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By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Voices of past, present and future Indigenous storytellers were spotlighted in the spirit of truth and reconciliation during the Friends of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum's (FRSM) Solstice Speaker Series.

The event, sponsored by Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) is in its second year. It's a four-part speaker series built around the natural seasonal calendar, where Indigenous speakers come together to engage in conversations and explore subjects around truth and reconciliation.

The latest Solstice Speaker Series focused on Indigenous journalists and their personal experiences and work around truth and reconciliation.

The panel was moderated by former journalist and communications specialist Cherish Francis and

featured Nelson Bird of CTV Regina, along with former Eagle Feather News (EFN) editor John Lagimodiere, and current EFN editor Kerry Benjoe.

The panel was introduced by University of Regina School of Journalism student Campbell Stevenson, who will be joining EFN in the fall as an intern.

"It's great to be able to sit with my cohorts in the industry – Nelson, Kerry and Cherish – and talk biz," said Lagimodiere. "I think Indigenous media, and the people who tell the stories, have come a long way. And these stories are so very relevant to everyone in Canada right now. It's not just an Indigenous thing, it's a Canadian thing."

As the founder of EFN, which he owned until 2022, he said stories on subjects like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Indian Residential Schools, and mental health trauma are not only difficult to cover, but are sometimes hard to talk about.

*continued page 2 ...*



JACKIE OTTMANN  
**PRETENDIAN IMPACT**

"They are taking up resources designated for Indigenous peoples and so the question becomes, 'How do we address this and how do institutions address this?'"

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April 2023 is our  
**Environment  
Issue**  
May 2023 Issue:  
**MMIWG & Missing Persons**



EFNews - RECONCILIATION ALLY  
**Regina Open Door Society**

"There were things I wished I could have asked my grandma and my aunt. I would have loved to have known what the origins of the things we ate are. It is important to pass down cultural traditions around food."

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# Saskatchewan’s Indigenous storytellers past and present share the stage

... continued from page 1

Some of the topics are heavy and have impacted the careers of journalists, but sharing their perspectives can be part of the healing process.

“I think the outcome of this (Solstice Speaker Series) will be the audience will have a better appreciation of Indigenous stories, of the challenges of telling those stories, and the importance of telling them,” said Lagimodiere.

Craig Perrault, FRSM executive director, which organizes and hosts the event, hopes the event continues the important conversations that were started last year.

“The intent is to make sure all of us are getting access to people who can help inspire and drive change,” said Perrault. “The conversation started last year. But this needs to be a life-long conversation.”

Last year’s topics included Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Pope’s apology, the screening and conversation about the film *We Were Children*, and a discussion on “what we have inherited” by Chief Cadmus Delorme.

“The topics are current, thought provoking, and designed to create active participation,” said Perrault. “When you get great thinkers, you don’t want to control the conversation. You just want to put them in a position to share. Our job is to put the best people on stage so the audience can have an experience and grow.”

The spring solstice event kicked off with the official announcement of the Harold Johnson Memorial Scholarship, which will help to fund one young Indigenous student per year who is making an impact on his or her community.

It was created to honour Johnson, a renowned Saskatchewan author, advocate and lawyer, who helped to create the Northern Alcohol Strategy.

Both the Solstice Speaker Series and the Harold Johnson Memorial Scholarship are part of SGI’s commitment to advancing reconciliation.

“SGI is very committed to diversity, equity and inclusion, and to especially work with Indigenous community in the province and across the country,” said SGI Chief Customer Officer Barbara Cross.

The scholarship was created by SGI to honour the legacy of a man who made a significant contribution to the province, said Cross.

SGI will be awarding one student per year who has lived by Johnson’s values.

The post-secondary student must be a Saskatchewan resident, but can study anywhere in Canada. The recipient will receive a maximum of \$2,500 per year over a four-year span. The scholarship opened on February 1 and will close on June 30.

Information can be found on the SGI web site at <https://sgi.sk.ca/scholarships>.

Additionally, SGI is awarding a one-time contribution of \$10,000 to a charitable or non-profit organization that is making a positive difference in the Indigenous community.

“His approach was unique,” said Cross. “Instead of an organization swooping in to a community and telling them how to solve problems, the approach of Harold and the Northern Alcohol Strategy is to be in the community and support their work to make decisions around dealing with substance abuse issues.”

Information on the funding can be found at <https://sgi.sk.ca/community>.

The scholarship recipient and selected organization will be awarded this fall.

“We have set this up to honour Harold’s legacy,” said Cross. “We believe he really did make a contribution to this province, so we wanted something lasting that would put his name out there and honour the work he did and hopefully support the people who continue what Harold started.”

The Solstice Speaker’s Series was recorded and will be released at a later date for those who missed the event.



**Campbell Stevenson, a University of Regina J-school student stands at the podium during the sound check as Cherish Francis, the panel’s mederator looks on. Seated are Nelson Bird, from CTV, Kerry Benjoe Editor of Eagle Feather News and John Lagimodiere for Eagle Feather News editor. (Photo supplied by FRSM)**



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# Family honours the legacy of Metis leader

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Fourteen individuals have been recognized for their humanitarian work with a Jim Brady Memorial Award.

The new award was created in honour of the Metis leader who educated and mobilized Metis communities on the rights of individuals living on Crown lands. He also helped establish Metis groups in Saskatchewan and Alberta that sought political and cultural protection.

“I was watching people at the grassroots level who were doing extraordinary things, not for glory or recognition or to better themselves personally, but for the betterment of human kind,” said awards spokesperson John



The Jim Brady Memorial medal, 14 of which will be presented in 2023. (Photo by Marley McDonald)

Brady McDonald.

The inaugural award recognizes the unsung heroes who are selflessly working to fight for human rights, keep culture alive and make the lives of those around them better.

McDonald, an author, artist and activist, credits his grandfather for inspiring him to also commit his life to the betterment of others.

“He set a high benchmark for what we can do to help other people,” he said. “Humbly working to help those around you – that’s what we want to recognize with this medal.”



John Brady McDonald (right) presenting medal to Donny Parenteau on March 11, 2023, the 115th birthday of Jim Brady. (Photo by Marley McDonald)

So with the approval of the McDonald clan the awards were created.

He describes his grandfather as someone who could have lived a comfortable life as a prominent Metis leader, but instead lived in a one-room shack in La Ronge.

“He would give his last dollar to help a stranger and would sleep outside so someone in need could have his bed for a night,” said McDonald.

Humility is the basis of the award right down to the presentation and

medal itself. The copper Jim Brady Memorial medal was based on the Victoria Cross, a simple bronze cross, which is the highest honour in the British Armed Forces.

The recipients don’t receive any extravagant fanfare – just the medal in a pouch, a certification and a letter of recognition – rather than presenting the award at a big event.

One of the awards was even presented in a local Tim Horton’s.

“As Indigenous people, we’re humble,” said McDonald. “We don’t toot our own horns. But it is part of our culture to honour our warriors, our veterans, our matriarchs.”



John Brady McDonald (right) presenting medal to Leah Dorion on March 11, 2023, the 115th birthday of Jim Brady. (Photo by Marley McDonald)

The plan is for the Jim Brady Awards to live on in perpetuity, but organically and without quotas.

If one year calls for 15 awards, or none, so be it, he said.

Durocher was one of 14 selected to receive the inaugural award.

Other recipients made public include Christi Belcourt, Andrea Menard, David Garneau, Leah Dorion, Donny Parenteau and Maria Campbell. As well as two posthumous awards, to Bernice Sayese and Victor Thunderchild.



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## Land acknowledgement: And then what?

As a Nehiyaw woman who advocates and brings attention to all types of historic and current injustices our people have been facing since first contact, I often wonder how many of our individual citizen and organizational allies are genuine in their reconciliation intentions.

I wonder if they ever consider checking in with local First Nations and individual groups to re-evaluate their allegiance to the almighty Land Acknowledgment.

Do they ever consider asking if it serves a purpose in their organization?

Have they asked, is it enough?

I also wonder, do these organizations consider asking the Indigenous groups or their employees how they feel hearing, "I would like to acknowledge the land on which we stand..." over and over again.

Personally, I have never been asked how I felt. I would most likely say, "thank you for asking me, and I am actually pretty tired of hearing it and it has become extremely uncomfortable."

But, allow me to explain why.

While it is comforting to know many organizations have adopted this phrase to honour and respect the land on which they learn, work and play, it just isn't enough anymore.

It's become the uncomfortable sound of a repetitive broken record.

It's like when we hear a different version of the same song, it remains the exact same words being read out at every non-Indigenous gathering or meeting.

I never realized how much I was bothered by this phrase until I heard the most beautiful "Acknowledgment" from a local artist who elegantly described the land, the environment, injustices, and acknowledged she would not be practising theatre if it wasn't for the original people of Treaty 4 Territory.

The artist further suggested each person in the theatre be accountable and genuine when acknowledging this land and the original people who once lived in harmony with nature.

She was not afraid to say how peaceful Turtle Island was before the settlers arrived and nearly eradicated the Indigenous people.

This beautiful artist brought me to tears as the tone in her voice expressed genuine empathy.

Although, I was more than pleased with her acknowledgment I still had to ask, "Now what?"

What will you do to incorporate teaching the "Truth" and ensuring you are contributing to "Reconciliation" in the work you do?

I am proud to share this beautiful acknowledgment was followed by intentional reconciliation work in her theater production.

I am so thankful for local artist Kris Alvraz for being a genuine and authentic ally.

This is the question I now ask

every non-Indigenous organization active in the reconciliation process, "Land Acknowledgment and then what?"

- What is your organization doing to give back to the local Indigenous people who lost their language, culture and identity?
- What are you doing to make your work environment safe and inclusive for Indigenous staff?
- What is your organization doing to incorporate "Indigenous Ways of Knowing" to community programs?

Whether you are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, I encourage you to take a better look into what is happening after all these "Land Acknowledgments;" is the reconciliation process genuinely leading to action in your environment?



### Speaking Truths Chasity Delorme



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# Dogsledding is in the blood

By Marjorie D.L. Roden  
for Eagle Feather News

At this year’s Prince Albert Winter Festival, the McGunigal family proved dog mushing is not just a man’s sport by placing in the top five in several of the competitions.

“I will say (my daughters) are very strong, independent women, and they’re a bit younger than I am, but they’re a huge inspiration for me,” said Tammy McGunigal, who placed first in the four-dog sled race.

The Metis women have a long history with the sport.

“We’re fourth generation dog racers,” said Danielle, the elder of the two



**Danielle McGunigal (left) hits the pay window at the Prince Albert Winter Festival. She, her mother and younger sister all competed in this years dog sled races. (Photo by Marjorie Roden for EFN)**

daughters.

She placed fifth in the 10-dog team race.

“My great grandpa raced the dogs, then my grandpa raced the dogs, and then my parents started racing dogs,” said Danielle. “We were born into a sled-dog-racing family.”

Younger sister Demi was also in the two-day, 10-dog-sled team race.



**A female competitor races towards the finish line during the Prince Albert Winter Festival. Predominantly a male dominated sport, many women are choosing to race their own dog teams. (Photo by Marjorie Roden for EFN)**

On the first day, she placed fourth just ahead of her older sister. However, in the six-dog race, Demi placed second.

The sibling rivalry on the trail is all part of the fun.

“We always give each other a hard time, joking around, trying to get each other to stop running,” Demi chuckled. “It’s so I can try to get by her.”

On the second day of competition, Danielle redeemed herself.

“I didn’t actually see her much on the trails today,” said Danielle. “Yesterday was more fun, she was running in front of me.”

The pair will likely face off more in the future now that Danielle has moved out and joined her partner’s team.

“We have our own sled dogs,” she said.

With the sport being mostly male dominated, Danielle has noticed some changes.

“Over the last few years,

more females have been involved,” she said.

“I was in The Pas last weekend (at the Northern Manitoba Trappers Festival). I think there was a total of 13 female competitors.”

As with any sport, support is vitally important, in more ways than one, said the McGunigals.

“I think it’s a sport that’s hard to do by yourself, whether it is from friends or family,” said Danielle. “We went to Minnesota earlier this year, and we were gone for almost a week, so we needed someone to stay at home with the animals.”

Competitions also means time away from her young son.

“I have grandparents usually with him, or my parents, who usually take care of him,” she said.

However, it is a sport she loves and is happy to be doing her part to keep it alive.

“It’s important to me, as a Metis woman, to continue on this as a sport, which is a part of Metis history,” said Danielle.

She encourages young people interested in the sport to keep at it.

“Don’t give up on a bad day,” said Danielle. “I’m sure with any sport, like soccer, you might want to quit. It’s the same with dogsled racing. You’re not always going to have a good run with your dogs, but don’t quit on a day like that. Keep going.”



**Demi McGunigal wears No. 3 bib for the four-dog sled race. She was the youngest of the McGunigal women to compete in this year’s Prince Albert Winter Festival. (Photo by Marjorie Roden for EFN)**



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# Wrestling gaining momentum with the youth

By Marjorie D.L. Roden  
for Eagle Feather News

The recent Prince Albert Winter Festival (PAWF) drew in large crowds from the city and surrounding communities.

"It's been a good turn-out because this year, it has about three times the amount of people it's had in the past," said Dylan Arcand, an arm wrestler.

He finished with two silver medals in the men's zero to 177 kg weight class.

Arcand was surprised at how popular the arm wrestling event was. He wasn't sure if it was because the sport is growing or if it was just more accessible this time around.

"It was upstairs last year. Not a lot of people went upstairs to check it out," said Arcand. "Having it here (on the main floor hallway), everybody's coming by. I've never seen a crowd like that. Usually you don't see (spectators) unless it's nationals or provincials."

Originally from Prince Albert, he's spent the last few years learning as much as he can about arm wrestling.

Arcand didn't realize how big it was until he turned 26. He's now so committed to the sport that he moved from P.A. to Saskatoon just to find a club.

"It's literally one of the most important things in my life, and it always will be now," said Arcand. "It's something I found in my life that I'm somewhat good at, and something I'm always working towards."

The sport is open to everyone.

Two of the younger female competitors, Aura Isbister, from the Lac LaRonge Indian Band, and Nazhoney Taubhorn, from the Mistawasis First Nation, earned gold and bronze in their respective categories.

Being based in Prince Albert means they have limited training facilities.

"My dad, Russell Howland, he's really good at this. I only work out with him," said Isbister. "I do have another coach, she's my mom, Jean Isbister."

Taubhorn is relatively new to arm wrestling having competed only once a

couple years ago.

"I go to boxing with the Red Wolf Club," she said. "I did it as a change (from boxing)."

Being that Isbister is more experienced, she was more confident going into the competition.

"I thought I'd be out right away," said Taubhorn, who was surprised by her win.

All three arm wrestlers had their own advice for the youth to encourage them to get involved in the sport.

"Do what you want to do and don't let anyone hold you back," said Isbister.

"It's basically fun," Taubhorn said, adding "What I would say to a five-year-old is, if you really want to do it, you should do it. Even if you have no experience, you can learn it."

Arcand said it's great to see the kids watching the competition with excitement and he encourages all those interested to give it a try.

"A lot of times, for the kids, it's a lot less expensive to join up for arm wrestling (compared to other sports)," he said. "I didn't start until I was in my twenties. Imagine, if you started younger, the sky's the limit."

The benefits of arm wrestling are it teaches you focus and discipline, said Arcand.



**Dylan Arcand (wearing glasses) competes in his arm-wrestling division at the Prince Albert Winter Festival. (Photo by Marjorie Roden for EFN)**



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# Metis harvesting rights; the need versus the reality

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Every year, traditional bow hunter Garrick Schmidt gives away hundreds of pounds of meat to community members and Elders.

Every part of the animal is used – the meat is eaten, the hides are used for drums, rattles, moccasins and vests while the bones are made into tools. These traditional skills in hunting and harvesting animals are then passed down to younger generations to learn the art of responsible hunting and harvesting.

Despite the significant and far-reaching benefit to the community, Schmidt, who is Metis, faces extensive restrictions and potential five-figure fines for exercising his inherent right to hunt.

“I know that in the northern area of the province, there are recognized



**Garrick Schmidt (centre) along with members from his Métis Local set up an underground fire pit to cook a bison. The cooking demonstration took place during the 2022 Back to Batoche celebrations. (Photo by Abreana Deneyou for EFN)**

harvesting rights, but down south it’s a challenge,” said Schmidt. “There are no recognized harvesting rights, but we still need to provide for our families.”

Currently, court decisions have allowed Metis people to hunt on land in specific, traditionally used areas of the province.

“I know of people who have received \$10,000 fines for hunting (in the southern region) without tags or permits,” he said.



**Garrick Schmidt, a land-based educator and owner of Eagle Ridge Dog Sled Tours, says, as a Metis, he faces extensive restrictions and potential five-figure fines for exercising his inherent right to hunt. He is hoping a provincial Metis harvesting agreement will soon become a reality. (Photo by Abreana Deneyou for EFN)**

Schmidt. “Harvesting rights should be dependent on the size of your family. If you are providing for a family of five, you should be allowed a certain amount of animals to harvest... We need to be able to harvest for our families

without worrying about being slapped with a \$10,000, \$15,000 or \$20,000 fine.”

In March, the Metis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) announced the reformation of the Harvesting Advisory working group.

“The MN-S government in Saskatchewan recognizes the importance of harvesting among Metis people across the province,” said MN-S Vice President and Minister of Justice, Michelle LeClair in a statement. “We remain dedicated to reaching an agreement that supports the ability of our citizens to provide sustenance for their families. We want to engage more of our citizens in the process to ensure we are laying a good foundation for the future.”



**A close up of the firepit that was set up to cook 200 lbs of meat for a bison feast at the 2022 Back to Batoche celebrations. (Photo by Abreana Deneyou for EFN)**

LeClair acknowledged the frustrations of citizens due to the limited recognition of Metis harvesting rights and regulations across the province.

In 2019, the MN-S reaffirmed an agreement with the province, signed almost a decade prior, committing to officially recognizing and respecting Metis rights to hunt and fish across the province.

Despite the pace to which these discussions have taken since the initial MOU signing, Schmidt remains hopeful.

“I think if they have changed the advisory board with new members who are more active in harvesting, maybe it will help speed things up,” said Schmidt. “I think the steps the MN-S are taking are in the right direction. I’m hopeful that everything will be signed and ready to go by summer.”

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## INNER EDGE RESOURCES



# Reconciliation Ally

Regina Open Door Society

By Adeoluwa Atayero  
for Eagle Feather News

The Regina Open Door Society (RODS) is taking the idea of breaking bread quite literally with some of its new Indigenous education programs.

Haiming Li, RODS youth program coordinator says catering to newcomer youth is important and, thanks to funding from SaskCulture for Indigenous education programs, they were able to create some fun activities.

Having previously dabbled into other parts of Indigenous identity such as art, culture and history, Li said they were looking at doing something different.

“We had not done anything in regards to food, so we started a search for an Indigenous chef,” she said. “We reached out to chef and culinary consultant Jenni Lessard and she replied to us. We then began to discuss the cooking workshop in October.”

Lessard, who is Metis, runs a company called Inspired By Nature Culinary Consulting, located in Lumsden. Prior to opening her business, she operated her own restaurant in Birch Hills for eight years and was also once the executive chef at Wanuskewin Heritage Park.



A group of newcomer youth in the Regina Open Door Society's youth program are in the kitchen at the Regina Food Bank prepping food under the guidance of a local Indigenous chef. It is part of the organization's Indigenous education programming it started last year. (Photo supplied)

Lessard said growing up in northern Saskatchewan inspired her to pursue cooking as a career.

“We didn't have television, cell phones or internet, so I would cook for something to do and loved to pick berries and learn about the different plants and their uses,” she said.

Although most of their workshops are online, Lessard recommended the cooking workshop would be more impactful if it took place in person. Planners had to find a kitchen to contain all the attendees, which they didn't have. Fortunately, the Regina Food Bank stepped up and let them use its training kitchen.

Lessard said meeting in person was important because food holds a very deep and significant meaning to her.

“More than being a chef, I've always known I wanted to feed people,” she said. “I got that guidance from my maternal grandmother because her house was a gathering place for not just our family, but for other people in the community who needed something to eat.”

Her grandmother didn't cook fancy food, instead, she made simple delicious food, which is also Lessard's approach to cooking.

She said being able to share Indigenous meals is special, because not too long ago, it was not the norm.

“For a while many Indigenous people were hiding who they were and what their roots were because it wasn't safe to be an Indigenous person in Canada,” said Lessard. “There were things I wished I could have asked my grandma and my aunt. I would have loved to have known what the origins of the things we ate are. It is important to pass down cultural traditions around food.”

# Regina Open Door Society focuses on Indigenous education

The RODS youth learned to make rosehip butter and vegetarian soup with wild rice from northern Saskatchewan and squash. Lessard shared important historical facts about Indigenous foods.

“We think of Canada as synonymous with maple syrup but that's an Indigenous meal,” she said. “I also showed them some teas that are harvested from northern Saskatchewan.”

Lessard says she only teaches things she's been taught or has learned on her own because not all Indigenous cuisine is the same.



Jenni Lessard (standing) is a Metis chef who shares her knowledge about Indigenous cuisine to a group of youth newcomers as part of the Regina Open Door Society's Indigenous education programming. (Photo supplied)

“I don't think I'd be able to cook Indigenous cuisines from the East/West coast without learning from someone who has lived on that land and who can show me what to do.”

The event was a success, which Lessard attributes to it being food-based.

“I don't think it's possible for you to eat with someone and not feel connected after.”

Li said organizing events like this for newcomers can be a challenge.

“Because most immigrants do not know the importance of Indigenous history, it's a little hard for us to promote the program,” she said. “We let them know that it's important to learn something about the Indigenous people in Canada.”

RODS continues to offer Indigenous education programs, including other food-based workshops, powwow information sessions and truth and reconciliation education.

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# Nakoda language warrior helps keep the culture alive

By NC Raine  
for Eagle Feather News

Shayna McArthur’s Nakoda language classes are more than learning words and phrases – they are breathing life back into the Nakoda way of life. “I think language and culture is very spiritual,” said McArthur. “When someone wants to learn a language, especially an Indigenous one, to me it always hints at them wanting to strengthen and build up their spirituality.”

From the White Bear First Nation, she spent her Fridays during March teaching a Nakoda language class to a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults through the YWCA Regina.

The classes were aimed to give the students functional, usable language over a short span of time – only four lessons.

But what McArthur found was the students not only wanted to learn Nakoda, they also sought something deeper.

“They wanted to learn Nakoda songs and to say a prayer,” she said. “That’s something they asked for at the beginning.”

Many of the students were Nakoda and, as the class progressed, so did their curiosity.

“They had so many questions,” said McArthur. “We talked about our bloodlines and how we’re all related to each other as Nakoda people. Kinship is very important to us.”

She grew up learning the language from her late grandfather, Armond McArthur, who taught Nakoda language classes at the university.

For as long as she can remember, she had a desire to learn about who she was and where she came from. She would speak Nakoda with her grandfather, she would listen in during his university lessons, and she would attend classes whenever they were held in the community.

“My grandparents tried to instill in us who we are, and we should be

proud of that,” said McArthur. “So I’ve always taken an interest in culture.” This led McArthur to study Indigenous Education at the First Nations University of Canada (FNUiv), where she is in her final year. When she was approached by the YWCA last winter to teach Nakoda language classes, she looked at the offer with humility.

“I had never done anything like that before, so it was a big step,” said McArthur. “My grandfather always encouraged me to go out and do it. So that’s what guided me.”

This understanding of culture and kinship is deeply engrained in her.

“I feel there’s both a responsibility and obligation to carry the language on,” said McArthur. “Both of those are intertwined within me. So, whatever I learn, I try to teach to others or to help someone else.”

Over the course of the four classes, she taught the students to introduce themselves in Nakoda: to say who they are, what their occupation is, where they are from and what they can do. In addition to a song and prayer, they also practised how to ask questions and respond to basic conversational topics.

Her goal was to provide her students with a basic, real-world understanding of Nakoda.

“I tried to make the environment as safe and comfortable as possible,” said McArthur. “Where they can try things and make mistakes. I was really proud of how far they had come, and proud of how strongly they felt about being Nakoda.”

Whether she’s teaching or expanding her own knowledge, McArthur never loses sight of Canada’s dark history and how her ancestors were shamed rather than celebrated for their culture, which motivates her to keep the language alive.

“If we speak our language and we keep telling our story, then reconciliation can happen,” she said.



Shayna McArthur, a young Nakoda language speaker taught some classes through the YWCA. (Photo supplied)



## Congratulations Students!

During Indigenous Achievement Week this March over 40 Indigenous students received awards for their accomplishments in academic achievement, community engagement, leadership, research and resiliency. Congratulations to everyone and thank you for all that you do!



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN



# Wordsmiths from across the province gathered to test their skills

By EFN Staff  
for Eagle Feather News

The St. Jude’s theatre of E.D. Feehan High School in Saskatoon was buzzing as hundreds waited anxiously for the second Saskatchewan First Nations Spelling Bee to get started.

The day began with a prayer by Elder Frank Badger followed by an honour song performed by Mark Okicitaw to celebrate and inspire participants.

Emcees and volunteer organizers Lillian Denton and Lori McAuley said they were excited to be able to host the regional bee for First Nation youth again.

“What makes it special is it gives the opportunity for those kids to actually have a place on the national stage,” said McAuley. “So the winners in each category, Junior, Primary and Intermediate – the first-place winners – will be going to Toronto for nationals.”

The inaugural Saskatchewan First Nations Spelling Bee was held in 2016.

For McAuley, an educator and Principal of St. Frances Cree Bilingual School, the bee is more than a competition – it’s an opportunity for students to improve their spelling and reading abilities, but more than that – to build confidence and leadership skills.

“It makes them leaders just going up on that stage,” she said. “And when you see them come off the stage, they’re so excited about how they were actually able to go out and compete and face their fear of talking in public, which is something very difficult, especially for little children.”

That was the case for Kelry Campbell, who at 11 years old competed in her first spelling bee and won first place in the Junior category.

Kelry’s sisters Ava and Laya also participated in the competition, with Ava taking third place among the Junior participants and Laya securing second place in the Primary category.

For Kelry, she said winning first place and advancing to the national spelling bee championship felt really good. It was like all her hard work studying, after school and hockey practices, had paid off.

“It feels like, I don’t know how to say, it’s like amazing, like relieving,



Mark Okicitaw joins participants from the Junior category on stage to perform an honour song as part of the spelling bee’s opening ceremonies. (Photo by Melody Lynch)

because I’ve been studying for a while,” she said after winning. “At first I was just like, ‘Can I really do it?’ I was very nervous. But once I got into top four I was like, ‘I can do this, I can spell.’”

It’s not just about winning, but about representing Indigenous people and



The three Campbell sisters, who each placed in the top three in their respective categories. Pictured L to R: Kelry Campbell, Laya Campbell and Ava Campbell. (Photo by Melody Lynch)

her home community of English River First Nation.

“It’s just fun for me,” said Kelry. “Since I’m Indigenous, it just feels like I’m doing this for my people.”

After getting over her nerves, she realized she enjoyed her time on stage.

Kelry’s mom Sheylee beamed with pride for her daughters.

She said it was good to be at an all First Nation’s event because when they participate in activities, like piano, they’re often the only Indigenous kids taking part.

“I get emotional every time with my kids on stage,” she said. “I always tell them to stand proud and so I’m glad that this is (for) First Nations... It’s stepping stones and more opportunities for them.”

Kelry will fly to Toronto in May to compete alongside kids from across the country in the Spelling Bee of Canada national championships.

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# Understanding the impacts of pretendianism in academia

By Kerry Benjoe  
of Eagle Feather News

The First Nations University of Canada, in partnership with the National Indigenous University Senior Leaders' Association (NIUSLA), hosted the second national forum on Indigenous identity fraud.

Last year the topic was Indigenous identity and this year the conversations were about Indigenous citizenship.

"The primary focus again is trying to find ways forward in relation to addressing identity fraud within post-secondary institutions and affirming Indigenous identity, or citizenship, or membership and lived experience," said FNUUniv President Jacqueline Ottmann.

She said this conversation is critical even though identity fraud has been happening for centuries for various reasons.

"Especially after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action in 2015, after those were released more resources were provided for Indigenous peoples within post-secondary whether it's faculty, staff or leadership positions and what we have learned, which have been high-profile cases, is that there are non-Indigenous who have falsely claimed Indigeneity and are speaking for Indigenous peoples," said Ottmann. "They are taking up resources designated for Indigenous peoples and so the question becomes, 'How do we address this and how do institutions address this?'"

She said the common theme emerging from the conversations is the need for Indigenous people to take the lead in the processes.

The end goal of the forums is to establish principles and strong recommendations that affirm Indigeneity whether it's citizenship, membership or identity within post-secondary institutions.

Ottmann said in mainstream institutions there are very few Indigenous employees, which is why the national forums are very important.

"Coming together as a collective, we would be able to implement that change a lot quicker," she said.



**First Nations University of Canada President Jacqueline Ottmann at the podium during the National Forum on Indigenous Identity Fraud held at the Hotel Saskatchewan in Regina. She said Indigenous identity fraud is something that needs to be addressed and Indigenous people need to take the lead in deciding the next steps.**

An equally important part of the conversations is the value of lived experience.

"Indigenous people are being hired for their knowledge and so there has to be a connection to what we learn in our disciplines to what we know through lived experience," said Ottmann. "We know the realities of Indigenous peoples today, our traditions, our practices and what are our stories and we bring those into the institutions because if an institution is hiring someone without that knowledge then the foundation for Reconciliation, or decolonization, or what we call Indigenization is not very strong."

The forum was by invitation in order to create a safe space for some difficult discussions. Those invited included Indigenous staff, faculty, students, Elders and leaders connected to a post-secondary institution.

Ottmann said great conversations were held and the forums are still a work in progress. She said it's difficult to pinpoint exactly what the next steps are right now.

The primary focus was to provide an Indigenous-only, safe space to begin discussing what needs to be addressed and what needs to be done when it comes to Indigenous Identity fraud.

## HEALTH 2023-24 BUDGET

**A record \$6.9 billion health budget ensures Saskatchewan's health system is making investments that work for everyone.**



- \$55.5 million as part of Government's nearly \$100 million commitment to recruit, train, incentivize and retain healthcare workers and physicians in communities across the province
- \$39 million increase for initiatives to help seniors age within their communities and provide the supports they need
- \$42.5 million to address surgical wait times by adding 6,000 more procedures
- An additional \$7 million for more specialized medical imaging procedures, allowing 10,500 CT and 4,700 MRI scans
- \$8.8 million to enhance and stabilize emergency medical services in rural and remote areas including support for an additional 33.19 full time equivalent positions in 27 communities across the province
- \$12.4 million increase for a record \$518 million for mental health and addictions

**The 2023-24 budget will hire more healthcare professionals, perform more surgeries, improve emergency medical services, and strengthen the healthcare system across our growing province.**



# ArtsyFACT artsyFICTION mixes art and storytelling to raise money

By Memory McLeod  
for Eagle Feather News

Combine copper, turquoise, birchbark, sturgeon, otter and a few tall tales and what you have is artsyFACT artsyFICTION.

The First Nations University of Canada (FNU) hosted its second annual art fundraiser to support the Medicine of the Art fund.

ArtsyFACT artsyFICTION presenters were each given an item and they shared a story about its origin and purpose, which was either true or completely fabricated. The audience had to determine if the story was true or false.

One such object was an old, beat-up, beaded buckskin coat.

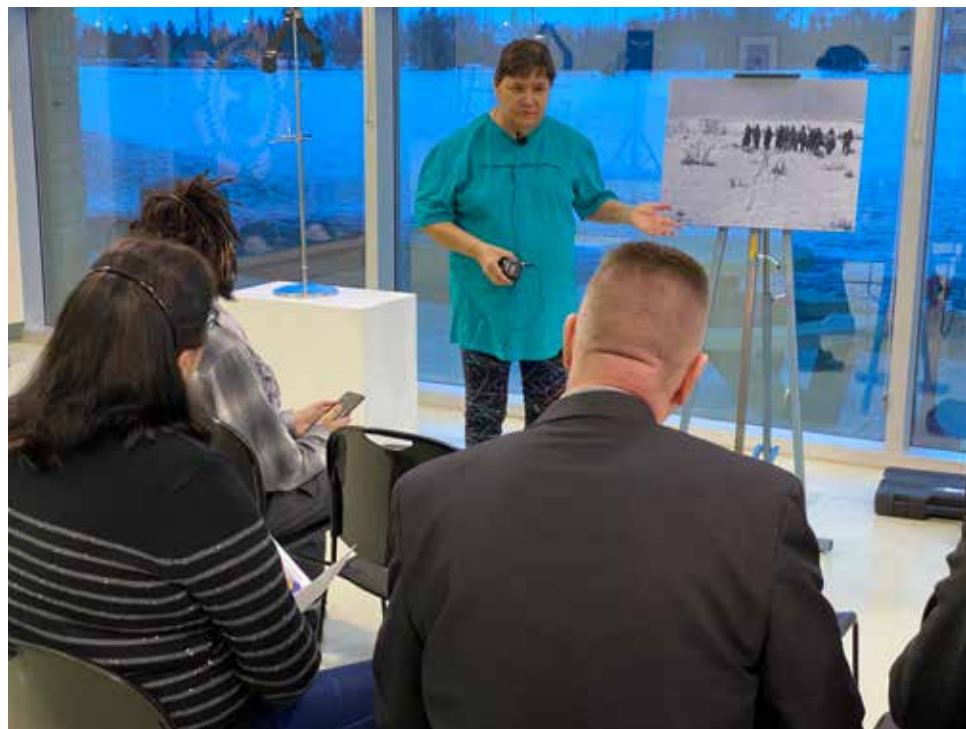
Questions about its origin led to a fictitious tale of the event's organizer and head of FNU's fine arts and communications department Audrey Dreaver's famous ancestor.

**Participants gather in the atrium of the First Nations University of Canada prior to the start of the 2023 artsyFACT or artsyFICTION event hosted by the Fine Arts Department to raise funds to support the Medicine for the Arts Fund. (Photo supplied)**

In fact, the jacket was donated for art projects.

"The story we told was that the jacket belonged to James Isbister, the original Metis farmer who began the settle-

ment that is now Prince Albert," said Dreaver. "The story goes that he played a crucial part in convincing Riel to return to help the resistance. However, he didn't believe



**Audrey Dreaver, the head of the FNU Fine Arts and Indigenous Communications Arts Department, organized the event and was one of the evening's storytellers. She shares a fictional story about a beaded buckskin jacket to a group of participants. She successfully fooled several people with her story. (Photo supplied)**

that violence was the way forward and parted ways with Riel. So the roughed-up-looking jacket was more believable with the background story of the battles going on at the time. I think we fooled quite a few with that one."

Those taken in by the yarn included participants such as artists, academics, students and members of the public.

The event was also a fun way to teach people how to look at art differently.

"We see art as living things, with meaning and energy, with a purpose," said Dreaver. "It is interactive and alive. It's not just some dusty thing on display in a museum, no – through it, understanding and appreciating it, we can reconnect with our ancestors."

Cree Poet Laureate, Louise Bernice Halfe, a celebrity storyteller at the event, said artifacts are important because they preserve the history that is passed down orally rather than in written documents.

"If you pay attention, it will speak to you and tell you a little story about our planet," she said.

Halfe, who's own artwork includes stone carving, sculpture, fabric and writing, says the life and purpose of a material is unlimited to those with creative minds.

"I've been a supporter of the arts all my life," she said. "It's a value that was passed down from my mother. She used to take the seemingly unusable parts of a moose or deer, such as the hooves, and make purses out of them and use their guts to make baskets."

Halfe carried on her mother's ingenuity in her own art.

"I used to go to the thrift stores and buy old cowboy boots and make purses out of them," she said.

The Medicine for Art is a special FNU fund used to cover travel and material costs for guest speakers and educators for unique workshops aimed to enhance the learning experience of fine arts students.

Leading up to artsyFACT or artsyFICTION, one such workshop on drumming took place.

Pura Fe, a Tuscarora and Taina, traditional singer-songwriter, taught students the history of drumming and singing throughout Indian country.

"In the beginning, we were a bit confused about whether women could play the drum (and) she told us that, historically in many tribes, it is the women who tended to do the drumming and singing," said FNU arts student Amber Bear. "She told us that as beginners, not to worry about protocols but instead focus on finding our voices."



**Paula Daigle, the FNU Librarian, was also one of the artsyFACT or artsyFICTION storytellers. (Photo supplied)**

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# The Mohawk language finds a home in Treaty 4

By Kerry Benjoe  
of Eagle Feather News

Before a historical language agreement was signed between the Ontario-based Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC), First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv), and University of Regina (U of R), gifts were exchanged between the Mohawk delegation and FNUniv members.

After the gift exchange and announcement, Jennifer Dockstader, executive director of the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (FENFC) said partnerships like this one not only help preserve the Mohawk language, but re-establish important relationships that existed between tribes prior to colonization.

“We were always cousins and always related, so now we go back to those relationships,” said Dockstader.

“This program is a credit to the Mohawk language students of the FENFC’s Kén:tho tsi kateweyénhstha: (I Study Here in Mohawk). Many of them



Tahnee Bennett, Mohawk language instructor, and Sam Hill during the gift presentation. (Photo supplied)

have advanced to the point of requesting further learning and so FENFC approached FNUniv to offer the Mohawk Language Certificate,” explained Samuel Hill, FENFC program coordinator, in a news release.

“We needed to make sure our language was protected by other nations



Tahnee Bennet Mohawk Lang Instructor and Jennifer Dockstador. (Photo supplied)

we know to be reliable and that’s (FNUniv),” said Dockstader. “They already have some of the infrastructure here to make sure this will really be a partnership so we wouldn’t lose knowledge, but we would actually be gaining knowledge.”

FNUniv will offer an online Mohawk Language Certificate Program this fall. The program is comprised of 15 credit-hours of Mohawk language classes along with general courses in accordance with FNUniv Language Certificate requirements. Students will be able to continue to study Mohawk and advance their proficiency in the language while earning a Certificate of Mohawk from FNUniv.

“We are hopeful about our continued partnership and for a future where all of the Haudenosaunee languages are taught at First Nations University,” said Dockstader.

Jacqueline Ottmann, President of FNUniv, speaks to the importance of Indigenous language programming.

“Language teaching is critically important, especially as many Indigenous languages are or are becoming endangered,” she said in a news release.

“As Canada’s only national Indigenous university, we strive to protect and preserve Indigenous languages, which are inextricably tied to our cultures and our identities as First Nations people. By collaborating with FENFC in Ontario to expand our language programming to include Mohawk, we are continuing our work to teach more languages that are representative of more nations across turtle island — and that’s something we’re very proud of.”

Equally proud is Tahnee Bennett who will be teaching the online Mohawk classes.

Moved to tears, she said she never thought she would be teaching her language at the university level.

Even more special is the fact that she is a second language learner.

“We’ve lost so many first language speakers, I think it’s important to just go ahead and try to speak no matter what level you’re at or if you’re uncomfortable, you have to get uncomfortable to be able to speak the language,” said Bennett. “It’s a healing process because of our residential schools.”

She is encouraged by the signing of the language agreement because it means the language is not just more accessible but it’s safe at FNUniv.

Bennett will be using Brian Maracle’s method of learning the language, which has proven to be successful.

Maracle was at the announcement and said it’s great seeing the Mohawk language resurgence taking place across Turtle Island.

“There are eight universities in the east that teach Mohawk but none of them teach a five-course program so this will be the first,” he said.

The Mohawk language was nearing extinction until second language speakers, including himself, began actively working to revive it and he is seeing an upswing in the number of Mohawk speakers.

He believes the new FNUniv course will only help to advance the language.





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