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"How it made its way back to the place it was created is a story made for the movies."

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

The moment the jacket arrived back home is one the Pechawis family will never forget. Gone almost 80 years, it was like reuniting with a long lost family member. When Katie Pechawis slipped it on, remembering the jacket from when she was a little girl, the weight of that moment brought her to tears. "It was overwhelming, it made me flutter," said Leslie Pechawis, who has been on the Mistawasis First Nation band council for 17 years. "When I first saw that jacket, I felt like I was holding my Kokum, because her hands were on that jacket." The jacket was hand-made by Leslie Pechawis' Kokum, Suzzette Pechawis, eight decades

ago, but it took a long, winding journey to return. How it made its way back to the place it was created is a story made for the movies. "I feel like I'm part of this jacket's narrative," said Cami Ryan, who returned it. "I simply was its caretaker for some time." To Ryan's knowledge, the jacket was gifted many years ago from Suzzette to Ryan's grandmother, Barbara Thompson – a non-Indigenous family who lived near the Mistawasis First Nation. "That's the piece of the story that's lost to time. We didn't know what happened with these women, but we can assume they were friends because they lived in a small community," said Ryan.

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July 2023 is our
Summer Theme
August 2023 Issue:
Sports, Back-to-School, Powwow

If only it could talk, what stories would the old jacket tell?

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The jacket became somewhat of a family heirloom and was always around, said Ryan.

She said her grandmother was known to wear it around the farm, even while milking cows.

But the jacket was nearly sold at a garage sale when Thompson was preparing to move to a retirement home.

Recognizing its significance, Ryan's aunt and uncle bought it for \$25, to keep it from being lost forever, she said.

Years later, the jacket was passed down to Ryan from her aunt and uncle.

"You need to keep this jacket because I think it belongs to you and your family," she recalled them saying.

And for years, the jacket was part of her family.

Ryan's daughter, a singer-songwriter, wore it on stage several times.

The jacket came with them when they moved to Missouri, and has been across the border until this summer, when Ryan decided it needed to go home.

"It felt right because it never felt like it really belonged to us," said Ryan. "I know my grandmother cherished that jacket – and I believe she cherished it because of her relationship with Kokum Suzzette."

"When it found its way home, it felt like a little miracle. It's just funny that we figured it out over Facebook, of all places."

Ryan decided to post a photo of the jacket on a local Facebook group, which caught the attention of the Pechawis family, who identified the jacket as the work of Suzzette Pechawis.

"Someone gave (Ryan) my number and she phoned me, telling me about the jacket and telling me that she wants to return it to our family,"

said Leslie. "That really made my day,"

Now back with the family, the jacket is being appreciated not only for its importance to the family, but for the craft that went into it. The leather has faded, but the Cree beadwork is still vibrant and intricate.

"It's a very special jacket," said Leslie. "It's like a work of art."

The Pechawis family is still undecided on what to do with the jacket, and are considering having it placed in a museum.

The decision will be made as a family, said Leslie.

The families are now connected through the journey of this special jacket, plan on meeting face-to-face this summer, and perhaps reestablishing the connection their ancestors once had, said Ryan.

"I'm just so thankful to have it," said Leslie. "This is something precious that I will treasure forever. Something special that has brought our family together. It's a wonderful feeling to have it back. And I'm just so thankful to (Cami Ryan) for making the effort to get it to us."



Jacket made by Suzzette Pechawis, gifted to Barbara Thompson, around 80 years ago. (Photo by Julie Vincent Photography)



Barbara Thompson wearing the jacket, with her daughter (Cami Ryan's mother) in 1950. (Photo by Cami Ryan)



Katie Pechawis wearing the jacket she hadn't seen in 80 years (Photo by Leslie Pechawis)



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Entrepreneur is building a future by helping others build their businesses

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Nick Basaraba is the type of guy who turns lemons into lemonade. Or, somewhat more accurately, turns lemons into internet traffic.

Faced with the plight of so many during and after the height of the pandemic, the 25-year-old, struggled to find steady employment. He took matters into his own hands, Basaraba dove into entrepreneurship by starting his own search engine optimization (SEO) business.

About a year in, the business has grown more than the young Métis entrepreneur could have imagined.

“It’s been growing so fast over the past year,” he said. “I fell in love with this business and being able to help out other business owner achieve a higher level of success.”

SEO is the process of improving the quantity and quality of website traffic from search engines, essentially bringing more potential customers to your page. Basaraba’s company specifically focuses on SEO for construction contractors. Focusing on construction contractors has allowed Basaraba to fine tune strategies and solutions for one specific sector.

At the time of publication, Basaraba’s company was undergoing some structural changes, including an impending name change, and thus his company’s prior name is withheld on request.

“Growing up in Prince Albert, my dad owned his own business and was a hard worker, so I grew up with that same work ethic and being self-motivated,” he said. “I chose this business because we saw a huge gap in that space. A lot of contractors have a hard time getting work (without referrals) so there was a huge opportunity in that space.”

A recent graduate of the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), Basaraba changed gears and began taking online SEO courses, but credits his immersion into culture as the reason for his success.

“I think learning who I am and where I come from has helped me succeed in business and life,” said Basaraba. “I feel like I’m following in my ancestor’s footsteps and pursuing that part of my Métis identity – which is about being self-sufficient and sovereign and creating opportunities for

ourselves,” said Basaraba.”

Another one of his driving forces is sports. His accomplishments include playing softball for Team Canada; winning bronze at the World Championships in the USA in 2016; being named Athlete of the Year in Prince Albert in 2016; and being named an All-Star while playing for Team Saskatchewan, to name a few.

“Sports is a great avenue and expression for my negative experiences in life,” said Basaraba. “I think it’s an important outlet and a good way to express yourself. My hope is to grow my business really, big so I can give back to the community so everyone can experience the joy and feeling of peace that comes with being involved in sports.”

He’s currently constructing some philanthropic plans, which centre on providing support and positive experiences for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. As a new father to a one-year-old daughter, Basaraba said providing for those younger generations is all he needs to keep pushing himself and his business forward.

“The main idea of what I’m doing is to inspire young people,” he said. “I’m just focusing on being able to give back to the youth, give them more resources, give them a good role model, and pay it forward. My ancestors gave up their lives so we could have a better life, so I think it’s my obligation to pay it forward.”



Nick Basaraba, owner of an SEO business based out of Prince Albert, hopes to grow his business to give back to young people. (Photo by Nick Basaraba)



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Graduates are all set to take off

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

New heights are being reached for current and future students of the Aircraft Maintenance Engineering program at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) including recent graduate Dominic Worme.

The 20-year-old from Kawacatoose First Nation said the program gave him more than he expected.

"It was really interesting to learn about aviation, how everything works, all the systems," said Worme. "It gives you knowledge and lets you do things you never thought you'd do."

The two-year program, delivered at the Saskatoon Aviation Learning Centre provides students with the knowledge and skills required to maintain, repair, and overhaul aircraft in accordance with Transport Canada's safety standards.

"It's a bit sad that it's now done, to be honest," said Worme. "Just the relationships you build with your classmates and the fun you had in the hangar. I think we'll all miss it."

The course challenged him, as he held down a full-time job as a ramp lead at Executive Aviation, while being a full-time student, but he rose to the occasion.

The weekly tests were tough, but the environment created by SIIT made him always feel supported.

"The program heads were all First Nation, and they would talk to you a lot about culture, or tell stories, or even tell us a

Cree word," said Worme. "It felt like being in my community. People there reminded me of people back in my home reserve. It made it easier to settle in."

What drew him to choose this career path was being able to obtain his license which means he can work anywhere and see the world.

The sky is the limit for Worme.

He's currently trying to decide between joining the air force or working in Saskatchewan, but either way, he knows when he starts his career in aircraft maintenance, he'll be ready.

"They really emphasize that they don't want to send out people who don't know exactly what they're doing," said Worme. "They make sure you're ready to work on your first day on the job."

The success of this program, now in its twelfth year, is overwhelmingly high.

"Around 70-to-90 per cent of our graduates every year are finding employment after convocation," said Jon McEvoy, Program Head at SIIT. "Sometimes those rates are even higher."

He contributes much of the program's success rates to a thorough immersion into, not only the foundational knowledge behind aircraft engineering, but the practical knowledge derived from many hours of hands-on training.

The goal is to have the students ready to work from their first day on the job, said McEvoy.

Another contributing factor is the emphasis put on the student's culture and identity.

"Students often come into the program with anxieties about being away from their home, their communities, and their support systems," said McEvoy. "So, what we do is try to provide them with cultural supports, including having Elders available to them anytime they need."

Earlier this year, the federal government announced a \$1-million support for the SIIT Aircraft Maintenance Engineering program.

The funding will go towards the development and delivery of a preparation program to remove barriers and create pathways toward licensing for Indigenous people and women entering the industry. It will also be used to help build the capacity to introduce an Avionic program and update the classroom. The renovations will mean the number of seats in the current program will double so instead of 18 students there will be room for 36.

One way SIIT recruits candidates is by hosting summer innovation camps on First Nations as a way to engage youth in science and technology. Past camps had youth flying the SIIT aircraft simulator and working on a Robinson helicopter.




Dominic Worme (right) receiving his diploma from program head Jon McEvoy at the Aircraft Maintenance Engineering facility in the Saskatoon Aviation Learning Centre in Saskatoon. (Photo by Dominic Worme)




Dominic Worme during his official graduation ceremony in June. (Photo by Shannon Worme)

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Eczema the diabetes of dermatology

By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News

Canada’s first Indigenous dermatologist, Dr. Rachel Asiniwasis, is looking to understand why so many Indigenous people have uncontrolled eczema.

“Is it because, genetically, Indigenous people are more prone to skin disease? Unfortunately, that’s something that there’s no information on,” said the dermatologist who is also a member of Muscowpetung Saulteaux Nation. “I would argue, that in my experience, the conditions seem strikingly more severe, especially in remote communities where there are more barriers to receiving care.”

Atopic dermatitis, or eczema, is a well-known skin condition, but Asiniwasis said, it’s actually far more serious than most people realize.

Eczema is a condition that causes dry, itchy, and inflamed skin. It is most common in young children but can occur at any age and is chronic with regular flares.

“I call eczema the ‘diabetes of dermatology’, because its the most common chronic skin condition that is inflammatory,” she said. “There’s lots of misconceptions that it’s just a skin problem. But because of the skin barrier being impaired, patients with eczema are unable to hold water and moisture



Dr. Rachel Asiniwasis, Canada’s first Indigenous dermatologist, wants greater resources given to the under-researched issue of eczema in Indigenous communities.(Photo by Ashley Emmens)

in their skin and are prone to developing infections.”

The side affects of eczema can run much deeper.

Patients sometimes experience constant itchy skin that can bleed and disturb sleep. The condition can lead to depression and anxiety, as well as decreased performance at work and school, explained Asiniwasis.

In addition, eczema is linked to the development of asthma and allergies down the road, she said.

Research shows that eczema can also affect the inside of the body and may even affect bone health or even cause cardiovascular disease.

“You can imagine, it can really influence people in their career choices, it’s a really impactful disease,” said Asiniwasis. “If you ignore eczema and children get infected, their skin can thicken, and they can end up with mental



Dr. Rachel Asiniwasis uses a dermatoscope to detect skin irregularities on her father Blair Stonechild. She is currently studying eczema and its prevalence among Indigenous populations. (Photo by Ashley Emmens)

health issues.”

About 90 per cent of those with eczema develop conditions before the age of five.

Data is limited for specific impacts on Indigenous communities, but Asiniwasis said the national average for Indigenous youth is about 10 per cent. But she’s seeing around 16 per cent in Saskatchewan communities, with eczema affecting as much as 25 per cent of youth in northern and remote communities.

Jennifer McGillis, a Métis and First Nations woman from Regina, has dealt with eczema for most of her life, starting when she was around eight years old.

“I used to have it on the back of my legs and arms, so when I would wear shorts, I would get bullied because they didn’t know what it was,” she said.

McGillis still suffers from the condition, with itchy patches on the top of her hands. She said her children and grandchildren also have eczema, including two-year-old grandchildren who have itchy breakouts, cannot use many kinds of soap or detergent, and sometimes cannot wear diapers or clothes entirely.

She said none of the treatment she’s received from family physicians has been ineffective.

“I’ve always been told to go to a dermatologist because the doctor didn’t know (how to treat the case),” said McGillis. “I have three different types of cream from the doctor, none of which really work.”

So, what needs to change to address this issue affecting so many young Indigenous people?

Asiniwasis said it starts with engaging Indigenous communities and empowering them in these kinds of projects, as there is a lack of representation of Indigenous people in these studies.

“We’re missing information on the experiences and values of Indigenous patients. We need to have hear their stories and expand beyond just numbers,” she said. “We need to learn about the barriers and determinants of health and talk about solutions.”

The barriers to treating eczema are vast such as: A lack of access to health-care for patients in remote communities; Overwhelming instructions on how to care for the condition; Both frontline workers and patients downplaying the condition; as well as language issues.

“I hear very often from my patients that ‘my family doctor didn’t have time to talk about my skin condition, (the doctor) didn’t know what to do, or dismissed it outright’,” said Asiniwasis.

Indigenous leaders, healthcare workers, patients, and researchers need to engage with each other, said Asiniwasis, to develop strategies to address this issue.

“We need to engage communities and document it as best we can. I think we all need to come together and look at this closer,” she said. “That way, policy makers have to address it.”

Reconciliation Ally

By Memory Mcleod
for Eagle Feather News

Those attending the 2023 Treaty 4 gathering may be able to jump onto a trap line and try your luck in bagging a beaver or two!

In the spirit of reconciliation, Andre Boutin-Maloney, a teacher at Bert Fox Community High School created a game to bring the past alive for students. The game is based on the Fur Trade and was developed originally to bring Canadian history into a high school financial literacy class.



Andre Boutin-Muloney in the centre surrounded by students as they play the fur trade game he created during the 2022 Treaty 4 Gathering in Fort Qu'Appelle. (Photo by Andre Boutin-Muloney)

"Looking at the fact that 70 per cent of our students are from an Indigenous background, I wanted to create something that brought their history to it," said Boutin-Muloney. "We also wanted to create educational content that reflected the calls to reconciliation. So we began, with our students, to research the history, to learn the details of the fur trade. A lot of work went into it and the students did a lot of that too, so it was theirs too."

The game, simply called the Fur Trade simulation, was created specifically for the annual Treaty 4 gathering, where each fall students from schools all



Andre Boutin-Muloney the Bert Fox Community High School who created a game based off the Fur Trade to teach students about colonization and financial literacy. In June, he won the Bank of Canada Museum Award for Excellence in Teaching Economics for middle school teachers. (Facebook photo)

Board game teaches youth about colonization



Students gather around the stand were Andre Boutin-Muloney set up his fur trade simulation game during the 2022 Treaty 4 Gathering in Fort Qu'Appelle. (Photo by Andre Boutin-Muloney)

through the territory come together to learn about the history and legacy of the land and the signatories.

While the fur trade hails back to an older era, the game brings to life the time before treaty signing and perhaps reveals clues about relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of the region.

"Depending on the age of the kids we adjusted it, but basically we introduced European colonialism and how that eventually led to trade and treaty making," said Boutin-Muloney. "Visiting students took on the role of fur-trappers/traders. We made a whole bunch of item cards that were commonly traded as well as a description of the technology Indigenous people used before European trade goods came along. A bunch of my students were introduced as "beavers" and they had to be caught out in the Treaty 4 grounds. If caught, they handed over "made beaver pelt cards" which the students could bring back to trade for items at the trading post or with an in-land trader," he explained.

The game premiered during the 2022 gathering and was well received by both students and other teachers. A point of pride for Boutin-Maloney who wanted to create an educational tool that could be adopted and used in other classrooms.

"We wanted to show that while the Europeans had items that created a bit more convenience, their technology was not superior," said Boutin-Muloney. "For instance, early rifles, they would rust easily, hard to repair, ammunition and gunpowder was hard to come by, whereas the bow and arrow were easily repaired in the field, light weight and mobile. Other factors to consider in determining the value of a trade item was its suitability to the region. So a heavy ax would not be a suitable item to the highly mobile people of the plains. So such an item would be traded for others of greater value to them."

He said, describing the elements of the game that bring special insight about life on the plains leading to treaty signing.

"The items acted kind of like chance cards. Some items were useful and gave people a bonus modifier on their trades, some of the items were not helpful (alcohol, some blankets carried disease, pistol). Some items could be "traded up" if you found the person who needed it, etc."

Boutin-Muloney's efforts did not go unnoticed.

In May, he received the Award for Excellence in Teaching Economics for middle school teachers from the Bank of Canada Museum.

The Value of inclusion

What does it mean for business to be inclusive of Indigenous worldviews?

That all begins with understanding Indigenous cultural values, and how we experience things concerning the world we live in.

What would make workplaces have intrinsic value for Indigenous people? This is important for businesses to consider for a variety of reasons, including reconciliation, recruitment, and retention.

So, how do we frame this conversation?

I think one good way is to examine Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In these dimensions, Geert compared Western worldviews with cultures across the globe, to find the unique differences to help companies navigate cultural conflict between societies. That's kind of an ideal model for comparing Western value systems compared with Indigenous value systems on these lands.

There are six broad based dimensions to culture, according to Hofstede:

- Power Distance
- Individualism vs Collectivism
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Masculinity vs Femininity
- Long-term vs Short-term Orientation
- Indulgence vs Restraint

Canadian society scores high on individualism and indulgence. It scores moderately high on masculinity and uncertainty avoidance, but scores lower on power distance and long-term orientation.

Ultimately, it shows Canada respects values about the individual person's importance, indulging in the amenities of society, use of masculine definitions in institutions, and needs society to be compartmentalized, assured and without unknowns.

They also have higher focuses on short term gains and supporting hierarchies of power as compared with Indigenous people.

This means Canadian society, mostly based on Western worldviews, is reflected in companies, and actively promotes a Eurocentric worldview in its institutions and systems.

Those values become the values Indigenous people need to adopt to fit into the companies they are employed with. But is this the type of inclusion that empowers Indigenous people?

That answer is no.

That inclusion defies our identity, our worldview, and the way we value life's experience.

When we compare Indigenous worldviews on the Hofstede metric, we find Indigenous people hold values opposite to Western values, sort of their counterpart.

Indigenous people hold values that are supportive of the benefits of the majority of the community (collectivism), restrictive in their use of power, money and amenities, OK with levels of uncertainty in outcomes, inclusive of feminine values in their power structures and ideologies, respective of small level hierarchies with close-knit power systems, and use a long-term orientation up to seven generations.

Moreover, the use of spirituality is not driven out of any Indigenous organization, including in governance and business.

What we find with inclusion is the focus is short-sighted. It doesn't actively include Indigenous worldviews into their institutions and systems.

Indigenous people are expected to shelf their identity at the door, and then pick it back up when they leave.

Does this reproduce Indigenous identity issues?

How is that sustainable for any Indigenous person?

We need companies to move from assimilation to accommodation.

Next month I will examine the idea of incorporating Indigenous values into business systems. As it stands, business ideologies feel like an adversary to Indigenous worldviews. I am not sure that's the case.



In perspective
Jay Bird



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Nelson Bird continues to break path for Indigenous journalists

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

On July 13th the province's most recognizable TV personality Nelson Bird will reach a milestone in his career – a quarter century in front of the camera.

In June, he received a RTDNA (Radio, Television, Digital News Association) Lifetime Achievement Award making him quite possibly the first Status Indian to receive the recognition.

Other well-known recipients include Lloyd Robertson and Ian Hanomansing.

"Overall, it validates the work that I've done to share who we are as Indigenous people, because that was always my goal from the very beginning of my career," said Bird. "I wanted to educate non-Indigenous people and even ourselves about who we are and what we're about."

The desire to educate others and to share stories about Indigenous people began long before he stepped into a newsroom.

"I think back to when I was 19 years old, as a young building maintenance



Nelson Bird, "a CTV journalist" received a RTDNA Lifetime Achievement Award in June. In the photo he stands by a vintage television camera. July 13th will mark his 25th year at CTV Regina. (Photo by Nelson Bird)

person ... I was always the only Indian in the room with a bunch of other co-workers whom I adored most of the time," said Bird. "But I always felt (like) I needed to let them know who we are."

He returned to school and graduated from the University of Regina and the First Nations University of Canada with a Bachelor of Journalism and Indigenous studies along with a certificate in Indigenous Communication Arts.

In 1998, Bird joined the CTV newsroom as a video journalist, producer and anchor. In addition to daily news coverage, he became the host of Indigenous Circle, which is one of the longest-running, Indigenous-focused news segments, which airs weekly on CTV Saskatchewan.

"Back then, it was not easy to get into the business," he said. "They were not looking for Indigenous people, they were not looking for people of colour. It seemed to be a white career thing because every newsroom I ever went to as an intern or seen, there were no Indigenous people."

Bird said CTV Regina was always ahead of its time when it came to showcasing Indigenous people and Indigenous stories.

"Carol Adams (now GoldenEagle) was a reporter here back in the early '80s and she was a journalist and an anchorperson," he said. "Most people don't realize she was among the first (Indigenous reporters in Canada) and Joan Beatty also. They were here in the '80s and I came along in 1998."

Throughout his career he has won many local and national awards for his work, but says it's never been about the accolades.

"I made it my mission from the very beginning to tell our stories in a way that they have never been told before," said Bird. "I've maintained that and I still push for that."

His dedication to the job, his love of storytelling and his nose for news did not go unnoticed.

In 2013, he became the first Indigenous person to hold the position of assignment editor for CTV News Regina – a mainstream news outlet.

To put the accomplishment into perspective.

At CTV there are only about seven Indigenous journalists across the country. Meanwhile most newsrooms still don't have any Indigenous representation at all.

"The reason I have stayed so long, is because I felt like I need to do this and I'm not done yet," said Bird about his career choice. "I prayed for this

along time ago. I prayed for answers to where I should be in this world and what I should do. Some days I have nearly quit. There have been days I've almost walked out of here and said, 'Screw this, I just can't do this anymore.' And there are very specific reasons why I thought that and those reasons still come across my desk, or my phone or my computer on a regular basis."

Early in his career, he received death threats via telephone or mail, but that all changed with the introduction of social media.

"It opened a whole new door to more abuse toward all people, Indigenous people especially," said Bird. "I nearly packed it in and thought 'I just can't do this anymore.' But I always felt like if I quit and I stopped then they win."

News of his lifetime achievement award came the same day CTV announced massive job cuts throughout the news chain, which made him hesitant about sharing his good news.

However, he wanted to thank his co-workers for putting his name forward, so he made a post thanking the special people in his life.

Bird is the first to admit journalism is a tough profession because it's unpredictable, but he can't imagine doing anything else.

"It was my destiny, it was my purpose. it was my mission," he said. "It still is."

Being a reporter is a demanding, high-stress and deadline-driven job.

"You have to have thick skin in this industry as an Indigenous person in mainstream," said Bird. "This is what we are as journalists, we are reporting the story. We are not the story. We have to keep on maintaining that because some of the stuff we see and we report on are unfortunate especially when it comes to the poverty, the injustice and the issues like missing women, missing people. These are things that hurt me and bother me. But I just keep going. I may go home and cry. I may shed a tear sometimes, but I know I have to get back on that horse and get back in the newsroom each day."

He credits his wife Judy for being the one who gets him through those hard times.

"At the end of the day, we're all just humans getting by, doing our jobs and doing the best we can," said Bird.

Although he faced many tough situations throughout his career, he remains optimistic.

These days, he sees so many young people and young journalists who are genuinely interested in learning about Indigenous people, Indigenous culture and Indigenous history.

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Montreal Lake Cree Nation revives its powwow after a 25-year hiatus

By Bee Bird
for Eagle Feather News

The Montreal Lake Cree Nation (MLCN) celebrated National Indigenous People’s Day with a traditional powwow, something the community hadn’t done in a quarter of a century.

It was held at the Senator Allen Bird Memorial, which located about an hour north of Prince Albert.

The community held its first powwow in 1994 and its last one in 1998. It’s been so long, no one really knew why the tradition ended.

However, the current leadership recognized the positive impact powwow and other ceremonies have in other communities and decided to revive the tradition.

Carol Naytowhow, MLCN councillor, remembers the powwows from her childhood and is excited to see them return.

She said the powwows took place at the lakeside, where an arbor once stood.

Although she was young at the time, she recalled the excitement of watching the dancers.

“That memory is always there,” said Naytowhow.

She’s glad the community was able to come together and host a powwow even if it was just for the day.

Naytowhow said the community has faced its fair share of issues over the years and have been looking at positive ways to engage with the young people on the reserve.

The school committee was brainstorming new strategies to help at-risk youth overcome obstacles, and revitalizing ceremonies was one of their plans and so the powwow planning began.

Gerald Ballantyne was the arena director shared his thoughts about the event, while he was on duty.

He appreciated the leadership for not only finding a positive way to bring the youth together, but also reintroducing cultural traditions.

“We talk about our kid’s spirituality, our kids acknowledge that there is a higher power in regards to healing,” said Ballantyne. “This is really what

it’s all about. It’s all about healing.”

For the community it was about celebrating resilience and strength by reclaiming long-forgotten traditions and passing them on to our future generations.

MLCN community members have been talking about rebuilding the powwow arbor by the lake.

“The committee, they might want to expand in the future, bring back that arbor to our community of Montreal Lake and would like to see a full three-day powwow in the near future,” said Ballantyne.

Glen Daniels, from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, attended the celebration to give his blessing to the reserve through his dancing.

He said if the powwow returns next year he will return.

“Most definitely, if I’m invited back, guaranteed I’ll be here,” said Daniels. “I’ll be the first person here again.”

The community’s efforts to revitalize the culture was inspirational to many in the community and many left feeling optimistic about the future.



Traditional Dancer Henry Orne dances at the Montreal Lake Cree Nation Powwow. It was the first time the powwow has been held since 1998. The community is talking about erecting an arbour at the site where it once stood. (Photo by Bee Bird)



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Prince Albert’s Andrea Menard Wins Top Honours

By Marjorie D.L. Roden
for Eagle Feather News

After having taken a substantial break from the music industry, Prince Albert’s multidisciplinary performer Andrea Menard re-entered the musical scene. With a quiet roar, Menard not only performed at the second bi-annual Summer Solstice Indigenous Music Awards held in Ottawa on June 6th, but she was also nominated for Metis Artist of the Year, eventually taking the hardware home with her at the end of the night.

“I hadn’t had an album out for almost 10 years, and I sort of felt like I was not part of the industry part of music anymore,” Menard admitted. “When they called to ask if I wanted to perform on the show. I thought ‘OK, I haven’t had that in a long time’ and I thought, ‘I’m really, really loving what the Indigenous community is bringing to the industry and basically changing it from within.’ We are expressing our experiences from every walk of life. I’m in a very different place than I was 20 years ago. I gave away this album, I knew I gave this for the Métis people.”

As any honest teacher of an Indigenous language would do, Menard approached seven different Métis language keepers from Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The group of seven not only helped her write the songs in Michif, but also taught her the proper pronunciations. The title of the project is Anskoonamakew Iii Shansoon, which means Giveaway Songs in Michif. The album itself is available to download for free in “The Singer” sec-

tion at AndreaMenard.com

“I’m in a very different place and this album was specifically made as a giveaway as a way to honor my own talents and honor the Michif language which I don’t know. I had to go and learn, and I had to sit with Elders and Language Keepers,” Menard said.

She worked with language keepers from both Saskatchewan and Manitoba

“When it came around to being nominated for awards, I thought, well, do I really want to?” Menard recalled. “In a way, I had come to terms with being in the (musical) spotlight again. I didn’t know if I wanted to be in that industry very much anymore, for many reasons.”

For the last several years, Menard has been concentrating on both her acting career and her wellness training business. Menard explained her priorities’ focus was “nothing bad, it’s just shifted. So when I got nominated and when they called my name, I was in a very different place. I could accept it for what I had created and it was a very different experience than when I was younger.”

Her advice to others unsure of their own career path is listen to what their heart is telling

them.

“We need to build the muscle of listening to our inner wisdom, to our guides, to our ancestors, to the grandmothers, whoever they call them,” she said. “When we start following our own path to our own joy, then the world opens up.”



Andrea Menard in red velvet stands at the podium to accept her music award. The Métis singer and actress took a decade long break from singing but returned with a Michif album. (Photo by Tracey Lynne)



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First Nations Power Authority attracts hundreds to its annual conference

*By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News*

The First Nations Power Authority (FNPA) is becoming a leader in the green energy sector and people are taking notice.

"I am extremely pleased with the attendance and the enthusiasm coming from the two days," said Guy Lonechild, president and CEO of FNPA. "We got a lot of great feedback in terms of Indigenous led, leading to Indigenous procurement standards that will hopefully permeate through the electricity sector."

Provincial power authorities are hearing the need to develop Reconciliation Action Plans, so Indigenous people are not left behind but are the driving force behind this cleaner energy future, said Lonechild.

He was equally pleased with the number of First Nations and tribal councils who showed up to learn about sustainability and greener energy.

The conference attracted about 400 participants from across Canada over the span of two days.

Milton Tootoosis, chief reconciliation officer for the Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority (SREDA), said there is a real need to learn more about renewable energy and sustainability.

"I am always trying to stay on top of the latest trends in industry," he said. "The Saskatoon market is already very diversified, and I think this is an area that is not well known."

He said there is a sense of urgency especially with the current target of 2050 for net-zero emissions.

"I am starting to see an awakening in the Indigenous community," said Tootoosis. "I was here at the first conference, seven years ago, and there were maybe 50 of us."

A paradigm shift is happening, he said, people are finally realizing climate change is real and it's unavoidable.

Tootoosis believes Indigenous people's traditional environmental knowledge is becoming increasingly more valuable, which is why industry needs to include Indigenous people when planning ways to reach net zero.

Lyle Daniels, Indigenous and community director for Building Trades Alberta, also believes it's important to have a forum that focuses on bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to talk about creating a cleaner future.



Guy Lonechild, president and CEO of FNPA, holds his company's eagle staff during the closing ceremonies of the conference. He said as an Indigenous organization it's important to incorporate Indigenous culture into everything they do. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

tor.

"As an ally there are certain things we can do to open opportunities up and at the same time there are certain times when we can step aside and let Indigenous folks do for themselves," she said.

Smith-Parent said getting Indigenous people and Indigenous women involved in the energy is invaluable.

"You can't do energy without the land and Indigenous people are the original stewards of the land," she said. "I think it would be so groundbreaking if you can have energy projects led by Indigenous nations."

Smith-Parent said it was empowering to see Indigenous women leaders at the forum discuss the work they are doing for their individual First Nations.

She's been to hundreds of conferences and not one has been as inclusive and as Indigenous-led as FNPA's.

"It's not tokenistic," she said. "It's infused in every part of the forum, so the content has been incredible and yes it's about Indigenous Reconciliation, ownership, economic empowerment but it's also about camaraderie."

Smith-Parent appreciated the sharing of Indigenous culture at the conference.

Day one began with a pipe ceremony, which was open to everyone and

the forum began with a grand entry.

Smith-Parent said one of the best parts of the conference was networking with powerful Indigenous women.

She was on a panel with other women who talked about the need for diversity and inclusion.

Sophie Collins, Tmícw technician for Qwelminté Secwepemc, who is an Indigenous woman in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) was also on that panel. She shared what it's like being a woman in her line of work.

"I wanted to share some of the challenges we face and some the ways more corporate companies can be successful in implementing more Indigenous initiatives in the future and how they can be more than just symbolic gestures.

Collins said it has not been easy being in STEM.

In her graduating class she was the only Indigenous woman in it.

"There were other Indigenous people in it, but they were men," said Collins. "I not only had to fight for my voice as a woman in STEM, it was something I had to do every day to be in a classroom with them."

In her current role she is the only woman in the office, which means she has no mentors or role models, but at the conference she made connections with other women leaders in the field.

Sandra Sutter, manager for aboriginal partnerships Indigenous partnerships for PTW Energy, was impressed with the conference organized by FNPA.

"It is an Indigenous-led conference and there is a difference in the way information is communicated from an Indigenous lens," she said. "That's really important for non-Indigenous businesses to be a part of and understand otherwise how can they learn to build relationships with us."

She said the balance between male and female is critical to our survival as a species on this planet.

"Matriarchs are the ones who are going to be able to help businesses operate but in a better way," said Sutter. "As we see matriarchs rise again, we are starting to see how we live, work and play on the planet."

In keeping with Indigenous traditions, all participants were invited to retire the FNPA eagle staff and flags.

The conference concluded with everyone shaking hands and saying their



The FNPA forum began with a pipe ceremony and concluded with a ceremony. The attendees danced out the flags on the final day of the conference. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)



Sophie Collins (left), a Tmícw technician for Qwelminté Secwepemc, stands next to Katie Smith-Parent, executive director of Young Women in Energy. The women were part of a panel titled, Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. (Photo by Kerry Benjoe)

goodbyes.

FNPA awarded five scholarships to the University of Saskatoon's Master of Energy Security program during the evening gala and is looking to award five more before September.

Those interested in applying for the scholarship can find information at fnpa.ca or by calling 1-855-359-3672.

Indigenous artists take up space in downtown Regina

By Jonnie Deneyou
for Eagle Feather News

Geanna Dunbar and Brandy Jones along with dozens of volunteers took the intricate art of loom beading to epic proportions in a giant mural lining the entirety of the F.W. Hill Mall.

The more than 2,600 circles come together to form a large-scale depiction of beadwork in a mural project that's called the Path to Reconciliation.



Indigenous artists Brandy Jones left and Geanna Dunbar worked together to create a large-scale mural in downtown Regina. The project was initiated by Regina Downtown BID and the Creative City Centre. (Photo by Jonnie Deneyou)

said Dunbar.

They chose to emulate loom beadwork because as an artform it shows the influence European trade goods had on the Indigenous economy.

"We wanted to acknowledge that glass beads and seed beads came with colonization," said Dunbar. "Before that we would adorn ourselves with porcupine quills, shells, bones and those types of things, so to honour that we chose the flower and vines to represent the earth and what it gives...Plus being

"We wanted to create a piece that acknowledges the history of the land," said Dunbar.

Juxtaposed against the normally dull pavement are eight long rows of the brightly coloured circles all of which were individually traced and painted by hand.

However, to fully appreciate the images of flowers, vines, geometric patterns and animals one has to see it from above.

"We incorporated the colours of the medicine wheel, the aurora borealis and (water),"

a Métis person, I'm just drawn to them naturally."

The project started because Regina Downtown BID and the Creative City Centre wanted to do something to liven up Scarth Street with a focus on Reconciliation, so they approached Dunbar and Jones.

"Immediately, when they said path, I thought beadwork because I thought it would be a strong visual," said Dunbar. "I truly believe as an independent artist and as Indigenous artists we should be able to take over as much space as we can."

Once they agreed to take on the monumental task, they recruited Audrey Dreaver from the First Nations University of Canada as a cultural consultant and Elder Brenda Dubois to advise them on how to proceed.

The art installation was completed on June 16th – but officially opened to the public on National Indigenous People's Day.

The project became a labour of love for everyone involved.

For two weeks the artists and volunteers endured the ever-changing Saskatchewan summer weather to complete the mural.

There were many mornings after a big storm, when Dunbar and Jones would have to physically remove all the water from the area or pick up the metal barriers before work could continue.

Everyday without fail people showed up.

"It just flew by even with the insane storms," said Dunbar. "The community outreach was really good. We had the RCMP come out, as they should, and then we had Harvard Broadcasting come out and paint. We had interest from autism groups. We had people from all cultures come out."

One of the standout moments happened in the early morning hours.

Each day the team lit a smudge to start the day, the scent of burning sage that drifted in the morning breeze attracted the people who live in the downtown area who asked if they could also smudge themselves.

"The project helped create a community in the downtown area," said Dunbar.

What she loves most about the mural is that it's not perfect.

"Every painted glass bead isn't a perfect circle which encapsulates how nothing is ever truly flawless in life," said Dunbar.

The artists are happy with what they were able to create, but say they're not done.

"We have all these big plans we are really trying to make groundwork for and this is just the first step of that dedication," she said.



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Teacher program helps create generations of educators

*By NC Raine
for Eagle Feather News*

The longest-running Indigenous teacher education program in North America is located right here in Saskatchewan, and this year marks its monumental 50th anniversary.

The Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) began in 1973 with a mission to build a community of teachers who understand the Indigenous culture, values, identity, and traditions of their Indigenous students. It began first as a two-and-a-half-year certificate program, but has evolved into a four-year Bachelor of Education degree.

The program’s impact on our province can’t be overstated, said ITEP Director Yvette Arcand.

“We have 3,000 graduates who work in First Nations communities across the province, (they) work in rural and urban centres,” said Arcand. “Our graduates are able to find out who they are, they are able to share that culture and those traditions and language practices that our ancestors instilled in us.”

These life-changing impacts can now be seen through multiple generations who have attended ITEP, said Arcand.

Jeff and Tiana Cappel, father and daughter, respectively, have both graduated the program seven years apart.

Both from the Muscowpetung First Nation, Jeff graduated from the ITEP program in 2016 and is now the Indigenous Education Coordinator at Regina Public Schools. He credits ITEP with giving them the academic and cultural tools needed to be successful.

“It was the best experience I ever had,” he said. “I really enjoyed the community of it. It felt like I belonged there.”

Jeff is both proud and honoured his daughter, followed in his footsteps.

For Tiana the feeling is mutual.

“It’s so special to me because I’m so proud of him, that he went back to school to obtain his degree,” she said. “He didn’t push me; he just spoke from



Tiana Cappel and her father Jeff Cappel are both ITEP graduates. Jeff graduated from the program seven years ago and this year his daughter followed in his footsteps. (Photo by Tiana Cappel)

edge, which sets the program apart from other educational programs.

Current student, Shaina Manning, shared how ITEP has changed her.

“My heart has transformed, and I’ve come to appreciate so much about the world around me,” she said. “I’ve realized as change within myself in the last two to four years. A change in the way I think, talk, and the way I respond to the world around me. I know it’s because of the community at ITEP.”

To celebrate the 50th anniversary, ITEP has a series of plans to commemorate the half-century. Notably, they’re naming their student lounge after the late Cecil King, the first ITEP director.

The plan is to put out a third anthology of ITEP students’ poetry which will feature 104 contributors. The school is also hosting a round dance, golf tournament, beading and storytelling sessions.



Muscowpetung Saulteaux Nation Chief Melissa Tavita (left), Tiana Cappel (wrapped in a starblanket), Councilor Rhonda Rosebluff (right) during the ITEP 2023 graduation in June. ITEP is celebrating its 50th year of operation. (Photo by Tiana Cappel)

the heart (about ITEP) and I could see the passion behind it. So, following in his footsteps makes me proud of both of us.”

Tiana said being part of the 50th Anniversary graduating class makes her feel an even greater sense of pride.

ITEP helped her find her identity as an Indigenous woman and she’s now eager to share her knowledge and hopefully inspire others she meets.

“At the beginning, I didn’t know how to incorporate Indigenous teachings or ways of knowing in the classroom,” said Tiana. “I have learned a lot, especially with being placed in a Cree cultural program in Saskatoon.”

She says ITEP helped prepare her for her new role in the world.

“Learning from instructors, listening to Elders, and seeing other teachers bring culture into the classroom, it has given me so many ideas of how to incorporate culture into regular classes,” said Tiana.

Arcand, not only attended the program in 1991, but has been working at ITEP for the past 25 years, says students leave with is accurate cultural knowl-

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ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

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The Peepeekisis First Nation opens the Chief Thunderbird Lodge

*By Memory McLeod
for Eagle Feather News*

The Peepeekisis First Nation celebrated the opening of its new community hub, Chief Thunderbird Lodge in June with a nod to the unique history of the band, a salute to the proud heritage passed down through the veterans and an eye on the future of next generation members.

Urban Headwoman Cicely Poitras pointed out that the administration is keen to take special considerations for future generations and the community hub is a place for them to come to learn about the stories of the ones who went before them.

“We are excited about a few projects we have underway and what drives that is the desire to create something for them, our young people,” she said. “The hub was built to create hope for them to show them where we come from and a place to learn and grow together as a community.”

The location of the new hub holds a lot of memories for some of the kat-eyak (elders) who remember the popular and well attended sports days, baseball and hockey tournaments and other cultural and familial ceremonies. The band office was also built on the site, which for a time housed Chief Enoch Poitras and his family. It’s a time his daughter Cicely remembers fondly.

“I was maybe only four years old then, but we knew there was a morgue in the basement and it was a dark, cold and spooky space,” she said. “So, we used to dare each other to run across and touch the wall and come back,” she



Left to right: councillor(s) Desmond Desnomie, Blaine Pinay, Alan Bird, Matthew Lerat-Stonechild, Cicely Poitras (head woman), Debbie Hill (head woman), and Chief Frankie Dieter. In front holding ribbon (left side) Lillian Stevenson (elder), and left side elder Percy Pinay. Holding the big scissors is Samson Deiter (ribbon shirt), and Dominic Dieter-Merasty. (Photo by FHQTC)

ducing surrounding farms, there were stories of the abusive and intrusive nature of the Indian agents who controlled every aspect of daily lives of the people from arranging marriages to withholding food and rations as punishment among various other grievances.

According to Peepeekisis’s website, a specific claim was submitted in 1986 in which it was determined that “Canada was in breach of its lawful obligations to the band.”

The settlement came as a culmination of the determined efforts of band leadership to bring compensation to the people.



Aerial view of the Chief Thunderbird Lodge. (Photo by the File Hills Qu’Appelle Tribal Council (FHQTC))

recalled with laughter. That whole area holds good memories for our people.”

These days the site houses the powwow grounds and a skating rink, so with the edition of the lodge it helps to create a central place of activity.


The new lodge houses the veteran’s hall, band office, a store and gas bar and the daycare. It also features a community kitchen.

“We were so proud at our opening to see so many smiling faces, enjoying the food prepared in our beautiful new kitchen,” said Cicely.


The 16-million-dollar legacy project is a nod to the history of the File Hills colony, for which the band was awarded a settlement of \$150 million in 2020.

In 1896, the government started the colony as an experiment designed to bring members into assimilation to a colonial lifestyle of farming, agriculture, and communal living.

The colony was designed to encourage students returning from Industrial-style residential schools to abandon the traditional way of life. While the colony was deemed successful by the government’s standards, even out-pro-



Congratulations Graduates!



Dene artist helps design Canadian Mint’s newest toonie

By Kerry Benjoe
of Eagle Feather News

On June 21st Canadians were able to purchase the 2023 National Indigenous Peoples Day commemorative \$2 coin that was created by three artists—Megan Currie, English River First Nation, Myrna Pokiak (Agnaviak), Inuvialuit Settlement Region and Jennine Krauchi, Red River Métis.



Closeup of Canada’s newest \$2 coin unveiled on June 20th. It was designed to honour the rich and diverse cultural heritages of the First Nation, Inuit and Métis people. (Photo by the Royal Canadian Mint).

“It’s quite monumental because I guess this is the first time that there’s been three indigenous artists on (Canadian currency) and then also female artists,” said Currie, owner and art director of Crossing Design. “It was quite an honour, but it actually didn’t even really hit me until it got unveiled.”

The artists each designed a segment of the coin, which is to represent the First Nation, Inuit and Métis people.

The project took more than a year to complete.

“The mint reached out asking if I would like to submit a design for the commemorative coin,” said Currie. “I submitted three concepts and then they picked one.”

Her contribution is much more than just a floral pattern.

Currie incorporated five important symbols into her design such as: Grandmother Moon with the seven phases of the moon etched on the perimeter of the coin. The phases represent the past present and future including the seventh-generation teaching; The blossoming flower is the central image of the design, which depicts an adult figure raising a child to symbolize hope; The Forget me not flower is to honour the past including the survivors of residential and day schools, the 60s Scoop, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls as well as the contributions of veterans. The rising sun within the flower signifies a new day and the opportunity for everyone to embrace Reconciliation; The four circles within the main flower and the berries are to acknowledge the four stages of life, ceremonies and the four seasons while the berries are to remind people to honour Mother Earth; and finally, The Butterflies symbolize transformation, metamorphosis and balance. It’s also a reminder for people to live a balanced life – spiritually, mentally, physically,



From left to right: Cassidy Caron, President of the Métis National Council, Dylan Whiteduck, Chief, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, English River First Nations artist Megan Currie, RedRiver Métis artist Jennine Krauchi, Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Marie Lemay, President and CEO, Royal Canadian Mint unveil the National Indigenous Peoples Day \$2 commemorative circulation coin at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa (Photo by the Royal Canadian Mint).

and emotionally.

Currie said to see the coin unveiled was a moment she’ll never forget. “To finally see it and know that you contributed something to that? It was good,” she said. “It’s still kind of shocking because I know it’s going to be circulated throughout Canada. It’s going to be in the hands of many people. And it’s an honour.”

Currie, a long-time artist, started her own graphic design business 10 years ago, but it’s only been in the last few years she’s been able to do it full time.

As an artist, she never set any big goals with her art.

“I don’t know if I when I was younger, if I ever thought it was possible (to be a full-time artist),” said Currie.

As a 60s Scoop survivor, she said it was good to be part of a national project to celebrate Indigenous identity.

“Growing up, (as an Indigenous person) we’re sort of seen as less than all the time and it was never a thing to celebrate,” she said. “It was more something to be hidden or to be ashamed of.”

To have the coin go into circulation on National Indigenous People’s Day filled her with a sense of pride.

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