified way. Getting better takes time and money.

CHEP is hosting a fundraiser on February 15 for Hamilton. It is expected to be a sell-out. And for that she is reluctantly grateful.

"This is hard for me. I'm a helper and now I need to be helped and it's hard for me to digest."

Hamilton admits that she gave up for a while but then her stubborn side kicked in.

"The people around me have been great and my work mates have been so positive. So I am doing this for myself but also for people I can help in the future. I am going to come out and fight," she said.

"I can't take this lying down. I can't let those people down."

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Bella's story

**By Roberta Cross
For Eagle Feather News**

In early 2011, six-year-old Bella Arcand began to have serious seizures. Bella was a strong and healthy girl, so they were totally unexpected.

Her mom, Beverly Lafond, remembers the fright of running to pull Bella from a swimming pool when a sudden seizure sent her unconscious under the water.

After a battery of tests and many hospital stays, Bella was diagnosed with a rare condition called Rasmussens' Encephalitis (RE). It affects children. Bella was suffering almost 30 epileptic seizures a day, damaging her brain a little bit each time.

RE is caused by lesions on one side of the brain, and affects one side of the body. In Bella's case, this was her right brain hemisphere, and it affected the left side of her body. She couldn't walk or play like before. The only known way to stop RE is removing the affected side of the brain in a radical surgery called a hemispherectomy.



Bev was faced with this incredibly difficult choice four years ago. On Jan. 30, 2013, Bella was surrounded by her mom, her sister Ava, and 12 other family members from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation as she went into surgery at the Stollery Hospital in Calgary.

Bella's eight-hour surgery was a success. But when she woke up two days later, an intense recovery began. Bella and Bev spent another five months in Edmonton at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital. Ava was in Saskatoon, living with Bev's sister Kaila, and travelling to Edmonton to visit once a week.

Bella had to learn to swallow, and was saved by a quick-thinking nurse one time when she choked. Because the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body, Bella's motion, feeling, and sight on her left side were affected. She learned to walk again. She also learned to bike and swim again. "Swimming is my passion!" declares Bella.

Two months after leaving the Glenrose, the seizures returned. This time, a team of surgeons in Calgary performed a second operation. Because Bella's brain had developed so many new ways to work, her recovery was faster.

Slowly she has been regaining the use of her left arm, and her coordination is amazing. She swims, and dances, and soon will be taking horseback riding les-

sons. Bella's recovery takes a lot of physical work as her brain re-wires, and she's often really tired. Bev describes Bella and her recovery as "inspiring, courageous, and awesome!"

Bev is always at her side, and at school it is her trusted EA, Mrs. Braun. Ava is a loving sister, considerate of Bella and the ways their family life has changed over the past six years.

"I've learned to be patient," says Ava.

Bella has learned about asking doctors questions, "because it's my body," she says. "Will it hurt? Can I do sports?"

Bev agrees, saying "I've come to learn to trust my gut and Bella. The doctor has just an opinion. Usually a good one, and well-thought out, but I have to ask questions and decide."

Despite their own financial and personal challenges living with RE, Bella, Ava and Bev dedicate their energy to raising money for the Children's Hospital of Saskatchewan.

"Because we need a better hospital for children, we need a place where people can be comfortable," Bev explains.

Bev takes Bella to the RUH at least once a month for treatment, and often many more times. The emergency room is not a friendly place for kids and families, agree Bev and Bella.

Being with family is important for recovery. Right now, says Bella, "you have to leave your home. Leaving your home is bad."

Other things that are important in a childrens hospital for her are that "family members need to be able to come to the playroom, and I hope the new hospital has comfy beds, and good food in the cafeteria."

She also mentions having childrens' activities, and single rooms so families can be together.

Bev is grateful for all the quality care her family has received in Saskatoon. But she does recognize how important it is to have surgeons, staff, and a facility that understand the needs of children and their parents here in our province.

Bella has had some amazing experiences thanks to the Children's Hospital Foundation. They helped connect Bev to free flights to Edmonton for the surgery, and made it possible for Bev and Bella to meet Garth Brooks.

"It was awesome, he put his hand on my shoulders," says Bella. Last summer Bella threw the first pitch at a Blue Jays game.

"And I got to make a cookie dough blizzard," she says, and smiles.

If you'd like to support Bella's fundraising, please donate at:

<https://childrenshospitalsask.ca/p2p/bella-arcand-raising-funds-for-the-15th-annual-childrens-hospital-radiothon/>



Bella has been a champion for raising funds for the Children's Hospital in Saskatoon. Her strength and courage have inspired her friends and family. This is Bella just before she was about to throw out the first pitch at a Toronto Blue Jays baseball game. Bottom left, Bella and mom Bev walk the beach and share a quiet moment together.
(Photos by Carol Lafond)





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And you thought I couldn't dance!

Who would have thought a two minute dance would have such an impact?

I recently had the pleasure, and the terror, of participating in the popular fundraiser *Swinging with the Stars*. It all started with a Facebook posting by a friend putting my name forward for the event. I followed the link and saw it was a dance contest that raises funds for charity.

I thought nothing of it since it was just someone doing it as a lark on Facebook for goodness sake. Then I got a phone call from the creator of the event, Brett Bayda. He pitched me on the idea of practicing with a professional dancer for a two minute dance that would be performed at a gala event in front of hundreds of people.

There would be six other couples and the charity this year was the Saskatoon City Hospital Rehabilitation Centre. It'll be easy he said. We will set you up with a dancer who would teach me an easy two step and it will be fun!

"I can two step quite well," I thought, remembering my time at the Texas T from my long ago youth. No danger in that. A good cause, not too much of a challenge and it might be fun. How hard can it be?

Next he set me up with a professional dancer ... and I hit the jackpot. I got Kimberly Parent. Now, I knew about Kim because we had done a story on her Saskatoon Salsa Dance Company and her work with Indigenous kids and their performance at the Mayor's Gala.

I also saw her salsa at the Reconciliation Walk on National Aboriginal Day. I had never met her, but she had been featured in the paper. A Métis businessperson and hell of a dancer. Great pairing.

We first met in her studio on 8th Street. Excited about the two step, before I could get a word out edgewise about my awesome rhythm, I learned

Kim had a plan already. We were going to jive to Jail House Rock, and because we were the first ever Indigenous pairing in the event's five year history, the organizer had asked for something 'cultural.'

And to us that meant jigging. So a jig/jive was decided on and we went to work.



These seven couples helped *Swinging with the Stars* raise over \$140,000 for the Saskatoon City Hospital Rehabilitation Centre. Kim and I are in the jail uniforms surrounded by our fellow dancers. The support for each other in the green room was heart warming and the event was a thrill of a lifetime for the dancers.

(Photo by Ken Greenhorn Photography)

And work we did. I did not know how much work goes into a two minute dance. Short answer ... it is a lot! We put in close to 50 hours of practice. One or two sessions a week for the first couple of months, and in January we practiced almost every weekday for at least an hour.

The challenges were many. I was

out of shape. No cardio, heavy feet and not very good rhythm (sorry, I lied earlier).

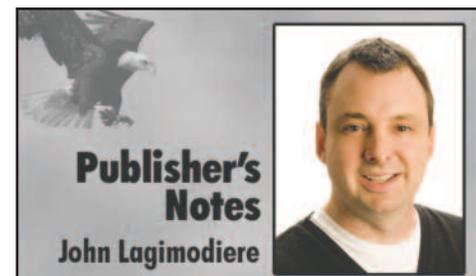
Fortunately Kim is the best coach. The feisty Métis woman pushed me like no coach I have ever had. She insisted on multiple repetitions of steps until I got it.

"Again! Remember rock, step, left then right!" "Frame!" "Hand out here!"

"Smile!" Smile? I was dying, covered in sweat and just trying to breathe.

She was often apologetic after practices but I took no offense. I do the same thing with the kids I coach hockey, so who was I to complain.

Herb Clark at Dance Dynamics helped us with our lifts, pulls and choreography. My old pal Derek Rope



came and taught us how to jig.

The jigging was the hardest and most nerve-racking part. We didn't want to let our community down.

Derek taught us well. To top it off, we thought if we need to jig, we should have the world's greatest fiddler playing for us so I called John Arcand and pitched him on the idea. Without hesitation he said yes.

The night of the dance was tense. But weeks of practice and anxiety melted away when we took the stage. I couldn't see anything past the lights in our eyes. Johnny started fiddling and the training took over and we did that dance darn well in front of 1,000 people. And we didn't fall. I didn't drop her and the only mistakes were on my end and minor in nature. Probably our best run ever. Relief!

The impact? I lost ten pounds and got in the best shape I have been in for 15 years. I made a good friend with Kim. And most importantly the event raised over \$140,000 for the Rehab Centre.

I recently visited the Centre to visit and photograph our friend Colleen Hamilton as she recovers from a life changing operation. The sun was pouring in on the wide open space filled with exercise machines, weights, medicine balls and people trying to get better.

Colleen raved about the staff, the Centre and the process and also the large number of Indigenous people who use the place. That comment made the entire labour of blood (scraped up Kim a few times, also fell on her and bashed her head on the floor ... sorry!), sweat and tears so worth it.

Plus, when I have to have my crappy knees replaced, the Centre will be there for me and for others in need.

How much impact can a little two minute dance have? Turns out lots.

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Pretty Prime Minister has one oar out of the water

I would like to meet the First Nations youth who spoke to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about his and her canoe and paddle storage needs.

Although it has been many moons, since I was a teen with pimples the size of juicy blueberries, I cannot recall canoe storage as being one of my main concerns.

Like all the First Nations people in Trudeau's imagination, we had a canoe – or at least we had access to one. My Uncle Frank had it sitting next to his garage.

My cousins and I used to carry it to the slough near our house and set it in the murky, waist high water. Then we would all pile in until it sunk to the bottom. Then we would push each other out until it could float again.

After we had engaged in our traditional ways for a long enough time – or until mom was due home from grocery-shopping (because we were actually not allowed to play in the water), we would dump out the smelly slough water and carry it back to Uncle Frank's. Then as we put it down, we would turn it upside down. Not because anyone told us to do that but because that was the obvious way to store a canoe.

Now I am just learning that canoes are supposed to be protected from the elements which seems strange considering that they go on the water, which is an element. They must be hung on the wall, on special hooks designed for canoes – if you've never seen such things I'm sure someone makes them on Etsy. And paddles must be stored inside of fur-lined waterproofed bags, like your dad's golf clubs.

But Trudeau's statements weren't all wrong. He also said that First Nations youth want places to do their

homework with Internet access. When I was a teen, I did feel like tearing my hair out about that. I studied at the kitchen table, bathed in the warm glow of cigarette smoke, while people walked in and out of the kitchen to make sandwiches and phone calls.



In addition, there was an ongoing cacophony caused by visitors, babies, and cats jumping on the table, demanding my pen for their own cat use. I used to imagine the places that my non-Native classmates had at their disposal – their own rooms with desks. It sounded blissful.

What I would have given for a quiet place to study and with access to the Internet. Although there wasn't Internet in those days – yes I'm that old – and if you had tried to describe it to me, "It's a place where you can literally watch a million hours of cat videos", I would have passed out.

Our pretty little Prime Minister also implied that TVs in rec centres aren't needed. Clearly he hasn't watched a good movie with a dozen people recently. 50 per cent of my childhood was spent lying on our living room floor pointed at a T.V. with my uncles, cousins, aunts and neighbours.

A shared TV can be a teaching tool and opportunity for healing; it was T.V. time that taught me about Martin

Luther King, Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and of course, poltergeists.

After watching those movies, I felt inspired to fight both racism and ghosts. In fact, when I went to Queen's University, one of my favourite places was the Indigenous Student's Centre, a little house on that campus, where all the Aboriginal students gathered together to eat bannock in peace.

It was there that we all watched the Maori film, *Once Were Warriors*, together and discovered that we weren't alone, that other Nations had been royally screwed over by colonialism as well.

The Centre also had study areas upstairs along with computers and Internet access. But no canoe shed, oddly enough.

Trudeau's comments also threw shade on First Nation leaders but since he followed it up with canoe storage, the only person who looked out of touch was him. But having a Prime Minister make such paternalistic statements is dangerous because the challenges facing First Nations youth are daunting and he needs to listen, for real.

Our communities need discriminatory funding practices to stop – in health, in education and infrastructure. We need the Canadian government to undergo a fundamental shift in the way that it treats First Nation people. Once that is in place, then we'll have time for canoe trips – but only if Trudeau agrees to go shirtless.

Still, I am glad that we have a Prime Minister who would even bother take questions from Canadian people. I'm not the sure that other guy ever peeked his head out to check on us. Except maybe once a year when he told us whether there would be another six weeks of winter.

Arts Board Deadlines

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

**Culture on the Go –
Touring**
February 16

Independent Artists Program
March 15

Indigenous Pathways Initiative
April 15

**SaskFestivals Program* –
Annual**
April 15

**Artists in Communities* –
Artist in Residence
Projects**
May 1

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

Premier's Centennial Arts Scholarship
May 1

For applications, visit: saskartsboard.ca

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Bourassa to head CIHR in Sudbury

**By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News**

She's a woman with many accomplishments who is paving new paths for Indigenous health research.

Dr. Carrie Bourassa was recently appointed as the New Scientific Director of Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health based in Sudbury, Ontario.

"I'm pleased to welcome Dr. Bourassa to the CIHR leadership team. With her wealth of experience in Indigenous health, she is extremely well-suited to help CIHR implement its action plan to strengthen Indigenous health research in Canada and ultimately, build a healthier future for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples," says CIHR President Dr. Alain Beaudet in a media release.

This will be the first time in the history of the institute that it will be based in a northern small institution to help meet the health challenges of the northern and rural areas. Dr. Bourassa says this is an exciting opportunity for her to pursue.

"I am honoured and humbled. I didn't expect to get the position," she says. "I'm excited to be able to serve Indigenous communities in a different way."

She currently holds the position as Chair in Northern & Indigenous Health and is also an Adjunct Professor at Laurentian University. In the new and upcoming position, Dr. Bourassa wants a strategic community consultation to try understanding what the priorities are for Indigenous communities across Canada.

"You can't have just Indigenous institute address Indigenous health, it has to be integrated across

the institute so there's a lot of work to do," she adds.

Through her work ahead, Dr. Bourassa will find out from different community perspectives on what needs to change within CIHR so they can build on the strengths, resilience and ask Indigenous communities across Canada to address the huge gaps they see in Indigenous health.

"It's going to be a different challenge ... doors have opened that I haven't planned, and I've always felt like I served communities that I worked for Indigenous communities in the research that I've undertaken."

Dr. Bourassa will be taking the cultural-safety evaluation and training lab with her in Sudbury to continue part of her responsibility on training and mentoring students and young researchers. She acknowledges Dr. Eber Hampton and Dr. Mary Hampton who showed her what community-based Indigenous health research is about and how to implement the principles of reciprocity, respect and relevance to put communities first.

"It's not about you, it's not about your ego, it's about community, it's about strength, resilience, and what communities have to offer. It's about those who came before me and it's about those yet to come. I want to honour them," she adds.

Dr. Bourassa who is Métis belongs to the Regina Riel Métis Council #34. For many years, she was a Professor of Indigenous Health Studies at First Nations University of Canada (FNU). She began the new position as the Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health on Feb. 1.



Dr. Carrie Bourassa has been named the new Scientific Director of Canadian Institutes of Health Research in Sudbury, Ontario. She has left her posting at the First Nations University of Canada for the prestigious position.

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SGI video contest hopes to spread traffic safety message

**By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News**

Every month, SGI partners with police on different traffic safety focuses. In December, they focused on impaired driving and throughout the month, SGI is raising awareness while the police are enforcing the laws. There were 353 impaired driving related offenses in December compared to 308 in December 2015.

“It’s very disappointing to see because there’s been so much awareness about the new traffic laws that came into effect beginning of January,” says Kelley Brinkworth, the SGI Manager of Media Relations.

“With all the awareness out there and encouraging people to plan that safe ride home and the fact the police still caught this many people drinking and driving, it is a disappointment.”

One of the new initiatives that SGI is doing is called the “Save a Life Challenge” which is to help raise awareness of road safety issues impacting First Nations communities. The contest was open to everyone but through their traffic safety promotion department, the community liaisons promoted the contest through various Indigenous tribal councils within the province.

“We’ve challenged individuals in these communities or groups to spread the message of road safety by filming and sharing a short video that highlights a road safety issue such as distracted driving, impaired driving, speeding and wearing your seatbelts,” she adds.

Shane Quewezance, File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC) Traffic Safety Coordinator has worked to spread the word out on the new SGI initiative by targeting the communities within the tribal council.

“I put (the contest poster) up in band offices, health stations and gas stations. I approached the schools since I work with the youth,” he says.

“Piaopot First Nation had six youth involved and



Students and teachers from the Peepeekisis Pesakastew school submitted a video. The teachers include: Patricia Deiter and Vera Tourangeu with Guy Bird and Cameron Yuzzappi as the Educational assistants. The students include: Sky Bird, Chantel McKay, Logan Deiter, Lilah Dieter, Trae Dieter, Maddison Grey, Logan Kishayinew, Hanna Dieter, Aleigha Agecoutay, Creedance Bird, Shaynna Desnomie, Xina Desnomie, Shawn Pinay, Avery Starr, Geoffery Ward, Sian Desnomie-Stonechild, Aaron Ward, Aquinna McLeod.

(Photo by Patricia Deiter)

Peepeekisis had seven youth involved (in each entered video). They shot everything on their own.”

The contest closed on Jan. 23 resulting in 13 video entries. The videos are now posted on SGI’s Facebook page where viewers can vote by ‘liking’ their favourite video for the ‘people’s choice’ prize.

Winning videos will receive up to \$10,000 in support of a traffic safety initiative in a First Nations community of the winner’s choosing. Voters had until Feb. 8 and the winners will be announced on March 1.

“It was exciting to see contest participants embrace the challenge to demonstrate how the choices we make behind the wheel can have very real and tragic

consequences,” said Shannon Ell, Director of Traffic Safety Promotion at SGI in a media release.

“By driving safely, each of us has the power to save a life, whether it’s our own or someone else’s.”

SGI did a breakdown percentage of impaired driving related fatalities in a five-year average between 2011-2015. During that time period, 55.5 per cent occurred on provincial highways, 21.2 per cent on rural roads and 13.5 per cent on First Nation roads, 9.5 per cent on urban streets and 0.3 per cent on other roads like a northern forest road or on federal land.

Visit SGI’s Facebook page to view the videos, and cast a vote for your favourite!

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Spence-Fontaine enjoyed long, rewarding career in nursing

By **Andréa Ledding**
For Eagle Feather News

Janet Spence-Fontaine is one of the first Aboriginal nursing graduates from the University of Saskatchewan, hailing originally from the North, and graduating in 1965.

"I'm currently a member of Sagkeeng," she notes.

Now retired, she is the spouse of well-known politician Phil Fontaine.

"I live in Winnipeg and am a 24-hour caregiver to my mom. She's 98 and holding it together."

She notes there were other graduates ahead of her such as Jean Cuthand-Goodwill and Anne Thomas, but nobody else has come forward or identified, so she recently returned to her alma mater to address the many Indigenous students enrolled now.

She wasn't someone who grew up with a burning desire to be a nurse, it was more of a process of elimination for her, but she adds nurses are needed everywhere.

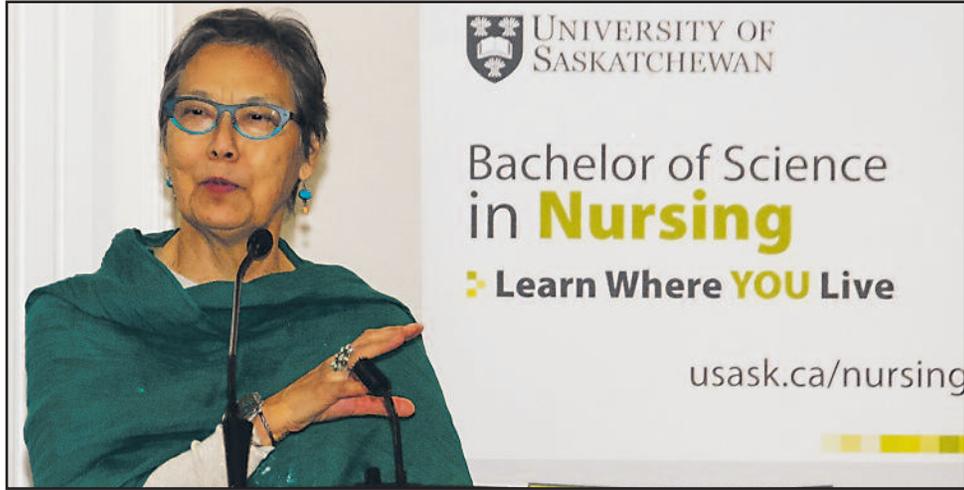
"My field ended up being public health and I have done other things since, always with the component of Aboriginal health and always with the idea that we need to be in balance in our four bodies."

A major Indigenous contribution to the health field is awareness of balance in the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional realms, she notes, something she needed during her own five year degree.

"The program that I got into was heavy with the sciences and that's not naturally my field – some people have that gift for sciences but I didn't and just had to slog away," said Spence-Fontaine. Her first posting was with the Prince Albert health district, in public health. "The disconnect between community and the theoretical things I was learning just seemed so big, that's why I ended up going into public health nursing and from there into community development."

She grew up with an expectation that she would go to university. Her father was a 1927 graduate from Emmanuel College, and didn't retire from teaching until he was 87.

"There was a strong belief in edu-



Janet Spence-Fontaine was among the first Indigenous nursing graduates from the University of Saskatchewan and was a leader in promoting public health in Indigenous communities.

(Photo U of S College of Nursing)

cation being the answer to a lot of the challenges that Indian people would face," she explained.

She grew up in many small towns, often the only First Nations family around, and was even directed by her Wilkie school principal to not drop French so that she would be accepted to university.

"Everyone supported me and put me into that direction, so in that sense it wasn't an agonizing struggle and I didn't really think about it too much. I wasn't alone in my family to go."

Her mother, in fact, achieved a BFA at the University of Manitoba after raising her children.

"It's never too late. She had gone to high school at the Brandon Residential School and then she hadn't felt that she had gotten enough out of it so she took some classes by correspondence after she was done there, it was a mindset. When she was 55 she decided to go to university and some of my aunts did as well."

She credits their inspiration, along with her mother's can-do attitude of quiet support, trusting that each kid would find their own way. From public health, Spence-Fontaine went on to community development, and became an adult educator when a teacher didn't arrive.

"The Chief came to see me (and) I said I'm not a teacher and my baby is small, so he said I've got a babysitter, and there I was, learning on the job."

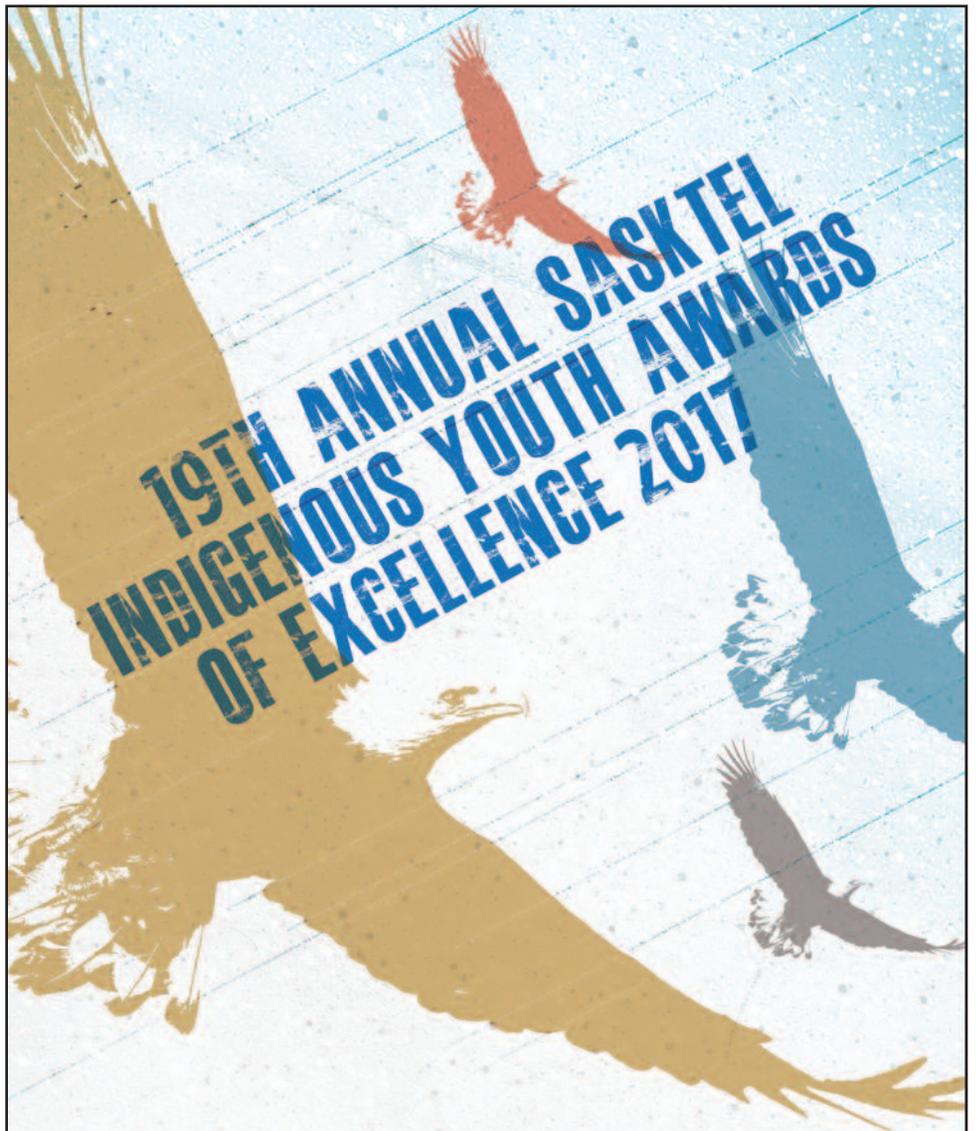
While the Chief's wife babysat her

people's life," she observed.

She also worked at the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood when position papers were being written in response to the federal government's White Papers, called Our Tomorrow or Wahbung. She has also worked on local history projects, lived in Whitehorse, and volunteered with women's organizations, which led to work for the Manitoba Women's Directorate and localizing control of health with the federal government and northern development strategy for a cabinet committee.

Her most unexpected job was as first director of the Tourism Secretariat for Manitoba, eventually coming full circle to work for the Aboriginal Health branch before retirement.

"Balance is what I was after, at an individual level and for my family and for the rest of the world as well."



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Benefits of breastfeeding being touted across the province

By Darla Read
For Eagle Feather News

Melanie Flett knows first-hand what it's like to want to breastfeed a baby, but to not have the support that makes it easier.

"I was surrounded by family who didn't know much about it," the 22-year-old mother from Red Earth Cree Nation says as she looks back on her experience nursing her son.

"But I was determined to exclusively breastfeed him."

That's why Flett is taking training to become a peer support for other nursing moms on Saskatchewan's First Nations.

"The lack of support I had being a new mom ... it was overwhelming. Support is very important. I would love to be there and support other moms."

Thanks to funding from the First Nations Inuit Health Branch, Flett is participating in one of four peer support trainings offered across the province. Around 50 moms will be taking the training between Prince Albert, Onion Lake, Okanese, and Treaty 6.

Kelsey Ring is a registered dietician with the Prince Albert Grand Council, and one of the facilitators of the training.

"During university and my first year of work, I realized that I had a passion for infant nutrition and the special bond that breastfeeding creates between mom and babe."

According to Statistics Canada, 89 per cent of Canadian mothers in 2011-2012 initiated breastfeeding soon after their child's birth. Six months later – the length of time the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends exclusive breastfeeding – 26 per cent were still breastfeeding. The WHO recommends continuing

to breastfeed while foods are introduced up to two years and beyond. In addition to many health benefits breastfeeding provides mom and her baby, which adapt to a child's needs as they grow or get sick, it also meets many emotional needs of a child.

Some barriers breastfeeding moms can face include lack of knowledge, social norms (some communities see bottle feeding as the norm), poor family or social support (spousal support is key to breastfeeding success), embarrassment (such as being shamed for nursing in public), or lacking access to support – exactly what this training hopes to combat.



Jana Stockham on left is a lactation consultant with Cindy & Jana and one of the facilitators of the Prince Albert conference, and Melanie Flett, right, is a mom training to become a peer support for other breastfeeding moms. (Photo by Darla Read)

In addition to Ring, the other facilitators are lactation consultants from Saskatoon and Prince Albert, as well as public health nurses, including retired

RN Georgina Quinney. She started a very successful breastfeeding peer support program in Shoal Lake and ran it for 15 years. She is the inspiration for expanding training to multiple First Nations, says Ring.

"I facilitated a training session with Georgina about two years ago and saw what a difference it was making in Shoal Lake and surrounding communities," notes Ring.

"When an opportunity for funding came up, we submitted a proposal to host the training (which has never been done on this scale here before)."

The training follows the American WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Breastfeeding Peer Support Training program quite closely – with adaptations for First Nations women living in Saskatchewan.

The goal of the conference is to build confidence and empower First Nations moms to support and promote breastfeeding within their communities.

"All of these moms have the knowledge through their own breastfeeding experiences. We just want them to feel comfortable and confident talking to other moms about it," explains Ring.

"We also realize that the support provided by peers is unique and, in combination with support from their health care providers, plays a key role in breastfeeding success."

Flett also encourages moms to empower themselves before their baby is born.

"Attend prenatal classes. Read the books or pamphlets about pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding just so you gain some understanding. Because being a new mom can be overwhelming. Reach out for help when needed."

Aboriginal Peoples Survey

Economic Participation

A survey of First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit



Enquête auprès des peuples autochtones

Participation à l'activité économique

Une enquête menée auprès des Premières Nations vivant hors réserve, des Métis et des Inuits

Between January and June 2017, Statistics Canada will be conducting the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). You may be selected to participate.

Take part, complete the survey and help build a better future!

For more information, call 1-800-263-1136 or go to www.statcan.gc.ca/aps.

Entre janvier et juin 2017, Statistique Canada mènera l'Enquête auprès des peuples autochtones (EAPA). Vous pourriez être sélectionné pour y participer.

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Pour obtenir plus de renseignements, veuillez composer le 1-800-263-1136 ou consulter le site www.statcan.gc.ca/eapa.

Homeless battle cold, unfair stereotypes

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

REGINA – Battling with an alcohol addiction and homelessness, Joey Reynolds' life is like a rollercoaster full of ups and downs. He carries a dark backpack with limited clothing and a blanket that he has picked up in the previous homeless shelters he utilized.

Reynolds is originally from Pukatawagan over 200 kilometers north of The Pas in Manitoba. He has lived on the streets off and on since 1995 in Manitoba, Prince Albert, Saskatoon and now Regina. He lived with some family in Prince Albert for a few months but was thrown out on the streets due to his partying.

"I rather live on the street and know that I am safe instead of living in hostels where a lot of people will bully you for your money or the way you look," he says.

Reynolds recalls being badly beaten up at the Salvation Army in Saskatoon. Since then, he fears for his safety when he goes to homeless shelters. This has caused his mental well-being to deteriorate.

Currently he rents a small apartment suite in Regina but says soon, he will become homeless again.

"I live in a rough apartment and I get scared to go home sometimes because my next door neighbours are partying, so I prefer to be out in the street all night," he says.

The Knox-Metropolitan United Church located in downtown Regina helped him find his current place but soon he will be moving out as the landlord will be selling the apartment building which leaves him back to square one. The challenge he faces when he's out in the streets is trying to find a warm place to sleep every night.

"Sometimes I will go to the detox and look for a bed. In order to be at detox, you have to be drinking. So

I will purposely go out and buy a bottle of Listerine or something," he confesses.

"Even if you're trying to abstain, you get drunk to qualify (to get in detox) and there goes your sobriety."

If detox is full, Reynolds will rush to get a bed at the Salvation Army and if it's full there he will ask for a cell at the Regina police station – which he's usually denied. It's a battle that he deals with every day – dealing with his addiction and being homeless. In the summertime, he has no problem finding a place to sleep outside.

"You want to try find a safe area to sleep where you won't be kicked around and you want to be safe at the same time," he says.

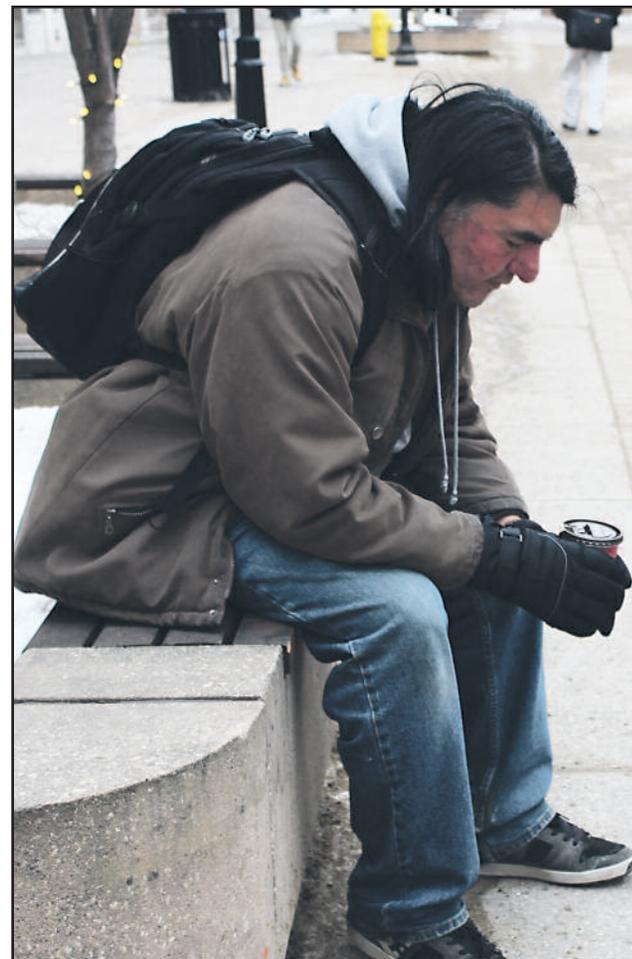
"I've slept in front of the Mobile Crisis. I hid myself in the little bush area and I ran into another guy crashed out there."

When it's wintertime and with nowhere to sleep, Reynolds will think hard of places downtown with heat vents, including bank entrances, in order to stay warm for the night. He says a lot of street people will hang out at the library that he refers to as a safe haven during the day. It is also a place where he has an opportunity to read books, daily newspapers and surf the Internet.

Being homeless, Reynolds says you realize how important time is. His daily routine runs on time from waking up before the city commutes, lining up at places to eat and grab a coffee to making it in on time at the Salvation Army to secure a bed for the night.

Reynolds says there's a stigma to homelessness where society tends to think those that are homeless are dangerous, have schizophrenia, bipolar or some other mental illness.

"We're just human beings, we deserve some respect and recognition just to be humanized and not de-



Joey Reynolds shared his struggles with being homeless and admitted he sometimes gets drunk so he can qualify for the detox overnight shelter just to have a warm place to sleep. (Photo by Jeanelle Mandes)

humanized or demonized as evil people," he adds. "Life is hard out there. A lot of (us) want to get a sense of respect and a sense of hope and dignity."

He hopes the City of Regina can work with the homeless community instead of just making the issue of combating homelessness an election promise.

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Family urges vaccinations after tragic loss

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

PRINCE ALBERT – Baby Zander Tarzan Venne was a nine-month-old baby who loved to carry his favourite owl toy around with him wherever he went.

He was a happy and cheerful little baby who had nothing but smiles on his face – a smile that lit up any room.

“Zander could brighten up anyone’s day no matter what mood they were in. He was so happy and was always laughing,” says Allison Modine, who is the aunt of Zander who died recently.

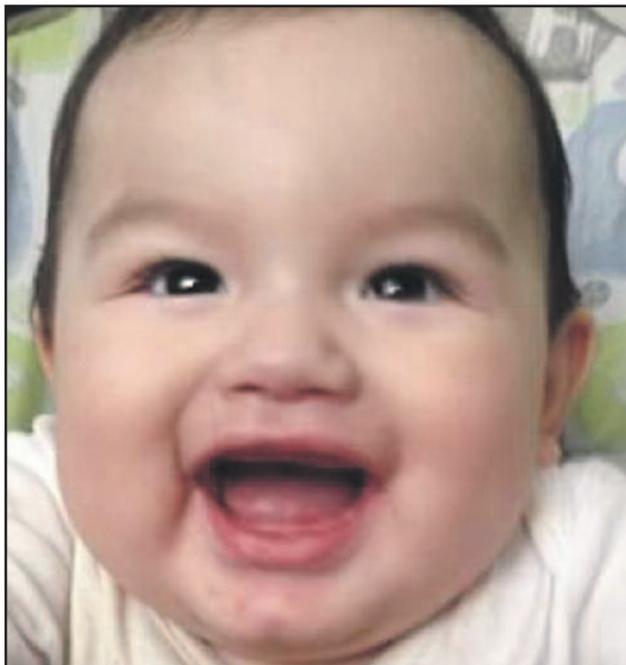
“My favorite memory was when he kept Face-timing me by accident on my sister’s phone probably like three or four times that day. Every time I seen him, he would smile right away.”

Allison resides in Prince Albert but keeps in touch with her sister, Ashley McLeod, the mother of Zander, who lives in La Ronge. Modine shares a heartbreaking story of her nephew who died on Jan. 24 from Meningitis. She says her sister Ashley had so much love for her only child.

“He was her baby and her everything. She used to talk about him almost every day and she would upload pictures of him every day on her Facebook,” says Allison. “My sister is absolutely devastated when she lost her only child.”

Baby Zander just learned how to crawl weeks before he passed away. On the evening of Jan. 23, Zander came down with a fever. As he was teething at the same time, the family thought it was a normal symptom.

She broke his fever by giving him a bath and by the morning, he felt a bit better. After they woke up around noon from their morning nap, Ashley noticed spots on Zander that raised her concerns.



Baby Zander was a favourite photo subject of Ashley and Allison Modine.

“She freaked out, panicked and took him to the emergency right away. He went into cardiac arrest and passed away within two hours from arriving while waiting to be airlifted to Saskatoon,” recalls Allison. “Our whole family has been affected by this. Zander was loved by everyone.”

Since his passing, Ashley has been taking it hard. She couldn’t sleep in her home after losing her child so she moved out and stayed at a friend’s place until she got another home. Every night, Ashley sleeps with a picture of her son Zander to remind her of the happiness that he brought to her and her family.

Baby Zander was up to date on all his immunizations but he was two months shy of receiving the 12-month vaccination for Meningitis.

This experience has caused bad anxiety for Allison and she now takes precautions for her own children by ensuring they are up to date with their immunizations and to recognize the signs of the infection. She shares her sister’s story with hopes that others can understand that Meningitis can take a life away fast and that immunizations can prevent it from happening.

The deadly infection is usually mistaken for the flu or teething; Allison urges parents to be aware of those symptoms.

“Keep your child’s immunizations up to date. If you suspect it’s more than a fever or if something doesn’t feel right, take your child in. It does not hurt to get your child looked at,” she says.

“I hope by spreading awareness that it will help people to know the risks of what meningitis is and to prevent this from happening to someone else’s innocent child.”

Allison and her sister are currently raising money to buy baby Zander a headstone for his grave.

The headstone they want to buy costs over \$5,000 and so far, Allison has raised close to \$700 on a Go Fund Me page.

“There’s really nothing I can say or do for my sister that’s going to make her feel better or whole again. The least I can do for her is try get her precious baby boy a headstone,” she adds.

“He deserves it. My little sister is my best friend and I’ll do what it takes to get him that headstone.”

People can donate at the Go Fund Me Page titled Headstone for Zander.

<https://www.gofundme.com/headstone-for-zander>

NOTICE: MÉTIS NATION - SASKATCHEWAN CITIZENS

The Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S) will hold a Legislative Assembly (MNLA) followed by a General Assembly on the following dates:

Delegate Registration February 17, 2017 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

MNLA February 18, 2017 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

MNLA/General Assembly February 19, 2017 9:00 AM

Please Note: The General Assembly will immediately follow the MNLA on February 19, 2017

Location

TCU Place, Grand Gallery
35 - 22nd Street East, Saskatoon



30 days notice of this session of the MNLA as required by the Constitution of the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan will be sent to all delegates of the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. For more information visit www.metisnationsk.com, contact your respective local Regional Director listed on the website or contact Evan Shoforost (Ernst & Young) at (306) 649-8242.

www.metisnationsk.com

Dancing promotes Métis health and culture

By Julie Wriston
Of Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – The combination of physical activity and passing on of Métis culture culminate in creating a healthy lifestyle through the Métis dance program offered at Westmount School in Saskatoon.

Given an appropriate Michif name, Lii Pchii Daanseur di la Prayrii (Little Prairie Steppers) was launched over five years ago. Students at Westmount have been given the opportunity to master the art of Métis jigging, square dancing and social dance.

Approximately 27 students participate each year, some of whom have been dancing in the program since pre-kindergarten. A group of eight students are able to strut their stuff as a touring group, attending events like the grand opening of the Round Prairie Library in January of this year.



The Lii Pchii Daanseur di la Prayrii (Michif language for Little Prairie Dancers) are a mainstay at Westmount School in Saskatoon and perform for dozens of events and organizations every year. (Photo by Julie Wriston)

Mataya Laprise is one of the talented young dancers who has been involved from a very young age. She started dancing for fun, but has become a prize winning jigger taking home a second place win during a jigging competition held over the Christmas break in her home community of La Loche.

“It’s fun, and challenging, and everyone should try it,” she says.

Mataya also participates in powwow dancing and enjoys the opportunity to perform.

Her skills and enjoyment to perform will serve her well as she will be joining her fellow dancers to showcase their talents at this year’s Telemiracle event held in Saskatoon.

Angela Caron, Principal of Westmount School is very proud of the responsibility shown by the kids.

“The dancers are committed to practice every Monday after school, and many of them show extra initiative by attending

the community dance lessons that take place Monday evenings at the school as well,” said Caron.

Westmount provides a drop-in Métis dance program that is free to attend and open to all ages and skill levels. The program runs from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday evenings. Currently the class enjoys a wide array of participants, nearly 30 people each week, from school staff, community members and Métis families from Saskatoon and area.

Traditional square dancing is led by Wilfred Burton, and jigging instruction is provided by Warren Isbister.

Each class builds on the learnings of the previous lesson leaving participants with increased confidence and abilities to share in this aspect of Métis culture.

Angela Caron sees the program as a way to engage with families and demonstrate the Métis values that are prominent throughout the community.

“It is important that we have Métis specific programming that takes place in our school and community. Westmount is one of very few places that offer this type of opportunity.”

Participants in the community class have the option to support Le Petite Dancer de la Prairie by donating a toonie each class towards Telemiracle.

On Feb. 10, Westmount School hosted a Sweetheart Dance open for all to attend. The evening was filled with the wonderful music of Phillip and Dallas Boyer, dancing, laughter and memories. A nominal fee was being collected at the door with proceeds going towards Telemiracle and to sustain the community dance program into the future.

For more information about the drop in dance lessons, Sweetheart Dance, or to provide donation support for Telemiracle, check out the Facebook page Métis Dance Westmount, or contact Westmount School.

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Application Deadline: February 27, 2017 – 5:00 p.m. CT



Seven of the twelve students registered to take part in the BMQ Co-op Education program at Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation were sworn in at a ceremony surrounded by loved ones, and community and military leaders at the Constable Robin Cameron Education Complex near Duck Lake, Sask. on January 30, 2017. (Photo Canadian Forces Public Affairs)

Beardy's & Okemasis cadets following a proud tradition

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

BEARDY'S AND OKEMASIS FIRST NATION – Twelve youth from the Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation participated in an inaugural swearing-in ceremony – the final step to joining the Canadian Armed Forces.

The students from Const. Robin Cameron Education Complex (CRCEC) and Stobart Community High School are the first participants in this new basic military qualification co-op education program – a program that allows students to attend school in the mornings and attend Canadian Armed Forces training in the afternoons.

The 38 Canadian Brigade Group's (CBG) inaugural Indigenous Basic Military Qualification (BMQ) Co-op swearing-in ceremony took place at the First Nation's high school on Jan. 30 with senior members of the 38 CBG and proud community members in attendance.

"It's incredible that (12) youth from our community will be participating in the Military Co-op Program from both the Const. Robin Cameron Education Complex and Stobart Community School," says Beardy's Councillor Kevin Seesequasis on the community's website.

"These young individuals are gaining employment while continuing their education, they will make friends and memories that will last a lifetime, and have joined the ranks of a long list of honourable warriors who have worn the uniform proudly and served in the Canadian Forces from the Beardy's & Okemasis First Nation."

Pte. Dean Daniels, a CRCEC Grade 12 student, is following the footsteps of his late grandfather Vincent Gamble, a veteran who passed away in 2014 and who had a deep impact on his life.

"He was willing to go fight for his

home," says Daniels. "He still went out and risked his life for his home. I really respected him for that."

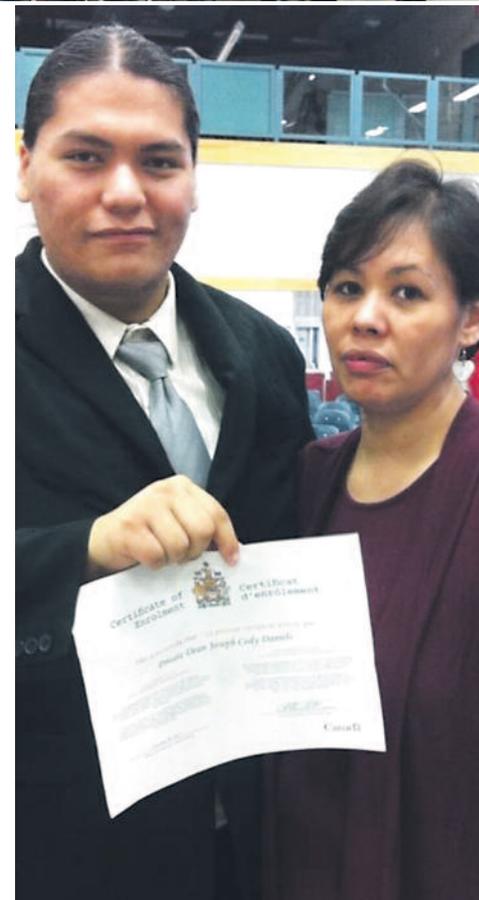
Daniels felt waves of happiness and pride at the swearing-in ceremony and he hopes to continue on this path by entering into Special Forces once he completes high school.

"I felt really happy. I felt like I made my grandfather proud. My family kept telling me how (my grandfather) would be proud of me," Daniels adds.

Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation is a community that honours their past and former veterans. The 12 privates will continue a proud tradition of service and carry on the legacy of their fallen soldiers.

"We are incredibly proud of them and wish them success in this new endeavor," says Seesequasis.

The youth will be trained with the North Saskatchewan Regiment and the Service Battalion.



Private Dean Daniels and his mother Kim after the swearing in ceremony. (Photo by Milton Gamble)

Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation is 92 kilometres north of Saskatoon.



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Alaina Gillespie-Meise, Occupational Health Consultant



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Spelling counts for these national competitors

By Julie Wriston
Of Eagle Feather News

Mastering literacy is a skill that creates confidence. What better way to ignite a fire of learning than through competition? That's exactly what the First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee has been doing for youth across Saskatchewan.

Pauline Favel, President Saskatchewan Region (Spelling Bee of Canada), compares literacy training with the training of athletes.

"When we give support and guidance to natural born athletes, we foster and develop their skills and they excel. It is no different with literacy. We want to prove to these kids, and the public at large, that they are very bright and they can shine if given the opportunity."

"Our dream/vision was to create the venue where we could bring all the First Nations students from across Saskatchewan together to compete in this unique and innovative literacy competition."

Last year was the first time the FNPSB ran the competition and it was met with tremendous success.

"Everyone had a good experience with the spelling bee. The kids were very engaged and studied really hard."

First Nations youth from all over Saskatchewan competed in three categories – primary, junior and intermediate. Canspell provided the format and the words that are used across Canada. It was

a great way to "take the kids to a higher level" remarked Favel.

"We were able to see the kids compete up to the best of the best in the Province. We said, why stop there? Let's take the kids to Toronto to compete nationally at the Spelling Bee of Canada (SBOC) Championships."



Last year these students earned their way to Toronto for the National Spelling Bee. They qualified by winning at the inaugural First Nations Provincial Spelling Bee. The Spelling Bee will be held this year on March 24 at St. Mary's School in Saskatoon.

Last May, the three first place winners William Kaysaywaysemat Jr. – Chief Kakewistahaw School, (Primary Age), Makayla Cannepotato – Chief Taylor Elementary School (Junior Age), and Alexander Johansson – Saulteaux Heritage School (Intermediate Age) attended the SBOC and proudly represented Saskatchewan. Of the 30 Regions from across Canada that attended, the FNPSB team were the only First Nations team represented at this national competition.

"The experience was more than we ever imagined."

Cecile Smith is a FNPSB committee

member and sees the spelling bee as a great tool to get parents involved with their kid's learning.

"I was so excited to see our kids use this to further their education and to see how engaged the parents really were. Our parents are so competitive!"

Smith says she "pushed her way in"

the spelling bee a reality.

"It's really about how we as First Nations people are prepared to respond to literacy. We could say there is no money and let that be a barrier. But we want more for our kids. We must think outside the box and not let finding the dollars stop us. It takes people who want to make a difference to build a program from zero," Favel suggests.

The sponsors of the spelling bee are the ones who turn dreams into reality.

"This year we wanted to make sure that our sponsors have the opportunity to become more involved. We are inviting them to commit to acting as officials and to be up there with our kids to see the impact of what we are doing first hand."

For those who agree, a full day of training is being provided to become a judge. Raising money to support sending the winners to compete nationally again this year is a high priority for FNPSB.

Ultimately the FNPSB is hoping to turn this into a National First Nations spelling competition.

"We have something that's very well received and creates such a positive impact in the lives of the kids who compete."

This year's competition will be held on Friday, March 24, at St Mary's School in Saskatoon. It is free to attend.

Come out and support these talented, hardworking kids.

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Campeau Fund champions capacity building initiative for Métis communities

By Julie Wriston
Of Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – Economic health is a major contributor to the health and vitality of the people who live, work and raise families in our province.

Nine Saskatchewan Métis communities recently signed on to take part in a five-year pilot project that offers Métis specific business and economic development capacity building in an effort to stimulate a healthy vibrant economy for the future.

The Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF) has worked to identify areas that require support and focus to enhance opportunities in business development for Métis communities. Out of that investigative process, the Métis Community Capacity Strategy (MCCS) was developed.

A division of CCDF, the MCCS is funded by the Province of Saskatchewan with the objective to stimulate the economic development activities of Métis people and Métis communities.

First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs Minister Donna Harpauer congratulates CCDF for the initiative.

“We look forward to seeing participants mobilize and build on existing community strengths and create new jobs and new business development,” Harpauer said.

“The Métis Community Capacity Strategy was rooted in CCDF’s longstanding knowledge that Saskatchewan’s Métis communities need to have increased participation in Saskatchewan’s economy, adds Director of the MCCS, Roland Duplessis.

The support that will be provided to the participating communities will be focused in the areas of economic development, business and finance and will be customized to fit each of the community’s unique needs.

Duplessis addressed the community leaders who attended the launch by acknowledging that each community has already undertaken various levels of development and that this program is designed to continue the work that has already been done. He says CCDF is not coming to tell the communities what to do, empowering the group by saying “you know what your needs are.”

His passion for Métis development and the merits of the MCCS were apparent in his statements encouraging the full commitment and responsibility of the communities who are engaged.

“We need to prove that this works” and he reminded participants that they are “bound by (their) own will to make this work”.

The nine communities participating in the MCCS include: The Northern Village of Beauval, Buffalo Narrows Economic Corporations, Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (Saskatoon), The Northern Village of Green Lake, Infinity Development Corporation (Archerwill), Kineepik Métis Local (Pinehouse), The Northern Village of La Loche, Prince Albert Métis Women Association, and Sakitawak Development Corporation (Ile a la Crosse).

For the newly elected mayor of La Loche, Robert St. Pierre, the focus on capacity building is a positive

step in the right direction.

“We look forward to working with CCDF to develop opportunities for La Loche. The proof will be in the outcomes.”

The sentiment was echoed by all who attended the launch. Bobby Woods, Mayor of Buffalo Narrows remarked that it is time to “put words to action.” He looks at the MCCS as an opportunity to take back the reigns of development as he feels that there have been set backs in capacity building over the last few years as a result of lack of governmental support.

“At this point, we have everything to gain, and nothing to lose.”

A consulting team from Northern Research Group (NRG) will be utilized to support participating communities with their development. NRG has been working together with CCDF and the Métis communities to identify specific challenges with the goal to create specific capacity building services that offer solutions and help to set realistic goals.

Matt Vermette, CEO of NRG says that economic development is key for the health of each of these communities.

“The need for support isn’t new. Métis communities have been struggling for decades to be involved in the economic growth of Saskatchewan,” said Vermette.

He hopes to see communities realizing and engaging in business opportunities in the first couple of years of the MCCS program.

“Creating opportunities at the community level creates a hopeful future for the people who live in them.”

The MCCS will support the nine communities in capitalizing on business opportunities, wealth generation, and enhanced employment for Métis people in Saskatchewan. The intent is to prove the success of the program, and grow its capacity to engage and support more communities into the future.



Kineepik Métis Local President and Mayor of the Northern Village of Pinehouse Mike Natomagan shares a laugh with MCCS Strategy Director Roland Duplessis on left as Alex Ross with Community and Business Development at Pinehouse looks on.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

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Aboriginal Friendship Centres respond to community organization needs

Advertorial

The Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan undertook extensive engagement activities between April 2015 and April 2016. This 2016 Urban Aboriginal Strategy was created through the voices heard during those engagement activities. The strategy is based on the insights and personal experiences of over 1000 Saskatchewan Aboriginal people through one-on-one interviews, surveys, and focus groups.

In addition, over 300 organizations contributed at community meetings to solution based discussions related to better understanding the needs of urban Aboriginal people. Conversations explored community based actions to reduce barriers to full meaningful participation of Aboriginal people in community social and economic structures.

Some common province wide priorities became clear. Following the holistic approach taught in the medicine wheel, as emphasized by the Elders, was always at the forefront of engagements. Research activities were guided by Aboriginal principles, beliefs, and wisdom, at

all times. Through the voices of the Aboriginal people interviewed, our research revealed that many Aboriginal people have lost their sense of self, their sense of community, and their connection to their culture. These three losses were seen by participants to be at the root of all challenges faced by Aboriginal people. Their restoration was also seen to be at the root of all long term sustainable solutions.

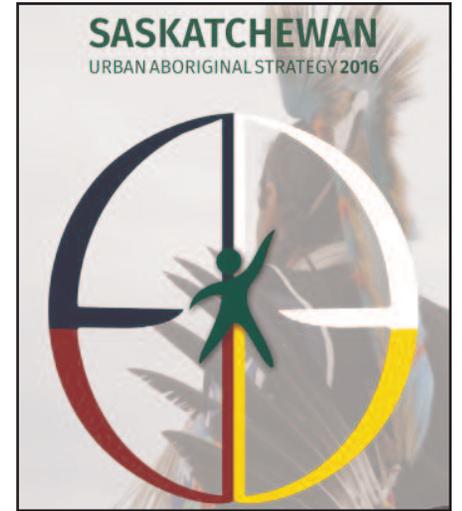
Over 75% of those interviewed responded that they had been personally touched by addiction and/or depression. In comparison to non Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan, Aboriginal people experience a reduced quality of life, rates approximately 20% lower for employment and educational attainment, and extremely disproportionate rates of incarceration.

These measurements indicate systemic disadvantage for Aboriginal people. Engagement participants strongly expressed a need for inclusiveness, fairness, and equality of opportunity. Respondents proposed that a meaningful strategy would reach the individual, the family, the

workplace, service providing organizations, and leadership levels within communities.

Our research team heard, repeatedly, that all strategies for change must be determined and driven by Aboriginal people themselves, as well as through the work of Aboriginal organizations. Interviewees stressed that the Aboriginal voice must be amplified. Opportunities are needed for increased understanding of Aboriginal history and culture, both within the Aboriginal population and within the broader community. Communities asked for opportunities to increase collaboration with Aboriginal citizens and Aboriginal organizations. Communities also expressed a desire to increase levels of Community Cultural Competency, whereby their economic and social structures would increase in responsiveness to Aboriginal people and culture. A culturally competent community would foster mutual respect between all cultures.

The sequencing of this strategy begins with the individual, then moves into family relationships, then moves into community involve-



ment. Building on this foundation, increased contributions to the local economy and social networks would be a natural consequence. Healthy people living in healthy environments create a high quality of life for all people. Such societal transformation will result in a reduction, and eventual elimination of labor force, educational, and justice system statistical gaps that currently persist.

Explore the full report with appendices at AFCS.ca.



MOVING FORWARD

Core Strategic Framework

The framework is created as a lens that opportunities for investment can be viewed through. This was created from the direct reflections from the Youth, Elders and broader community that were engaged with.



Fundamental change must occur in Saskatchewan to eliminate differences between rates of labour force participation, educational attainment, and quality of life experienced by Aboriginal citizens, as compared to non-Aboriginal citizens.



Fitness, healthy lifestyle brings sense of accomplishment

By Joel Pedersen
For Eagle Feather News

In mid January I received a phone call that 2J2 had been selected as a finalist in the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce 2017 SABEX awards for community involvement.

Grateful, thankful and speechless (which is unlike me as some of you may know)... the lady asked me if I was still there?

I laughed and thanked her. We spoke with for a few minutes as the news soaked in.

I was able to find out the other finalists, as I wanted to congratulate them also. To the best of my knowledge, 2J2 was the only First Nations owned business that was a finalist in the 2017 SABEX, for at least this category.

Starting a small business is a challenge that not everyone is up for. You have to find what you are passionate about, believe in your service or product, know what you are strong in and what you need to improve on, pursue that goal, make it reality.

There will be people who support your ideas and others that will be dismissive. Having the ability to stay professional, to have balance is extremely important for a healthy and positive entrepreneur.

My time growing up was always influenced by sport and fitness. Sometimes I enjoyed the practice and training as much as playing and competing (I still do to a certain degree). I had many great coaches, teachers, mentors, and some that didn't make the Christmas card list.

It didn't take me long to realize that coaching and leading was something that I enjoyed and was pretty good at. I taught my brothers and sister to skate,

to play hockey and soccer. While I still played sports, I also started to volunteer with their teams.

Then, into the military, training that really started to prepare me for real life experiences, and importance of physical and mental fitness and resiliency. Joining the Saskatoon Police Service brought me to a whole new level of preparedness and the sustainment of healthy lifestyle.

I enjoyed the high level of training and operational duties of policing and the military. What also occurred was the chance to work directly with community, outside the responding emergency service role.

It was at this point that I saw how one person could make a difference in some people's lives. When working with community I built something that often is only found when sport occurs, an equal level where all are the same, regardless of race, gender or age. The sport of fitness.

Fitness 2J2 is a community based socially responsible health and wellness company. First Nation owned and operated we employ Aboriginal women and men. The programming is inclusive open to all levels of fitness and abilities.

When I first started out 2J2 it was part-time business, with the goal of building capacity to become a fulltime business. I saw a need for effective safe functional fitness programming for the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon.

Fitness is expensive, a drop-in class was about \$12-\$20 and personal training is \$60-\$125. Not many people I knew had that type of expendable money, especially in the inner city of Saskatoon.

I knew how effective the community-based approach was, and was able to start off some program-

ming initially with the city and then with Pleasant Hill Community Association.

Soon after this I was contacted by the Southend School at Reindeer Lake, (a First Nation located north of La Ronge). The principal liked what she had heard and wanted to contract the program for her community.

From that point on the majority of 2J2 programming has been in North with partnerships with Northern Sport Culture and Recreation a non-profit company, and with TransWest Air.

I have experienced some very hard personal and professional challenges. With the most daunting and painful, the loss of my 16-year-old son Max only a couple of years ago.

The actions I take each day through my personal convictions and belief in passing on the lessons and stories of resiliency is truly the best way I can honour Max and my family.

With the intent of, hopefully, reaching at least some people even for a brief smile of satisfaction of their accomplishment. I know through fitness and living a holistic lifestyle that we can do infinitely more than we think we can.



Joel Pedersen is the owner of Fitness 2J2. in Saskatoon.

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Trip to Toronto for NAIG will be a thrill for young basketball player

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

Jasper Paul will be slam-dunking at this year's North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) to be held in Toronto on July 16-27.

Paul is a 13-year-old athlete in Grade 8 at École St. Pius X in Regina. She's been playing basketball since 2010 as the point guard.

She has never attended NAIG before and is excited for the experience.

"I am looking forward to building a great team to compete in the games and to take home some hardware. Also I am excited to be going to Toronto to play a sport I love with my culture highlighted," she says.



Jasper Paul is hoping to add to her hardware collection at the NAIG in Toronto this summer.

Paul looks up to Toronto Raptors basketball players Kyle Lowry and DeMar DeRozan because she considers them exceptional players due to their great work ethic, heart and love of the sport. She looks up to her parents because they are great athletes who never quit.

"I pushed harder in basketball because I love playing and being a better player each time I step on the court. Experiencing challenges during sport gives me life skills that make me believe in myself," she adds.

Paul faced many challenges but pushes herself harder to succeed at achieving great things. Her future goal is to become a doctor to help people.

"I want to be a doctor because my dad is a nurse and I think that doing things to help people can make their day and help you become a great person," she says.

Her advice to any youth who want to pursue their passion in sports to make it into the games is to push yourself no matter how hard it gets.

"Keep your head up and believe that you can be in NAIG. Then all you do is put in time and work ethic and you can achieve your goals!"

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Division	1st	2nd	3rd
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E-mail transfer: tomtotoosis27@gmail.com
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Attention: Milton Tootoosis
729-5th St. E. Saskatoon, SK S7H 1G6
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AMBROSE TAPAQUON

Insulator

"WORK HAS BEEN PRETTY STEADY for me... I have gotten to see some amazing places across the province and meet some incredible people... It's good, honest work."



Ambrose Tapequon: A good day's work

When opportunity knocked, Ambrose Tapequon was ready to answer the door.

Tapequon, who was born on George Gordon First Nation near the village of Punnichy and grew up in Regina, found himself struggling to find a rewarding career upon graduating from high school.

"As a First Nations person, I felt like there weren't a whole lot of job opportunities lined up for me," he said. "I was working with a job coach during my search and he found a posting for an insulator apprentice with the union. I jumped at the opportunity."

In 2011, Tapequon joined the International Association of Heat & Frost Insulators & Asbestos Workers Local 119, who covered the expenses of his training. He spent the next few years learning on the job site from journeyman insulators, while also taking classroom courses in the union hall.

"The union gave me a chance to find a fulfilling career and I'm happy I took that opportunity," Tapequon said. "The fact that I didn't have to pay anything for the training was a huge plus. The instructors were very knowledgeable and on the jobsite you learned something new every day. The learning is always ongoing."

Insulators apply, remove and repair thermal and acoustical insulation (e.g. as calcium silicate, glass foam, mineral wool, Styrofoam and fibreglass) on all types of industrial equipment (e.g. duct piping, heat exchangers, tanks and vessels). Tapequon said he appreciates the diversity of the work.

"It's definitely not the same experience every day," he said. "Every day is different and you don't get bored. I also find that the work is very fulfilling."

Still early in his career, Tapequon has had the opportunity to ply his trade on some major job sites across the province. He has worked at the Co-Op Refinery Complex in Regina, on PotashCorp Rocanville's \$3-billion expansion project and is currently contributing to K+S Potash Canada's Legacy Project.

"Work has been pretty steady for me. It's nice to get that steady work in the province and not have to leave," Tapequon said. "I have gotten to see some amazing places across the province and meet some incredible people. The tradespeople I've met on job sites are great to interact with."

And as a union member, Tapequon said he has confidence when stepping onto a job site knowing he has the support of the union behind him. He said he also appreciates the financial perks, from the various benefits to a healthy pension plan to job security.

When he's not on a job site, Tapequon calls the Queen City home. He said he enjoys spending time with family in his spare time. He feels very fortunate to have embarked down such a gratifying career path.

"It's good, honest work," he said. "The motto of many tradespeople is that, 'You put in a good day's work for a good day's pay.' That's just something I believe in and try to do every day."



George Gordon
First Nation



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