

Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

Indigenous judges named to Prov. Court

Judge Murray Pelletier was officially sworn in at the Provincial Courthouse in Saskatoon August 2 and he honored with a blanket from members of his Cowessess First Nation. (Photo by Nathan Raine)



By NC Raine
For Eagle Feather News

From 1977 to 2017, Saskatchewan had a mere four First Nations and Métis judges working in the provincial court.

In the last year, courtrooms in Saskatchewan have finally become more diverse, with the historic appointment of four Indigenous judges to the bench: Michelle Brass, Natasha Crooks, Mary McAuley, and Murray Pelletier.

The appointments of Indigenous women (Brass, Crooks, and McAuley) is historic because it is the first

time in 20 years, since Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's appointment in 1998, that an Indigenous woman has been called to the judicial bench in Saskatchewan. Or in this landmark case, three.

"In my belief – the accused, the victims, their families – when they're in court and when they see a judge that speaks their language, understands their culture and background, where they came from, I believe that they feel they're heard and have a fair trial," Judge McAuley told Eagle Feather News.

"So, I think (these appointments are) significant."

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TONY'S LEGACY

All of Saskatchewan is grieving the loss of respected Elder Tony Cote. But he has left a legacy of accomplishment. - Page 4



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LT.-GOVERNOR MIRASTY

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Justice Edition

Coming In September - Back to School Issue

CPMA #40027204

Judge McAuley wants to continue the level of excellence established by Judge Gerald Morin

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McAuley, from Cumberland House Cree Nation, replaced the recently retired Judge Gerald Morin, who was the first Cree-speaking judge in Saskatchewan and served for 18 years. Also fluent in Cree, she provides those appearing in court with the opportunity to express themselves in their native Cree tongue.

“I want to make sure I keep on with that level of excellence that Judge Morin established,” said

McAuley.

Despite being early in her career on the bench, McAuley has made an impact in the courtroom. She speaks of an individual at a recent bail hearing known to be aggressive when before a judge. After she remanded the individual, she expected an outburst, but instead the individual thanked her and walked out.

“I think they know when they’ve had a fair trial or not,” she said. “I think it kind of tips the balance a little bit where they feel a little more confident when the judge is a peer who knows their background.”

McAuley said she hopes that the number of Indigenous judges begins to reflect the number of Indigenous people accused in the criminal justice system. Indigenous people make up 76 per cent of the inmate population in Saskatchewan prisons.

“I hope (having more Indigenous judges) will create change. I think, over time, custody will cease to be the only viable option in terms of a sentence. I’m hopeful that we will be able to bring about change in them without always having to put them in jail.”

Judge Michelle Brass, from Peepeekisis First Nation, is also optimistic that these appointments can spark change. Brass, who is the appointed judge at Estevan, hopes to serve as an example for people of all backgrounds in her community.

“It’s being a role model for other Aboriginal people that they can aspire to becoming a judge if they so wish. It’s bridge building,” said Brass.

“In Estevan, there aren’t many Aboriginal people, so it’s showing to non-Aboriginal people that we are doing these jobs, too.”



JUDGE MARY MCAULEY



JUDGE MICHELLE BRASS

Brass, who was sworn in early this year, said it’s been a learning experience so far, and she is continuing to see that regardless of race, we are all human beings facing the same issues.

A recent study suggests nearly 50 per cent of Indigenous children in Canada live in poverty. These high poverty rates are linked with higher crime rates, suggests Brass.

“We’re still dealing with the intergenerational effects of residential school, and our colonial history, which is contributing to poverty and poverty-related crimes. We’re still dealing with a population boom, where our population has increased 30 per cent over the last ten years,” she said. “This isn’t an exhaustive list; this is just looking at why things are the way they are.”

In the wake of some historic trials in Saskatchewan

Back to Batoche



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Appointments will breathe new life into inclusion of Indigenous legal traditions

recently, many in the province have called for changes to the judicial system. While those changes may still be question marks, experts say adding Indigenous perspectives to courtrooms will foster understanding in culturally sensitive issues.

“In terms of Aboriginal and treaty rights, there’s an increasing recognition of Indigenous people’s own laws forming the laws of Canada,” said Shoshanna Paul, Aboriginal Law North Chair in the Saskatchewan Branch of the Canadian Bar Association.

“Having a brown person in the room when there typically isn’t one will definitely change the conversation.”

- Marilyn Poitras

“This raises the question – do we have anyone with experience or expertise in our courts in Indigenous peoples’ own laws? Being Indigenous doesn’t make you an expert in your nation’s laws, but it’ll be more

likely that you’ll be sensitive to it,” she said.

Paul, who is from English River First Nation, stresses the significance of these judicial appointments, saying that it will breathe more life into the inclusion of Indigenous legal traditions within the overall Canadian legal system.

Even something like Judge McAuley’s fluency in Cree creates meaningful inclusivity in the courtroom, she says.

“If you think about the language barriers that might exist – for some people their first language may not be English. Do we have a criminal justice system that can accommodate for that? Well, with Judge McAuley, yeah. That’s pretty significant.”

While progress is being made in Saskatchewan, the federal government currently has no Indigenous judges on the Supreme Court. Of the 153 federal judges appointed in Canada from October 2016 to October 2018, only six were Indigenous.

Marilyn Poitras, Director at the Wiyasiwewin Mikiwahp Native Law Centre, said she hopes other provinces can follow Saskatchewan in increasing their



Shoshanna Paul, Aboriginal Law North Chair

judicial diversity.

“The Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is the impetus,” said Poitras. “When one province starts that kind of movement, the other provinces can follow suit.”

“We’re adding Indigenous perspectives, experience, knowledge, understanding, insight, creativity, to the bench. I expect that will start to come out in decision making.”

Poitras noted that the justice system has historically been a racist place, and these appointments may bring more accountability in the courtroom.

“Having a brown person in the room when there typically isn’t one will definitely change the conversation.”



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Tony Cote's legacy will live on

Turtle Island lost an incredible man on July 31, 2019, Mr. Antoine "Tony" Cote.

He passed away at the age of 84 due to health complications, surrounded by family and loved ones during his last breath.

I had the honour to sit with the family at the Regina General Hospital while they brought Tony down to the Native Health Services smudge room.

I sat and listened to various stories of Tony from his loved ones. Although I was saddened, I felt comforted to know more about the life he had lived. I reflected on the time I've known Tony.

I first moved to Regina back in 2006 to pursue my post-secondary studies at the First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv). Tony worked as the university's commissionaire and he sat at a kiosk greeting people who walked by.

There was something about Tony that made him feel like a moshum, so I approached him and introduced myself. We talked about who he knew from my home reserve of Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation. After that, I was comfortable enough to stop by his desk to chat.

During my early morning classes at FNUniv, I would stop at the University of Regina's Tim Hortons café and buy us coffee and breakfast sandwiches. He always had an empty chair beside his desk so I would sit and eat beside him, catching up on the latest.

I remember one time, a few students walked by us during our morning visits. He leaned in and whispered that they are dating so and so. I looked at him with a surprised look and replied, "how do you know that?" And his response, "I know a lot that goes on here." We laughed.

One summer, I attended a powwow in Keeseekoose First Nation. I drove around the Cote reserve searching for Tony's house to shower up. After almost an hour, I finally found his house. He opened the door with a happy

look on his face. He greeted my daughter and I with open arms. He fed us porridge, toast and tea. I admired all of his artwork and his memorabilia of his awards.

My daughter was infatuated with his collection and she started digging around. I tried shooing her away from touching everything and Tony said, "ahh, just let her be." One of my favourite memories of him.

Over the years, I've learned so

much about my friend, Tony. 1874. He was a survivor of the Indian Residential School era, which was the most terrible experience of his life.

Tony was a Korean War Veteran – 25th Infantry Brigade, 81st Field Regiment RCA. Tony was Chief of Cote First Nation from 1970 to 1978.

Tony was the founder of the Saskatchewan Indian Summer and Winter Games. He held the first Saskatchewan Indian Summer Games in Cote First Nation 1974. Fast-forward



The last photo I took with Tony Cote at this past Remembrance Day service held at FNUniv. (Photo by Jeanelle Mandes)

much about my friend, Tony.

Tony is from the Cote First Nation. His great grandfather was Chief Gabriel Cote who was the main spokesperson for all the Saulteaux Tribes during the signing of Treaty 4, September 15,

45 years, the games were renamed to the Tony Cote Winter/Summer Games two years ago to honour the sports enthusiast. At the renaming ceremony, I had the privilege of interviewing Tony and ask him his thoughts on the games



Comment

Jeanelle Mandes

being named after him.

"I'm very proud of it ... they will always be mentioning my name," he said in an archived interview. "At least I'll be known for awhile anyway."

Aside from establishing the summer/winter games, Tony also established the first all-Native Junior 'B' Hockey team in Saskatchewan in the early '70s. He managed a women's fast-ball team that took them as far as the National Indian Activities Association championships and he formed the first all-Native Old-Timers hockey team called the Wagonburners and they competed in Alberta, New Brunswick and even as far as Florida.

Throughout his lifetime, Tony had many accomplishments that earned him awards to recognize his contributions. He received the Tom Longboat award in 1974 for outstanding sportsman, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 2008, he was inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame in 2011 and received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in April 2013.

In November 2018, Tony was amongst eight Indigenous athletes and builders who were inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Game at the University of Saskatchewan.

That's a lengthy list of accomplishments. Everything he has achieved in his life will leave an everlasting legacy for many generations to come.

I am proud to have known Tony all these years. I will cherish the memories, stories and the words of encouragement he left me with.

My condolences go out to this family, his home community, Saskatchewan Indigenous Veterans, FNUniv, his friends and all that knew and loved him. He will be missed dearly but will live forever in our hearts.

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It was a poopin' puppy party

For no particular reason, I decided to go and make my life 100 per cent more difficult and got a puppy.

Well, I did have a reason, I've always wanted a dog to go running with. I haven't run with a dog since I was a teenager and my dog then was a three legged sweetie (my family never got dogs, we generally took in whatever was dropped off in our front yard.)

That dog – a male my mom named Marsha because she's crazy (my mom, not the dog) – always tried to run in front of me which meant that my runs were a chaotic mess of trying to run around or jump over our well-meaning crooked-legged pooch.

So, my goal was to get a dog big enough to run with. But the SPCA only had puppies available. I was shown a black and grey puppy – the last of a litter. His name was Stormy. They showed us into a "socialization room" where my four-year-old and I met him for the first time.

My toddler wasn't very impressed and kept trying to get the puppy to play on the cat furniture. I had to explain that puppies can't climb.

"Then we should get a baby kitty," my toddler asserted. I somewhat agreed as I've always been more of a cat lover than a dog person but running is where dogs have the upper hand.

The puppy had a cone around his head. The dog attendant explained that he just had "the operation" and needed to keep his cone on for seven days.

"Right, so he just got spayed," I explained to my toddler.

The young woman corrected me. "Neutered."
"Right its cats that are spayed."

The clerk backed away before she had any more misgivings about my lack of experience with animals.

We decided to take him. While I was paying for the dog, one of the clerks said, "Uh, your pup is having some problems with diarrhea."

I felt this was the universe testing me. "How bad do



you want a dog, Dawn?"

I smiled and said, "That's not a big deal." I figured he's a pup, how bad could a little dog's diarrhea be?

My question was answered about ten minutes after we got in the house. It went on through the night and into the morning. So, the universe was really testing me: "Hey, you said you wanted a dog. Here's a damned dog."

I called a vet from the SPCA approved list to ask about the diarrhea: "What's up with puppy diarrhea – how is there more of it than of him?"

They assured me that it was perfectly normal and would go away on its own. My second question was, "Does this vet clinic also handle after hours gunshot wounds?" Because you never know, right?

After a couple days, the diarrhea went away and I felt at peace with my decision as I watched my toddler play with the dog at least until he said, "So, when does our

puppy turn into a kitty?"

"That could be awhile."

Personally, I'm looking forward to when the pup turns into a dog because safety is a concern as a woman always.

The other day I was on a walk with my toddler and the pup, and my son asked to go down by the river along a path. My son is a rather safe boy so I was excited when he made the suggestion. We were throwing rocks and playing with the pup when I spotted three men along the shore. I couldn't see what they were doing so I asked my four-year-old who simply replied, "throwing rocks." I didn't pay them any more attention.

Then we got ready to leave and my toddler jumped back into the stroller (along with being risk-averse, he's also a bit lazy). I was struggling to get him up the hill when those three same men appeared to the right of me on bikes.

Somehow our departures had coordinated at the exact time – a little too perfectly – I immediately felt unsafe especially since they looked like dirtballs. But luck was with me and right before the first bicycle would have been in front of me, the guy wiped out. The other two stopped behind him.

Another stroke of luck; another bicyclist appeared from the other direction right at that moment. He just looked like a regular dude and asked the guy who fell if he was okay.

I didn't. I just gave the three dirtballs the patented Dumont glare.

I do feel like the universe was protecting me and my kid that day but I won't be going down there again. Not at least until my pup is a solid crotch-biter.

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Mirasty Sask's first Indigenous lieutenant-governor

**By Kaitlynn Nordal
For Eagle Feather News**

A Lac La Ronge Indian Band member has become Saskatchewan's 23rd and first Indigenous lieutenant-governor.

Former RCMP F Division Commander Russell Mirasty was sworn in as Saskatchewan's Lieutenant-Governor on the morning of July 18 at Government House in Regina in a formal ceremony.

Mirasty formally takes over this position from W. Thomas Molloy who died from pancreatic cancer last month.

The lieutenant governor is appointed

the position, which he graciously accepted. He feels this role is a tremendous responsibility but is looking forward to meeting the people of Saskatchewan.

Mirasty acknowledged the importance of him being the first person of First Nations descent in the role.

"That is important to me personally (and) I think as well to the province. It will be meaningful to how I conduct my duties going forward," he said.

He also feels that this is a step towards building relationships and reconciliation.

tween First Nations and non-First Nations people.

"I think this is a historic day for our nation and certainly for the province of Saskatchewan having someone with not only Mr. Mirasty's resume to come into this position but with his Aboriginal identity. It's significant to where we are as a nation and a province," he said.

Mirasty and Moe have already started speaking about some of the things they would like to make a priority for the future of the province.

"I look forward to working with Mr. Mirasty in official and unofficial conversations leaning on some of his insight for the benefit of the government but also the people of this province," said Moe.

Mirasty's lieutenant-governor duties started immediately following the swearing in ceremony.

There will be a formal installation ceremony at some point in the near future at the Legislative Building.

The swearing in of Mirasty was lauded by Indigenous leaders. The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Executive sent their congratulatory greetings.

"It was a proud day for First Nations people in Saskatchewan to see one of our own named as the Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan so quickly in light of our recent great loss," said FSIN

Chief Bobby Cameron.

"This is historic, as this is the first lieutenant-governor in Saskatchewan who is First Nations and the first fluent Cree speaker. The relationship in this province has been drastically harmed through systems, through ignorance and through hate.

"We have a Queen's representative that is now one of the First Peoples of this land. Let's start repairing our relations by being examples. Lasting change comes with political will."

Lac la Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson expressed her pride in a band member achieving a prestigious role.

"I commend Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for his great insight on recommending the appointment of Lac La Ronge Indian Band member Russell Mirasty, as the new Lieutenant-Governor for Saskatchewan," said Chief Cook-Searson.

"Mr. Mirasty is a nation builder and strong community leader. He is articulate in both his first language of Cree and English.

"We have always been proud of all his accomplishments and we look forward to this new chapter for Saskatchewan, Canada and the 23rd Lieutenant Governor, Russell Mirasty, Lac La Ronge Indian Band member."



Russell Mirasty takes the formal oath of office to make him Saskatchewan's Lieutenant-Governor on July 18 at Government House in Regina.

(Photo by Kaitlynn Nordal)

by the Governor General of Canada, on the recommendation of the prime minister. The person in the position serves for five years as a representative of the Queen in their respective jurisdictions and gives Royal Assent to new legislation.

"As lieutenant-governor of Saskatchewan, I know (Mirasty) will continue to make a difference for the people of his province and all Canadians, and inspire others to create change in their communities," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in a press release.

Mirasty got the formal call from the prime minister on July 12, offering him

Mirasty, who was born and raised in La Ronge, believes this will be helpful to him in his new role.

"We are all a combination of our backgrounds, families, history and where we grew up and that's no different for me," he said. "But it certainly gives me an added perspective in terms of the province itself and the communities that are a part of this great province and it will be a great benefit."

Premier Scott Moe was also in attendance during the swearing in ceremony.

Moe also thinks this is a step in the right direction to a better relationship be-

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49th edition of Back to Batoche full of surprises

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

The 49th annual Back to Batoche celebration was a resounding success from start to finish.

Hard to argue when the opening ceremonies included announcements on initiatives including housing, education, safety and justice for Île-à-la-Crosse residential school survivors to kick off three days of culture and honouring of the ancestors.

Maya Hoskins-Fiddler opened the event with a heart-warming rendition of the Métis National Anthem and then it was into the good news.

The Île-à-la-Crosse Steering Committee and the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to begin to collaboratively chart a path forward to address the legacy of the Île-à-la-Crosse Boarding School. Through this process, the parties are hopeful that options can be agreed upon and supported, including addressing the immediate needs of survivors.

"This has been a heart-wrenching journey for our survivors and families of those students who have passed," said Glen McCallum, MN-S President.

"We have had promises from other governments over the years that never came to fruition and we approach this with cautious optimism. However, we have built a respectful, honest relationship with Minister Bennett and officials and we have achieved respect in several areas and I expect we will in this as well."

Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school was operated by the Province of Saskatchewan and the Catholic Church from 1906 to 1976.

Former students of the school were not eligible for compensation under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, as the school was never federally operated or administered.

Former Île-à-la-Crosse students filed a class action against the Government of Canada and Province of Saskatchewan in 2005. Plaintiffs allege that both governments are responsible for the sexual abuse, physical abuse, cultural abuse, isolation, and mental and emotional abuse that former students endured while attending the Boarding School.

Speaking of students, a big leg up was offered to current and future ones.

President Glen McCallum and Minister of Education Dr. Earl Cook announced a new 10-year, \$89 million post-secondary fund specifically for Métis students.

The new post-secondary fund provides direct financial support for Métis post-secondary students in the form of tuition, books and living allowance.

In addition, the fund will support student services and increase education governance capacity at the post-secondary level. Student funding and services will be delivered primarily through Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI) an arm of MN-S.

"As the education arm of the MN-S, GDI is widely recognized for its capacity and its reputation for providing services to the Métis of Saskatchewan and creating awareness and sharing knowledge on Métis history, culture and education," said Dr. Earl Cook, Education Minister and chair of Gabriel Dumont Institute Board.

"There is so much research that correlates post-secondary education as a critical factor in closing the socio-economic gap between Métis and non-Indigenous populations."

Next up was housing. In partnership with the Government of Canada's National Housing Strategy, the MN-S announced a new program to assist first-time Métis homebuyers and promote home ownership.

Citizens who qualify will be able to access up to \$15,000 towards a down payment, and up to \$2,500 for closing costs, if they own the home for at least 10 years. They will also have access to professional advice from realtors, lawyers and mortgage brokers through the home buying process.

"Home ownership for many Métis citizens has not happened due to a multitude of government policies that perpetuated crippling poverty. We recognize this and have worked with the federal government on proactive specific actions which will uplift Métis families to invest in their futures through home ownership," said Derek Langan, MN-S Housing Minister.

"Having a secure, stable home to go to is important for families on so many levels, including mental and physical health, as well as building wealth. This is a hand up for our citizens."

The opening ceremonies were topped off with another MOU, this time with the RCMP. Royal Canadian Mounted Police "F" Division Commander Mark Fisher and MN-S President Glen McCallum agreed to continue the work of building trusting and mutually beneficial relationships between Métis citizens in Saskatchewan and the RCMP.

The protocol stipulates that the RCMP will recognize MN-S as the government for Métis citizens and affirms the need to work together to build stronger, safer communities.

Following a presentation from the Citizenship Registry to President McCallum and his wife Verna of their genealogy, three days of culture, visiting and celebrating the land and Métis history commenced.



Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Indigenous Services, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan President Glen McCallum and Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations were all smiles at Back to Batoche this year. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

Celebrating Métis Culture

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Six riders started the Bring The Children Home ride which kicked off in Wahpeton Dakota Nation to raise awareness on the issue of Indigenous children in care. (Photo by Jeanelle Mandes)



Children in foster care, residential school survivors motivaton for 600 km ride

By Jeanelle Mandes
Of Eagle Feather News

A two-week horse ride aimed at healing, unity, empowerment, awareness and reconciliation strode through north central Saskatchewan making its way south of the province.

An Indigenous organization organized this one of a kind horse ride to bring awareness to the issue of Indigenous children in care.

The QBOW Child and Family Services planned a 600 km ride called Bring Home the Children Ride which kicked off in Wahpeton Dakota Nation on August 2.

The ride's final destination is Wood Mountain Lakota Nation in Southern Saskatchewan and the journey is expected to take 13 days to complete.



"We're going to use the spirit of the horse to bring an awareness of the children who are in foster care, residential school survivors and 60s Scoop children to symbolize an effort to bring these children back into their communities," said Neil Sioux, QBOW Cultural Coordinator, in a media release.

"This ride will not only bring awareness of this growing blunder, but it will also address the fact that First Nation communities have an inherent right to self-determination including the right to care for their children."

Earlier in the week, the Bring Home the Children Ride kicked off with a commitment ceremony and pledges where riders spoke about their experiences and intentions for participating in the ride. A horse dance and a sweat ceremony was held on July 31 with a feast following the day after.

Although the ride started off in very hot weather, a convoy of supporters followed behind which carried water and food for the riders and horses.

FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron was in attendance along with other Indigenous leadership at the opening ceremony of the horse ride.

"Bill C-92 has passed now and this ride will symbolize and signify what we've been doing to bring our children back home to where they belong," he said. "(FSIN Vice-Chief) Morley Watson said something real powerful and it stuck with me and many people across Canada. He said 'our children are looking out the window waiting for us to bring them home.' Let's go get them!"

The ride continued through to Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation, Whitecap Dakota Nation, through the Qu'Appelle Valley First Nations of Piapot, Muscowpetung, Standing Buffalo and will end at Wood Mountain Lakota Nation with a feast on August 13.

According to the Saskatchewan Child and Youth Advocate 2018 Annual Report, 80 per cent of children in care in Saskatchewan are Indigenous which is a much higher rate than the national average of 50 per cent of children in care who are Indigenous.



Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation Inc.

BOARD OF DIRECTOR

The Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SIEF) is accepting applications from individuals who are interested in serving as a member of the Board of Directors.

The Nominating and Governance Committee will endeavor to select individuals with the following areas of expertise: governance, business and financial management and knowledge in the agriculture sector (livestock).

For more information, please go to our website www.sief.sk.ca.

Please submit resume via fax, email or in a sealed envelope marked "Personal and Confidential" with covering letter and three (3) references to:

Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation Inc.
Attn: General Manager
202A Joseph Okemasis Drive
Saskatoon SK S7N 1B1
Fax: 306-373-4969
Email: tbrodziak@sief.sk.ca

Deadline for applications is September 13, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.

Inquest leaves Starr family still looking for justice

By Kaitlynn Nordal
For Eagle Feather News

The family of Waylon Starr is finally getting answers into his 2017 death in the Regina Correctional Centre.

The inquest into his death wrapped up on July 25 at Court of Queen's Bench in Regina.

According to the record, Starr arrived at the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre on July 5, 2017, on remand where he was being charged with break and enter and being unlawfully in a dwelling.

On July 28 Starr was sentenced to 82 days at the Correctional Centre. August 24, 2017 went per usual with Starr going through his usual activities and calling his mother and said "I'll call you tomorrow."

Brian Bonkowski, an investigator with the Ministry of Corrections, gave the inquest jury a minute by minute account of the night's activities. Because of an alleged altercation with his roommate, Starr was alone in his cell for the night.

That evening he did see the nurse about stomach pains, but he was returned to his unit. He was checked at 8 p.m., but then not again until 10:27. When the guard came by for cell checks he knocked on the door to check on Starr noting the covered windows. When the door was finally opened Starr was found

hanging so he called for help and grabbed Starr to pull him up, Bonkowski said.

Staff then came in, cut Starr's body down and tried to resuscitate him but to no avail. Starr was pronounced dead at the scene.

During the inquest's final proceedings, Coroner Brent Gough, reminded the jury that their recommendations and findings were to be based solely on the testimony heard from the witnesses and exhibits that were available.

After deliberating for roughly four hours, the jury came back with their findings and recommendations.

The six jurors agreed that Starr died on August 24, 2017 at 23:23 at the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre and his cause of death was asphyxiation by hanging which resulted in suicide.

They also came back with recommendations which will be sent to RPCC.

There recommendations were to:

- Provide timely access to elders.
- Require mandatory suicide prevention training for all staff, with re-certification every three years.
- Review cultural awareness training offered to staff with consultation from First Nations elders.
- Require staff briefing at every shift change.
- Audit all log books regularly to ensure correct record keeping and legibility

of records.

- Create a policy for in-cell privacy and inmates blocking their windows.

- Determine if there are times when incidents are more likely to occur and increase staffing and checks.

- Develop a more formal method for the inmate's family to alert staff and leave messages if there are any issues.

- Conduct mock rescue drills with staff.

After the inquest Coroner Gough thanked the family for attending and asking questions during the proceedings.

"I cannot tell you how important it is for the operation of the system for people to participate," Gough said. Gough also said their input was reflected in the recommendations and could prevent deaths in the future.

The jury also expressed their condolences and said some have also lost family members to suicide.

Starr's mother, Verna, said she was happy about the recommendations for elders and a new system for families to contact workers.

"I was very happy because maybe they'll lift their phones up and get off their asses and stand up and listen to

some people that need help," said Verna.

She hopes these changes prevent other suicides in the future.

"It is my hope, because I have a lot of relatives that are in the same situation and some of them did try and commit suicide but they were there for them right away," said Verna.

However, she still wants to see someone held responsible for her son's death through the justice system.

"My confidence level is kind of low right now because it seems so unreal," said Verna.

"I want to see someone held accountable, because somebody shouldn't be pleading to talk to an elder. They (prison officials) are not taking them (inmates) seriously enough. They should take them seriously when they admit they tried to commit suicide the day before."



WAYLON STARR

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BE A
GOOD WING MAN

DON'T LET IMPAIRED FRIENDS DRIVE.

SG IIII

It is possible to find justice and peace from within

When I look at my daughters, I see the future and there is nothing more sacred than that.

The future of our innocent children is dependent on our actions today. The world they have to grow up in is not ideal and there is a lot of injustice that needs to be dealt with.

I believe deeply in being the change you want to see in the world.

Your life can change in matter of years. I went from being a lost and drunk adolescent to a sober mother pursuing her law degree. The amount of growth that has happened in the past few years is incredible. The amount of work and hours put into balancing all of this alone is far from easy. It is justice I am looking for.

It is also about finding your people. The people who have your back, who care about you, this world and what they role model to their children and the young ones around them who look up to them.

So much abusive behavior and treatment has been normalized and passed down that we accept it.

I have come to a place in my life where I cannot accept disrespect anymore. I have walked away from people who have bad vibes and put me or other people down.

It took some time to get used to being sober and saying no to things and people that are not good for me. As time passes – I am now six years sober – that anxiousness from change and shifting into a new and improved version of myself has faded. I am able to embrace myself and my mistakes I made in the past and allow it to make me into a person who is always learning, healing and growing.

Once you get used to change and meeting people who appreciate you for you, it makes it easier to find and share your gifts with the world and give back.

This giving back is healing within itself and I think for me is a way of seeking justice. Finding justice and peace within myself first and then using that strength to find the answers I need to find outside of me.

The thing about today is, we have the privilege to access information at our fingertips. We can research, study, learn and therefore grow. While learning the facts we also need to keep in mind the solutions. It is one thing to address harms done to us and our peoples

and it is another to find solutions from those problems.

I do not have it all figured out. I am still a student. I have been fortunate to cross paths with many people I look up to. This path, I feel, is searching for justice in a world built on genocide.

Nothing happens

overnight. This work has taken generations and the torch continues to be passed down. The warriors of the past and their work continues to be alive through us.

The Indigenous activists and scholars who came before us and started creating waves of change and opening up new doors for us to go through has created space for us today. Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in professional institutions and these are spaces we also need to take back to continue changing the narrative just by our presence and showing up.

Divide and conquer was the agenda by displacing our people onto tiny plots of land (reserves) where we could not leave without a pass and

therefore could not gather and discuss matters.

We need each other and we are more powerful together. I attended the Assembly of First Nations this past week in Fredericton and I know AFN takes a lot of criticism, but I would never lump every chief and leader into the same category.

I also see many leaders working hard for their Nations and creating positive change. The positive outcomes need to also be highlighted.

The media and social media are good at focusing on the negative and creating its own narrative. There is only so much we can do and so much time we have here. Nothing is perfect, no one is perfect and yes, we have all been colonized and now we are waking from that colonial slumber, but instead of being pitted against each other, let's come together.

We need our people represented in all professions. We need doctors and lawyers who will support our people. We need artists, actors and film producers to share our stories from our perspectives. We need activists and trade workers so we can rebuild our Nations and traditional governance systems.

Wawohoda (Respectfully)



Day of Mourning honours victims, educations youth

By **Andréa Ledding**
For Eagle Feather News

“We do this every year to mourn the victims who have lost their lives to the sex trade, whether it's through illness, murder, suicide, addictions — that's what we do, we get together every year on this day and do a walk, and candlelit vigil, and a feast after,” explained Jackie Schell, committee member for the 20th annual Day of Mourning for casualties of the sex trade.

The day originated with the youth at Egadz who lost a good friend to the sex trade and wanted her commemorated. Since then, 142 names of children, women and men from Saskatoon have been placed on the list of deceased or missing victims of the sex trade, and the Day of Mourning is now officially recognized by the Province of Saskatchewan as being August 14 of every year.

The hope is to not only support friends and family through the loss, but educate others on the risks and dangers of the lifestyle, acting preventatively.

“The youth are the main drive. We do background work like funding, but the youth do everything else,” explained Schell.

“We wouldn't be able to do it without the youth committee, and they are very dedicated youth who ensure this happens.

“They do the entire program, the day of.”

All the youth involved have been affected directly or indirectly by those whose lives have been lost.

“We help plan how the events are going to take place, the dignitaries, entertainment, program,” explained Shelby La Rose, who has been on the youth committee for some time.

“There are about nine on the committee right now, some who are just learning and others who have been on the committee multiple years.”

Their desire is to create hope, dignity, and self-respect out of these tragedies by affirming commitment and concern for the victims and their families, so that they feel part of a caring community.

“This day is so important to bring awareness to the sex trade in Saskatoon and how big it is, and it's also a really beautiful event,” noted Schell. “The dignitaries, the Elders, the drummers; it's just a wonderful positive environment, everyone comes together and it feels nice.”

By honouring those who have lost their lives on the street to exploitation, they not only create community support, but educate high-risk youth and others about the root causes of the sex trade, and the very real dangers and risks involved.

“Even to support the families of



Cree Crain, Lendy Beaudry, Jackie Schell and Shelby La Rose hold up a memorial blanket for the Annual Day of Mourning, for those lost to the sex trade in Saskatoon.

(Photo by Andréa Ledding)

these people, it's important to gather,” noted La Rose. “This year we also partnered with the Missing Persons Liaison. They are coming to speak this year, which is new.”

The focus is on the families of the victims, the committee noted, whether they're still missing their loved ones or it's confirmed that they have passed away.

The evening begins with a memorial walk after gathering at Pleasant Hill Park at 6:30 p.m., followed by a return to the park for a program and traditional feast of soup and bannock. Entertainment includes

Mike Scott's music group “Brown Kids Shine” debuting a song especially written for the day and event, and videos created by the youth. Everyone is invited to attend.

The event is supported by Affinity Credit Union, Egadz Saskatoon Downtown Youth Centre and the youth organizing committee.

“We invite one and all to join us in honouring the victims on this very important occasion,” said Schell of the event that takes place August 14 in Pleasant Hill Park on Ave S between 20th and 21st beginning at 6:30 pm.



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