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**By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News**

Veteran Robin Cote's service in the United States Navy took her across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, followed by a short but memorable stay in Los Angeles and finally back home to Regina. Initially, she set out to see the world to expand her understanding of those around her, and to create a life for herself.

During her travels, Cote realized the more she shared of herself, the more she appreciated home. "Everywhere I went, I dove into the local community," she said. "With people often not being familiar with my culture or where I'm from, I always made an effort to understand the culture of the people in their homeland."

From the Cote First Nation in Treaty 4, Cote began her military life in a rather unorthodox way.

Her desire for a fresh start led her first to Alaska.

Cote then learned about the Jay Treaty and more about how she could utilize it.

The Jay Treaty was signed between Great Britain and the United States in 1794. As part of the agreement, the U.S. recognizes First Nations born in Canada as having the right to freely enter the U.S. for the purpose of employment, study, retirement, investing and or immigration.

This allowed Cote to join the U.S. Navy, which she did in 2006.

"I felt like it would be a good stepping stone," she said. "I didn't know I would be there for more than four years. I didn't think I would enjoy it so much."

She took an aptitude test and although she scored high in mechanics, she decided to serve as a hospital corpsman. In that role she worked at military treatment facilities, hospitals, and research units.

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Robin Cote's Journey: Navy to Hollywood and Back



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"I didn't see myself as a mechanic, but I do know what a voltage regulator is," said Cote.

That knowledge led to several opportunities around the world.

It started with bootcamp and training in Chicago, Ill. before being stationed in Florida.

Then, as part of the U.S. government's War in Afghanistan also known as Operation Enduring Freedom, she was deployed to Kuwait.

Her next stop was Naples, Italy, where she served as a split unit for a year, and a dental assistant for a second year.

From Italy, she was sent to the small tropical island of Guam. During her three-year stint, she was deployed as part of the 2012 Pacific Partnership to Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia.

I learned so much about other cultures and ethnicities," said Cote. "And being in the military, you're family with everyone around you – you're sacrificing your lives together. There's a camaraderie unlike

anything I've ever experienced."

While making lifelong connections, she also discovered very few had any idea about her Indigenous culture or about her homelands.

"That hit me the hardest," said Cote. "At home, you're surrounded by First Nations people. But I looked around in those spaces and I was often the only First Nations person. With people not knowing who we are, it made me feel like we were non-existent in those spaces."

As a way to combat that erasure, she chose to share about who she was and where she came from with the people she met during her travels.

After eight years of active duty, and two years in the reserves, Cote out-processed from the U.S. Navy in base in San Diego, Cali.

"Essentially, it was a weight issue that pushed me out," she said. "We were required to be under a certain weight, but these standards are from like the 1940s or 50s, and they didn't update them until I got out. They didn't incorporate women of different body sizes, women of colour. It felt discriminative...I was the fittest I had ever been in my life. I was doing cross-fit, working out twice a day. But being five pounds over-weight caused issues."

A military trial in San Diego over her minor weight issue ultimately went in her favour, and Cote was able to keep her severance pay.

She refused to let the trial dampen her spirits and decided to pursue another passion – makeup artistry.

Cote enrolled in the Paul Mitchell Hair & Beauty School, studying cosmetology for a year. During that time, while attending workshops, she met celebrity hair guru, William Williams, who connected her in the industry.

Her first celebrity client was Hollywood actor John Leguizamo, who Cote provided makeup for during the press junket for a movie.

"I had the opportunity to meet famous people, to collaborate with other artists," she said. "That's when I realized this is what I should be doing."

While freelancing in LA, Cote enrolled in the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, where she earned her bachelor's degree.

Then the pandemic hit.

"It made me realize that tomorrow is never promised," said Cote. "I wanted to be closer to my family, to reconnect with them and my community."

After a long journey that took her to war torn regions on the other side of the globe to rubbing elbows with the rich and famous in LA, she returned to Saskatchewan in April.

Reconnecting with her cultural roots, while embracing her military experience, Cote decided to run for the South Branch President of the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans Association (SFNVA).

After a brief campaign, an election was held on October 27.

Cote was successful and became the first female to hold the position.

"I think the most important thing out of this opportunity is letting my community know I'm here," she said.

Cote often hears people saying there are no veterans in the community, and she wants to change that misconception because there are others like her out there.

"We're here," she said. "If I'm showing up, then I hope it'll inspire other veterans to come out and represent their communities. It's time we step into this role."

Also elected during the October SFNVA elections was Grand Chief Robin Dawatsare from the English River Dene Nation.



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Canada

Annual ‘Hope Day’ gives identity

By Campbell Stevenson
for Eagle Feather News

The Queen City Wellness Pharmacy hosted a ‘Hope Day ID Clinic’. An initiative to assist many of their relatives (clients) to obtain the necessary identification to acquire housing, medical attention, and different forms of identification.

Sarah Kozusko, manages and operates the Queen City wellness pharmacy, she along her team recognized the need from their clients who required basic but necessary documents.

“If you don’t have ID, you don’t have an onramp into the system,” she said. “You can’t get social services, you can’t see a doctor, you can’t get a job, you can’t get a house... So, we’ve been trying to find ways to get some of those barriers down for years.”

The inaugural ‘ID Clinic’ became a bigger development than initially intended. By 10:05 am, nearly 50 people were lined up.

“Today, what started off with just treaty cards, is now expanded into service Canada coming, Ehealth being on board, SGI...So people will be able to get all the things they need in one day to have an on ramp back into the system.”

This initiative, amongst many others, stemmed from the loss of Vivian “Marjorie” Friday, two years ago. She was a strong advocate, and beacon of light for those experiencing houselessness.

This October, Marjorie would have been celebrating her 63rd birthday.

Her lasting impact continues to be honoured.

Several housing initiatives, and the city of Regina proclaimed Oct. 6th as “HOPE DAY.”

As members of the community, representing all age groups, gathered at the pharmacy, multiple organizations and agencies began assisting the various needs of the public.

SGI, alongside Service Canada, assisted with benefit applications and payments for relatives.

The Newo-Yotina Friendship Centre helped clients fill out applications to obtain their birth certificates and health cards.

The Ochapowace Urban representatives facilitated the issuance of status cards for band members.

Additionally, Indigenous Service Canada (ISC) and the Regina Police Community Engagement were present to help out.

Tyler McMurchy, spokesperson for SGI, expressed gratitude on behalf of SGI for being able to take part in this event,

“I think we really need to give a lot of credit to the Queen City Wellness Pharmacy,” said McMurchy. “By bringing all these different organisations together, to solve some of these issues for people. It’s a really fantastic thing they’re doing.”

In the near future, the pharmacy plans to hold additional ID clinics, with the hopes that these critical services will increasingly collaborate to assist those who require help.

“We need this to be a wider change,” said Kozusko. “So, I hope these pop-up clinics are happening regularly, and having it in a permanent place would be wonderful...As it stands right now, there’s nowhere in the city where you can get everything done...If you’re already living in trauma, you’re maybe not worrying about your follow-up the next day. So, having it all here and making things easy is what I hope to see happen.”

The first Hope’s Day ID Clinic was a success.



The Queen City Wellness Pharmacy, located on the corner of 11th Ave and Broad. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson.)

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Unpacking the Truth: Buffy Sainte-Marie’s Story and the 60s Scoop Legacy

In front of my students in my Indigenous Business in Canada course at the University of Saskatchewan, I asked a simple question: “Has anyone been watching the news lately? What’s the big story?”

The room fell into a dead silence, with eyes darting around. To break the awkwardness, I quickly added a hint: Buffy Sainte-Marie.

The silence that followed was understandable.

Perhaps my students were too young to understand the reference or to know who Buffy Sainte-Marie is. And that’s okay. However, the story I was referring to is significant for this class because it contributes to the larger narrative we’ve been exploring throughout the semester.

At the beginning of the course, we dedicated a lecture to unpacking the unhelpful narratives of First Nations people in the media and how both fictional and non-fictional accounts can contribute to myths and misconceptions about Indigenous people in Canada.

Buffy Sainte-Marie’s story, as it unfolds in the media, is unique and shouldn’t be lumped in with every other “Pretendian” story we’ve heard. It has nuance and stands apart from the rest.

As the dust settles on this topic and it goes through its usual news cycle, an elephant sits on the dance floor between the CBC and Sainte-Marie.

This is the very real story of the ‘60s Scoop and the stories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit babies who were adopted into the homes of settler families as part of an effort to advance colonial policies in Canada.

Some suggest Sainte-Marie’s story appropriates the ‘60s Scoop narrative, and whether this is true or not should be left to the court of public opinion.

The reality, however, is that this story reopens old wounds for those who were victims of the systemic removal from their homes, communities,

and culture through the infamous Adopt Indian Metis (AIM) program.

I can relate to this on a personal level because my mom was one of the ‘60s Scoop babies.

Whenever a story like this emerges, I have a little identity crisis.

Truthfully, I’ve never fully understood where I belong. I’ve grappled with the concept of what it means to be First Nations, even though I lack

a deep connection to my culture. I do have a card with a number issued to me by Indigenous Service Canada, but what does that really mean?

I’ve been fortunate enough to build what I call a technical understanding of my own culture.

I know enough to excel in my work in communications and training. I can articulate my ideas and understandings to leaders, serving as a bridge builder. But sometimes, even that feels a bit fake, like I’m an imposter.

In what world is it acceptable for anyone to feel like an imposter in their own skin?

I’ve had the privilege of meeting other children of ‘60s Scoop babies, and we share a common story.

We wrestle with the same questions and are on a journey to reclaim our identity, understanding that our current reality is also what it means to be a First Nations person in Canada.

The story of Buffy Sainte-Marie is difficult for many to digest, but there is a bigger story to be told, and I hope we can all see that.

While she claims a story of adoption for herself, there are many of us who have been thrust into this narrative by systems beyond our control.

There are many truths to the story of Buffy Sainte-Marie, but not all of them belong to her. Some belong to those who feel like outsiders in their own cultures – ‘60s Scoop babies and their children.



The Borne
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Indigenous Innovation Brewing in Every Cup



Sean Willy, CEO Des Nedhe (Right), Alisha Esmail, Founder of Road Coffee (Left). (Photo provided by Solstice Coffee.)

By Campbell Stevenson
for Eagle Feather News

The first coffee company in Canada with a fully Indigenous supply chain aims to revolutionize the Canadian coffee scene.

Solstice Coffee, a business partnership between the Des Nedhe Group and Road Coffee, is deeply rooted in social justice and sustainability.

Alisha Esmail, founder of Road Coffee, a unique fair-trade roastery based out of Saskatoon, wanted to further her work of ethical sourcing and production within the coffee industry.

“We wanted to create a brand that made sense for the impact we’re doing, and really represented the connection from farm to cup, the connection from Indigenous farmer to Indigenous people here at home,” said Esmail. “We’re working towards economic Reconciliation.”

Her drive to address the inequalities in developing nations eventually brought her attention to the growing industries here in Saskatchewan; specifically, the Indigenous communities thriving around Saskatoon.

“We’re not just impacting coffee farmers overseas, but we have a specific footprint back here in our own backyard,” said Esmail.

She recognized her unique position, and the opportunity she possessed to help create solutions that could empower Indigenous entrepreneurs.

This journey led her to collaborate with The Des Nedhe Group. Born from an entrepreneurial spirit, Sean Willy, President and CEO of The Des Nedhe group, a business corporation 100% owned by English River First Nation, saw great potential in what Esmail and Road Coffee were doing for the industry.

“We were introduced to Alisha through a mutual friend...and we just hit it off,” said Willy. “We saw what she was doing with Indigenous farmers in central America, and just with my connections and with my experience we saw that we could work with Alisha and amplify what she is currently doing.”

Esmail’s involvement and passion for Solstice Coffee brought her to reserve land, in order to work closely with the Indigenous community.

“She moved out here on reserve land, [with that] we can start employing Indigenous people where we would create one of the first Indigenous complete supply chains in the coffee industry,” said Willy.

“We can create a whole new entity called Solstice to tap into corporate Canada, to put more money into reconciliation, to put more mon-

ey into procurement channels to support indigenous entrepreneurs.”

The Solstice Coffee facility is built on the English River Urban Reserve, which will help to provide more jobs to the people who call the community home.

Cups of Solstice coffee can be purchased at the Petro-Canada and the Liquor store located in the Indigenous-owned business park, located directly east of Saskatoon.

“We’re always a big believer that, First Nations need their own source of revenue to actually path their journey towards self-determination, you can’t rely on government funding for that.” Said Willy,

“The whole goal is about growing that business to create more employment and create more revenues for us.”

Starting from Indigenous farmers, every cup of Solstice Coffee will embody the spirit of renewal and positive change.

What Differs Solstice Coffee from others companies is their sourcing model and their impact,

“Right now, around the world, coffee production is going down due to of climate change and farms being abandoned because parents want their kids to go get an education and have a better life and not suffer like they have for generations,” said Esmail.

“So, unless we change how the supply chain works your morning cup of coffee is not going to exist the way it does in 10 to 15 years from now.”

Beyond offering a genuine coffee experience, Solstice Coffee will wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to support the growth and prosperity of Indigenous communities throughout Canada and beyond.

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Indigenous Representation in the Television and Film Industry: A Promising Shift



Cheyenna Sapp in costume on set of *Acting Good* (supplied by Cheyenna Sapp)

*By Bee Bird
for Eagle Feather News*

Historically, Indigenous peoples have been underrepresented in the film and television industry and this lack of representation has perpetuated stereotypes and marginalized their voices and narratives - but things are changing.

Cheyenna Sapp, an Indigenous actress from Little Pine First Nation, is helping to create that change.

Her contributions offer hope for a promising future for other emerging Indigenous creatives.

While pursuing her BA in Indigenous Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, Sapp was also involved in stand-up comedy and wanted to improve her stage presence.

She decided to join the wîcêhtowin Theater, where she discovered her passion for theater performance.

Last year, she was cast in "Acting Good," an APTN Original and CTV Comedy series set in the fictional fly-in community of Grouse Lake First Nation in Northern Manitoba.

Sapp just finished the taping of the second season of the series, which is directed by Darlene Naponse, Micheal Greyeyes, and Eric Toth.

According to Sapp, the industry is witnessing an increasing number of opportunities for Indigenous creatives behind the scenes.

"We're seeing a surge in the industry with incredibly talented Indigenous screenwriters, directors, and producers," she said. "That's going to really help in creating more of an authentic representation of who we are in the media and showing people that we are still here, we are still alive, and we are still creating."

Sapp says the "Acting Good" series offers a unique approach to broadcast television.

"A lot of the stories I've seen on film and television usually have an element of trauma involved in it but not with this show," she said. "It's funny, it's silly, but most importantly, it's Indigenous led."

We are natural comedians, said Sapp.

"Our people are just naturals at standup comedy, and I want to see more of our people in this sector because we are so funny and humor is vital to (our) survival," she said.

Sapp hopes to raise awareness about the great qualities of Indigenous Peoples.

"We are resilient, we are funny, and we deserve to be valued and respected," she said.

Apart from comedy, Sapp plans to venture into filmmaking to create meaningful content about her family.

"I want to try my hand at filmmaking and create documentaries," she said.

As she receives more acting auditions, she also hopes to create an Indigenous sketch comedy T.V. show in the future.

The need for Indigenous actors will continue to rise as more and more Indigenous people enter the industry.

Sapp encourages other up-and-coming actresses and creative people to enter the film industry.

"Just keep going, and never give up," she said. "Your stories are necessary. Your stories are so important and they need to be heard."

The producers have just wrapped up the second season of "Acting Good" and Sapp is looking forward to seeing how it will progress in the future.

"I can't wait to see what the writers do with the story line, where the characters go, and to see it all unfold."

Season two of "Acting Good" airs on CTV Comedy Channel on Mondays at 10:30 PM CT

Check your local listings for exact times.

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Province recruits Indigenous post-secondary graduates



Wavell Starr, director of Indigenous Relations at CIC, is on the search for post secondary students for a new internship program (photo supplied by Starr)

*By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News*

A new internship program gives recent graduates an opportunity to potentially secure long-term careers in the Crown sector.

Crown Investments Corporation (CIC) has created Crown Career Pathways (CCP) for post-secondary Indigenous students interested in working within the Crown sector, provincial government, or the private sector in Saskatchewan.

“We want to increase Indigenous representation within the Crowns, and work towards a representative workforce,” said Wavell Starr, Director of Indigenous Relations at CIC.

CCP will see 22 interns being hired (11 per year) over a two-year period in positions with SaskPower, SaskEnergy, SaskTel, SaskWater, SGI, Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan, and CIC itself.

The pilot program is a \$1.2 million commitment from CIC over the two years.

It was created in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Call to Action 92, which calls for increased employment opportunities in the public sector for Indigenous people.

“Creating Crown Career Pathways demonstrates the Crowns’ commitment to support Truth and Reconciliation in Saskatchewan,” said Dustin Duncan, Minister of CIC. “This internship program is an important step in ensuring Indigenous people are represented in our workforce and have quality opportunities across Saskatchewan.”

Graduates eligible for the internship program will be required to have completed a program at the University of Saskatchewan, University of Regina, First Nations University of Canada, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Gabriel Dumont Institute, or the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

In 2021, Indigenous representation in the crown sector was at 11.1%.

Starr hopes this program will boost those numbers.

“The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission’s target for a representative workforce for Indigenous people is 14 percent,” he said. “The goal is to gain that 14 percent. We have been making some strides, but we have a ways to go.”

Interns will be paid through CIC, but the hiring and management of the interns themselves will be the responsibility of each Crown, explains Starr.

Some of the internship positions include an Innovation and Collaboration associate, and a Project Coordinator at SaskTel; two Analyst positions at SaskPower; Human Resources generalist at SaskGaming; and Administrator of Indigenous Relations at CIC.

“The target is to have 75 percent of those interns remained employed within Saskatchewan, with 50 per cent of those interns remaining employed within the crown workforce,” said Starr.

Following the two-year pilot, a review will be conducted to measure outcomes and determine future program options.

Starr said there are discussions about potentially expanding the program following the two-year pilot.

The new interns will have access to career supports and professional development. The goal being to help build a healthy Indigenous workforce in Saskatchewan.

“It’s a good opportunity for recent Indigenous grads to get some experience within their field, as well as have the opportunity to network and grow with other interns,” said Starr. “We’re hoping this extra element of care will raise engagement levels and keep our young graduates remaining employed here in Saskatchewan.”

Internship positions began in October 2023.

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Beloved Café returns to FNUniv campus

By Campbell Stevenson
of Eagle Feather News

After a long hiatus, Kôhkom Bea's Café has re-opened its doors to the First Nations University of Canada's (FNUniv) Regina community.

Located on the east side of the FNUniv building, Kôhkom Bea's has been either closed or operated by outside vendors for years.

During the opening, many gathered outside the Café's doors to commemorate this historic place on campus.

Sheila Pelletier, Director of the paminawasowin Child Care Centre on campus, has been attempting to revive the café for quite some time. "We need something here; I know Henderson's moved in for a while but we haven't had something of our own for quite some time," said Pelletier.

Her mission began when she noticed food insecurity had risen significantly for students and staff.

"I want Kôhkom Bea's to be a place that can provide food for students and staff," said Pelletier. "Everyone experiences difficulties in life, and sometimes accessing food can be a major issue for students and even teachers.

In recognizing the needs of her campus community, she wholeheartedly engaged in bringing back this university staple.

One of the most crucial aspects of re-opening Kôhkom Bea's was to add more emphasis on who it was named after-Beatrice Lavallee.

She was an Elder who played a vital role at FNUniv, and even when it was still known as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) prior to 2003.

Roland Kaye, the Elder's helper at FNUniv, recalls how essential she was to the fabric of the community.

"She would always help others, even when the University was closed, her work continued after - hours," said Kaye. "There was never a time where she wasn't helping out her community.

["We are never alone because the Grandfathers and Grandmothers are always with us."]

-Beatrice Lavallee

As the University re-opens this beloved place of community, it should be mentioned that this is a full-circle moment.

"The plaque outside of the Café [Honouring Lavallee] is made out of the



Cutting the ribbon on opening day. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson.)

same wood that the doorway of the tipi in the middle of our campus are made of." Said Pelletier.

"By providing hot meals and daily specials, while embracing traditional food items, I just want students and staff to have a place to come to for food. Even more, I just want to be able to keep our doors open for a long time, not just one year then we're gone. I want this place to be a mainstay on our campus."

Kôhkom Bea's Café officially opened its doors on October 27.

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Treaty 4 Education Alliance Championing Language Revitalization

*By Campbell Stevenson
for Eagle Feather News*

The Treaty Education Alliance held a conference at the Queensbury Convention Centre in Regina on Oct. 20th.

The Treaty Education Alliance provides services to their member nations, by advocating for the advancement of treaty rights education.

On Oct. 20th, the focus was Indigenous language revitalizing, and honouring those who have dedicated their lives to this crucial cause.

Faith Watson, Executive Director of the Treaty Education Alliance shared the importance of this mission, and how overwhelming the support has been.

“Our languages were lost due to the impact of residential schools, and it speaks to the importance and it shows us how important focusing on the needs is for education.... it’s a packed house in there, and we have many people that believe this work is important.” Said Watson.

According to Watson, the road to reconcile with Indigenous languages nearing extinction has proved difficult.

In order to reimplement teachings based on Indigenous tradition, culture and language, Watson advocates for a major reform of the education system.



Terrance LittleTent Hoop dancing at the Treaty Education Alliance Conference 2023. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson.)

an important component of First Nations culture. Without language, we have no culture.” Said Cote.



Faith Watson, Executive Director of the Treaty Education Alliance. (Photo by Campbell Stevenson)

“I think for us to see success, we need to deconstruct the whole idea of education. The Westernized idea of education does not work for us, so just totally deconstructing that and putting it back together in a way that will suit our needs and our culture, our traditions and our languages.” Said Watson.

Amongst the large crowd gathered were speakers who dedicate their lives and work to pursue the renewal of Indigenous languages.

Lorenna Lynn Cote, author, educator and returning to school to pursue her PhD, has been at the forefront of teaching anishinaabemowin for many years.


For her, language is essential to Indigenous identity,

“When a First Nation language goes extinct, then so does the culture. And that’s the way of life, beliefs, and history that the language carries within them. They all go away. English is replacing our languages.” Said Cote

During her presentation, Cote provided extensive charts and Isits of Indigenous languages nearing extinction.

Despite large numbers of Anishinaabe communities in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, she spoke on the decline of speakers, and those who practice tradition in their lives.

“Common among First Nations people is the view that language and culture are interwoven and inseparable. Languages and identity are



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Exclusive Perspective

Buffy: A Relative and Ally

By Blair Stonechild

In 2012 I wrote the biography called Buffy Sainte-Marie: It’s My Way. My interests were both professional and personal.

As a university student in the 1970s, I had been greatly influenced by Buffy’s songs such as “Now That the Buffalo’s Gone,” which aroused awareness of Indigenous issues.

I knew of individuals that are mutual friends, and she claimed ties to the local Piapot First Nation.

I was searching for a research project.

No one had written her biography, and I was thrilled when she agreed to cooperate.

I conducted interviews and we exchanged several communications.

I did travel to Wakefield, Massachusetts as part of the effort to learn about her past. There I did hear the suggestion that she could have been born there.

So, I consulted with an expert in that state’s adoption practices and was told that at that time there existed a practice of creating birth certificates of convenience. It was believed that this would shield both adoptee and adoptive parents from unwanted questions.

That was satisfactory for me, as my intent in pursuing the biography was to tell Buffy’s inspiring story of her talent, activism and achievements.

The revelations about her birth record now present a challenge for all who have followed and appreciated her over six decades.

For myself, I think that Buffy truly felt that she had some sort of Indigenous roots.

Lenny Bayrd, a local well-known Indigenous crafts maker, influenced her as a child. Beyond that, it is difficult to assess any stories that Buffy’s mother may have told her, or why Buffy gravitated so strongly to an Indigenous identity when she left her home and began singing.

It is clear that early on Buffy was confused about her specific Indigenous identity.

But what impresses me is the passion and strength of Buffy’s attraction to Indigenous identity and causes.

In her defence, she grew up in the 1940s and 1950s when “the only good Indian was a dead one.”

I remember this from being in residential school in the 1950s and watching the then popular cowboy and Indian movies on television.

What we saw was a constant spectacle of our people being shot and killed – and all for the sake of entertainment! So, it was not a propitious time to identify as Indigenous. It took courage for Buffy to stand up the way she did. There was no guarantee that she would become rich in such a role, although her singing talent and visibility in the burgeoning Greenwich folk scene soon made her so.

The other thing about that era is that people were not so cognizant about issues of Indigenous identity, let alone cultural appropriation.

In Buffy’s generation, there were few Indigenous people in a position to attain the role she chose to fill. Her pioneering work in this area occurred in the context of working alongside existing Indigenous activists including the American Indian Movement.

To her credit, she contributed her public profile and financial resources, as well as put her personal safety on the line during protests from the 1978 Longest Walk to Washington DC, to occupation of Alcatraz, and standoff at Wounded Knee.

Her creation of initiatives such as the Nihewan Foundation and Cradleboard Project demonstrate that she was genuinely committed to improving Indigenous well-being.

Whatever her motives, one cannot deny the commitment and sacrifices Buffy has made.

It would have been far more lucrative if she had just stuck to singing and focussed on selling records. Being banned on radio at the behest of the White House over her protest songs shows how effective her influence was, as well as how her career was impeded.

After a hiatus, she did make a comeback. Her long-term success was based on Buffy’s raw talent.

For example, her 1982 Academy Award was not due to any Indigenous qualification. I do not believe that Buffy’s primary motivations were money and fame, but given her energy and talent, these things were inevitable.

Some may compare Buffy to Grey Owl.

I recall elder John Tootoosis, who met Grey Owl, saying that he said that he knew that Grey Owl was not authentic because he did not speak Cree nor did he place priority on ceremonies.

In Buffy’s case, her immersion in Cree culture, language, history and spirituality is laudable.

She has spent time learning from Elders and has engaged in ceremonies.

She understands our spiritual principles including values such as courage and generosity, and the value of positive relationships.

She invested the time to foster an impressive array of relationships, especially with her adopted family on Piapot, where she has maintained contact since the early 1960s.

Unfortunately, her choices have come at the expense of her relationships with the Sainte-Marie family.

Today, here is little excuse to masquerade one’s identity when it is now common knowledge how vital it is to take authentic Indigenous identity seriously.

So how are we to view Buffy now?

I have a new book coming out called Challenge to Civilization: Indigenous Wisdom and the Future.

I explore the role that Indigenous people need to play in the future.

I argue that returning to Indigenous ways and wisdom and its respect for the gifts of the Creator, is the only viable path for long term human survival.

One of the main points I make is that while it is essential that Indigenous peoples play the leading role, progress will not be possible without the help of non-Indigenous allies.

They hold much of the power and can change mainstream society from the inside.

Buffy has clearly been an ally, and an important one.

Could she have achieved as much without an Indigenous persona? I don’t know. But what she has achieved is important to recognize and respect as her actions have brought tangible benefits for us Indigenous folks.

Perhaps the term “Indigenous” needs to be more closely examined.

It is convenient that the colonial government of Canada has created a whole array of legal terms that define who is or isn’t considered to be Indigenous.

In my research, I have come to the conclusion that what is also critical in defining who could be considered “Indigenous,” apart from solely biology or belonging to a specific territory, is who adheres to Indigenous spiritual values – being stewards of the land, and living values such as courage, generosity and respectfulness.

The spokespersons for the Piapot family put it powerfully when they stated: “To us, that [traditional adoption] holds far more weight than any paper documentation or colonial record keeping ever could.”

Yes, facts are important. But can myth be even more powerful, especially when it is driven by passion and inner conviction?

Blair Stonechild is a professor at the First Nations University of Canada since the 1970s and has authored several books including Loyal Til Death, Pursuing the New Buffalo, The New Buffalo, Buffy Sainte-Marie: It’s My Way, The Knowledge Seeker and Loss of Indigenous Eden. The opinions shared are those of the author.

A Dynamic duo is ready for business



One Hoop Consulting Team members Cadmus Delorme (left) and Thomas Benjoe (right) are excited about their new venture (photo

*By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News*

Two high-profile young Indigenous leaders in business and politics have decided to join forces and create a new consulting company dedicated to economic Reconciliation.

“We need to create companies driven on hope,” said Cadmus Delorme, founder and CEO of One Hoop Consulting. “Indigenous people are hurting right now, and as Indigenous people, our best means is hope. (We) have hope for a stronger tomorrow.”

He launched the company in October and has been joined by Thomas Benjoe the past president and CEO of File Hills Qu’Appelle Developments.

“The world is changing so fast and One Hoop is going to lift the ceiling (and) Tom and I know how to lift ceilings,” said Delorme who is the former Chief of Cowessess First Nation.

He said One Hoop embraces Indigenous heritage and its three pillars are: Indigenous consulting, management consulting, and government relations.

“A lot of Indigenous participation has been done from a perspective of asking for our participation or approval, but never from a place of: ‘What do you think we should be doing?’ ” said Benjoe. “What we end up with are policies and process that are misaligned and can create further hardships for Indigenous business...It’s important for us to have a stronger voice and actually guide, with Indigenous leadership, on what those solutions need to be comprised of.”

Both Delorme and Benjoe want to advance Canadians’ understanding of economic Reconciliation, and support meaningful relationship building between corporations, government, and Indigenous communities.

Delorme said, during his tenure as chief, he found that Indigenous nations want economic growth, but spent most of the time managing poverty.

“Seventy-five per cent of the time we manage poverty, and 25 percent is left for economic growth and innovation,” he said. “The poverty isn’t financial – it’s mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual poverty because of what we inherited.”

Delorme said there are businesses and government agencies out there that want Indigenous people to succeed in economics, but there is a lack of

connection happening.

“One Hoop is here to help lift business and Reconciliation,” he said. “To bridge both worldviews and understand that in the end, everyone has the same goals.”

That spirit of togetherness is what motivated the business name, said Benjoe.

“The understanding of the hoop is universal across all Indigenous nations,” he explained. “It brings us together. So, when we talk about organizations working with One Hoop, it’s being able to come into our circle, being able to work together and build understanding, relationships, and change together.”


Benjoe and Delorme not only bring extensive experience to One Hoop, but a personal bond that has connected them since their days as students at the First Nations University of Canada.


They’ve worked together and supported one another over the years, and felt it was time to bring together their strengths and collaborate on something special.

“We’re brothers. We’ve been doing this stuff for a long time,” said Benjoe. “We’ve been able to build careers – Cadmus in politics, and myself in business and banking. We’ll be able to bring those experiences and work with one another to bring different perspectives. It’s only going to get stronger as we go along.”


Delorme said their work in economic Reconciliation will span borders, as countries like Canada, the United States, and Australia each have their own journey. Their network already consists of local, national, and international clients, but Delorme said their hearts will always be in Treaty 4.

“It’s our hope that at One Hoop, will make sure Indigenous people are not just at the front and middle levels of business in Canada. We deserve to be at the top, to be equity owners,” said Delorme. “That’s where we should have been at the beginning. We’re going to make sure we get there. And once we do, that’s what Reconciliation is about.”





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*Business Profile:***Bannock Express: From Pandemic Risk to Culinary Triumph**

Rachel Smith founder of Bannock Express will appear on Dragon's Den this season she holds a certificate of her participation (photo supplied by Smith)

**By NC Raine
of Eagle Feather News**

Do Dragons love bannock? We'll find out in a few months.

There's been a gradual bannock takeover in Saskatchewan thanks to Rachel Smith, owner of Bannock Express.

It all started as a catering company in 2016, when Smith decided to take a chance and open a restaurant during the pandemic.

The risk paid off, with Smith operating a successful restaurant on 22nd Street in Saskatoon.

But it didn't stop there.

From her business she began distributing her bannock mix across the province and has made it into several local grocery stores and on-reserve businesses.

Most recently, Smith taped an episode of Dragon's Den, which will

air sometime at the end of the upcoming season.

"I always found a passion cooking in the kitchen," said Smith, member of Zagime Anishinabek (formerly Sakimay First Nations). "My healing journey was through cooking."

Smith grew up in foster care and in residential schools, bouncing around from family to family, she said.

By the age of 13, she became a permanent ward, and was sent out of province until she eventually aged out of care.

Smith returned to Saskatchewan and reconnected with family – which is when her healing began.

"I think food is part of our identity," said Smith. "It helps with healing, it helps us with our resiliency and being proud of who we are."

Her restaurant, Bannock Express, has become a go-to spot in Saskatoon for bannock lovers.

It has become an Indigenous 'destination restaurant', with people flying in from out of town often making her place their first stop.

"It's really grown to have a diverse mix of people," said Smith. "We've had people from all over Canada come to check out our restaurant."

The popularity of her bannock motivated Smith to package the mix and sell it.

Her bannock mix can be found in dozens of stores across the province, including Co-op gas stations, No Frills as well as several on-reserve businesses and will soon expand to include Sobeys and Superstore.

Smith is planning to enter the Alberta market soon and hopes to eventually include all of Canada. Until then people can order online through her website.

She said it's important for Indigenous food, like bannock, to be accessible to the Indigenous people and communities across the country.

"It's really hard to get bannock, especially up north where food security is an issue, and where ingredients like flour and baking powder are so expensive," she said. "So, I think being able to get food like this is an important aspect of food security."

Earlier this year, she was in Toronto to pitch her business to investors on Dragon's Den.

Smith applied several times in the past before finally securing a spot on the show.

"It was surreal," she said. "But I wasn't nervous at all. I worked hard to be in this position and practiced my pitch. I didn't even notice the cameras running around me."

Smith is contractually unable to comment on the results of the episode, but regardless of the outcome, she said it was a valuable experience.

"I'm so glad I was able to do it," she said. "And I encourage everyone to watch it because it'll be a great episode."

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