

Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

CUTTING THE RIBBON

It was a day to celebrate as the Piapot First Nation officially opened its newly developed Cree Land Mini Mart in north central Regina. A number of dignitaries were on hand for the celebration, including Piapot Chief Tony Rockthunder, Regina Mayor Pat Fiacco and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Vice-Chief Delbert Wapass. (Photo by Faith McLean)



Mini-Mart offers maxi benefits

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

What was once a vacant lot in the depressed inner city area of north central Regina has now turned into an area of hope and prosperity.

That neglected parking lot is now reserve land and home to the Cree Land Mini-Mart, an economic development project of the Piapot First Nation.

“That land was just sitting there dormant for years,” said Piapot Chief Johnny Rockthunder. “We had to do something with it.

“We had a specific claim at one time and we wanted to move this land to reserve status through the TLE Process. When I became Chief five years ago, we took it to the membership and we received overwhelming support to move forward.”

And move forward they did. Once it was rolling, the process to turn the land to reserve, which usually takes years, took only ten months.

“We worked so hard on it. We had the full support of Mayor Pat Fiacco, the Chamber of Commerce and from Member of Parliament Andrew Scheer who took our concerns forward in Ottawa,” said Chief Rockthunder.

“Everyone helped, but the credit goes to all of our band members.”

Then the difficult part began for the project and that was securing financing. As Chief Rockthunder said, “I

have never built a store in my life” and the band is in third party management which makes banks tend to shy away. Regardless of the obstacles, the project moved into the fundraising aspect and was quite successful.

“We did raise over half a million dollars and we reached a long term agreement with Penner Oil, and that allowed us to move forward with an environmental assessment and to start building,” added Chief Rockthunder.

The Cree Land Mini-Mart and Gas Bar has now been open for over a month, has 25 full-time and 10 part-time employees and is busy as ever.

“We are beating our projections,” said Chief Rockthunder. “You can look at this a couple ways. Do you want to create wealth or to create jobs? We choose jobs. Jobs allow people to build their self-esteem, feed their children, and even buy a car.”

The impact of the gas bar is being felt throughout the community. Wade Murray is the Regina city councilor for Ward Six and the gas bar is smack dab in the middle of his ward.

“I drive by there and it is always busy,” said Murray.

He also lives in the area and is a business owner in the area. “You know, Maclean’s Magazine labeled north central as the worst neighbourhood in Canada. I beg to differ. We have wide streets, stately trees, character homes, lots of diversity and vibrant businesses like the Mini-Mart in north central.

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MR. DECORATOR

Ken Thomas got into the Christmas spirit and his decorating skills paid off.

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IS HE WORTHY?

Patrick Brazeau is now a senator. But is he qualified? Check out the readers forum.

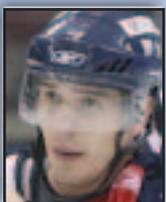
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A BIG YEAR

It was an outstanding year for the popular children’s program Wapos Bay.

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HE’S A PIRATE

Trent Campbell has moved to a new team as his hockey career continues to flourish.

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HOCKEY DAY

McKayla Sasakamoose is part of the Ahtahkakoop community that loves its hockey.

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Welcome to our
New Year’s Edition
Coming In February:
Health and Wellness Edition
CPMA #40027204

Decorating at CUMFI pays off for former Chief

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

I had the good fortune to be asked to judge the office Christmas decorating contest at the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) head office. Located in the heart of Saskatoon, the CUMFI offices house over 30 staff that, because of multiple partnerships, work for CUMFI, the Kinistin Saulteaux Nation and the Saskatoon Health Region.

With so many staff from so many organizations, there was lots of diversity in delivery and presentation.

Like any good decoration judge, I had to set out strict criteria. Top of the list was bribery. Who was willing to pay what? Was the bribe milk chocolate? Was it old bottom of the barrel Christmas treats or a plain old candy cane ... it was all important. The better the bribe, the higher you go on the list.

Then, of course, one had to consider colour. Were all of the colours of Christmas represented like green, red, snow, and bribery?

Also on the list was imagination. Was it the same old, same old Christmas decoration, or did the person really get into it and think outside the box. Tinsel can only get you so far in this game.



Ken Thomas was the big winner of the CUMFI office decorating contest. He appears here with his cohort Betty Nippi-Allbright who was bringing her wish list to the office Santa.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

Another category that helped people score points was lights. If you are not burning extra power at Christmas, you are not doing it right, so there definitely had to be a light element to any display worth its weight in gold, or chocolate.

And what is Christmas with out a carol or two or an annoying fish or Santa

that sings Christmas carols to you if you walk too close to its sensors. That is a touch of Christmas that can't be denied.

Now that the categories were decided, I was led around by CUMFI President Shirley Isbister. We got the lay of the land and as we progressed through the rabbit's warren of rooms, I was thoroughly

impressed with the Christmas spirit shown throughout the building. Most everyone had made an effort to decorate their office in one way or another.

Unfortunately there was only one bribe. Though it was a good bribe, consisting of candy canes, tea and more candy, the decorations in the briber's office did not elevate her to first place status. She did however receive third place based entirely on the payout.

But the decision was made easy when I entered into the office of Ken Thomas, a diabetes outreach worker and former Chief of Witchekan Lake First Nation.

He had strung lights, tinsel, garland, and decorations adorned the wall. He had a big comfy chair decorated in red. His office door was wrapped in wrapping paper. He had a Christmas diorama set up and Christmas music playing on cue.

Stockings were hung on the wall and he had a tree with an angel atop it and many, many gifts below. The room just felt good. He showed that Christmas is about the thought, the effort and the colours red and green and when you go that far and really put your heart into it.

First prize he won and first prize he deserved for showing the true Christmas spirit. Still could have used a bribe, though.



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Regina business will enable Piapot to do infrastructure improvements in community

• Continued from Page One

“Piapot is helping rejuvenate the entire area and we are looking forward to their future expansion and working with Chief Rockthunder and his members far into the future.”

According to Chief Rockthunder, the future expansion will include office space.

“The offices will go south of the gas bar. Now that we know how the gas bar will run, I like to plan for the future, look over the hill,” said Rockthunder.

“Many of those decisions will be turned over to the membership to decide.

“The community will tell me. No rush, as the Elders say.”

The benefits and profits go beyond north central Regina to all the members of Piapot First Nation.

“We want to invest in infrastructure in our

community, like housing and roads and we want to be able to supply our young moms with help to get nutritious food for their kids. There is a lot to do,” added Chief Rockthunder.

“But the most rewarding thing from all of this was seeing the young people working at the Cree Land Mini Mart that maybe never worked before. These jobs will help get rid of that big ball of social assistance that some people drag around.

“It will help some of them get self-esteem and to move forward.”



Chief Johnny Rockthunder says economic development promotes self-esteem.

Willows Tulloch
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Congratulations to Piapot First Nation on the creation of your new urban reserve business. Pursuing economic opportunities is the highway to a successful future. Good Luck!

Honourable June Draude
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations

Saskatchewan
Ministry of
First Nations and
Métis Relations

Congratulations!

Mayor Pat Fiacco and Regina City Council congratulates the Piapot First Nation and the management and staff of the Cree Land Mini-Mart on their official opening.

The City of Regina commends the Piapot First Nation on their urban reserve designation.



Chief Johnny Rockthunder, the Council, and the members of Piapot First Nation want to congratulate our band member Candace Fox for being named Best Actress at the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco, for her role in *Moccasin Flats: Redemption*, the made for TV movie. We are very proud of her accomplishments



We also invite everyone to come and visit our newest venture, the **Cree Land Mini-Mart** in the heart of Regina. Stop in for gas, confectionary goods, or just to visit. You are more than welcome.



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Editorial

It's a jungle out there, says monkey

It seems like it was just months ago that we were preparing for the meltdown of the world as Y2K was upon us and the computers would take over or ruin the world. Now all of a sudden it is 2009 and all us old folk are wondering where the time went and why it was so darn cold over the holidays.

I blame it on the youth spending way too much time texting each other. It throws off Mother Nature not having kids outside playing.

The year 2009 also marks the eighth year of fearless and quite often useless predictions by our drunken monkey, who wants us to call him Steve. He is sign language literate by the way.

Last year, Steve the Drunken Monkey, had a bang on year when it comes to predictions going eight out of ten which is great considering he was heavy into the rye at the time. This year he is on vodka coolers so look out, here he goes.

Politics

- There will not be another federal election in 2009. Prime Minister Harper will have to bend to the will of the three other parties. If he does not, there will be an election and Stephen will not be the leader of the Conservatives.
- At the FSIN election in October four people run for Chief, and the final ballot has Guy Lonechild and Lawrence Joseph vying for the top job. Steve is not sure who will win. Vice-Chief Watson and Vice-Chief Pratt are easily re-elected.
- Pat Fiacco in Regina and Don Atchison in Saskatoon, both very popular in the Aboriginal community, are re-elected as mayors in landslides.
- The NDP elect Nettie Wiebe as their new leader.
- The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations never ever, ever again hires the person who directed their Christmas greeting video that is on their website and ran on CTV. Can you say, not so good?

Sports

- The Saskatchewan Roughriders host the West Division final. They rely on the strength of Brett Favre's record year as the Green's new quarterback.
- The Philadelphia Flyers win the Stanley Cup after an emotional boost when Reggie Leach is named to the Hockey Hall of Fame.
- At the First Nation Summer Games at Onion Lake in August, the Prince Albert Grand Council takes top prize.

Etcetera

- The Canadian economy suffers for another six months and then slowly rebounds. But it is hard to notice as the economy does not suffer too much in Saskatchewan because of the strong resource base we enjoy.
- The First Nation University of Canada, because they are so good and practiced at it, patents the way it terminates its staff and sells its termination system off to other institutions looking to gut their workforce morale.
- On the bright side, Wanuskewin will decide on a new chief executive officer, the renovations will be completed and it will re-open with a flourish and return to the glory it once had as a must-visit tourist attraction in

Here and there ...

Saskatchewan. And also as a place to "Seek Peace of Mind."

It turns out that the first little baby born in the New Year in Saskatoon was the not so little Treyton Archie Paul Janvier from Patuanak. Treyton is the baby of proud mom Toni Misonpas and dad Payton Janvier. Treyton weighed in at a healthy 11 pounds and eight ounces. Good job mom!

We also want to give a shout out to Connie Kematch who entered a draw at our booth at the FSIN Pow wow. Her name was drawn and she has won an original painting by the venerable Ernie Scoles.

Coming next in Eagle Feather News

Congratulations Connie.

February is the health and wellness edition of Eagle Feather News. There will be a commentary on men's health, a look at mental health and suicide in Aboriginal communities, tips on dropping weight and

Readers Forum

This man's a senator, but is he worthy?

Last month we named Prime Minister Stephen Harper the Newsmaker of the Year for 2008. Obviously the nicer, better and more hopeful person to choose would have been President Elect Barack Obama, whom we hope changes the world, but we stuck to Canada and good, old Stephen was certainly the Newsmaker of the Year in our country.

Prime Minister Harper went on to make more news after we published by naming 18 people to the Senate of Canada. There were many notable Canadians included in the list.

There were also many notable Conservatives included in the list and there was one Conservative Aboriginal person included in the list, one Patrick Brazeau.

Brazeau is the 34-year-old Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal People. Brazeau has made a name for himself as a big supporter and skill for Prime Minister Harper.

The Congress outright endorsed the Conservative Party of Canada in the last general election.

That endorsement has earned them millions of dollars of funding from the Government of Canada to run their organization, an organization that no one really seems to know what they do or whom they represent.

Harper, a big fan of Senate reform, has asked his nominees to step down after eight years or if there is ever a time of elected senators. The salary for a senator is \$130,000 yearly.

So, for sure Mr. Brazeau has received a guaranteed \$1 million dollar handshake from Harper for shilling for him and attacking the Assembly of First Nations and the other recognized and accountable national Aboriginal organizations. By accountable, we mean membership lists and proper elections.

If things work out for the best for Mr. Brazeau, and he gets to sit for life in the Senate, he could earn over \$5 million.

Not bad considering his resume.

Recently, there was an article in the Jan. 7 Globe & Mail that said there is a complaint against Brazeau in front of the Human Rights Tribunal that claims sexual harassment on a former employee in late 2007 and early 2008.

According to the article, another staffer has come forward alleging Brazeau has endorsed a work atmosphere that promotes drinking and sexual harassment.

The article goes on to add that Brazeau wants to keep his \$100,000 annual salary and job as Chief of the Congress while he is also a Senator. This would certainly be a conflict.

The Senate is a place for statesmen and women.

People who have served the Canadian public with dignity and integrity like current Saskatchewan Senator Dr. Lillian Dyck or B.C. Senator Gerry St. Germain are supposed to

be senators.

The question we pose to you, dear reader, is this. Did Prime Minister Harper get it right in naming Patrick Brazeau to the Senate? Yes or no.

Is there any other Aboriginal Canadian that would have been a better choice?

This is your chance to be heard.

Email your thoughts to:

johnl@eaglefeathernews.com

or write them and fax it to 1-306-978-

8117 or mail it into us at PO Box 924,

Saskatoon, SK S7K 3M4.

Responses will be printed in the

February issue of Eagle Feather

News.

The best response will receive a year's

subscription to Eagle Feather News.



PATRICK BRAZEAU



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Holiday memories from the lake people

Happy New Year! Hard to believe we are now in the year 2009. Every year time seems to move faster. This is the time of year when people look back at the past and reflect on the coming year.

Today I am thinking about how we used to celebrate the holidays when I was a little boy in St. Laurent, Manitoba in the 1940s and '50s. St. Laurent is a Métis community on the southeast shore of Lake Manitoba.

It is a twin community with Duck Bay, near Camperville, across the lake and to the north. The same families built homes there along the old seasonal routes in the early 1800s. You see the same family names everywhere in these three communities, whether in the school registers or in the cemetery: Chartrand, Guiboche, Delaronde, Lavallee, Pangman, Desjarlais and so on)

We are lake people. Fishing has always been important, as well as trapping and hunting waterfowl.

For us the winter festive season was preceded by the anticipation and anxiety about the freezing of the lake so the men could go out and set their nets under the ice. If the lake was not frozen by late November people worried, "Christmas might be lean this year" because winter fishing was the economic mainstay of the community.

The freeze-up time in November also allowed families to store meat without fear of thawing and spoiling. That is when my dad would have a pig killed and butchered and stored in a shed. All the exotic pork dishes were homemade, from head cheese to pig's feet to bacon and, best of all, blood sausage, made with real blood in real intestines. No additives or substitutes allowed. Our winter meat diet was sprinkled with pork dishes between deer meat and rabbit and occasionally round steak from the grocery store.

The holidays really got going on Christmas Eve. A tree was decorated and we would all attend midnight mass in the local Roman Catholic church. In those days winter travel was by sleigh, open or with a caboose on it.

For the sake of any young 'city slickers' who don't know what is a caboose, it is a small cabin with a little stove in it that is put on a sleigh pulled by a team of horses. There is a little window at the front for the driver to see through. The reins slip through little holes below the window and the driver is warm

and cozy inside.

After midnight mass (I will pass over the stale joke, "what time is midnight mass this year?") we would have a small snack at home and then go to bed with great anticipation about what tomorrow would bring. Like children everywhere we enjoyed our gifts and each one of us would get some candy and a mandarin orange in a small brown paper bag, each one marked with a name under the tree.

Since there were 12 children in our family, there was quite a circle of bags and each bag seemed to contain exactly the same treats.

If it was a very cold morning we would have circled the round wood stove that heated the main part of the house as we did all cold winter mornings. Dad would have a roaring fire going, and with the stovepipe red and trembling, we boys would face away from the stove.

That gave us a chance to open the back flaps of our long 'Stanfields' for the occasional blast of extra heat. I will tell you how cold those Stanfields could get when they

got washed and hung outside on the line on Mondays when our mom did the weekly laundry, using melted snow in a tub, a washboard and Sunlight soap.

One of my jobs, when I was about seven or eight, would be to bring in the laundry. I would have a stack of long johns piled up in my arms, stretched out cold and solid on each side of me. To get into the house, I would have to pound the arms and legs to bend them to get the load through the door.

But, did they ever smell fresh and clean! They had to be after the cold blasts of winter air that had worked on them all day. Those cold Arctic air masses start somewhere up around the Arctic Circle. They roar down towards the south and veer east when they hit the Rocky Mountains out west, creating our famous prairie winter blizzards.

Then that Arctic air hits the ice of Lake Manitoba and really picks up speed, and the first thing it would hit when it came onto land in St. Laurent were our long johns stretched out like racehorses' necks on the clothesline.

Well, already I have run out of time and I did not even get to tell you about New Year's celebrations. I guess I will have to try that next month. You never know what you will end up with when you start telling about 'cayash ago'.



Comment
Paul Chartrand

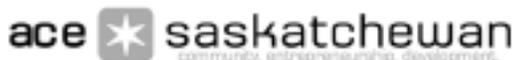


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Polar bears in snowmobile suits

Just when I take two weeks vacation, the coldest winter weather since 1966 descends on the province. A frozen sewer pipe splits and costs \$200 to fix. The dogs, cats and humans hunker down for the duration and soon get on each others nerves.

Home life becomes as nerve wracking as a manned mission to Mars. CBC Newsworld reports it's warmer at the North Pole than central Saskatchewan. During the early morning of January fourth the thermometer reaches minus 41 with a wind chill of minus 52!

My heart goes out to the homeless and those poor Filipino nurses the Health Region so warmly welcomed to so cold a place.

Three cougars were individually sighted sneaking into Saskatoon last fall. One was shot, the others scampered away not to be seen again. They were probably aware of the coming cold and were looking for a warm sewer pipe in which to pass the winter. Cougars are shy creatures, seldom seen except for the aggressive ones whose habitat is Jax Night Club in downtown Saskatoon.

This frigid weather must have some positive side. The whitetail deer population has exploded with the mild winters of the past few years. Deer dodging became a downright dangerous motor sport, particularly during the rutting season. They breed like rodents and have become so emboldened as to munch my petunias and leave my cedars looking like scraggly magpie nests.

The deer infestation is now in decline as the weak, sick and aged die off from the intense cold.

The first time I saw a raccoon in Saskatchewan it was quite a novelty. I even stopped to poke its road killed carcass with a stick. Raccoons and other southern critters are moving into Saskatchewan with the hot summers and mild winters of late.

There is another most nasty creature coming, one I absolutely detest. My sister suffered permanent nerve damage to her hand after being bitten by a brown recluse spider. They have now been found in southern Saskatchewan. They are more aggressive and far more poisonous than their better known kin, the black widow spider.

They are less inclined to run away and hide like the black widow. The one that got my sister actually attacked her, or so she said. This winter blast should hopefully push their numbers back to Idaho where they not so long ago originated.

In British Columbia there are miles after miles of rust coloured dead or dying forests afflicted with pine beetles. The warm winters have meant the pine beetles can also extend their range with devastating consequences.

Two years ago despite the best efforts of the wildlife people, the beetles took up residence in northern Alberta. It takes days of minus forty weather to kill them.

Hopefully these destructive pests will be killed off before they can move into northern Saskatchewan.

Intense cold requires good cold weather gear. The old adage: dress in layers, is good advice. Quality snowmobile wear works just fine. My base layer consists of polypropylene socks, long johns, top, head and neck mask. This wicks moisture away from my body, keeping me dry. Then I wear a layer of polar fleece long johns, top and neck warmer and thick wool/ polypropylene socks. Cotton is totally useless in cold weather.



Common Ground
John Cuthand

I wear snow boots that are good to 65 below zero. My Arctiva jacket is thick-lined with a Gortex shell. Gortex allows water vapour to escape while being both wind proof and water repellent. I wear thick insulated bib overalls with a water repellent and wind proof nylon outer shell. I wear leather cold weather gloves with a Joe Rocket Kevlar helmet with an electric heated visor.

Just hook me up to an air supply and I could walk around on the moon.

All this trick equipment doesn't amount to much unless it works in the real world.

Determined to snowmobile despite the -35 degree weather, I venture forth totally layered up.

The sled is hard to start. The oil is as thick as spruce gum. A few tugs and it finally turns over. A few more pulls and the engine sputters to life in a cloud of blue two-stroke exhaust.

Love to smell the two-stroke. The engine warms up, the track is spun and the skis loosened. The sled moves down the trail and into the field.

I hit the throttle and the 550 liquid cooled Arctic Cat motor sucking fuel through twin carbs hurtles forward. It's all good ... then the visor fogs up big time.

The world looks like I'm swimming in a big vat of Alpha condensed milk. Everything turned white.

I stop take off a glove, flip up the visor, chilling both face and hand.

Then I scratch away the frost to make a tiny window to look through. The fun factor just isn't there so it's time to go home and watch TV.

I later find out a brittle wire snapped in the cold rendering the electric visor heating element useless.

The thought of all those dying spruce beetles and recluse spiders is small comfort when the most brutal cold spell of the new century is considered.

It's become so cold even the polar bears are wearing snowmobile suits.



Message from the Minister

Best wishes to everyone in the New Year. I look forward to hearing from you as we gather critical feedback on the draft consultation policy framework. The goal of this framework is to help provide greater certainty and security in our investment climate. Work has begun to set up the exploratory table where we can sit down to discuss other important issues like sharing in the province's economic growth, environmental stewardship, dispute resolution, sacred sites, traditional use and consultation capacity requirements. Working together will lead us into a whole new world of possibilities.

Honourable June Draude
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
First Nations and
Métis Relations



Ward Meetings

Saskatoon City Council will be hosting a series of Ward meetings this winter to gather feedback from residents on a variety of issues. A meeting will be hosted in the City's ten municipal wards, and will be attended by the Mayor, the Ward Councillor, and senior civic managers. 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

DATE & LOCATION	WARD REPRESENTATION
• Tuesday, January 13 Rusty MacDonald Library Auditorium - 225 Primrose Drive	Ward 5 – Councillor Gordon Wyant
• Tuesday, January 20 Louise Street Community Church - 3042 Louise Street	Ward 7 – Councillor Bob Pringle
• Wednesday, January 21 Evan Hardy Collegiate Cafeteria - 605 Acadia Drive	Ward 8 – Councillor Glen Penner
• Thursday, January 22 Oskayak High School - 919 Broadway Avenue	Ward 6 – Councillor Charlie Clark
• Tuesday, January 27 Legion Building - 606 Spadina Crescent West	Ward 2 – Councillor Pat Lorje
• Wednesday, January 28 Mount Royal Collegiate Cafeteria - 2220 Rusholme Road	Ward 4 – Councillor Myles Heidt
• Thursday, January 29 Kelsey Campus Cafeteria - 1130 Idylwyld Drive North	Ward 1 – Councillor Darren Hill

Wards 9, 3, and 10 held their meetings earlier in January. For more information contact 975-3202.



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Thibodeau named CTV's 2008 Saskatoon Citizen of the Year

By Warren Goulding
Of Eagle Feather News

Two decades ago Bill Thibodeau was a welder with a wonky back and an uncertain future. But deep down, the soft-spoken young man knew he would find his place in the world.

"I was going to school, working part-time doing reno work and welding," he recalls.

"I got hurt, blew my back out pretty bad and I was told to consider another line of work," explains Thibodeau.

He knew education would be important and somehow his "interest and fascination in the law" would work its way into the picture. Just how that would play out began the day he caught a news item on EGADZ, a Saskatoon youth centre that was in the early stages of its development.

"It was a pretty negative piece, pretty one-sided. They described it as a haven for hoodlums. Given some of my own personal experience it wasn't so good. I used to get painted with that same brush," he admits.

After driving by the downtown centre he made a decision that would change his life.

"I got into volunteering and then casual work and then it was full-time."

That was 19 years ago. Today, Thibodeau is the executive director of EGADZ and he can make a rare foray into the public spotlight. CTV Saskatoon has named Thibodeau 2008 Citizen of the Year in the Bridge City.

"I've always struggled with any kind of recognition, that's not what I intended by way of what I've chosen to do as a career," he says with characteristic humility.

And what Thibodeau has chosen to do with his life is work with youngsters that some people call 'at-risk youth' but what positive thinkers like Thibodeau know are actually young people with potential if only they are given the chance.

"It can be pretty gratifying when you see a kid succeed," he suggests. "We don't change them, we can't



EGADZ Executive Director Bill Thibodeau has been named CTV Saskatoon's Citizen of the Year for 2008. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

do that, but we can have a hand in it."

Thibodeau says the work comes with its frustrations and he often questions himself.

"I'm still quitting twice a week, but it's the challenges that make it interesting. I didn't think I'd be here this long. Not forever. I had hopes for being a lawyer but it just seemed to work for me here."

And the challenges, Thibodeau and the staff at EGADZ have observed, don't getting any smaller with the passing of time.

"It's the same old issues and we've always had 12, 13, 14-year-olds but they're different today," he says. "They're more defiant, a lot more lost."

Thibodeau, 46, notes that he is beginning to deal with what he calls "third generation kids" at EGADZ and therein lies an explanation for some of the problems.

"Some of these kids are being raised by young

teenagers, teenage parents. They're systemized, that's all they know."

But fortunately for the literally thousands of youngsters who have passed through the doors at EGADZ or been helped by the once-controversial but always successful street outreach program, people like Bill Thibodeau have been there for them.

"I have a group of people here that really are the gears that make EGADZ work, that make the difference in kids' lives," he says.

"From my perspective it really has been about the kids and trying to give them that hand up and level out the playing field a little bit for them to give them a better chance at making a difference for themselves."

Thibodeau is the 42nd Saskatonian to win the prestigious Citizen of the Year Award. The first winner was Bob Hinit in 1967.



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Swift Current welcomes SIGA's investment

To commemorate the completion of the Living Sky Casino, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held in Swift Current. The casino opened its doors to the public Monday, Dec. 29.

"We look forward to providing the people of southwest Saskatchewan with traditional First Nations hospitality and service at Swift Current's newest and most dynamic entertainment attraction," said Living Sky Casino general manager Lionel Tootoosis.

"We look forward to entertaining our guests."

The Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) and its business partner, the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council, held a ribbon cutting which included First Nations Elders, Chiefs and councillors as well as provincial and municipal leaders.

"The casino is another example of a First Nations economic development project," said Tribal Chair Edmund Bellegarde of the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council.

"The success of this world-class entertainment venue will be measured by the new employment it creates and the positive revenue it generates for First Nations communities across Saskatchewan."

The \$35 million Living Sky Casino is a joint development between the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council and Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority. The 50,000 sq. ft. facility offers 225 slot machines, six live table games, a deli and restaurant. The new performing arts centre, called the Sky Centre is a key component of the entertainment complex



Tribal Chair Edmund Bellegarde (far left) of the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council, SIGA CEO Zane Hansen, Swift Current Mayor Sandy Larson, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Chief Lawrence Joseph, SIGA Board Chair Ray Ahenakew, SaskLiquor and Gaming Minister Dan D'Autremont, and Living Sky Casino General Manager Lionel Tootoosis all took part in the ceremonial ribbon cutting to officially open the Living Sky Casino in Swift Current.

and is scheduled to open in February.

Located on the Trans-Canada highway, the casino offers excellent accessibility to the million plus vehicles which pass through the area each year.

"So far we have had tremendous positive feedback on the casino," said Swift Current Mayor Sandy Larson.

"People say the project is well done, tasteful and provides another element to entertainment options in our community. They believe it will draw people in off the highway, who otherwise may not have stopped in Swift Current.

"It is also a new place to go and a

place to bring friends who visit. They are pleased with the in-casino services and staged entertainment as well."

According to the mayor, the casino will also bring positive economic benefits to the area.

"We believe the employment created in the casino will result in added value to existing community business who will benefit from the payroll dollars that are spent locally. We also appreciate the contribution the casino will make to municipal infrastructure through payments on the service agreement (in lieu of taxes) and utilities," added Larson.

"The Living Sky Casino is part of a three-year \$125 million major capital investment program at SIGA. The new Living Sky Casino, Dakota Dunes Casino in Saskatoon and the new Painted Hand Casino in Yorkton represent an unprecedented level for First Nations economic development in Saskatchewan," said Zane Hansen, SIGA president and CEO. The new Living Sky Casino employs 340 people, making it one of Swift Current's largest employers. Through expansion projects with its business partners, SIGA has created 800 new jobs across the province over the past 18 months.

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First Nations University alumni association launched

REGINA - The First Nations University of Canada alumni recently announced the formal creation of the First Nations University of Canada Alumni Association.

The Alumni Association's inaugural meeting was held in November and an interim executive was named. The creation of the alumni is in response to the long overdue plan to develop the network of over 3,000 graduates since its inception in 1976.

There were about 43 alumni present at the inaugural meeting. First Nations University of Canada President Charles Pratt, himself an alumnus, brought

greetings to kick off the meeting.

Milton Tootoosis (class of '85) brought forward greetings on behalf of the alumni. The alumni were informed on the purpose, structure and role of an alumni association.

The interim executive includes Milton Tootoosis-president, Lyndon Watson-vice president, Pearl Yuzicappi-treasurer, Marmie Poitras-secretary, and Alika Lafontaine-newsletter editor.

"The idea of launching formal alumni association for the University has been around for some time," says Tootoosis.

"I am very honoured to be the interim president and to play a role along with my

fellow executive team, in establishing this organization as an integral component of our university for many generations to come.

"We want to welcome all alumni to join us in the development of our alumni association," he added.

The Association plans to set a date for the annual general assembly and elections for the executive within the next six months.

The First Nations University of Canada, formerly called the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, first opened its doors to just a handful of students. Today,

more than 2,000 students are taking classes at the First Nations University of Canada.

When it first opened, the university was located in College West on the University of Regina Campus.

They now have a new building on the east side of the U of R Campus and there are three campuses located in Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

Former alumni of the First Nations University of Canada are encouraged to visit the First Nations University of Canada website to register and to plan on attending a reunion and AGM in the summer of 2009.

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The entertainment, arts year in review

What? 2009? Already? 2008 was so good to my family, I didn't want it to end. I do, however, welcome 2009 with open arms and look forward to another successful year for Saskatchewan's arts and entertainment industry.

The year 2008 was a breakthrough for so many people coast to coast and I'll do my best to re-cap the year that was.

Wapos Bay has cemented itself as Canada's best children's program – period. There, I finally said it. The little clay-mation show that could, has been nominated for five Geminis, and winning three. The most recent was for Best Individual or Ensemble Performance in an Animated Program or Series. The show's creator, Dennis Jackson, was also nominated for Best Writing in a Children's or Youth Program or Series.

Wapos Bay has attracted guest appearances by the likes of Jordin Tootoo, Lee Majors and most recently, Mike Holmes. Wapos Bay can be seen on APTN and SCN, check your local listings.

Candace Fox received some long overdue recognition in 2008. Moccasin Flats: Redemption, the made for TV movie that was the final installment of the popular TV series, screened at the American Indian Film Festival this past November and Ms Fox was named best actress! Congrats and stellar job Candace, we're all very proud to call you cousin.

Métis writer Joseph Boyden, who is no stranger to Saskatoon and the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company, won the prestigious Scotiabank Giller

Prize for his book Through Black Spruce. Boyden took home a cool fifty grand and cemented himself as one of the most talented writers of our time. If you haven't read his work, do yourself a BIG favour and read Three Day Road, Through Black Spruce or Born With a Tooth ... you'll be absolutely amazed with Boyden's ability to keep you turning pages.

Filmmaker Marcel Petit released and screened his feature-length documentary Hookers in 2008 and received critical acclaim. Hookers has made some stops on the film festival circuit and will be



It was a stellar year for Wapos Bay

screened as far away as Egypt this spring.

Rabbit Fall: Season II successfully finished its initial run on APTN and Space this fall and by

all accounts, was well-received by viewers. Starring Andrea Menard as Tara Wheaton, this season took a hard turn into the supernatural, complete with a mysterious Little Girl from another time and dimension. While still investigating heinous crimes, Tara was also forced to stay one step ahead of her erstwhile foe Simon Blackhorse and sociopathic partner turned boss Bob Venton. In the end, Rabbit Fall: Season II left viewers stunned when Tara was stabbed and killed in the thrilling season finale ... or was she? If you missed any or all episodes of Rabbit Fall: Season II, don't worry, it airs again on APTN this month.

My good friend and screenwriting cohort Trevor Cameron had an unbelievable year in 2008. He was promoted to Story Editor on Rabbit Fall and co-wrote three episodes – one with your humble

scribe and two with our screenwriting guru Peter Lauterman. Cameron also wrote two episodes of Cashing In, which airs this March on APTN and Showcase, and was also the show's Story Editor.

If that wasn't enough, Cameron also wrote two episodes of Wapos Bay and got his directorial debut on one episode. I can't say enough about this guy's talent as a writer and am super appreciative of his support of me as an emerging (aka annoying) screenwriter.

Writer, actor and director Simon Moccasin was blessed in 2008. He welcomed his second daughter Sage into the world in January while continuously plugging away at his career as an up and coming mover and shaker in the entertainment industry. He won the pitchfest at the Mispon Aboriginal Filmmaking Festival for his concept The Scoop, a docudrama about Aboriginal children being snatched from the birth families by the government and adopted out to non-Aboriginal families.

Moccasin was a victim of the scoop and looks forward to telling this difficult story through the film medium. Moccasin also performed in Native Earth's A Very Polite Genocide or the Girl Who Fell to Earth in Toronto in late 2008. Moccasin plans to forge ahead in 2009, with plans for a TV series, production of The Scoop and writing another edition of his series of plays called Bush Party.

Last year ended with another side-splitting edition of A Rez Christmas Story VII: Life is Wonderful. As always, the play gave viewers an abdominal workout but it was Waylon Machiskinic's portrayal of Seagoose and Clem that stole the show. Two weeks prior to opening night, Mitchell Poundmaker was forced to pull out of the play and Waylon stepped in. Needless to say, Seagoose is not the easiest character to play but Waylon pulled it off in remarkable fashion.



Curtis Peeteetuce, Jennifer Bishop and Aaron Naytowhow were also fabulous – as they always are.

Andrea Menard also had a stellar 2008. As mentioned, she starred in Rabbit Fall: Season II, released her CD Sparkle and sang her heart out from coast to coast. Since her one-act play The Velvet Devil was made into a TV movie, I have heard countless fans complain and gripe they never saw the play (myself included).

Here's our chance! The Velvet Devil, produced by the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company and directed by Alanis King, will be at the Broadway Theatre in Saskatoon on Jan. 29, 30 and 31. Call SNTC @ 933-2262 for tickets.

If I missed anyone or anything, feel free to email me at mgscreenwriter@gmail.com with a bannock slap. Here's to an amazing, productive and inspiring 2009!

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Americans embraced change ... let's join in

Americans elect a black president, an Aboriginal person is appointed to the Canadian senate and the Prime Minister of Canada apologizes to the Residential School Survivors.

These are historic events indicating that people are tired of the status quo and ready to embrace change. It took a very long time for the Canadian government to apologize to the thousands of Aboriginal people who were taken from their homes and forced to attend the Church-run Residential Schools.

An apology is just words until it is followed up by actions. Where are the much needed social programs to help people deal with the ramifications of opening Pandora's Box? If this government is truly sorry, then it needs to develop and fund programs to assist people dealing with the loss of family, culture, and language.

There were rumblings about the possible appointment of an Aboriginal person to the Senate but I never thought it would happen under the Harper government. Observers say the appointment of Aboriginal advocate, Patrick Brazeau, to the Senate should come as no surprise, given his close ties to Stephan Harper's Conservative government.

Brazeau, 34, is the current Chief of the

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, is an Algonquin from northwestwestern Quebec and a citizen of the Kitigan Zib Indian reserve. Imagine, he could have that Senate seat until he is 75 years old! What kind of change can he bring? We'll have to wait and see.

I am also curious to see how things will change once the new president takes office. I find it odd that I take more interest in the American politics than in the Canadian. Believe me I am not the only Canadian. I was so impressed that President-elect Obama actually went and met with American Indian Tribal Governments during his campaign! Imagine that!

During our last election not one of the candidates came to my door. Their propaganda made it to my mailbox but not one candidate ever darkened my doorway. I did take advantage of a meet and greet with the candidates at a venue in Regina.

"Where does your party stand on Aboriginal issues?" I asked them.

Many of the candidates were not

prepared to answer that question. Considering the ever-increasing Aboriginal population, I hope that future candidates are paying attention and begin work on attracting the Aboriginal vote in Canada.

I suggest recruiting more Aboriginal people to run for vacant seats in the next election.

The reality is that if we want to make changes to policy or any legislation affecting us, we need to step up and participate in municipal, provincial and federal elections either by voting or actually running as a candidate.

There was a time when everyone participated in the running of our communities. Today, many in society could care less. How can they care about who wins an election when they worry about what they will feed their children for dinner or how they will pay the rent for the next month.

We have to care! Look at some of the countries where people are starving and their country is at war – these people still participate in their elections, they still believe in the possibilities of change and so can we.

There was a time when Aboriginal people were forbidden to vote in an election. Imagine what a change we could make to this province if we all vote in the next election!

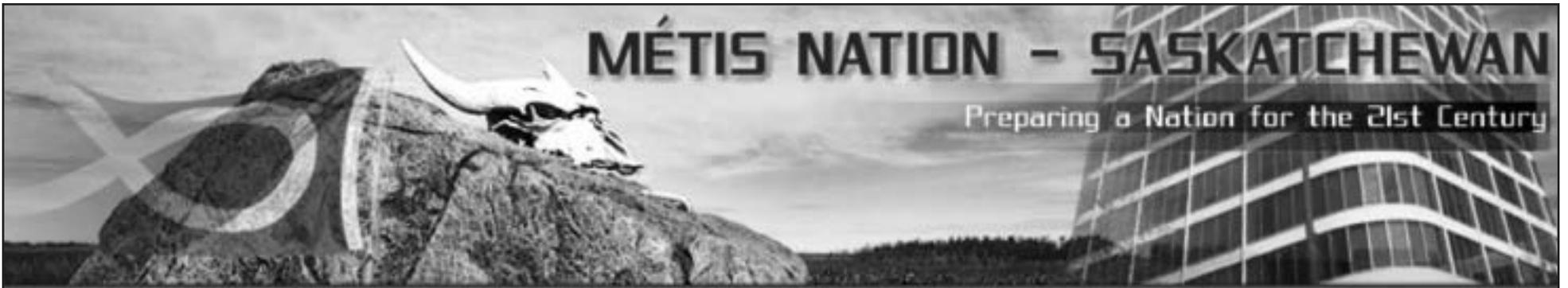
Many black people in America voted for the first time ever this past election. Why? Because for the first time someone took the time to listen to their concerns, someone who looked like them, someone who struggled like them, someone the voters could relate to.

Americans have embraced change and by doing so have brought the whole world along with them.

"Change will come," as the new president says. "It might not happen today, it might not happen this term but it will come."

So, have faith brothers and sisters, a change is coming to this world and we can either watch change come or participate in it ... we've got a choice. Ekosi.

Until next month play safe and have fun. Thanks for your emails and letters. Send your questions and comments to Sandee Sez C/O Eagle Feather News P.O. Box 924, Station Main, Saskatoon SK S7K 3M4, or you can send me an email s.ahenakew@yahoo.ca



The Métis Nation - Saskatchewan is working to improve access and health services to Métis residents in Saskatchewan.

In order to determine the health status of Métis and issues that affect Métis communities, Métis Nation - Saskatchewan is asking Métis citizens to participate in a Community Based Participatory Survey. This survey will be used to create evidence informed programming and will assist in the process of collecting statistical and representative data on Métis for health care purposes.

All data collection is strictly confidential.

From January 22 to January 29, Métis Nation - Saskatchewan and the Department of Academic Family Medicine, University of Saskatchewan will be in Northern communities to provide training to those interested in becoming Field Interviewers whose responsibility it is to conduct surveys in their Métis regions throughout Saskatchewan. Communities targeted in this first training phase are LaLoche, Buffalo Narrows, Ile a la Crosse, Beauval, Cumberland House, Stony Rapids, and LaRonge. Training in other Regions will follow in February.

If you are interested in conducting surveys on behalf of the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan or would like to participate by filling out a health survey please contact Kelly Patrick MN-S Interim Director of Health by phone (306)343-8285, toll free (888)343-6667 or by email kellypatrick@shaw.ca.

This work is being undertaken under the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund, with support from Saskatchewan Health and funding from Health Canada.



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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

Sincerely,

David Clinton,
 Mistatim, Sk

It's okay to celebrate the fiddle, games, projects, and highways and lakes with Indigenous names. But still, 75-87% unemployment amongst the "visibly" Indigenous is not acceptable.

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Federal initiative aims at improving employment picture for skilled Aboriginal workers in Saskatchewan

Aboriginal workers in Saskatchewan will be better prepared to take advantage of economic opportunities in their province, thanks to a new project recently announced.

Rob Clarke, Member of Parliament for Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River, made the announcement while speaking at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

Clarke announced funding to the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission to undertake the Aboriginal Participation and Upskilling Initiative pilot project. The project will create an innovative web-based network that will provide participants with tutorials, links to training programs, best practices, and learning plans based on occupation.

The project is designed to help 150 Aboriginal workers develop and implement personalized learning plans, enabling them to upgrade their skills and increase their employability.

“Our government is taking steps to ensure that Aboriginal workers have access to the skills and training they need to reach their full potential,” said Clarke.

“We are actively working with partners so that Aboriginal Canadians can fully share in economic opportunities that will lead to lasting benefits for Aboriginal people, their communities and their families,” Clarke added.

“This program helps our growing Aboriginal workforce reach its full potential,” said Lyle Stewart, Saskatchewan Minister of Enterprise and Innovation.

“Like any workforce, it needs the higher education and skills levels that lead to greater productivity, increased innovation, success, growth and higher earnings. In turn, these open the door to the quality of life we all seek,” Stewart said.

“This project is a very good initiative that complements the ongoing work being done through our Aboriginal Employment Development initiative,” said June Draude, Saskatchewan’s Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

“We want to see Saskatchewan’s First Nations and Métis people benefiting from our strong economy. This is a great program to train people for jobs in areas where employers need skilled workers.”

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Wanuskewin Heritage Park

Wanuskewin Heritage Park is a National Historic Site that brings to life the history and culture of the Northern and Plains First Nations peoples. The 760 acre Park located three kilometers north of the City of Saskatoon stands as a living memorial to the people who gathered here for over 6,000 years. The stewardship of the Park and its resources rests with the Wanuskewin Heritage Park Authority established under the Wanuskewin Heritage Park Act of Saskatchewan. The Authority is a registered charitable non-profit organization.

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- possess a strong awareness of First Nation historical, cultural and economic issues, as well as knowledge of traditional protocols and practices
- proven ability to work with the First Nation constituency, and a demonstrated ability to build consensus and collaborate with people of diverse cultural and organizational backgrounds
- a high degree of professionalism in the areas of diplomacy, judgment, relationship-building and presentation and time management skills
- the ability to communicate in a First Nation language will be an asset

To be considered for this opportunity, please submit your resume by Monday, January 26, 2009 to:

Board of Directors of the Wanuskewin Heritage Park Authority

Attention: The Search Committee

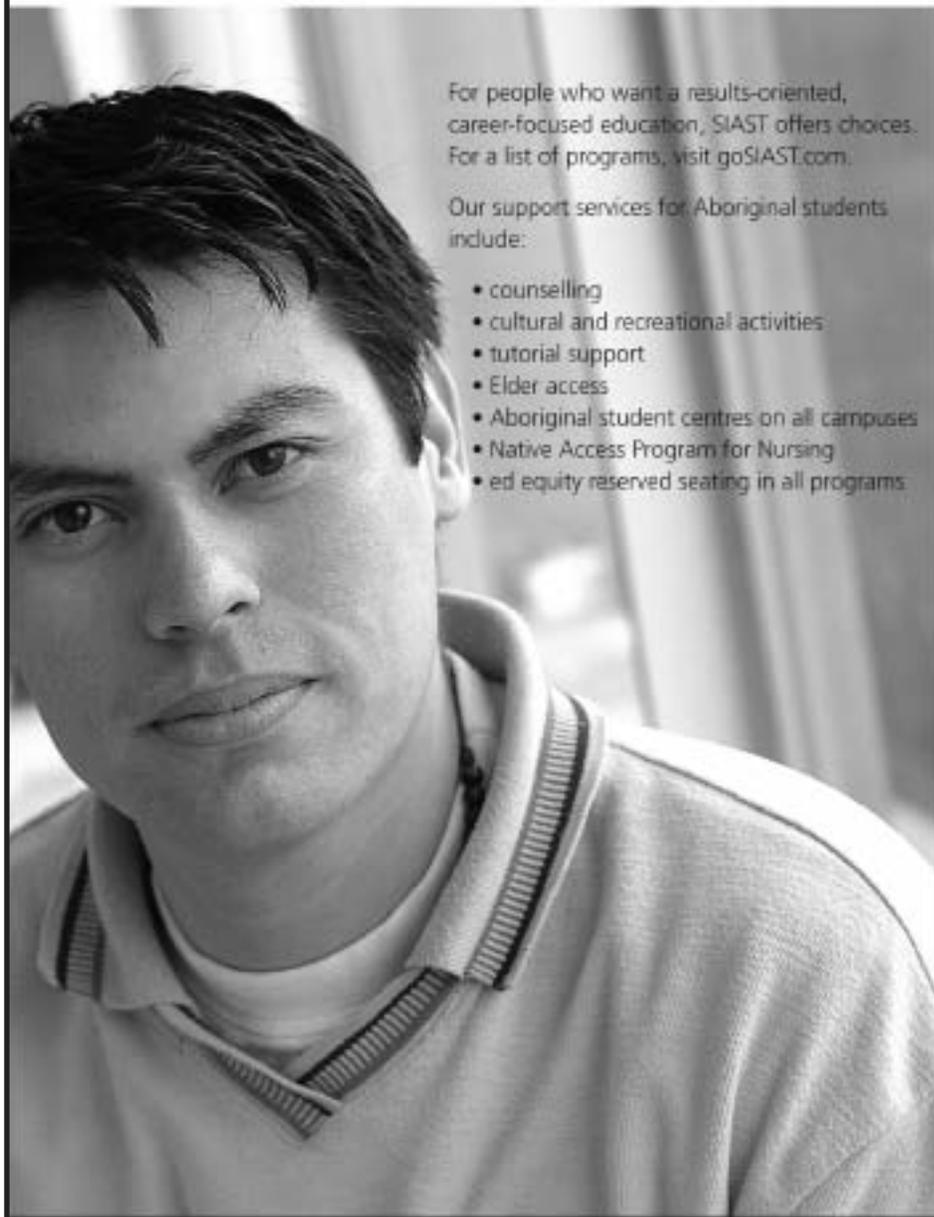
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A perspective on Residential School Truth and Reconciliation

By Blue Pelletier

The following is my response to Prime Minister Harper's Apology. His apology in the House of Commons on June 11 was great, but it was also a little late. Is that all we require, an apology and some money?

I wrote this and presented it at CBC's Truth and Reconciliation Forum the day after the apology. It was a beautiful evening, full of emotion and great conversation. A moment in my life, that I will never forget. I thought it would be relevant as we look back at the year that was.

The intent was obvious. Residential Schools were designed to destroy the Indian. Take away the identity, the culture, and the belief system. The cultural devastation we now refer to as assimilation.

Yesterday we witnessed history. When Prime Minister Harper stood in Parliament and read his apology we gathered around our TVs and watched as one Nation. And as First Nations people we watched and we listened, but also we remembered.

For those who are survivors; the memories of physical and sexual abuse still run rampant in their minds and affect their lives deeply.

For the generations that followed, the affects are among us. Everywhere I go across the prairies I see people who are poor and disadvantaged. Segregated to the inner cities, or living on reserves in a country we once called our own.

Yes, we received our apology, and yes, we received our money! But where do we go from here?

Do we allow this sickness, this disease that was passed on to my generation to plague us? Do we stand back and watch the epidemic of drug and alcohol abuse take us through the cycle one more time?

For me, and me alone, my answers were right in front of me. I was given an opportunity to succeed and shown a brighter future.

My mother is a residential school survivor. Her stories of how she was treated haunt me and to this day keep me away from the church.

But she did not allow herself to be a victim. She fought back against all odds and persevered. She became educated and showed me a way out.

She taught me about language, and gave me the tools to write and to speak. And with her guidance and her believing in me, how could I fail.

Now, I never forget what my mother went through, nor do I forget the type of life I led in my early childhood. But I will never allow those experiences to shape who I will become. I am stronger than that.

I believe as First Nations people we need to move on. Not forget, but move on. Find a way to heal ourselves, find a way to forgive. Take back what was stolen so long ago and become strong nations once again.

Find that pride that allows us to hold our

heads high. Become that vibrant culture, rich in tradition and find a way to contribute to this modern world we belong to.

Not as statistics, but as a functional group of people. We are a group of people who are not limited by our status cards or by simply being an Indian. We are now at a place in life where we can only confine ourselves.

Too often I am met with skepticism when I speak like this. So many of the young people I am around tell me why they can't, instead of how they can. To me this is just unacceptable. We are the Seventh Generation; we are the first of our

people who were not forced to attend Residential School. The self-hate that we grew into is no longer an option, or an excuse.

We all need to see and understand that people like my mother are all around us. First Nations people are now your teachers, your high paid executive, or even your favorite rapper.

Being just an Indian is now a thing of the past. Do not allow yourself to be put in a box you had no hand in carving! We are First Nations peoples and we are whomever we choose to be!



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Former Stingray Trent Campbell has switched jerseys and is now a member of the Portland Pirates of the American Hockey League.

English River's Campbell jumps ship to become a Pirate

Trent Campbell has made the jump from the East Coast Hockey League's South Carolina Stingrays to the Portland Pirates of the American Hockey League.

The English River First Nation product has done quite well since the call-up, notching three goals and three assists in his first five games.

Initially, he was asked to help fill the void after several of the team's players went down with injury.

But with his stellar play, which includes a plus/minus rating of +5, he just might have earned his roster spot for the remainder of the year, regardless of who returns from injury.

His professional hockey journey started last year, after a four-year career at Lake Superior State. During his time there he earned a degree in business administration management, convocating in June 2007.

After that it was off to France where he played the first couple months of the season. Campbell soon found

himself wanting to return, after just a few months.

"I went to a small town in France, I liked the culture and the town. But the hockey wasn't to my liking. And it is a different lifestyle over there," he says.

Campbell says that hockey has been good to him.

"It has given me a my education and a chance to travel all over the world. Hopefully when it's all done I can come back to Saskatchewan and maybe open up my own business. But I want to play hockey for at least a few more years."

If he keeps playing like he has been the 5-10, 175 lb. Campbell will definitely not be coming home anytime soon.

The wrap on 2008 sports

The File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council played host to the Saskatchewan First Nations Winter Games. The Saskatoon Tribal Council

came out on top winning the event with a total of 246 points.

Team Sask took their place at the top of the totem pole once again with a dominating performance at the North American Indigenous Games held in Cowichan, B.C.

It was the sixth overall team title for Saskatchewan since NAIG began in 1990. Saskatchewan finished with 243 medals, 94 gold, 81 silver, and 68 bronze.

The Saskatchewan Chiefs would go on to win the Junior B Provincial Fastball Championship once again. The team is comprised of players representing all 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan.

Two of the members from the Saskatchewan Chiefs would go on to represent Canada at the World Junior Fastball Championships, where they took home a silver medal. Congratulations to Terrell Walker and Dennis Iron ... you made the province very proud!

Random thoughts

I spent some time chatting with Freddie Sasakamoose this month and I must say it was quite the honour.

Any of us who participated in any sport when we were younger should tip our hats to a man like him... Woo hoo Canada is golden once again.

That's five world junior championships in a row.



Not a bad performance by our goalie in the final either, right Vince Lavallee.

Did we ever doubt we were the best hockey nation in the world! Go Canada Go!...Super Bowl picks: Carolina 17 - Baltimore 10...RIP Brennan Jarrett.

Let's re-name

Random thoughts

I would like to invite all of our readers to come up with a new title for my random thoughts section.

Give me something with a distinct First Nation tie to it. All of your entries can be emailed to me at blue.zone@hotmail.com

The lucky winner will receive a one-year subscription to Eagle Feather News and I promise to send you my absolute best fried bannock recipe!

I will use the best entry I receive for next month's issue and will definitely give you a shout out!

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Welcome Canada!

It's Hockey Day in Ahtahkakoop

By Blue Pelletier
For Eagle Feather News

On a chilly December day hundreds gathered at the rink out on the Ahtahkakoop First Nation. It was a special day ... it was Hockey Day in Ahtahkakoop.

The people there were also paying tribute to the 1974 All Native Saskatchewan Bantam All-Stars. They were a traveling group of young men who would go across the ocean and play all over Europe.

And on this day Freddie Sasakamoose, who was the coach said "too bad it is so damn cold, we would have had more people here, but this is one of the best days ever on my reserve."

"One of the best days I have ever had, to have Hockey Night in Canada come here is just great".

Although people were there to celebrate the 35th anniversary team, Sasakamoose says the team concept had started in 1972 when the team traveled to Kamloops for an international bantam tourney. He said there were teams from USA, Sweden, and Russia there.

"It was important for them to not be in awe of such teams and that they were there to prove that they belonged on the ice with them," Sasakamoose said.

The team that was put together in 1974 would embark on a journey that would change their lives. Their first stop was in England. And as Sasakamoose tells it, the boys were in a state of shock.

They wondered what the people were doing driving on the wrong side of the road. None of them had ever seen anything like it.

From England the team would go on to Holland where they would play their first group of games. They were met by 60 families upon arriving and all of them began to fight for the right to play host to the kids.

Some of it had to do with the Canadian flags they carried on their jackets. It was in the Second World War

that Canada had gone to Holland and helped get them country back after the Germans had taken it from them.

They couldn't have picked a better place to play first. The gratitude and the appreciation they encountered was simply remarkable.

The games were never really close, the young boys from Saskatchewan were simply too good for their hosts.

One thing that was also new to the kids was the food. These people eat cheese for breakfast, they would say. "They eat so different than us."

Next up was a trip to Warsaw, and then on to Helsinki. It would be there that the team would finally face a challenge.

It was a country many of the young men could identify with. It was very cold there. The hills were rolling, large rocks and small mountains were seen everywhere. And the stadium in Helsinki was huge. They would have thousands come out to watch their games.

The Finnish all-stars were led by a young Jari Kurri. The Fins would go on to win four of the seven games.

In Finland, the teams would exchange hockey philosophies. It was a sign of respect for Sasakamoose to be asked to take the Finnish kids through a practice, and for the Finnish coaches to teach the boys all their best European tricks.

This trip wasn't just about hockey. Traveling with the squad was a group of dancers. They were there to showcase the cultural aspects of our people.

"The fans would come to see our culture, and watch Indian hockey," said Sasakamoose.

The team was comprised of young Indian kids from all across Saskatchewan. They were tough kids who had played organized hockey their whole lives.

Several of the bantams have moved on to good careers while others struggled under the immense social conditions, poverty and racism. Some died as a result of social problems.

Some of the people that should be



Syvannah and Dayzsa Merasty and McKayla Sasakamoose hold the banner welcoming the country to their hockey-mad community of Ahtahkakoop.

(Photo by Shannon Avison)

thanked for making this happen include Ray Ahenakew, who helped coach along with Sasakamoose, Art Obey, who was the team manager, and a man named Jim Dalgliesh deserves a lot of credit. He was instrumental in helping the team gain enough funding to make the trip.

"This team was a dream, a dream for all of us. Someday I hope to be able to establish our own national team, our own team for the Olympics. An all-Indian team to represent our people," said

Sasakamoose.

"It is our dream. I would like to see a college with a good training program, a place to see all our kids play somewhere. It is my vision. I want to see it during my time, before I go.

I will be here for a while and I am in good health, but I want to see this happen."

Hockey Day in Ahtahkakoop will air on CBC Hockey Day in Canada on February 21.



This photo of the Saskatchewan Indian Bantam hockey team appeared in programs in Europe in 1974.

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