

eaglefeathernews

CONGRATS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 2022

CPMA #40027204



ELDER PROFILE
Frances ANAQUOD

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

Long before there was a First Nations University of Canada or dedicated Indigenous education programs for teachers, there were people like Frances Anaquod breaking trail for others to follow.

Originally from the Sagkeeng First Nation located 120 kilometres north of Winnipeg, Anaquod (nee Fontaine) attended the Fort Alexander Indian Residential School until Grade 9.

"It was a lonely place," is all Anaquod said about her early years in school.

Although the Residential School wasn't far from her childhood home, she was forced to live at the school from the age of five on.

Anaquod said her parents were strong advocates for education, so high school was always the next step. She and most of her 10 siblings graduated high

school.

Prior to 1951, any Status Indian as defined by the Indian Act, was automatically enfranchised if they pursued a post-secondary education. During this same era the pass system was also still enforced, which meant there were very few places to pursue a high school education.

Although she didn't want to leave her parents, Anaquod packed her bags and headed to Lebret to complete her Grade 12.

"It had a good reputation," said Anaquod, which is why she chose it instead of the high school in Ontario.

She still has her handmade yearbook bound with burgundy and cream coloured ribbon titled, St Paul's High, Lebret Class '57. Anaquod remembers most of her classmates and is able to share small anecdotes about them.

continued page 2 ...



NEW AUGUST EDITION

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For next month we're going to do a digital only edition for our subscribers! With that, we'll also be experimenting with some new tools to bring you digital content. So make sure you've subscribed at eaglefeathernews.com to receive this edition!

July 2022 is our

Graduation Issue

August 2022:
DIGITAL ISSUE - 1ST EDITION



COTE FIRST NATION

Standing for a Common Goal

"It's an extremely important history (and) being able to share it with everyone was super cool," said Langan. "I work here and I didn't know that's how this whole school came about."

- page 13



FUTURE LEADERS

Graduates of 2022

Take a look at some of the photos sent in by students around Saskatchewan.

- page 8-9

Elder Profile

History through the eyes of an Elder



... continued from page 1

"It was hard being so far away from home," she said about high school.

After graduation, she moved to Winnipeg to train as a teacher. Before she completed the two-year teacher's course, she was introduced to Gerald Anaquod by her cousin.

The pair married on Christmas Day in 1959.

In 1960, she stepped into her first classroom on a reserve in Alberta.

Anaquod said the demand for First Nation teachers was high. With children in tow, she worked on various First Nations throughout Saskatchewan often living in teacherages.

Teacherages were housing units set up on reserve for teachers, which sometimes consisted of living quarters housed inside a school.

In the early 1970s, Anaquod began working at the Payepot Indian Day School and, while working, she returned to university to complete her bachelor of education.

Her daughter Sharon, recalled living in the teacherage on Piapot with her parents and four siblings. The school was a two-story building and the top floor was a three-bedroom apartment with laundry facilities in the basement.

Although it was not a common way to live, Sharon said there were some advantages.

"We had running water and a washer and dryer in the 1970s," she said.

Although Piapot was located only 25 minutes out of Regina, the capital city of Saskatchewan, only the school was equipped with running water and indoor plumbing.

When a new school was built across the road from the teacherage in the mid 1970s, Anaquod took on the role as principal, which is a position she retained until she retired from that school around 1996.



Frances Anaquod a long time educator now retired shares stories about her life as a First Nation teacher working on reserve. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

Time has dimmed some of Anaquod's memories, but her eyes light up when she remembers the places she worked like Sturgeon Lake and Kawakatoose.

"The people were so kind," she said about the communities.

Being so far from her home community, Anaquod did miss her family and siblings, but she loved teaching.

During the three decades she spent working on Piapot, she made many friends.

"I am Godmother to several children," she said.

Prior to 1985, under the Indian Act women were automatically transferred to their husband's First Nation. So in 1959, Anaquod became a member of the Muscowpetung Saulteaux Nation and eventually moved there.

After she retired from Piapot School, her teaching career didn't end. In the late 1990s, she fulfilled a life-long goal of returning to her home community where she taught high school for a few years.

Anaquod returned to Muscowpetung and because she is fluent in her language she taught language classes up until the age of 72.

Now 84, Anaquod leaves teaching up to her daughter Sharon who followed in her footsteps and became a teacher in 2004.

Anaquod looks over her career with fondness and with no regrets and says many of her former students are now grandparents and when she sees them they still call her Mrs. Anaquod.

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Music event added to Saskatoon Pride celebration

*By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News*

It may have been a last minute addition to the Pride Week festivities, but the first Two Spirit Thrive music event was a success – despite a few hiccups.

“It was our first face-to-face event since 2019, so we had incredible attendance (throughout the week),” said Raven Sinclair, co-chair of the board of directors for Pride Saskatoon. “The concert, we weren’t sure we were going to go through with it, but I just pulled it together (and) made a few calls. I really wanted to have an event that had as much participants as possible.”

The headliner was the husband and wife duo Twin Flames who are an Indigenous indie-rock group from Ottawa.

Sinclair estimates a few hundred people attended the concert throughout the evening, which was a welcome surprise considering everything that happened leading up to the event.



Creeland Dancers from Beardy’s Oke-masis on stage at the Two Spirit Thrive Concert, which is the first time Saskatoon Pride has hosted a concert. (Photo supplied)

She said once the main act was secured she contacted people in her network and, much to her surprise, everyone agreed to participate. A poster was created and circulated on social media, which was as much advertising she could get done considering the short timeline.

The weather was the only thing that did not cooperate.

“We had two companies coming in to set up the stage and sound system and all of those things and there were times when you couldn’t move be-

cause it was so windy,” said Sinclair.

It took the crews all day to put up the stage, but they could not set up tables and chairs.

The headliners also had to find an alternate route to Saskatoon because their original flight was canceled due to bad weather, but made it on time.

“It was really, really crazy,” said Sinclair.

The show attracted many curious onlookers to the River Landing Amphitheatre where the event was held.

“At the fullest point I would say there was maybe 300, which was a little smaller than I wanted but it was just so windy,” said Sinclair.

The entertainment included spoken word poetry artists, the Creeland dancers, an aerial dance show, music performances all before the headliners took to the stage.

Sinclair said putting on the entire week of festivities was a juggling act because they were short staffed after two board members left the group, including the main organizer of previous Pride Saskatoon events.

“None of us really knew what had been planned and if we had the collective time and energy because we all have day jobs,” she said. “It just came together in a few days.”

She said the feedback has been positive considering it was the first time Pride Saskatoon hosted a concert as part of its celebrations.

“It was awesome,” said Sinclair.

There’s a possibility the concert will be back next year, but with advance planning.

The annual Pride Parade, which wrapped up the week was amazing and went off without a hitch.

“We had 2,600 registered walkers, and not everyone registers,” said Sinclair. “We had 156 floats. It was big. I think it was the biggest we ever had.”



Lori Campbell, VP of Indigenous Engagement at the University of Regina, (a sponsor of the 2S concert) and Jill Alaers. (Photo supplied)

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Wellness, treatment and recovery services are now more accessible in the north

By Amber Bear
for Eagle Feather News

Chief Tammy Cook-Searson of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB) celebrated National Indigenous People’s Day by cutting a specially created moose-hide ribbon at the Grand Opening of the Woodland Wellness Centre (WWC).

The day began with a traditional pipe ceremony followed by a grand entry of dignitaries, dancers and drummers.

Cook-Searson said it was an amazing day and was pleased with the community support from far and wide.

“During the ceremony, there were six eagles flying around, circling around where we were,” she said. “So, just a really beautiful sign.”



Chief Tammy Cook-Searson and Vance Badawey at the grand opening of the Woodland Wellness Centre. (Retrieved from Cook-Searson Tammy Jim Facebook)

Opening the WWC was the culmination of more than a decade of hard work. Cook-Searson said her late sister encouraged her to fight to find a way to help and meet the needs of the community members, which made the grand opening even more special.

“The dream was to have a wellness, treatment (and) recovery centre so we can build the capacity and be a catalyst for change,” said Cook-Searson.

The WWC will provide support to those dealing with mental health issues and addictions recovery by utilizing both western and traditional therapies. It will consist of an in-patient treatment centre with 24-beds for both men and women as well as an outpatient treatment centre.

There is also an Elders office and traditional medicine room inside the building and on the outside there is a sweat lodge, meat prep room and smoke houses.

The wellness centre is just the beginning of a much larger wellness plan for the north.

LLRIB delivers services to the largest First Nation in Saskatchewan, and

is one of the 10 largest First Nations in Canada, with a membership of over 11,000 people.

The WWC project will also expand into five of the LLRIB outlying communities. Each of the communities will have mini-healing lodges built near their communities this summer that will consist of off-grid two-bedroom/living room/kitchen style traplines units.

“Families can go there, and the community therapists can go there, or the Elders can go there and work with families,” said Cook-Searson.

She said the community is grateful for the financial support it received for the project.

The federal government contributed \$11.6 million and funding to cover the first year of operations and maintenance. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band invested \$2 million for the capital project and provided the land where the building is located.

The province contributed one-time capital funding of \$2.5 million to be used towards the mental health healing and recovery portion of the Centre, which includes an attached unit with inpatient beds for addictions treatment.

“Our government is pleased to provide capital funding for this project,” Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health Minister Everett Hindley said in a news release. “This contribution is an opportunity to participate in an innovative model of care that is community-driven and culturally responsive. I want to extend a sincere thank you to the project team, community members, leaders, and Elders for making this project a success.”

According to the province, the investment supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, as well as Saskatchewan’s Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan.



Chief Tammy Cook-Searson surrounded by guest and dignitaries for the grand opening of Woodland Wellness Centre. (Retrieved from Cook-Searson Tammy Jim Facebook)



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Spoken word artists shine At The Sâkêwêwak annual Storyteller's Festival

By Adeoluwa Atayero
for Eagle Feather News

As part of National Indigenous History Month, the Sâkêwêwak Artist Collective hosted a four-day event that included storytellers from a wide range of artistic expressions such as film, poetry, comedy and music.

22-year-old poet Tai Reign said it was an awesome experience to be one of the performers at this year's festival.

"I have been in the poetry community for about 10 years now, and while the poetry community is great, I don't get to see other Indigenous poets very much," they said. "We are kind of spread across Saskatchewan, so it was nice to have a bunch of Indigenous voices and hear their points of view."



Austen "Noble Savage" Ahenakew, a popular Regina spoken word poet stands by Sâkêwêwak signage. He was one of the artist who performed during the June Storytellers Festival. (Photo supplied)

on rez, she also points out that she does not represent all Indigenous experiences.

Following ecoaborijanelle was Austin "The Noble Savage" Ahenakew. The pas-

The festival continued its legacy of giving a spotlight to artistic Indigenous endeavours in the Regina community.

The poetry night was hosted by Kevin Wesaquate, a spoken word artist and included performances by ecoaborijanelle, Austin "The Noble Savage" Ahenakew, Tai Reign, Tenille Campbell, and the MC, Kevin Wesaquate, took the stage to share their stories through rhythmic storytelling.

Janelle "ecoaborijanelle" Pewapsconias started the night and shared personal pieces on identity as an Indigenous person and all the complexities that entails in 2022. Through her spoken word, ecoaborijanelle discovers finding peace with an evolved understanding of what it means to be an Indigenous person, intergenerational trauma and all. One of her pieces also celebrated the beauty of life in the Indigenous community, as opposed to life in the city.

ecoaborijanelle currently teaches art on Little Pine First Nation in Treaty 6 Territory and takes pride in continuing the spoken word legacy of the nehiyaw people. While she loves to share about joys of living

sion in Austin's performance helped to further emphasise the vivid pictures he painted with his powerful words.

His eclectic timing of rhythm and flow sparks a sense of urgency regarding the issues facing the Indigenous community such as abuse and PTSD in a thoroughly honest way.

Reign calls Ahenakew her poetry brother because they came up in the poetry community at the same time.

"Whenever I see his sets, it's always mind blowing because there's always something new that he's bringing," they said. "Whether it's to an old piece or something new that he's written, it's always breathtaking."

Reign also performed a number of pieces about the struggles facing the Indigenous people during their set. Some of their pieces included a land acknowledgement piece, "Ugly," "Two For One," and "No Good."

Their poetry all started with a high school English assignment.

"Once I found out that poetry was a good way to express myself, it became my outlet, my point of view, and my mental health," they said.

Reign has come a long way from those school days as they are now the Spoken Word coordinator for Regina Word Up, which is run by the Creative City Centre. They look forward to planning Spoken Word events and workshops in the future.

Closing off the poetry night was Tenille Campbell.

The Dene/Métis author and photographer is from English River First Nation and is unrelenting in her efforts to reclaim the narrative of Indigenous love through her work.

Reign says Campbell's set was a standout for her during the poetry night because of how joyous it was.

"I thought that her pieces were so amazing because my poetry and the poetry I often hear is about the negative things that we experience so it was wonderful to hear about somebody's positive experiences about Indigenous love and living while brown."



Tai Reign a Regina spoken word artist on stage at the June Storytellers Festival called "Over Der". (Photo supplied)

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Congratulations are in order!

Another school year is done for so many students – and with that comes graduation. Recently, I was chatting with a colleague of mine who is attending grad school with me at Royal Roads University. We were in Victoria together a few weeks ago where she shared with me that she was missing her kid's Grade 5 graduation to be there for in-person classes. Fortunately, she could attend via FaceTime. I was amazed at the energy, sacrifice, and bravery it takes to be a parent and to still go to school all the way across the country.

I had the pleasure of teaching this past winter at First Nations University of Canada. I was truly astounded by the hard-working students who had big goals and aspirations and who were taking big strides to achieving them. I am amazed by their energy and bravery as they take on their academic programs.

Going to school, getting that piece of parchment paper, flipping the tassel on the cap is no small achievement. This is why we choose to celebrate graduation in our July issue.

In this issue, we're celebrating the achievements of educators, the in-

stitutions who have made an impact, but most importantly, we are celebrating all the Indigenous graduates here in Saskatchewan. Enjoy the read, and make sure to visit our graduation celebration spread in the middle of this issue.

For next month, we're going to do a digital only edition for our subscribers! With that, we'll also be experimenting with some new tools to bring you digital content. So make sure you've subscribed at eaglefeathernews.com to receive this edition!

In closing I want to say this:

To the students who worked hard to finished up high school – congratulations!

To the students who finished up university working hard out of the dorms or even raising kids – congratulations!

To the returning student who finished up another degree to grow in knowledge and help their community – congratulations!

To the institutions and educators who motivate

and inspire students to see them walk across that stage – congratulations!

Join us in the celebration.



**Publisher's
Notes**
Ben Borne



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Khloe Anaskan using beauty pageant to highlight her culture

By Kaitlynn Nordal
for Eagle Feather News

Musician Kacey Musgraves may sing about not being pageant material but that couldn't be further from the truth for Khloe Anaskan.

Being the mother of five boys, Khloe's mother Lesley Anaskan was excited to have a daughter and enjoy activities with her.

This would lead to the world of pageants.

Khloe, now seven, did her first pageant at a year old.

"It was something girly we could do together as mother and daughter," said Lesley. "She has been doing great – loves it."

Beyond the pretty dresses and playing with makeup, Khloe enjoys the social aspect of pageants.

"I like meeting new queens and making myself beautiful," said Khloe, "I like showing off my dresses."

After competing in a pageant in Toronto in 2021, Khloe was able to move on to a pageant happening in the Dominican Republic called Little Miss Tourism Intercontinental where she will compete for the title from July 26 to 31.

As the days slowly tick by, Khloe grows more excited to compete internationally and experience a new country. She's looking forward to meeting new people and maybe learning a phrase or two in Spanish.

"It will be a learning experience for her since we have all been in isolation because of Covid," said Lesley. "It helps her get out and socialize with other pageant queens and get our culture and tradition in that part of the world ... She will be doing a jingle dress dance for her talent and I don't think any of them have seen that before."



Khloe Anaskan. (Photo supplied)

"I want to show them a part of my culture," she said.

More than anything Lesley is looking forward to sharing the experience with her daughter. "I'm hoping it will go well," said Lesley. "I want to just enjoy this trip with her."

She said the competitions are not just about winning. "I want other youth to know anything is possible if you put your mind to it, I hope Khloe can be an inspiration to other little girls," continued Lesley.

As a way of helping with the financial costs of going to Little Miss Tourism Intercontinental, the Anaskan's are doing fundraisers which you can find out more about on their Facebook pages.



Khloe Anaskan will be competing in Little Miss Tourism Intercontinental in the Dominican Republic from July 26 to 32. (Photo by L. Anaskan)

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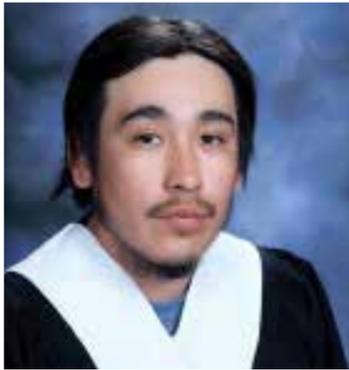
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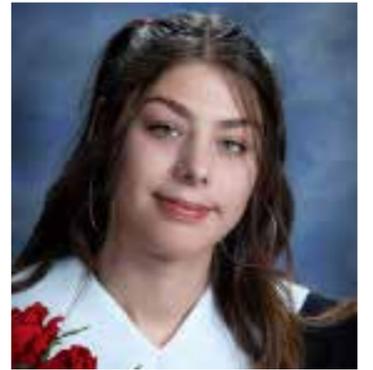
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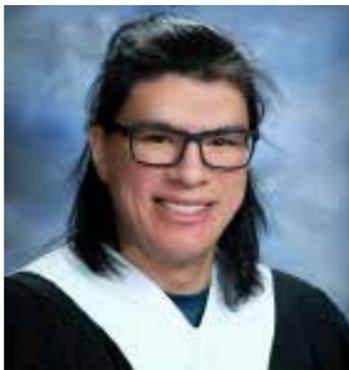
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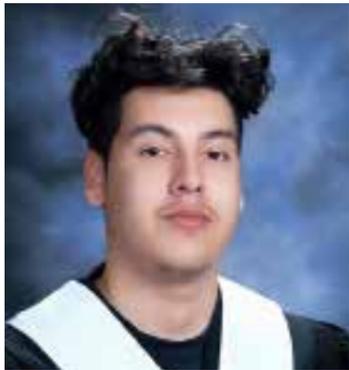
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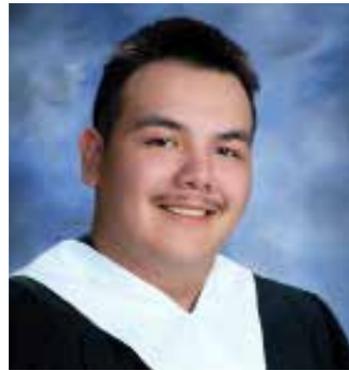
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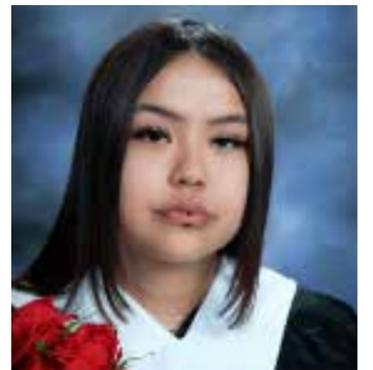
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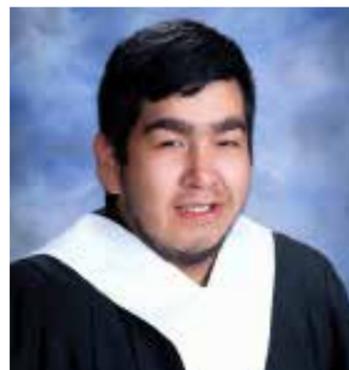
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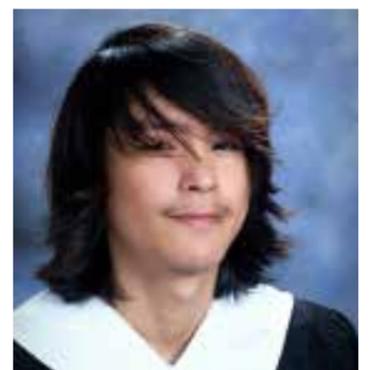
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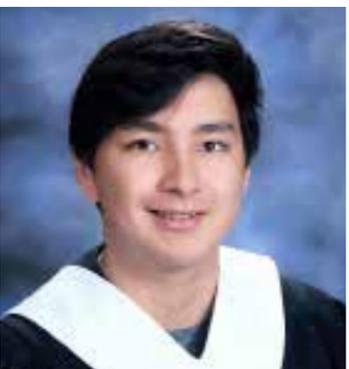
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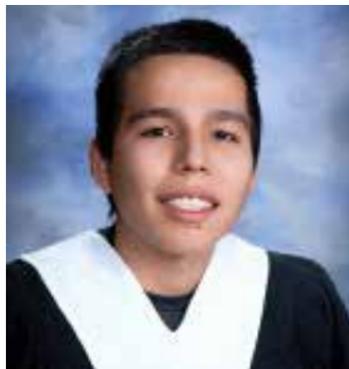
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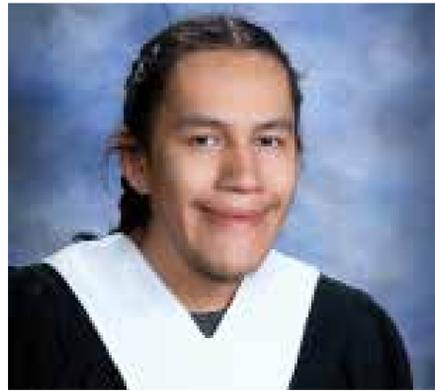
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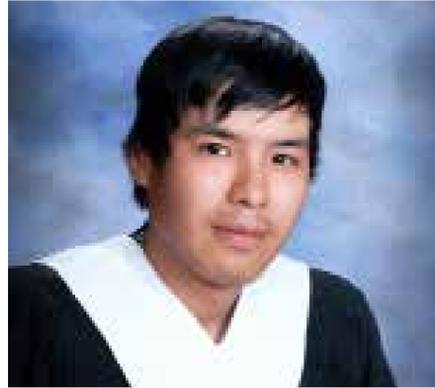
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TOGETHER



*“As one road ends,
another begins”*

Saskatoon Tribal Council cracks the code in student achievement

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

A group of 42 Indigenous, high-school graduates made history in Saskatoon. The group is the very first graduating cohort of Saskatoon Tribal Council's (STC) Pathways to Education program.

The program, which began in Saskatoon in 2018, was created to provide supports to communities where there is low graduation rates and student retention. But four years ago, neither the students nor the coordinators knew the extent of the challenges they'd be facing.

"Throughout Covid, it became apparent that Pathways was doing more than just making sure kids can graduate," said Shane Henry, Director of Education at STC. "Pathways was such a blessing for us in engaging students and not allowing them to fall through the cracks."

The program, helping young students stay afloat regardless of what life throws at them, is a partnership between STC, Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools, and Saskatoon Public Schools. Pathways serves a total of 225 students in 15 different high schools across Saskatoon.

Essentially, it's a do-everything after school program that provides students with tutoring, financial support, school supplies (ie. backpacks), daily suppers, nutritional guides, Elder teachings, bus passes, land based learning, sage picking, fun activities, you name it.

Pathways operates out of two sites – St. Goretti for the Catholic division, and Mount Royal Collegiate for the public division. The students' programming goes from 4pm – 7pm daily, and offers the students a number of tutors for any subject a student may need help with. And of course, supports to get young people through the uncharted waters of a pandemic.

"You could really see the stress that (the pandemic) caused the students," said Darlene Lanceley, Pathways to Education Coordinator.

"We were dropping off things like sage kits, mental health kits – anything they needed or were lacking during that time period. And we were still active with all our programming."



42 graduates of the Pathways program received their high school diplomas (photo supplied by Darlene Lanceley)

In 2018, Pathways started with about 35 students. Some left due to personal circumstances like moving away to a different city, while many students joined the program over the ensuing four years. But, according to Lanceley, every single student who started in 2018 and stayed for the full four years ended up graduating from their respective high schools.

"I can't tell you how much this means to them. They tell you that this now feels like family. They feel like they have another home, and they have adults that treat them like equals," said Lanceley.

"That's what this is all about. Giving the kids the support they need so they can dream big."

At the Pathways group graduation in Saskatoon this June, many of the students on stage spoke about the impact the program had in their lives, recognizing that the program may have been the difference between success and failure.

"Making the difference between graduating and not graduating is a huge thing for a program like Pathways to be able to claim success over," said Henry.

And academic success isn't the only thing these students earned. For each year in the Pathways program, each student earns a \$500 scholarship for anything they wish to study in university.

Next year, the program will be expanded to 350 high school students, providing more young Indigenous people with the support they need to reach important milestones.

"I think this could have huge, seismic changes to how First Nations education works in the country," said Henry. "I think Pathways kind of figured out how to crack the code in student achievement."



Marketing Art, Your Way, Together

Art students study traditional Indigenous art forms at Portage College in Lac La Biche, Alberta. However, students didn't have a way to sell the artwork they created in the program.

To address this issue, the college partnered with the provincial government, students, and a local non-profit to create the Nehiyawaskiy Indigenous Peoples Art Co-op. Now, the co-op gets students' artwork to buyers in markets and shops across the province.

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Closing the gap: Housing the homeless in Saskatchewan

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Studies have shown rates of substance abuse and mental illness among the homeless population contribute to lower life expectancies and recovery from addictions, but there are places that can help.

Since December, the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) has been operating an emergency wellness centre on 1st Avenue in Saskatoon. As of April, the centre supported 407 individuals and 14 families, which amounts to over 7,200 beds being used as of opening. In May, the provincial government announced they will provide up to \$3.5 million to support the centre.

"This is an opportunity for STC to have an Indigenous-led program to support Indigenous people and all people to have a quality of life,"



The five homes, operated by Oxford House Saskatchewan, providing 25 individuals in Saskatoon who have completed addictions recovery with safe, affordable housing. (Photos by Mark Soloway)

said STC Chief Mark Arcand. "This funding will help us build a foundation to address homelessness in Saskatoon. In the past four and a half months, we have been very transparent, accountable, and accomplished outcomes that have supported individuals and families."

Arcand said they are starting to see results.

The plan is for STC to eventually move the wellness centre to a permanent location.

OXFORD

For the last 10 years, Oxford House Saskatchewan (OHS) has provided safe and affordable housing in Regina to individuals who have re-

cently completed an addictions recovery program and has expanded to Saskatoon.

"We were finding that people were leaving from treatment in Saskatoon and coming to Regina. With the need that was out there, we crunched the numbers and saw that there was an opportunity to expand services to Saskatoon," said Mark Soloway, OHS executive director.

In May, OHS opened five affordable homes which amounts to 25 rooms in total.

"We find that people leaving addictions treatment, they need to get out of those toxic environments that they were living in that caused those addictions triggers," said Soloway.

The primary requirement for entering the OHS is the recent completion of a 20-day recovery program, or being in the process of entering treatment. Soloway said they receive applications every day to come to OHS, and if they housed every person who applied, they would "be at capacity in no time."

According to Soloway, 80 per cent of their tenants are at-risk of being homeless when they leave treatment and the average length of stay is 154 days. "We see people being far more successful and staying on their recovery journey when they stay with Oxford House. Transitional housing out of treatment is a key component for people staying sober."

RHI

Looking forward, Regina's future Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) is to construct 29 affordable housing units for residents who are exiting homelessness.



Kitchen interior, housing operated by Oxford House Saskatchewan (Photos by Mark Soloway)



USask graduate Sheldon Bear, foreground, and his peers being honoured at the Indigenous Graduation Celebration 2022.

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Residential School Survivors sometimes just need each other

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Organizers of a new Residential School Survivor gathering aim to create a safe and welcoming space for those dealing with past trauma.

Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway, co-founder of the Buffalo People's Art Institute and event organizer, hosted the first gathering in Regina last October.

She felt compelled to do something for survivors after news of the discovery of unmarked graves at former residential school sites broke and the first National Day of Reconciliation was observed in Canada.



Carol Rose GoldenEagle, Saskatchewan's poet laureate, at the podium sharing her story of being a 60s Scoop survivor at the residential school gathering held at the MacKenzie Art Gallery. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

The goal was to create an event where survivors could come together, not in celebration, but to just be with one another. The first event focused on ceremony and survivor stories, but the theme this time around was Healing through Art.

"I feel that sharing stories, visiting and making friendships and having a community that can help support you through your stages of healing or processing of news is very important," said Tristen Durocher, who performed at the event. "A lot of Indigenous issues have been spotlighted in recent years by the media and it's good that there's more public awareness about them, but at the same time it opens up a lot of emotional wounds for Indigenous people. And for us to always have our trauma broadcast it's hard to process."

The Mackenzie Art Gallery partnered with the Buffalo People's Art Institute and provided a space for the one-day event along with the promise to host another in October.

BigEagle-Kequahtoway recruited a couple of the province's most popular Indigenous performers to help reinforce the idea that healing is

possible through art.

Durocher, a fiddle player, photographer, writer and activist, shared music and light-hearted stories with those in attendance.

"Music has always been present in our communities and it's important for our youth to still have access to our music and culture, because it helps bring forth healing," he said. "I started fiddling when I was nine years old, so a lot of what I learned about my culture I learned through the spaces music allowed me to be invited into."

He enjoys visiting different communities and hearing different people's stories.

Durocher said the gathering served as a kind of reunion for him.

In the summer of 2020, he walked more than 600 kilometres to Regina and set up camp on the front lawn of the Saskatchewan legislature where he fasted for 44 days to raise awareness about youth suicide.

"A lot of the kokums here (at the gathering) were kokums that came to visit while my camp was happening in Regina, so they are familiar faces," said Durocher.

He said it was great to sit and visit with all of them again.

GoldenEagle shared her own story of being a 60s Scoop survivor and reconnecting to her culture and community again and about the role art played in that healing journey.

After the entertainment and lunch participants had a private viewing of Radical Stitch, a beaded art exhibit.

The next event will take place again at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in October. The City of Regina and Reconciliation Regina were also sponsors of the residential school gathering and handed out small booklets that contain the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to action.



Tristen Durocher played the fiddle, shared stories, and visited many old friends at the Residential School gathering. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

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Cote First Nation a community that cares about education

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

The Chief Gabriel Education Complex (CGEC) is steeped in history and stands as a testament of what a community can accomplish when they have a common goal.

Before the Class of 2022 walked across the stage, the community took some time to reflect on its history and honour its long-time school employees.

The K-to-12 school opened in 1998, after almost a decade of lobbying by the leadership.

It all started with a sit out.

On March 20, 1989 the federal government said post-secondary education funding was not a Treaty right. The response nationally was loud.

Two days later, cross-country demonstrations were held in solidarity including one in the Town of Kamsack when all school busses from the First Nations did not run.

Kamsack is a small town located three hours northeast of Regina and less than 10 kilometres from the Cote First Nation.

A non-Indigenous teacher from the small town wrote an opinion piece criticizing the protests while supporting the federal government's stance.

Action from Cote First Nation was swift. They pulled all their students from the schools and began teaching them on-reserve in whatever space they could find.

Nine years later CGEC opened and many of the original staff are still at the school.

Those with 20 and 20 plus years of service were honoured at the CGEC Gala.

A history of the school was shared during the event to remind the community about their story.

Michael Langan, the art teacher, compiled the presentation and found the actual newspaper clippings from that time.

He said reading the old articles filled him with pride knowing how powerful and determined the elders and leadership had to be in order to accomplish what they did.

"It's an extremely important history (and) being able to share it with everyone was super cool," said Langan. "I work here and I didn't know that's how this whole school

came about."

Upon entering the school, visitors are met with art and Saulteaux language signage everywhere. It's bright, welcoming and very much Indigenous.

The majority of the teachers and school staff are members of the Cote First Nation, which helps foster a family-friendly atmosphere and that's exactly what was envisioned when work began to create the space.

Helen Cote, not only helped organize the gala but she is also one of the long-time employees who was honoured at the event.

She wanted to do something special for the staff because what they have created at the school is unique. Cote said there are parents teaching side-by-side with their children and some of the former graduates are now teachers, which is not common in many schools.

"We are family," said Cote. "I know all the students and how I am related to them."

The bond among students and staff is strong and makes the place feel more like a home than a school.

"One of the reasons I wanted to come back was to make a difference because I know what it was like in high school here," said Tammy Crusch, Grade 9 teacher. "These are my future leaders."

Chief George Cote said the school stands as a real example of a dream come true for Cote First Nation.

"There was a lot of racism back in the day," he said.

Cote graduated from the high school in Kamsack, so he knows what the environment was like back then.

He said CGEC is a safe place where children can receive a quality education free from racism.

However, the work to create a school that meets the needs of the community is not over.

Most recently the Treaty Education Alliance, which includes: Cote, Kawakatoose, Pheasant Rump and Whitebear First Nations all signed an MOU with the federal government to advance reconciliation. It sets out a process moving forward and includes a focus on the development of a new on-reserve education model based on recognition of an inherent right to self-determination and an asserted Treaty right to education.



Helene Cote, event organizer and teacher, received a star blanket at the Chief Gabriel Cote Education Complex gala event in May. She stands in the school gymnasium and speaks to media after the event. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)



Chief and Council, Cote First Nation. (Photo supplied)

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Canada Post pays homage to the people's chief

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

She may have given up the title, but to many Mary-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier will always be chief.

During the National Indigenous History Month, Canada Post unveiled its newest collection of stamps paying tribute to a few outstanding Indigenous leaders including Métis leader Harry Daniels, Inuk leader Jose Kusugak and Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier.

"I am honoured," she said. "Hopefully the stamp will inspire our young people, our children, our youth."

Day Walker-Pelletier served four consecutive decades as the leader of Okanese First Nation before announcing her retirement in late 2020.

Canada Post approached the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) about who should be immortalized on a stamp and Day Walker-Pelletier's name was put forth.



Erica Beaudin, the long-time friend and assistant to Mary-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier stand with Mary-Ann after the unveiling of her new Canada Post stamp. (Photo supplied)

Humble by nature she doesn't see her political career as something to "make a fuss about," because it's her community that allowed that to happen.

She entered politics in 1981 at the age of 26. In those early days, Day Walker-Pelletier would be the only female at the table, but didn't let that stop her from advocating for women, children and her community.

"We need women to make changes in different areas," she said.

The unveiling of the stamp took place on the Treaty 4 grounds in Fort Qu'Appelle.

The stamp features Day Walker-Pelletier wearing a traditional Treaty chief jacket adorned with various medals including the Order of Canada she received last year. In the background are a circle of teepees.

Although she loves the image used, she said seeing herself on a stamp is something that will take some getting used to.

Okanese Chief Richard Stonechild, who worked side-by-side with Day Walker-Pelletier for 17 years as a council member, said she was a great teacher.

"One of the best things I learned from her was to never take no for an answer from the Department of Indian Affairs, called ISC (Indigenous Services Canada) now," he said. "I really appreciate what she went through as a leader, for us, for all those years. When the full weight of the community is on your shoulders and you're carrying that baton now, it's something else."

Day Walker-Pelletier is not just tough but she is also very kind.

"When I lost my mother, she almost took that place and helped all of us," said Stonechild. "She touched all our hearts in a very special way. Everyone of our band members seek her out for guidance, advice, solace or camaraderie. She's just a very one-of-a-kind, unique individual."

Although she retired from politics she is still working on passion projects for her community and is the chair of the Day Walker Homefire Family Centre on Okanese.

A residential school survivor, she recently travelled to Rome to meet with the Pope, where she presented him with a pair of beaded orange moccasins.

Erica Beaudin has served as Day Walker-Pelletier's personal assistant for more than three decades and said she was very proud to see such an amazing woman be recognized for all her accomplishments.

"She is the most genuine person I know," she said. "She is always who she is and that is something we could all strive towards. I am very honoured to know her."

The pair have been on many adventures together that were good, bad, triumphant and sad.

"Through it all she just continues to carry on and that in itself is a teaching," said Beaudin.

Day Walker-Pelletier said the best advice she ever received from her kokum was to get her education and to just keep moving.

"When we pass on, just keep moving, don't look back."



Mary-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier receives a congratulatory hug from Lt-Gov Russ Mirasty at the unveiling of her Canada Post stamp. (Photo supplied)



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Young advocate has her eyes set on the Miss Teen Canada competition

By Kaitlynn Nordal
for Eagle Feather News

Mahatma Gandhi once said “be the change you want to see in the world” and that’s what Paige Anaskan is doing by participating in this year’s Miss Teen Canada Pageant.

The 16-year-old from the Piapot Cree Nation admits initially she was unsure about entering the competition.

Anaskan prefers to spend her time on the volleyball or basketball court. She’s also proactive in her community both on a personal level and a volunteer basis. Sometimes it includes picking up garbage around her neighbourhood because she believes that’s important. Most recently, as a student volunteer, Anaskan helped paint the new basketball court at the mamaweyatitan centre in Regina.

The idea about the pageant first started after her mother saw an advertisement on Facebook and encouraged Anaskan to enter.

“I didn’t think it was my thing,” she said. “I was scared to get judged for my skin colour and my race but then I really thought about it and I decided to do it.”

Anaskan believes being part of a national competition provides an opportunity, for her, to raise awareness about things she is passionate about.

“I wanted to show people what First Nations women can do,” she said. “I told the pageant ladies I wanted to spread that message and that you shouldn’t judge just from what you see.”

The Miss Teen Canada Pageant is to take place in Toronto in August over a two-week span.

The first week involves working with a coach to get her pageant ready. Together they will work on her walk, her look, her outfits, public speaking and everything else.

Anaskan is currently fundraising to cover costs for the competition that includes travel, clothing, tiara, sash and the additional expenses for one or both parents to accompany her because she is a minor.

For the talent portion of the competition, Anaskan has decided to sing.

“I love to sing,” said Anaskan who will be doing a rendition of Hallelujah by Alexandra Burke “Last time I sang it I had a lot of people in tears and it’s one of my mom’s favourite songs.”

For the speech portion, the teen is focusing on a social commentary about beauty and how it is something that comes from the inside and about getting to know someone before judging.

“I feel like beauty pageants have a certain image on how girls are supposed to look and you have to look like this or you aren’t suitable for them,” said Anaskan.

Although she is participating in a beauty competition, she believes beauty is not something that can be judged on physical appearance alone.

“I feel like girls push themselves to have that ideal body or that ideal model look and I feel like that’s not how it should be,” said Anaskan. “Girls should be comfortable in what they look like and shouldn’t have to change just because someone says you have to or because another person looks like that. You have to just be yourself and great things will happen.”

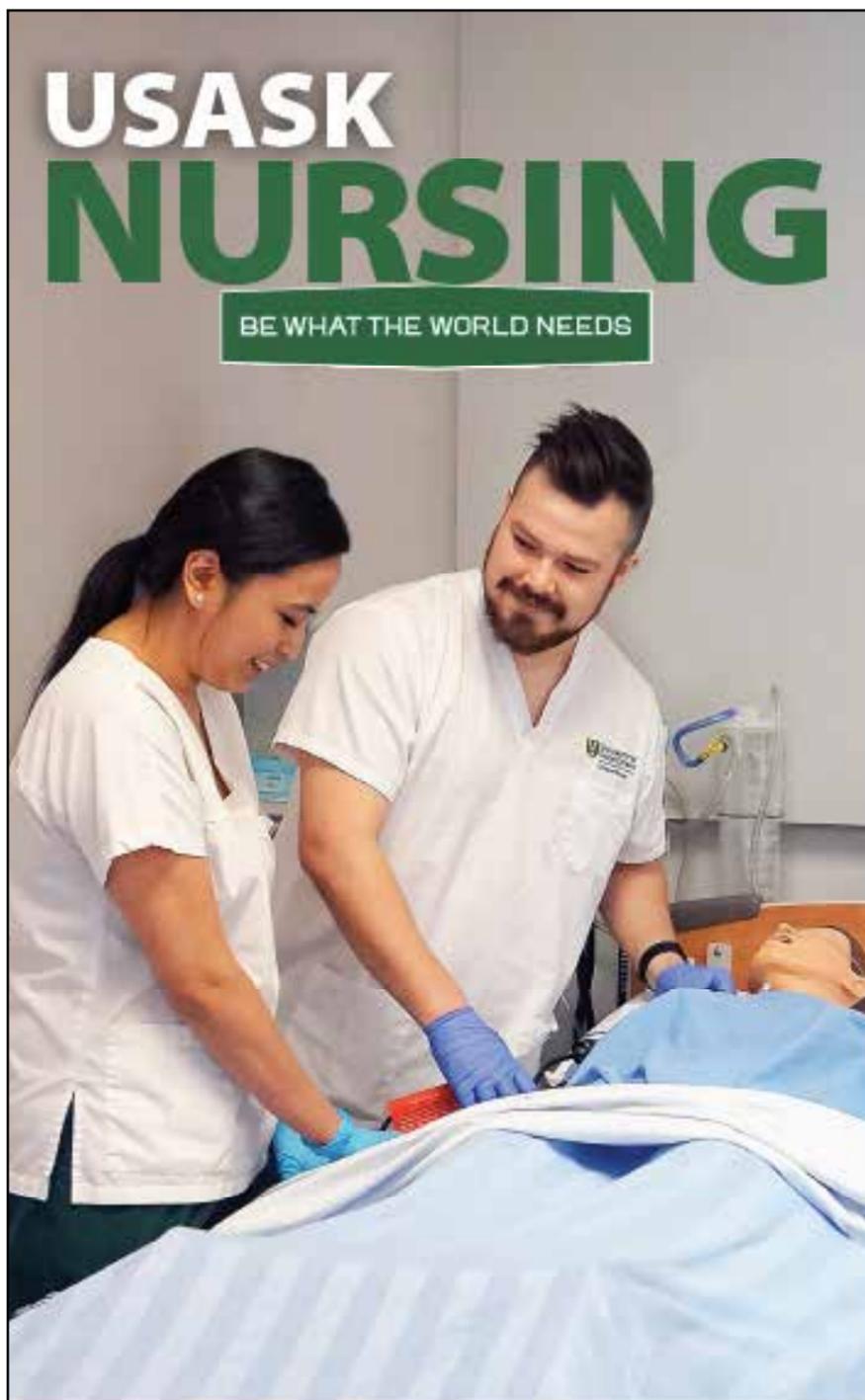
She hopes to use this new platform to continue the discussion on unrealistic beauty standards.

“I want to do it to show girls they should respect themselves more and not try to hide their natural beauty and let it show,” said Anaskan. “Once you let your true colours show, in my eyes, you are the most beautiful, unique girl out there.”

In the fall she will enter her final year of high school with plans to attend university and pursue something in the arts.



16-year-old Paige Anaskan, a Miss Teen Canada contestant, is competing so she can share a message of body positivity with the world. (Photo supplied)



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