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By Liam O'Connor
of Eagle Feather News

For Deon Hassler, water has always flowed through his life one way or another.

The 60-year-old veteran's connection with water began many years ago, first as an avid surfer, then as a member of the American Navy and now overseeing the water and wastewater treatment plants for 11 First Nation communities.

Hassler doesn't believe his profound relationship with water started simply by chance.

"There's probably a spiritual connection there too," he said. "It's kind of like the way things come around, you know. I never thought I'd be back working in the water industry and where I got my start, so it's kind of weird the way things

work sometimes."

The connection with water began before he was even born.

It all started with his father, Leroy Hassler who was born on Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation – Cegakin. When his dad turned 18, he joined the United States Marines Corps and was stationed in El Toro, California.

In 1962, Deon was born not too far away from that base in Orange County. Growing up near the ocean, he developed a love of surfing.

He was only able to complete one year of post-secondary, because the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S. only provided for one year of funding. Deon joined the Navy to continue his education because he wanted to become a machinist.

continued page 2 ...



SERA-LYS MCARTHUR

A CHALLENGING ROLE

"I definitely have my own personal issues to draw from, but I also know several people who have been in a domestically violent situation that they've had to escape," said McArthur. "I think it's important to show real stories like that."

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One Arrow First Nation ENGRAVED IN STONE

"(After) a while it kind of didn't feel as scary, but it was also still nerve wracking, every single bit of it. The bigger the opportunity, the more scary it was to [do] it."

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Shana Pasapa SWINGING WITH THE STARS

"At first I felt like 'why did i sign up for this,' my back hurt the most, but as i started dancing it slowly went away. She was four months by the time we took the stage and it felt good to have come that far in such a short time."

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Veterans, Remembrance Day

December 2022 Issue:
Christmas

Learning to go with the flow

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He joined the navy instead of the Marines, like his father, because the navy had more non-violent positions.

"I didn't carry a gun, I carried a pipe wrench," he said.

Deon spent time on the ocean carrying tugboats and then went on to work on a helicopter carrier — it was here he learned about water treatment and wastewater.



left to right: U.S. Navy Veteran Deon Hassler, U.S. Marine Veteran Leroy Hassler (Deon's father) and U.S. Marine Veteran Dale Hassler (Deon's brother) - all three Hassler men, originally from Cegakin Nakoda Nation, volunteered for service while living in the United States. (Photo supplied by Deon)

While in the navy, he travelled to many places like the Philippines, Japan, Korea, China and Thailand.

He did have one near-death experience while on a tugboat. While using a grappling hook to raise the anchor of a ship they were attempting to tow back to shore, the water got choppy, which made things treacherous.

"I lost my grip 'til it got to the chain part of it, and right behind the chain was the hook," said Deon. "It caught me and dragged me from both legs. It carried me about three feet before they cut the line."

He used to run marathons, but the grappling-hook incident left him unable to walk for a month and, ultimately, ended both his running and military career.

Being an Indigenous man in the navy at that time was not an issue because he was treated like everyone else.

"I mean, there's so much discrimination here [in Saskatchewan], compared to where I grew up in California," said Deon.

After leaving the military, he began his next chapter in life — wastewater and water treatment. Around the same time, he felt an urge to return to Canada, to his First Nation.

"That spiritual thing in California was always something that felt like there was something missing, and this is why parents tell stories about First Nations where they grew up," said Deon. "It just felt like there was family missing

around us. So, coming back to the reserve and getting to know all my relatives and you know, getting to know your family again, I think that's what the missing connection was there."

He now lives in Saskatchewan and will often join other Indigenous veterans on Indigenous Veterans' Day, in powwows and for flag-raising ceremonies. Initially, he wasn't sure if he'd be accepted as a veteran.

"I just felt like I didn't belong because also being in, you know, fully in the United States," said Deon. "I didn't feel like I would belong, but they brought me in."

He says his uncles from Carry the Kettle introduced him to ceremonies and now that they're gone he carries on the traditions.

"I always think about them when I'm doing the ceremonies," said Deon. "When we pray I think of them because, if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be doing these ceremonies on Remembrance Day."

His objective now is to train others how to maintain and operate water systems ensuring File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council communities have safe, clean drinking water.



Deon Hassler, a retired Navy Veteran, has relocated back to Canada and enjoys civilian life. His work still involves water but now he focuses on water maintenance and safety for the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council. (Photo supplied)



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Where have all the Garys Gone?

**By Eric Standing
of Eagle Feather News**

Do you know someone named Gary? Or better yet, do you have a friend named Gary? If so, consider yourself lucky, because knowing a Gary is a privilege that your grandchildren may never experience.

In the early 1950s, Gary was the 10th most chosen name in the U.S. for three consecutive years, with a yearly average of 38,000 born in the U.S. alone.

Sadly, at last count, there were only 450 born here in America and 38 in the U.K.

One of the theories as to why the name is disappearing is that it has become unpopular among modern parents.

However, this cannot be the case because as everyone knows Gary means "spear" and is therefore too strong of a name not to be widely used.

Now that we have ruled out popularity, the next logical course is to look into other factors that cause population loss amongst species.

LOSS OF HABITAT

According to the National Wildlife Federation, destruction, fragmentation and degradation of habitat are some of the leading causes of population loss.

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to study many Garys in the wild, I have become aware that their main habitat is hardware stores and construction sites, which still seem to exist in abundance, but could be under threat due to



Eric Standing. (Photo supplied)

online shopping and D.I.Y. projects.

Although Garys are known to be naturally skilled truck drivers, only a handful of Garys can still be found driving trucks, so one can only surmise that the shortage of Garys is also responsible for our current supply chain issues.

INTRODUCTION OF INVASIVE SPECIES

Parade.com informs us that the most popular boy's name in 2022 was Liam, so it would appear that all of Garydom is under threat from this overpopulation.

With so many Liams running wild, taking up prime nesting areas and food sources, it can be hard for the newborn Gary to thrive.

If one should happen to find a nest of Garylings, it is advised that you do not touch them, as the mothers may not recognize their scent afterwards.

HUNTING AND ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING

While many people are considering tracking our remaining U.S. Gary herds through electronic means or leg bands like we do with geese, others are not so sure as concerns have been raised about disturbing them during mating season.

Authorities are not aware of any known Gary hunting having taken place, but some have been known to have been relocated.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Unless you are willing to go down to the courthouse and change your first name, then the only other options are to support the Garys we have now in order that they may live longer, and to produce more Garys, a cause for which I may devote my life's work.

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New exploratory partnership has people talking

By Marjorie D.L. Roden
for Eagle Feather News

Moments before the historical exploration contract between the Ya' thi Néné Lands and Resources (YNLR) and Denison Mines Corporation was signed in Prince Albert, Elder John Toutsaint shared his concerns.

"You know, we've been made promises with jobs," he said.

Toutsaint wanted assurance this new agreement would indeed provide the much-needed jobs for the people of northern Saskatchewan.

"I'm just asking for the future (generations), not myself, if you promised to fulfill all the needs that we need in the North, we don't mind," he said. "But they say they're going to do this promise, and then after we sign it off, we get ignored. We don't want to see that anymore," said Toutsaint.

The Athabasca Basin communities include Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation, Black Lake Denesuline First Nation, Fond du Lac Denesuline First Nation, Stony Rapids, Uranium City, Wollaston Lake, and Camsell Portage. YNLR is a non-profit that represents the interests of these communities. The parties negotiated for several years, which culminated into a deal with the Denison Mines Corporation.

The groups signed that deal on Oct. 19.

The agreement formalizes Denison's commitment to work collaboratively with YNLR and the Athabasca communities and to conduct its exploration activities in a sustainable manner that respects First Nations' Inherent and Treaty Rights, advances reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and provides benefits to the communities of the Nuhenéné.

It includes a framework for information-sharing and permitting processes, environmental protection and monitoring, and the sharing of financial benefits through the Athabasca Community Trust to support community development initiatives.

Among the local dignitaries present was Prince Albert Northcote MLA Alana Ross, whose portfolio also covers Northern Resources.



Ya' thi Néné, Denison, and community representatives all signing the Exploration Agreement. (Photo supplied)

"Not only does this agreement establish a formal partnership, it demonstrates how Indigenous communities and industry can work alongside one another in the development of Saskatchewan's mineral resources," she said. "It builds off a long history of positive relationships between the Northern mining industry and Indigenous communities."

The exploration agreement is to not only look for uranium deposits, but to find ways to safely mine them in the future in order to protect not only the environment and communities, but traditional lands.

Also included in the deal is to not just employ the people from the area but also educate and train them for the mining industry. Individuals working in future mining deposits will need to know how to avoid adversely hurting their traditional lands.

"The biggest thing that we are looking for is a bigger commitment to our young people," said Daniel Powder, leader of the Athabasca Permanent Resident Organization. "Educate them and to make sure they get benefits and everything that the Denison mines have to offer."

Mary Denechezhe, Board Chair of Ya' thi Néné echoed Powder's sentiments in a prepared statement.

"Our communities want to participate in and benefit from projects happening on our lands, which historically has not always been the case," she said. "This exploration agreement will provide certainty to our Basin communities that there will be meaningful engagement on proposed projects and monitoring of exploration activities to ensure the environment and all Treaty Rights are respected. The economic benefits will help to strengthen our communities in the Basin. We acknowledge and respect Denison's leadership in advancing reconciliation with our communities."

This is not the first time Denison and YNLR have worked together. For example, on the renaming of Waterbury Lake's J Zone deposit to Tthe Heldeth Túé in honour of the Denesuliné Territory in which the deposit is located.

"Our past and present actions demonstrate a mutual willingness to engage in positive business practices that advance reconciliation, and this exploration agreement further codifies how the principles expressed in Denison's Indigenous Peoples Policy will guide our activities in the Nuhenéné into the future," said David Cates, President and CEO, Denison in a news release.



David Cates, President and CEO of Denison, speaking at the press conference announcing the Exploration Agreement. (Photo supplied)

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Journalist turned health and wellness advocate

By *Jasmine Pelletier*
for *Eagle Feather News*

Michelle Brass left journalism to help Indigenous communities build healthy relationships with food.

"I was interviewing somebody in the studio at CBC and I just remember that they were out in the world doing these really amazing things," she said. "I was sitting in a dark studio day-in and day-out, interviewing people all over the world doing fun, awesome stuff. I thought 'I'm gonna be on the other side of the microphone, doing fun and amazing things and getting interviewed about it.'"

Originally from Yellow Quill First Nation, Brass was living on Peepeekisis Cree Nation when she first started to make healthy changes in her own life.

"I [started] eating a lot more of our ancestral foods," she said. "Lots of wild meat, berry picking and medicine picking. I walked a path of ceremony,"

"It's not simply about food and nutrients, it's about so much more," explained Brass. "Our food has spirit. When we go to the land and collect that food, we're connecting with spirit ... it does change how we feel on so many levels. We're sharing in the food, it strengthens community connection."

A healthy lifestyle is something Brass is actively working to pass down to her 10-year-old son.

"(Children) learn by example, not by being told what to do," said Brass. "(My son) has come out berry picking, medicine gathering ... We've watched his dad, he goes hunting and fishing. (My son) understands these land-based food practices."

She said her journalistic curiosity led her to research the benefits of land-based food practices.

"I'm always very curious as to how we got to where we are today," said Brass. "How did we find ourselves in this position where we're suffering such negative health impacts in our communities? Chronic disease, diabetes, obesity. How is this tied to the food that we eat?"

Brass studied nutrition online through the New York City based Institute for Integrative Nutrition. She also trained as a life coach through the Martha



Former journalist Michelle Brass decided to change careers and couldn't be happier with where it's taken her. She will be speaking about Indigenous nutrition at the Newo Yotina Friendship Centre in Regina on Nov. 14. (Photo supplied by Michelle Brass)

The community already follows land-based food practices in many ways, including having a greenhouse and a food forest. Greyeyes-Pinay says that 80 per cent of the meat her family eats is wild.

"Sovereignty is about making decisions for your community," said Brass. "It does need to be sovereign processes. It cannot be somebody from outside coming in and telling somebody what to do. I mean, that's just never the way to go about it in an effective way."

To Greyeyes-Pinay, food sovereignty is about "looking to our future, not only for our children but for our grandchildren."

Brass can be found at her professional website, www.michellebrass.com.



Michelle Brass, opening keynote at the Honouring Children Conference for the Meadow Lake Tribal Council in Prince Albert. (Photo by Cassie Acker)

Beck life coach training program.

Brass developed the Sustainable Health and Wellness Leader (SHAWL) program to help individuals and First Nation communities with their wellness journeys. When it comes to problems like food sovereignty and the impacts of climate change on food systems, it's important for the solutions to come from within the affected community.

Canada's systemic genocide and historical displacement of First Nations people has left survivors with the task of re-establishing healthy food practices.

Brass wants to help set communities on the right path using knowledge from the people.

"Our knowledge and wisdom comes from the people," said Brass. "From the memory of our parents, and grandparents and great grandparents and the knowledge of the land, and the land will tell us what will best work for that community. Every ecosystem is different."

Kimberly Greyeyes-Pinay lives on Muskeg Lake Cree Nation where Brass visited to discuss sustainability. "Sustainability to me means the person as a whole," said Greyeyes-Pinay. "Your food, your spirituality."

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One Arrow First Nation's laser engraving business is seeing success

By Liam O'Connor
of Eagle Feather News

For a group of young Indigenous entrepreneurs from One Arrow First Nation, 2021 and 2022 have been quite a thrilling time, and they are ending the year with a bang on Aboriginal Peoples Television Network's (APTN), *Bears' Lair*, which aired on Oct. 16.

A business club at Almighty Voice Education Centre is an initiative that started almost a decade ago in One Arrow First Nation. The club is run by Joe Taylor, who helps guide students to create and run a successful business.

"They participate in all facets of the business, for the most part," said Taylor. "And I'm just kind of mentoring and opening some doors for them and seeing where that can take them."



One of 3R Innovation Imaging® designs that's made from recycled fence boards. Each piece of fence board is unique with a different paint job. (Photo by Joe Taylor)

The group Taylor is currently working with has students that span Grades 6 to 11.

The students created a business called 3R Innovative Imaging and they sell repurposed wood that's been laser engraved with culturally significant images or words — hence the "3R" in their name, which stands for recycle, reuse and reinvent.

"They're doing their part to save the environment by keeping old



The 3R Innovation Imaging pow wow pitch team from the 2022 competition posing in front of their presentation. (Photo by Joe Taylor)

cabinet doors, cabinet door samples and fence boards from the school yard from going into the garbage dump," said Taylor.

Taylor said they would sell their products at various events, but now they're in 14 retail locations and are working on getting a website and social media up and running.

The 3R Innovation Imaging group ran the gambit of award shows and competitions. They won the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award at the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation, then placed fourth overall in the Pow Wow Pitch Competition (PWPC) that had 1,600 submissions across Turtle Island.

In 2022, the students became semi-finalists at the PWPC and were featured on the *Bears' Lair* TV show; they were flown out to Vancouver, B.C. for filming. *Bears' Lair* is similar to the CBC show *Dragon's Den*, except it features only Indigenous businesses across Canada.

At these competitions, the team of students have to make their best



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Members of 3R Innovation Imaging busy in the process of painting and working on various art pieces. (Photo by Joe Taylor)

pitch and hope it leaves a good impression. Ruby Daniels, the spokesperson for the group, is becoming very familiar with making these pitches.

"It was so scary at the beginning, like I was literally shaking before each event," said Daniels. "[After] a while it kind of didn't feel as scary, but it was also still nerve wracking, every single bit of it. The bigger the opportunity, the more scary it was to [do] it."

Daniels said now that she's done a few competitions, she's settling into the role more, adding that who you bring along to the competition is important because they are also there to support you.

When asked about the experience of being flown out to Vancouver, Taylor said it was amazing, not only for the experience but also because it was the first time some of the kids were on a plane.

Daniels said she plans to have a business of her own and then go study abroad after she graduates.

"I want to see everything. I've been in living in this place since I was a kid," said Daniels. "And once I started here, I just felt like I could finally take off and do my own thing, live my own life, [then] come back and tell the world the stories."

The team effort paid off for the PA Raiders

By Marjorie D.L. Roden
for Eagle Feather News

The Prince Albert Raiders paid homage to Indian Residential School Survivors by donning special jerseys for a home game on Oct. 1.

Although the Orange Shirt Day jerseys were to be worn one-time only, an entire team of artists worked on the design over a period of a couple of months.

That day, the Raiders had their first win of the season over the defending WHL champions, the Edmonton Oil Kings, 5 to 1.

James Stonechild, one of three members of the design team, said he was honoured with the invitation to help create the unique design.

"It was a humbling experience to work with the younger group," he said. "Everybody's got a different idea about what the meaning is. It all comes to the same thing."

He said the design team took a collaborative approach, which meant there were revisions that happened over the two-month period.

"We had that opportunity to design and then come back and make another design," said Stonechild. "We had to make sure we were all expressing ourselves."

Anthony Anasusko was another of the artists invited to help create the jersey design.

"They asked me to think of something for 'Every Child Matters', so I did some quick sketches," he said. "I think I did five rough ones, in different directions, and they picked one. From there, I did some more work on it, and made five different variations of that one, and then they went with one, and it is what it is now."

It took him about a month to create his vision; then the artists all worked together to finalize the final



PA Raiders Forward Evan Herman wearing the specially made Orange Shirt Jersey for the Oct. 1 game against the Edmonton Oil Kings. (Photo by Marjorie Roden)

version.

Brad Tinker was another artist who was involved in the project and was impressed with the amount of support there was throughout the Raiders' organization.

"We all worked together with Mann Northway (Auto) and the owners of the Raiders, to pick the layout and everything," he said.

Anasusko was one of the younger members of the artistic team, and certainly has big plans for his future.

"My main goal is to put myself out there and show young kids who like to do art that it's okay to put yourself out there, and not be afraid to fail because you'll never know unless you try," he said.

Although most artists tend to work in isolation, Anasusko has no regrets about being part of this particular design team.

"Whether I get anything out of it or not, it's still good," he said. "I still love creating art."

Anasusko encourages other young artists to keep at it, if that's what they enjoy.

"Art and everything else can open up doors, and bring you opportunities that can help to inspire other people as well," he said.

The game-worn jerseys were auctioned off online. The first three sold belonged to Dallyn Peekeekoot, Tre Fouquette, and Evan Herman, all of whom are Indigenous.

The money raised by the team is to support local Indigenous sports and education programs.



PA Raiders Forward Evan Herman said, as a Métis person, he was proud his team did something special to recognize Orange Shirt Day and sees it as a positive step forward in terms of Reconciliation. (Photo by Marjorie Roden)



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STR8 UP continues its evolution by staying the same

By Kaitlynn Nordal
of Eagle Feather News

Over the summer, the Federal Re-integration project was launched, which means STR8 UP will be able to offer support to those currently incarcerated at federal facilities throughout the province.

STR8 UP Executive Director Russ Misskey said it is in keeping with STR8 UP's mission and that is to help individuals successfully leave gangs.



For the last 20 years, STR8 UP has helped people who are incarcerated, who have been recently released, or are dealing with addiction. (Photo by R. Misskey)

Since its inception, the gang-exit strategy program has evolved to meet the needs of its members.

It all started when two inmates asked Father André Poilièvre, the chaplain at Saskatoon Correctional Centre, for help to leave the gang they were in. He promised to try and from there STR8 UP was born. Although he retired, the organization continues to thrive.

It now has partnerships with more than 40 non-profit organizations including: Indigenous communities, government and municipal agencies, educational institutions and businesses. It helped to create the Provincial Gang Strategy and the Gang Violence Reduction Strategy- Community Intervention Model.

Misskey said STR8 UP has expanded to include other services provincially and federally.

In 2020, housing became critical so the STR8 UP Transitional Housing program was created to provide support for people leaving correctional facilities and addictions centres.

The new Federal Re-integration project means STR8 UP Outreach Workers can go into the prisons and develop relationships with individuals by facilitating sharing circles and providing one-on-one support.

"These relationships and (with) us being in the facilities regularly have served to establish a positive reputation among gang members who are contemplating leaving the gang lifestyle," said Misskey. "Timely contact with gang members in correctional facilities has led to trusting, ongoing relationships."

He said working towards a common goal with members is what makes STR8 UP unique.

"In custody, inmates have the time and inclination to reflect and assess their plans for the future; most genuinely want to make changes," said Misskey, "Helping establish viable plans for release on bail or re-integration from custody by facilitating the connections they need, builds an openness to accepting ongoing assistance and case planning. Then once they are released back into the community, they have those established



Retired Father André Poilièvre (seated left) is surrounded with members of STR8 UP, many of whom he helped leave the gang life. (Photo supplied by Russ Misskey)

relationships and a community of supports that they are already familiar with to reach out to as they continue their healing journey."

This helps the person reintegrate and develop a sense of balance in their lives along with a sense of solidarity and kinship so they can seek advice on a regular or daily basis throughout their personal healing journey.

The Community Outreach program is the only program at STR8 UP that doesn't receive annual funding, so it depends on donations and multiple year-to-year grants to operate.

"This support from the community has over the years allowed STR8 UP to continue to work with individuals looking to leave gangs and has strengthened our network of support," said Misskey. "For STR8 UP to have been working in the City of Saskatoon for over 20 years now without core funding as an organization is a testament to the amazing work Father Andre started many years ago and to the strength of the organization."

The hope is to continue building strong partnerships with the various stakeholders and work towards secure, long-term funding.

During its 20 plus years of operation, STR8 UP has supported more than 400 incarcerated people and former gang members to transform themselves into responsible citizens and family members. Although membership is on the rise, STR8 UP still provides access to drug and alcohol counseling, support, sharing circles, and culturally specific programming. Approximately, 95 per cent of STR8 UP's membership are Indigenous men and women.

One day STR8 UP hopes to become member-led.



Members of STR8UP routinely go out into the community and share their experiences of being in a gang with young people as a way to show those at-risk or those currently in a gang a way out. (Photo supplied by Russ Misskey)

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Life in the BIG City

by **Jamin Mike**
for **EagleFeatherNews**

As I enter my third month working for the Toronto Star (the Star), I acknowledge those who come before me – who broke trail in newsrooms for the next generation of Indigenous journalists like me.

From what I was told, it wasn't easy being a journalist 20 plus years ago covering Indigenous stories. But even today, we still receive negative, and often racist, backlash from many Canadians who cannot handle the truth.

A month ago, I was honoured to sit down with Tanya Talaga, a widely-respected Anishinaabe journalist who worked for the Star for over 20 years, and we talked about storytelling – the need for more Indigenous reporters – and she talked with wisdom.

As we sipped coffee, I stared at her in admiration of all she has achieved for our people.

What I felt on my first day as an Indigenous reporter in a major newsroom, she felt decades before me. It's people like her who deserve respect for paving a way and breaking glass ceilings.

Looking back as an undergraduate student, I didn't feel I'd cut it as a reporter, but I soon realized our callings can take us through trials in order to grow and unlock skills. That's OK.

Knowing others had to start somewhere, like I am right now, brings me comfort as I build my career.

It was in the Indigenous Communication Arts Diploma program at First Nations University when my cohort was asked if we are Indigenous reporters, or reporters who happen to be Indige-

nous.

I thought about that for a long time, and I still find it hard to answer that question genuinely.

Though, for my nehiyaw people, our stories are integral for our future, along with our languages, laws, lodges, and songs. I find our identity, families, and culture cannot be put on hold in order to fit into a status quo.

In my younger days as a student in traditional



Photo of Jamin Mike. (Photo supplied by Denita Gladue)

lodge, I received teachings from different Elders, who lived life and earned their wisdom just like Tanya Talaga did as a long-time journalist.

It's through this wisdom I no longer allow negativity to be part of my story and shape who I am. Something I and many others let control us for far too long.

I feel, deep within, I am nehiyaw first and foremost.

My ancestors didn't survive hardship for me

to continuously find an excuse to not live my best Indigenous life – including as a journalist – and I truly don't want to remove my identity in order to fit into a box.

Knowing others had to start somewhere, like I am right now, brings me comfort.

To start, I am assigned to the Star's city-life desk and, so far, I covered Toronto's municipal election, Ontario CUPE walk-out, and other daily news stories with a one-day turnover.

There are challenges to writing breaking news stories, but it's rewarding to know I can do it, even when I feel defeated.

When I covered Toronto's municipal election, I was sent into the field to ask 25 streeters their opinion on who should take office. It was pouring rain, and I walked around for seven hours, finally finishing my task.

I wanted so badly to give up on this assignment and call it quits for the day, but perseverance proved itself the key to my success.

On days like these, I call upon my ancestors and their strength.

As I go through life and learn through trial and error, I begin to realize we are champions who will create a bright, Indigenous futures through hardwork, faith and responsible storytelling.

Jamin Mike is Willow Cree from Beardy's and Okemasis Cree Nation who is pursuing a career as a journalist. He is currently a reporter at the Toronto Star and is the latest Eagle Feather News columnist. Jamin invites readers along his journey of growth and career building in his column about being an Indigenous reporter from the rez working in Toronto

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New upskilling program gets Indigenous learners ready for digital agriculture

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A new agricultural technology program is ready to train indigenous people for jobs in digital agriculture.

The Automation and Digital Agriculture Specialist Program from Palette Skills is an accelerated 2 week full-time + 6 weeks part-time intensive program that gets students up to speed with automation and digitization technologies in agricultural production and processing.

Palette Skills is a national nonprofit committed to building a smart and inclusive economy through innovative upskilling programs that connect participants to growing industries. The new digital agriculture program has been designed in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, and industry leaders Protein Industries Canada and the Enterprise Machine Intelligence and Learning Initiative (EMILI).

Along with its partners, Palette Skills believes there is a revolution going on. Agtech has been called the fourth wave of agriculture, and it's a way of growing and making food that uses sophisticated digital and automated processes, including drones, artificial intelligence (AI), and even robots to boost productivity.

Agtech can make agriculture more sustainable by gathering and analyzing precise information about plants, the environment, water, and soil.

"We think the Automation and Digital Agriculture Specialist Program will support Indigenous learners to become active participants in digital agriculture," says Palette Skills Executive Director AJ Tibando. "Through these technologies, communities can take a leadership role and help build sustainability, food sovereignty, and more connection to the land."

Whether it's about addressing issues of food security, honouring ancient food traditions, or making sure that Indigenous citizens are in the driver's seat when it comes to economic development, Indigenous young people are an

untapped talent resource on the land, not only where they live, but also where the food has to be grown.

A recent Aboriginal Peoples Survey shows that over half of Saskatchewan's Indigenous people are under the age of 25, and according to Statistics Canada, 1 in 5 residents of Saskatchewan will be Aboriginal by 2036. The potential for learning and leadership is enormous, but according to experts, tapping this talent requires new models for skills development.

"Indigenous people are really engaged, and they find themselves rooted in the rural experience," says leading agtech consultant David Yee. Yee is an Executive in Residence at the College of Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan, and he's excited about the opportunities for Indigenous participation and learning coming into play with the digital agriculture program from Palette Skills.

That's because the Automation and Digital Agriculture Specialist program is a hybrid intensive learning experience designed in consultation with leading agri-tech businesses and key academic partners. Don't think of it as just another academic training program. What makes it different—and relevant to Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan—is that Palette Skills focuses on bringing learning and real-world skills development to people in the communities where they live.

For David Yee, the innovative program comes at just the right time for Indigenous communities across the province.

"Indigenous people in Saskatchewan currently own about 4 million acres of arable land, but they are only actively managing and farming about 15% of this resource," says Yee. "A lot of it is being simply leased out, but I believe there is going to be both pressure and opportunity to take back some of this land."

When that happens, the Automation and Digital Agriculture Specialist Program will get the next generation of Indigenous talent up to speed with automation and digitization technologies in agricultural production and processing. A key strength of Palette Skills' approach lies in the organization's partnerships with industry. The program has been designed in consultation with leading agribusiness leaders to give participants tools to identify, manage, and implement agtech solutions across the agri-food value chain.

And through the program's intensive networking events—including live demos—that include employers and industry partners, participants get connected to industry with real-world skills.

Our program participants are ready to hit the ground in a number of diverse and important roles," says Ednali Zehavi. "From working as a precision agriculture specialist, ag program manager, agronomy technologist, or an agricultural data analyst, we are connecting great talent to employers on the ground (like Parametrics Ag, Nutrien, and KPMG) who are ready to hire.

A recent participant of the Digital Agriculture Specialist Program told Palette Skills how she benefited from the program's focus on networking opportunities in the industry.

"I told all my friends you should participate in this program," says Berokh Hagdhan, "because the most important thing that I got from this program was confidence. The program showed me I can make a difference in the agricultural industry, and in my community, too."

Palette Skills is hosting information sessions about the Automation and Digital Agriculture Specialist Program on November 23rd from 5:00 to 6:00 pm CST. To learn more about the Automation and Digital Agriculture Specialist Program from Palette Skills, navigate to their webpage at www.paletteskills.org/agtech.

Regina's first indigenous artist in residence is hard at work

By Adeoluwa Atayero
for Eagle Feather News

Métis artist Audie Murray is the City of Regina's first artist in residence and hopes to unveil her beaded masterpiece in the new year.

Originally from Lebret, she has family ties in Treaty 4 territory and in the Meadow Lake region.

Murray, a visual artist, couldn't be happier with the opportunity to not only embark on a major project but to work with young adults in a mentorship role.

Earlier this year, the city put a callout for artists and part of the application was to propose a project that could be completed during the residency.



Audie Murray, a Métis artist, is the City of Regina's first Indigenous artist in residence and she is hard at work mentoring youth and working on her final project for the City. (Photo by Yasmin Dar, 2022)

"I proposed to do a large scale wall hanging out of bead work using a technique called bead weaving," said Murray. "I am also running a youth residency that will go on till the end of the year."

She began working on one of her projects in September, which she hopes to debut sometime in January.

For the youth residency, Murray has been working with young adults to develop their own design and beadwork pieces. All of the pieces will be displayed together when they have all completed their work.

Working in the visual arts is a childhood dream come true for Murray.

She followed her passion and turned it into a career. While working in the field of visual arts she quickly realised what an important communication tool it can be.

"The visual arts gives me a tool to talk about what I want to talk about in terms of responding to life," said Murray.

This is one of the many reasons why

Murray believes this program is a positive step forward because it is helping to build a connection between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the city.

"This program is important in terms of representation in the city, especially in terms of Indigenous representation," she said. "It is also an important representation of the arts."

Murray is also grateful the residency allows her to work in a way that's conducive to her artistic process.

The theme of the project is urban Indigeneity. Murray liked the theme because it is open to her interpretation of what urban identity means.

"I think because Regina is one of the bigger cities in the province of Saskatchewan, it is important to have residencies like this in place for the people that live here," Murray said.

As someone who grew up in Regina herself, Murray is conscious of how her childhood has influenced her work.

For the city, she is creating a three-foot-by-four-foot wall hanging made with small beads. The artwork will be a combination of two images: the sky in Regina and the sky in Lebret.

"The final image is a blue plain that represents the sky but it also represents two different places at the exact same time," said Murray. "Combining the city sky with a rural sky is definitely a reflection on the theme of urban Indigeneity."

She also wanted to focus on the sky because "it is an interesting space where borders don't exist like they do on the land." Murray said people don't focus on the difference between city and "non-city" when they look at the sky.

She graduated from the University of Calgary with her masters in fine arts. It was majorly online because of COVID-19. Pursuing her studies through a pandemic taught her practical resilience, which she now applies to her art projects, which have proven to be a bit challenging.



Take Root Among the Stars, 2022, glass beads and copper. (Photo courtesy of Fazakas Gallery)

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Saskatoon star shines bright

By Marjorie D.L. Roden
for Eagle Feather News

Self-declared comedic “memer” and fourth-year University of Saskatchewan student Cheyanna Sapp is living a dream.

“I never thought making memes would get me this far,” she said. “But hey, here I am!”

She is the first to admit her rise to television stardom is unconventional and wasn’t really part of her plan.

“I never thought that being a funny person would take me anywhere in life other than I might have more friends,” said Sapp.

Originally from Little Pine First Nation, she has landed a role on the ground-breaking Indigenous sitcom *Acting Good* that debuted on CTV’s Comedy Channel on Oct. 17.

The series is produced by CTV Comedy in association with former North of 60 actor Tina Keeper’s Kistikan Pictures.

No one is more excited about the opportunity than Sapp herself.

The show is set in the fictional fly-in community of Grouse Lake First Nation located in northern Manitoba. It stars comedian Paul Rabliauskas who returns home after his attempt to make it in the big city failed.

Sapp plays Rose who is Rabliauskas’s on-again-off-again girlfriend.

Those who know Sapp, especially on Facebook, are aware of Sapp’s comedic genius.

Around 2019, she took a stab at being a stand-up comedian. At the time she was at the U of S pursuing an Indigenous Studies degree and decided to also study theatre to improve her stand-up performances.

Sapp’s continued presence online and on-stage provided her with the opportunity to meet others in the industry, including Rabliauskas who forwarded her name to the show’s producer.

“Tina Keeper messaged me via Facebook, to ask if I wanted to audition,”

said Sapp. “That in itself is like a dream come true for me because I’ve been a fan of (Keeper) ever since North of 60. I was so elated, and then I said, ‘Yes, of course I want to audition.’”

She was selected to be part of the cast.

Filming of the 10-part series took place in Winnipeg over the spring and summer, which worked well for the full-time student.

She is back in Saskatoon to complete her education.

Sapp is proving anything is possible and that includes having a successful career without having to leave home.

“I didn’t even know there was a big comedy scene here in Saskatoon,” she said. “I had no idea until two or three years after I moved here. I started attending open mic (events), and then I actually went up and tried out some of my jokes. It worked out really well.”

Sapp’s advice to others is to sign up for acting or performance training and then “just put yourself out there.”

“Networking helps a lot because that’s what’s gotten me to where I am, and just be yourself,” she said.

Sapp plans to continue in the industry and see where it goes.

“I never really thought to put more time into being funny,” she said. “(Often it’s) the things we don’t think we can build on that are actually our strongest qualities ... But if you practise it, and work on it, it could potentially take you somewhere.”

Sapp is glad she decided to take a chance on herself because she is now in a place where she can make a positive difference in the industry.

“I believe in Indigenous representation in TV

that’s authentic,” said Sapp. “That’s one of the things I’m working towards. I feel it’s my duty to ensure our stories are being told from our perspective and being told correctly and authentically.”

Acting Good airs every Monday at 8:30 p.m. on the CTV Comedy Channel.



Cheyanna Sapp, a University of Saskatchewan student, is enjoying her newfound fame as part of a groundbreaking new Indigenous sit-com *Acting Good* on CTV’s Comedy Channel. (Photo supplied by Sapp)

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Innovation in dance, combining styles and dynamic duos spells formula for success for Hopes Home fundraiser *Swinging with the Stars*

*By Memory McLeod
for Eagle Feather News*

For choreographer and professional dancer Shana Pasapa, dance has always been a saving grace. A lifelong passion has now become a way to raise funds for a good cause she believes in.

"I've always practiced some form of physical activity but dance has always been the one thing that brought me back from long breaks, when I wanted to get back to training. It's something I love and to fundraise through dance just makes for a good, fun evening," Pasapa said.

This year is her second time lending her name and talent to the "Swinging with the Stars" annual fundraiser for Hope's Home. Last year, she and partner Chief Cadmus Delorme of Cowessess First Nation wowed the crowd with a combination of hoop dance and Jiu Jitsu that brought a fresh dynamic to the annual event.

"Cadmus has a background in pow wow, so he already had that



Z99 DJ Cassity (left) and Shana Pasapa (right) at the end of their dance routine for the 2022 Swinging with the Stars charity fundraiser. (Photo by Peter Scouler, supplied by Pasapa)

one up. So we mixed in his chicken dancing. I don't feel like it's forced, you know when you put the pow wow music on, it makes you want to dance anyway."

This year she paired her skills with the energy and vibe of her partner, Z99 radio host Cassity.

"I felt like we just clicked instantly. Her energy is so much fun. When it came to her dancing, she was very competitive where she wanted to get it right. So I challenged her and was able to throw in some more difficult moves that would be for a more advanced hoop dancer and she nailed them," Pasapa said.

This time around the pair incorporated Indigenous Hoop dancing with Jiu Jitsu, in which Pasapa has a purple belt, and another surprising element.

"When we first started putting it together, Cassity mentioned she had done some highland dancing so we incorporated a few of those moves too. Jiu Jitsu has a lot of ground movements, which develops your ability to move on the ground gracefully so I was able to incorporate that and in the end we had a cool routine that looked more complicated than it was," she explained.

The duo took home the judges choice award and were able to raise just over \$5,000 of the total of over \$170,000 raised for the charity that operates homes and daycares for special needs children.

Combining her talents and with a flair for innovation is Pasapa's signature. The entrepreneur has used her gifts for the benefit of the community in other ways. Besides her clothing design company Pasapa De-



Shana Pasapa (left) and Z99 DJ Cassity (right) on stage during their performance. It is Pasapa's second time being a dance coach for Swinging with the Stars. This year, she choreographed a routine that combined both Scottish Highland dancing and Traditional Hoop dancing. (Photo by Peter Scouler, supplied by Pasapa)

signs, she operates a self defense company called POW Power Our Women with a desire to empower women to take charge of their own safety and security.

"My mom had asked me to take a self-defense class as a younger



Six dance teams performed a choreographed routine as part of the 2022 Swinging with the Stars celebrity fundraiser, which raised \$170,000 for Hope's Home. Z99 DJ Cassity and Shana Pasapa won the Judge's Choice Award on Oct 21 at the Conexus Arts Centre in Regina. (Photo by Peter Scouler, supplied by Pasapa)

person. I've been followed, yelled at. Being a smaller person I learned what I could do to protect myself."

Pasapa is not one to shy away from a challenge and, when asked to participate again this year, she agreed but this time as a mother with a two-month old baby in tow.

"At first i felt like 'why did i sign up for this,' my back hurt the most, but as i started dancing it slowly went away. She was four months by the time we took the stage and it felt good to have come that far in such a short time."

Most pretendians are little more than parasites

I was once told by someone they wished they were Indigenous. I responded saying “why would you want to be poor and depressed all the time?” He wasn’t at all interested in a reality so many Indigenous people face. It was too distant from his romanticized ideal. His infatuation would become a lie if he tried to fool people with claims of Indigenous blood. Fortunately, he did not. There are, however, people with less Indigenous blood than a mosquito who claim to be Indigenous. They are pretendians, those who adopt an Indigenous identity when it is advantageous to do so. They utilize their new found identity in order to advance their career, access scholarships and opportunities meant for Indigenous people. They are not so much lost in fantasy as they are deliberately and knowingly stealing from another people. They are parasites who need to be called out.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been diverted from funds set aside to support Indigenous artists. Michelle Latimer, filmmaker, and Joseph Boyden, writer, have both benefited from a skimpy claim to an Indigenous blood line later proven false. Carrie Bourassa, former director of the prestigious Scientific Indigenous Health Branch of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, has at different times claimed to be Anishinabe, Métis or Tlinget.

She is none of the above. Under considerable pressure she has resigned her position with the University of Saskatchewan. These are pretendians who, ironically, would have done well in their careers if only they were honest.

Sacheen Little Feather, made famous by her

ter and others. Despite her fraudulent claim, she became an effective and highly regarded ally who was very much a part of the Indigenous community throughout the rest of her life.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond’s claim to have an Indigenous bloodline is in doubt and problematic. She was a lawyer, judge and advocate for First Nations throughout a long, storied career. She has been awarded an honorary doctorate of law from eight different universities and is highly thought of by First Nations. CBC conducted thorough research, which found no evidence of her claim to First Nation ancestry. Her response was evasive leaving the very remote possibility she may indeed have Cree ancestors through the Norway House First Nation in Manitoba. She married into the Muskeg Lake First Nation, which promptly issued a statement of support as did the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). It is much harder to condemn the pretendians who made significant contributions than those who didn’t. Increasing number of hiring and funding sources now demand proof of an Indigenous blood line. It’s about time.



Breaking Trail

John Cuthand

refusal to accept an academy award on behalf of Marlon Brando, was not a White Mountain Apache as claimed but an imposter with no Indigenous blood at all. Her real name was Maria Louise Cruz. She took on an Indigenous identity with the goal of advancing her acting career but the truth was exposed upon her death by her sis-

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