A renowned author, storyteller, and cultural and language preserver was honoured at this year’s Anskohk Aboriginal Literature Festival in Saskatoon.

Held for one week in October, the fourth annual festival is designed to highlight Aboriginal authors from across Canada who participate in workshops, panel discussions, and presentations. The Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company, the Saskatoon Public Library and McNally Robinson Book Sellers host the Festival.

SNTC’s General Manager Donna Heimbecker thinks the festival is one-of-a-kind in North America, and was created for that reason: because there was nothing out there recognizing Aboriginal authors.

“Our community has always kind of been on the sidelines. Nobody has taken the initiative to really celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of Aboriginal writers to the industry, to the school system, whether it’s academic writing or writing for children. There is a huge list of accomplished, prolific writers in our country.”

Those writers were honoured at the gala dinner where awards were handed out for Poetry Book of the Year, Children’s Book of the Year, Fiction Book of the Year, McNally Robinson’s Aboriginal Book of the Year, and the Lifetime Achievement Award.

That Tongued Belonging by Marilyn Dumont was awarded two prizes: Poetry and Aboriginal Book of the Year. Cherie Dimaline won Fiction Book of the Year, McNally Robinson’s Aboriginal Book of the Year, and the Lifetime Achievement Award.

And, this award was not the first received by Johnston. He has received the Order of Ontario, the 125th Anniversary Medal, and in 2004 he received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Heritage and Spirituality. He also has two honorary doctorates from the University of Toronto and Laurentian University.

Heimbecker says the festival has grown since it began four years ago. There were 30 submissions for the book awards. New this year were evening coffee houses where the public could listen to authors and speak to them in a more intimate setting.

“Very few of them have been withdrawn from circulation. I’m proud of that. When the book life, the shelf life, is about six weeks ... I’m proud of that. Of all the books, do I have a favourite? No. They’re all my children.”

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By Darla Read

Drew Hayden-Taylor, poet Gregory Scofield and Neal McLeod participate in a panel discussion. (Below) Basil Johnston received a lifetime achievement award for his efforts in preserving the Anishinaabae language. (Photos by John Lagimodiere)
With an all-new fall season hitting television screens across the country Nov. 5, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) has unveiled its largest, most diverse programming line-up to date. And one of their high-profile series was shot in Saskatchewan and features a local celebrity.

APTN will offer nine new entertainment series, 11 returning entertainment series, four new children’s series and two children’s returning series. More than 30 new documentary offerings round out the schedule and include 20 world premieres. Their news shows were re-vamped as well.

“We are very pleased to bring our viewers such an exciting fall line-up; one which complements our already unique brand of programming” says Jean LaRose, APTN Chief Executive Officer.

APTN’s commitment to the development of Aboriginal producers has come to fruition; as is evidenced by the increasing number of high caliber programs the network has successfully secured. Our efforts to develop unique Aboriginal programming that is, by definition, Canadian content have also proven beneficial – APTN currently airs 84 per cent Canadian content in multiple genres – more than any other Canadian television broadcaster.”

One artist benefiting from APTN’s growth is Saskatchewan actor and playwright Andrea Menard. She is the star of Rabbit Fall which launched on Friday, Nov. 9. The made-in-Saskatchewan series, produced by Angel Entertainment, is a twisted take on the supernatural and crime.

Rabbit Fall is a strange place populated by strange characters that are involved with strange crimes. In every episode there is an underlining current of the supernatural and crime.

Andrea Menard plays big city cop Tara who gets sent to a weird and creepy small town called Rabbit Fall where it seems as though there are bodies everywhere. (Photo courtesy APTN)

The series stars Andrea Menard, as Tara, an Aboriginal police officer that gets stationed at Rabbit Fall because she’s had her own fall from grace.

“This show will turn Native Spirituality upside down,” said Menard on a hectic Monday between media interviews from around Canada. “It is a supernatural creepy kind of town and I play this big city cop who thinks this is a demotion. But the character learns lots about herself and her life. People will love this show. We have great characters and great writing.”

Over 50 per cent of the shooting was done in Duck Lake, one hour north of Saskatoon and at nearby rural settings including a Bible Camp that had its own lake. Most of the interiors, like the police station, cabins and rural homes, were shot in Saskatoon.

Shooting in the summer in Saskatchewan, the crew contended with over 30 C degree weather. While there were lots of bugs on the set, there was often a scarcity of extras in the small community. When a call was put out for 20 extras for an angry “lynch mob” the small town of Duke Lake was only able to hustle up 12, but it was just enough.

But the greatest challenge came the night that a controlled burn of a shed had to be created for episode five, which was directed by Lorne Cardinal of Corner Gas fame.

The producers had hired a pyro-technician and had the Saskatoon fire department and paramedics on site for safety and control. The producers had considered getting a backup water pumper in case the fire department got called away, but they were assured that the only thing that would pull them off the shoot was a five-alarm fire, which had not happened in 15 years.

But halfway through the shoot, the fire department dispatcher got a call. A major chemical explosion on the other side of town needed every pumper and every fire fighter the city had (who could blame them.)

“So we ground to a halt,” said assistant production manager in charge of the site that night, Ell McEachern.

“I spent the next one and a half hours on the phone trying to find a private water truck and paramedics to hire.”

The shooting resumed and was completed, but a looming lightning storm on the horizon kept threatening to bring the burning scene to an end for good.

“The people in this fictional town are split between the believers and the non-believers,” said Menard. “My character starts as a non-believer and you have to tune in to see where she goes. But I know for sure, viewers will respond to the town folks in this show. “Believe me.”

If you have cancer, you are not alone.

The Canadian Cancer Society can provide information about cancer in 17 Aboriginal languages. Our national information centre is located in Saskatoon.
Gabriel Dumont gets three nominations on Saskatchewan Book Awards shortlist

In 2007, for the first time in the history of the Saskatchewan Book Awards, readers chose some of the titles nominated for the annual awards. The new Readers’ Choice Award, sponsored by the Regina Public Library, brought in a shortlist voted on by library patrons across the province. In all other categories shortlists are chosen by juries of writers, publishers, and other book professionals. Nominations were recently announced at simultaneous news conferences in Saskatoon and Regina. The 2007 list pare downs the original 210 entries to 70 nominations in 13 categories.

Distinctive characteristics of Saskatchewan culture are highlighted in many of the books on this year’s list. Fourteen of the nominations are for books from the Aboriginal community. Doug Cuthand’s Askiwina: A Cree World is nominated for two awards. Harold Johnston’s Two Families: Treaties and Government received nominations for Book of the Year as well as, First People’s Publishing.

The Native Law Centre’s publication First Nation Jurisprudence and Aboriginal Rights is nominated for the Publishing in Education and First Peoples’ awards. Blair Stonechild’s The New Buffalo is nominated in the Scholarly Writing category. Fiddle Dancer, a first book by Anne Patton and Wilfred Burton, and its publisher, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, also share three nominations.

Elsewhere, first-time author MaryAnn Kilkby received two nominations, in both the Non-Fiction and First Book categories, for I Am Hutterite. Octogenarian William Driedger tells the story of a boy growing up in a Mennonite village in his first book, Jakob, Out of the Village, nominated for the Regina Book Award. The 15th Anniversary Awards Gala will take place on Saturday, Nov. 24 at Regina’s Conexus Arts Centre, when the winners of all 13 awards will be announced. This year’s guest speaker will be Sandra Birdsell, whose novel The R梳理, recipient of numerous Saskatchewan Book awards, was nominated for both the Giller Prize and a Governor General’s Award.

Shortlisted authors will read at the Regina Brunch on Nov. 3, 12 noon at the Hotel Saskatchewan Radisson Plaza, Saskatoon Brunch on Nov. 18, 11:30 a.m. at the Delta Bessborough Hotel, Prince Albert Reading Event at John M. Cuelenaere Library on Nov. 15 at 7 p.m., and at the Swift Current Reading Brunch on Nov. 18, 11:30 a.m. at the Days Inn. Tickets for all Saskatchewan Book Awards events can be purchased on-line at tickets@bookawards.sk.ca, or you may call 791-7744.

For more information visit saskatoon.ca and look under “S” for Snow & Ice Program or call the Snow & Ice Hotline at 975-2491.
B rad Wall, our premier-elect, said hope beats fear a multitude of times during his victory speech. That mantra pretty well summed up the feelings of the province as we bid farewell to the fine folks at the NDP after 16 years of service to the people of Saskatchewan. The NDP had done a commendable job but was out of gas and everyone, including the NDP, knew it.

Because of that, the NDP campaign strategy was to convince people that Brad Wall was Grant Devine and that if he was elected he would sell our crown, crank up the debt and that we should all be very scared … very, very scared. Unfortunately for the NDP, Brad Wall is far from scary and the campaign had the opposite effect and actually offended people and wound up driving them to the Saskatchewan Party. Fear mongering just doesn’t work.

The SaskParty has made considerable changes to its First Nation and Métis policies in the last few years, policies that are inclusive and respectful, so there should be no drop off on the quality of the relationship between the province, the FSIN and the MN-S. Our best guess is that Don Morgan or June Draude will be the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, though Morgan would also make a good Justice Minister.

In other election notables, Joan Beatty and Buckley Bellanger both maintained their NDP seats up north, which was no surprise to anyone. They are hugely popular. In the city of Saskatoon, Eileen Gelowitz ran a good campaign against incumbent Andy Iwanchuk but came second with a nice amount of votes. Good for her and her team.

The most interesting urban battle came down to Saskatoon-Meewasin where Liberal Leader David Karwacki was running against Justice Minister Frank Quennel. Everyone was focused on those two but Roger Parent, Métis business specialist and SaskParty candidate ran an awesome campaign and almost played giant killer coming in a very close second. Good effort Roger.

Out in the sticks, the most interesting result is yet to be decided. In Meadow Lake, former Minister of First Nation and Métis Relations, Maynard Sonntag is in a dogfight with SaskParty candidate Jeremy Harrison, the former MP for the area. Harrison became famous for calling some reserves banana republics after losing to Liberal Gary Merasty in the last federal election. He also stated in one of his challenges that there was unlawful election advertising posted on the wall of a polling station. His so called election advertising was the cover of Eagle Feather News cut out and posted on the wall calling the northern riding a battleground. We will watch this riding battle closely.

Another thing hit me watching Brad Wall give his victory speech. I am finally from the same generation as our premier. He is only two years older than me and he was the only candidate that had “smoked” per se. How cool is that? Hope beats fear. Go Brad go.

And now for something completely different …

In a bit of a flip-flop, things are going very well at the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan. In conversation with President Robert Doucette, it appears as though funding levels are returning to pre-election fiasco levels. Doucette and his executive are earning salaries and he has even negotiated a salary of approximately $50,000 per year for the Area Directors. Also coming down the pipe is funding to get the Powley Decision front and centre and to get hunting rights implemented based on Powley.

With the recent Belhumeur case in the Qu’Appelle Valley going the Métis way, the province has no other option than to negotiate this deal. The MN-S is also expecting lots of work around the Duty to Consult legislation that is having a huge impact on the resource industries in this nation. At the Métis National Council, things have gone a bit south. They recently had to layoff all of their staff except three. The remaining three are keeping the administration going, but due to the unmoving political stances all around, there is a deadlock that has left the MNC without a leader and without a duly constituted mandate. It looks like the courts may have to settle the matter. More money for lawyers, less leadership for the Métis people. Sad.

What’s coming up in Eagle Feather News

In December we will bring you a state of the union from the MN-S, the FSIN and the province of Saskatchewan. We are trying to line up all the leaders for interviews and hopefully we can bring you their thoughts on the holiday season, sharing of resources and where their respective organizations are. We will also have newsmakers of the year. But we need your help here. We want your thoughts on who or what was the news event of the year. We also want you to tell us about people who may be considered the sportsperson of the year, or artist of the year, or someone who just did some darn good work for the community.

In December you tell us who is newsworthy. Send in your ideas to johnl@eaglefeathernews.com or call me toll free at 1-866-323-6397 we look forward to hearing from you.
We need to return to the principles of Wahkotowin

Maria Campbell

We are hanging on by our fingernails. We are hanging on by our fingernails because we are being blackmailed. We are being blackmailed by the government.

In the midst of all of this, our leaders have forgotten the teachings of our ancestors. We were taught the good way, hunt with respect. What happened?

Let's begin with the stories. They are our stories, our songs, our ceremonies, and our dances. They are our teachings and knowledge of our people. What has always bothered me is that so much energy and money has gone into trying to establish the legal status of our people. What we need is the return to the principles of Wahkotowin.

For the last 60 years the Lubicon, with this uncertain legal status, have fought for their survival. This has destroyed their traditional lands and way of life. As a result they struggle to protect themselves and to secure a future for their children.

We were all silent as dad's eyes welled up with tears. "That old moose was right," he said. "I always gave myself to you and your family never went hungry. Now they are grown up and they are coming home with lots of wild meat." We were all silent as dad's eyes welled up with tears. "That old moose was right," he said. "I always gave myself to you and your family never went hungry. Now they are grown up and they are coming home with lots of wild meat.

I'm telling you this because it is important to this story. Dad gave all his guns away that summer and never hunted again, nor did he support the hunting rights for just anybody. "If an old man is doing to each other. The art, the music and stories of Aboriginal peoples are intrinsic to our communities, and if we lose our children we lose everything.

A community example involving the Lubicon Nation in north central Alberta. The Lubicon are 'relatives' who were left out of the treaty signing in the nineteenth century and are considered important enough, we can move to consider the Lubicon as Cree people while being over run by the government, our lead- ership, the processes of land claims, and rights-based causes and therefore we don't engage in critical analysis of ourselves because we are told that this will be seen as putting our people, our communities, down. "Can't, Can't," the other cheek, suppress anger, suppress pain until we can't feel anything anymore and our brains stop working - this is the legacy of colonialism.

I share it out of concern for our children and the youth we work with at SNTC reflects that we are doing to each other. The art, the music and stories of Aboriginal peoples are intrinsic to our communities, and if we lose our children we lose everything.

I believe it was author bell hooks, who said ' Shame is the result of an injury to the soul.' And that reminds me of the little girl in Melfort whom three men sexually assaulted.

The “lovelessness” that abounds in Aboriginal life is painful. It just bloody hurts. We need to start being kind to one another, start treating each other like relatives and practicing the principles of Wahkotowin — and that is free.
A mong the Saulteaux there is a story about an ancient people who wanted to live forever. The Great Mystery gave them everlasting life by turning them into stone.

According to the Bear Clan teachings we honour them by calling them grandfather or grandmother for they were once people like us.

East of Stanley Mission on the Churchill River there is a mysterious boulder which moves unseen from the rivers edge to the bluff above and back again. Travelers have seen it above and below at different times in their passing. There was one man who decided he would find out for himself what made the rock move.

He stayed upon the boulder until he could stay awake no more. He nodded off and when he opened his eyes the stone had moved from the bluff to the waters edge. He left and refused to return.

On the Waterhen First Nation there is a white rock which moves from one end of a narrow bay to the other, again sight unseen. It has done this since ancient times.

Near the Battle River in central Alberta there was once a large meteorite upon a hill top. The Plains Cree believed it to be sacred. In 1864 some Methodist missionaries removed it from its resting place.

The Cree were outraged and predicted three calamities to follow. These were starvation, disease and war. The buffalo were thick upon the plains when the iron stone was taken and the prediction made.

Within four years the great herds collapsed never to return. A smallpox epidemic then raged among the northern plains people and war broke out between the Blackfoot Confederacy and their enemies the Cree, Saulteaux and Assiniboine Alliance.

The Iron stone can now be found in the Alberta Provincial Museum in Edmonton.

Northwest of Rosetown Saskatchewan along the valley of the Eagle Creek there is a side coulee extending back into the Bad Hills. Buffalo bones erode from the creek banks. Buffalo skulls rest untouched in the earth with wildflowers growing out through the eye sockets.

There are many tipi rings and unexplained circles of stone too large to be tipis rings arranged along the slope of the valley wall. Golden eagles hunt prey and mule deer and elk are numerous.

Large marine fossils from millions of years ago have been found. The backbone fossils of the plesiosaur were especially prized by the Blackfoot who once lived here. These Piskuns resemble buffalo and were kept to ensure success in the hunt.

The Bad Hills took their name from the Cree’s deadly encounter with a war party of Blackfoot followed by the killing of a Cree by a great plains Grizzly bear in that same year. There were once many bears living in this area. The remains of their dens can still be seen.

The Bad Hills was lost beneath a rock pile and little is known about it.

The Bad Hills is the stone that endures and keeps the Earth’s stories.
Hello Eagle Feather News readers. November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month. Did you know that lung cancer is the number one cancer killer of both men and women in the Canada?

In addition, lung cancer is responsible for more cancer deaths than prostate, breast and colorectal cancers combined. An estimated 19,900 people will die of lung cancer in Canada in 2007. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women. The signs and symptoms of lung cancer can take years to develop and they may not appear until the disease is advanced.

Some symptoms of lung cancer that are in the chest:

- Coughing, especially if it persists or becomes intense
- Pain in the chest, shoulder, or back unrelated to pain from coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Changes in the voice or being hoarse
- Harsh sounds with each breath
- Recurrent lung problems, such as bronchitis or pneumonia
- Coughing up phlegm or mucus, especially if it is tinged with blood
- Coughing up blood if the original lung cancer has spread, a person may feel symptoms in other places in the body. Common places for lung cancer to spread include other parts of the lungs, lymph nodes, bones, brain, liver, and adrenal glands.

Some symptoms of lung cancer that may occur elsewhere in the body:

- Loss of appetite or unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Headaches, bone or joint pain
- Bone fractures not related to accidental injury
- Memory loss
- Neck or facial swelling
- Blood clots

It is estimated that 87 per cent of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking. Because smoking is an addiction, it can be difficult to quit. Because our lungs draw in and utilize the air from outside of our body, anything that we breathe in can affect their health.

By far, the most important risk for lung cancer is smoking tobacco. Quitting smoking helps to reduce that risk. The more you smoke and the longer you smoke, the higher your risk. No amount of tobacco is safe. Did you know that smoking starts your heart pounding an extra 15 to 25 beats per minute, raises your blood pressure by 10 to 20 points? It corrodes the delicate membranes of your lips and palate.

In the lungs, it chokes the airways and rots the air sacs, leaving residue of cancer causing chemical. It deposits these and other dangerous poisons in your stomach, kidneys and bladder. All of this happens every time you smoke! Exposure to second hand smoke also increases the risk of lung cancer, and nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or at work increase their risk of developing lung cancer by 20 per cent to 30 per cent. Everyone should be aware of how his or her body normally feels and report any abnormal feelings to their doctor. Often, these unusual feelings can be attributed to other causes, such as bronchitis. But a doctor should check anything that is worrisome.

Quitting smoking is a process. Thousands of people quit each year with help from the Smokers’ Helpline (1-877-513-5333), and are an inspiration to those who want to stop. Quit now and reduce the risk of developing cancer. In general, the longer you don’t smoke the more you lower your risk. Giving up smoking is the single most effective thing you can do to extend your life. Only you can do it. Smoking is now seen for what it actually is - a killer of thousands of Canadians each year.

Lest we forget, November 11 is Remembrance Day. It is the VETERAN, not the preacher, Who has given us freedom of religion. It is the VETERAN, not the reporter, Who has given us freedom of the press. It is the VETERAN, not the poet, Who has given us freedom of speech. It is the VETERAN, not the campus organizer, Who has given us freedom to assemble. It is the VETERAN, not the lawyer, Who has given us the right to a fair trial. It is the VETERAN, not the politician, Who has given us the right to vote. It is the VETERAN, Who salutes the Flag, It is the veteran, Who serves under the Flag (author unknown)

Don’t forget to thank our veterans for all they have given us.

I enjoy reading your letters and emails. If you have any questions or concerns that you want addressed please send a message to ls_ahenakews@hotmail.com
A Regina teen has become the first-ever young writer from Saskatchewan to capture the top prize in the Our Stories Aboriginal Writing Challenge.

Chantelle Cheekinew’s winning story, My Brother, earned the 15-year-old Balfour Collegiate student a $2,000 cash prize and an expenses-paid trip to Ottawa with her grandmother where she got to read excerpts of her story to Aboriginal leaders and authors.

My Brother tells the story of a young girl whose brother is shot and killed at a pow wow.

“There are so many stab-bings and shootings in this generation, I wanted to put that in my story,” said Cheekinew. “It’s something that needs to be talked about and written about.”

An aspiring novelist, Cheekinew’s writing career is off to a great start. The Our Stories win is second writing award she has won this year.

Her story Human Immunodeficiency Virus, about the challenges of living with HIV, was inspired by personal friends and was named a winner in the Grade 9/10 category of the Howl Creative Writing Contest for high school students in Regina.

As part of her prize, Cheekinew will be interviewed and profiled in a Canadian Learning Television and Book Television television feature. An excerpt from My Brother will also be published in The Beaver: Canada’s History Magazine.

Amanda Wapass-Griffin won an award for her story Silence Speaks A Thousand Words.

Young writer beginning to pen a story of accomplishment

The only other Saskatchewan winner was Amanda Wapass-Griffin of Saskatoon who took third place in the 19- to 29-year-old age category with her story Silence Speaks A Thousand Words.

Cheekinew’s and Wapass-Griffin’s stories can be read online at the Our Stories website, www.our-story.ca/authors.
Battle rages on, long after war is over

BY ANDRÉA LEDDING

Long after hanging up his rifle in service to his country, Claude Petit has been battles the federal government for over 15 years in an effort to gain fair and equitable compensation for Aboriginal veterans.

“My grandfather died in the First World War, my father fought in the Second World War along with two uncles. Myself, an uncle, and my brother all fought in the Korean War, and I was wounded there,” said Petit, noting that he also had relatives in the Riel Rebellion—which is where he thinks Ottawa’s bias is firmly entrenched.

He goes to Ottawa every November for the national Remembrance Day celebration, but spends the rest of the year trying to support fellow veterans, organize annual general meetings, publish newsletters, and chair meetings to cut through Ottawa bureaucracy and seek justice.

He notes that, in 2002, an agreement was offered where veterans were to receive $20,000—nowhere near what they were asking for—but only if they had returned immediately to their bands or survived until 2000. However, many veterans did not go directly to their reserves right after returning from service, which largely meant they received no compensation. This system also completely cut Métis and non-status vets who had no reserves to return to.

Petit gave one example of a man who married and had three kids, and because there was no housing available on his reserve he had to remain in the city. Petit went to bat for him, and after considerable lobbying, phone calls, meetings, and letter-writing was able to gain compensation.

“But that was just one case, and Petit knows there are many more who have slipped through the cracks or never received their just wages. ‘You need support to do this, they don’t make it easy, and there are too many hoops to jump through,’” commented Petit of the current system. There are many veterans who have given up seeing any money in this lifetime, or accepted less than their due, and according to the Canadian Legion, veterans are dying at a rate of about 1,600 per year. As well, widows who should have received their husband’s compensation have been denied.

He estimates membership of the National Aboriginal Veterans Association at about 4,000, but adds that they receive little to no funding even for a quarterly newsletter or annual meetings. Annual membership costs $15—but only if you can afford it.

“It’s hard to operate,” he said.

Petit is a founding member of NAVA and has been treasurer, vice-president and president. He applied for funding this May and has yet to receive so much as an acknowledgement for his application; he adds that he has often funded major events on his personal credit card.

There has been slow movement—a $1 million monument underway in Ottawa dedicated to Aboriginal veterans, and a Senate report which itemized about a dozen ways the Aboriginal veterans should be supported—but practically, very little is actually being done.

NAVA had made some headway with a scholarship, but after doing all the groundwork it was taken over and changed to the “Achievement Foundation” and currently NAVA has no members on the board or any input in the direction.

“It’s a good organization, but we lost control over it and receive no recognition for it,” noted Petit, adding that this shouldn’t have happened as they had knowledgeable people capable of running the organization.

Petit hopes that eventually the government will commit to a reasonable package similar to what Hong Kong Veterans and merchant marines received—$7,500/year for every year served in Canada, and $15,000/year for every year served abroad.

In the meantime, they are meeting with organizations such as the Chinese Veterans in Vancouver and trying to find strength in their dwindling numbers.

“I guess we just keep plugging away,” said Petit. “But it’s so discouraging, we get no support.”
Residential school survivors share their stories with youth

BY DARLA READ

Running in conjunction with this year’s pow wow, the FSIN also hosted a day for Saskatoon high school students to learn what it was like to attend residential schools. Around 200 Grade 9 to Grade 12 students attended the Honouring Residential School Survivors Symposium.

Students heard first-hand accounts of what some survivors went through, first in a video called ‘Childhood Lost’ by journalist Doug Cuthand.

After the video, three of the four survivors featured in the film spoke to the students.

One of them was Deanna Ledoux-Raine, who attended St. Michael’s residential school. Ledoux-Raine says initially she didn’t want to participate in the film, but decided to go ahead because she wanted her four children to know what happened in the schools.

She says she also wanted non-First Nations people to understand what happened.

In the film, Ledoux-Raine recounted for the students how the priest would come into their dorms at night. She said she remembered being almost grateful when he’d go to a girl other than herself. At the time, Ledoux-Raine was eight years old.

Ledoux-Raine turned to alcohol as an adult to deal with her past. She says she overcame her addictions because of family support.

“So, if you see people that are struggling, think of this video. Think maybe they’re from that background. And display a little faith in them. Because when people are struggling, all they need is for somebody to show that they’re worthy, and change will come.

“Don’t be judgmental when you see somebody staggering on the street or somebody standing on the corner. There’s a history to that. People don’t just wake up and decide to become that way.”

Her message, and that of the other survivors who told their stories, resonated with Amanda Ulriksen, a Mount Royal Collegiate student.

“Students should come watch this, because we might be able to change the ideas of people,” Ulriksen commented.

That was what FSIN Chief Lawrence Joseph wanted students to take away.

“Not to make you feel bad, but so you understand what it’s like to walk a mile in someone else’s moccasins.”

The students also heard from Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine.

He told the students he accepted the invitation because he knew there wouldn’t just be First Nations students attending.

“I see one of my responsibilities, and I don’t take this responsibility lightly, is to educate and inform Canadians about us, our struggles, our challenges, important accomplishments, tremendous achievements that we’ve been able to do and accomplish in spite of all these incredible impediments that have been before us.”

Fontaine said while the stories students were hearing were difficult to listen to, he wanted them to take away that First Nations people have persevered and remain strong and proud.
La Ronge band preparing for crisis but hoping for the best

BY ALENE CAMPBELL

When the Lac la Ronge Indian Band faces a threat, its chief and council make an emergency measures plan and they’re treating the $23 million in residential school compensation payments arriving by mail to about 800 people in the community no differently.

“When we have a forest fire, we need to evacuate people. In this situation, we’re making another inter-agency plan with the six communities so that all the councilors have one plan and are all on the same page,” said Chief Tammy Cook-Seerson. “We have resources if there is any crisis so we know who is doing what. We know what we’ll do in case of an escalation of violence, if children need protection.”

In October, federal compensation payments to the 18,000 residential school survivors in Saskatchewan started to arrive in the mail. Most individuals are getting about $28,000 but, collectively, more than $600 million is expected to flow into the province.

As with any emergency plan, Lac la Ronge’s chief and council hope they won’t need theirs – and they’re not the only ones planning for the impact that the compensation payments will have.

First Nation communities throughout the province have played host to representatives from credit unions, banks, the RCMP and other organizations that want to inform and educate survivors on how to protect themselves and their compensation. Not all visitors to the communities have had good intentions. Scam artists, callers using high-pressure sales tactics and other financial predators are eying the survivors as easy and attractive targets.

At the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, comprised of six communities in north-central Saskatchewan, preparedness includes understanding. At a public information session on Oct. 30, Roy Bird from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, representatives from the RCMP and the Prince Albert Police Service, councilors and elders and attendees revisited why the compensation was coming and how this historic payment was going to impact the present-day lives of the 8,500 members of the band.

Protecting people and their assets is the top priority, says Wilfred Jimmy, Aboriginal Relations Manager of FirstSask Credit Union. To make banking easier for survivors, FirstSask modified some of their account-opening policies and also took their services on the road in the form of information sessions at a number of First Nations near Saskatoon.

“We understand that these people have suffered enough already and we certainly don’t want to make things tougher than they need to be,” said Jimmy. “Many compensation recipients, particularly those living outside of major urban centres, don’t have bank or credit union accounts, a real barrier to cashing, spending and investing their compensation money,” said Jimmy.

He advises keeping funds in an account and keeping bank documents and PIN numbers secret versus keeping the cash at home. Even so, account information can fall into the wrong hands. The best protection is being known to the tellers and staff, Jimmy says. Because many tellers know customers on sight, account holders should visit their branch in person to become another ‘familiar face’.

Even with an account, survivors can’t cash their cheques for the full amount since financial institutions keep only a small amount of cash on site. Survivors can get $1,500 in cash when they deposit their cheque, withdraw up to $1,000 in cash per day from rural branches and $3,000 per day from urban branches.

Banking isn’t for everyone, though. “Some of the elders are used to dealing with certain merchants in the community, like stores, where they have accounts,” said Seerson. “They trust these merchants, have done business with them for years and are comfortable doing it this way.”

Many First Nations, financial institutions, police forces and the RCMP have posted information on their websites describing how survivors can protect themselves from abuse.

“Lots of good things will come out of the payments,” said Chief Tammy Cook-Seerson. “It’s going to have a huge impact in our area here. Lots of people are planning to do good things with the money. But we want to be prepared.”
What about the next generation asks victim of childhood sexual abuse

BY JOHN LAGIMODIERE

Simone McLeod has begun her healing journey and hopes to help other victims.

S
imone McLeod is living with the legacy of the Indian residential schools without ever once setting foot inside of one. McLeod was sexually abused from the age of three to 11.

"Many of my perpetrators were physically assaulted and raped in these schools," said McLeod, a renowned Saskatchewan artist. "When they were released from the school, they carried that abuse into our society.

"As a young woman I have encountered countless sexual assaults and was in and out of abusive relationships. Both of my parents and all of my aunts and uncles went to the residential schools and I have grown up in what I would call the 'fallout' of this era."

To bring awareness to the plight of the 'fallout generation,' McLeod has written a book about her healing journey and intends to walk across Canada in 2008, stopping in First Nations and communities across Canada to share her story with anyone who wants to talk.

McLeod has found her healing journey to be filled with guilt.

"There is a distinct lack of programs for people like me to deal with our issues. How do we get justice," asks McLeod. "Is the pressing of charges the first step? Do I have the right to take this step, or are there alternative steps that I can take so I do not feel like I am committing a new form of genocide on my people."

"We need a voice and we need to worry about the third, fourth and fifth generations of this."

McLeod has seen the second-generation victims fall by the wayside into patterns of severe alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution and other forms of self-sabotaging lifestyles.

"The core of family just keeps falling apart. New generations are struggling. Our young people are killing each other and at times seeking revenge on their own perpetrators. I believe it is time for those of us who have learned to succeed in this world to reach out and try to deal with this 'so obvious problem' and work together to seek solutions so that we will not suffer and our grandchildren will not suffer," she said.

McLeod intends to start her walk in Prince Rupert, B.C. on March 21, 2008 and will walk down the #16 highway until it turns into the #1. She intends to finish her journey in St. John's Newfoundland on June 21, 2009, on National Aboriginal Day.

"I am planning on speaking to as many First Nations people as I can. I will be visiting Healing Centers, Friendship Centers, and any other place that asks me to come. I believe that I can gain more valuable insight to the many questions I have, if I seek the answers from as many First Nations People from across this country as I can."

"Because of the bravery of our First Nation veterans, I am now free to walk anywhere in this country that I wish," McLeod added. "I will honour them as I walk" McLeod intends to raise the awareness not for herself, but for the children who have to live with this injustice and those who never had a chance to fully experience what happened to them and are left amidst lives of alcohol, drug abuse and other horrendous situations.

"It does not have to be like this," said McLeod. "Surely we can all work together and reach out our hands to the lost people who just can't stand up for themselves. I will be asking that we have memorial ceremonies across the country for those survivors of residential schools who lived such terrible lives full of abuse, and never had a chance to heal or talk about this."

"I feel as if it will help us move on as a people if we can somehow give them a bit of peace by acknowledging their lives and their struggle. Also do the ceremonies for the second generation victims who have passed on without having a voice."

McLeod does not want to be branded as a troublemaker but she believes these issues have to be out there in order to save as many young people as possible.

"It is my belief that the sexual abuse I suffered as a child is still happening today in many other families. Whether or not it is incest, is not really important. The important thing is to give the youth and the children a voice to be able to deal with issues that are so hard and affect their daily lives," she said.

"All I know is I am following my heart and doing what seems right."
In the words of Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Vice-Chief Glenn Pratt, the FSIN bank books aren’t looking good. “We are in a dire financial situation within the Federation. It’s been very difficult to continue to have our boards and commission when we simply do not have any funding.”

During its fall legislative assembly, the FSIN announced it has incurred a debt of $1.4 million. That includes a $400,000 loan, a near-maxed million-dollar credit line, and a debt of $171,000 from the first five months of this fiscal year. When the chief financial officer spoke at the assembly, he told the assembly bills are mounting, creditors are calling, and as a result, there have been cutbacks.

And, Pratt says there will likely be more. “Meaning that we’ll have cutbacks in just about every portfolio area. There’ll be cutbacks in travel, administrative costs, unfunded areas. We might be losing staff. Some of us have already cut back some of our staff.”

The matter wasn’t on the assembly’s agenda until Okanese First Nation Chief Mary Anne Daywalker-Pelletier requested it to be.

She was dismayed when she heard what the financial situation was. “As a First Nations leader, I feel very embarrassed that our organization would be in the position they are in.”

However, some chiefs, including Beardy’s and Okemasis First Nation Chief Rick Gamble, defended the FSIN, “It seems to me that we expect our organization to do all kinds of work with nothing to work with.”

Using gaming revenues was discussed as a potential solution to the deficit. Gamble suggested the idea, supported by Pratt and FSIN Chief Lawrence Joseph. Not all of the chiefs liked the idea, including Shoal Lake First Nation Chief Marcel Head, who said many of the reserves have deficits and programs to pay for as well.

“Before I would even support taking the $16 million and direct it to the FSIN, I would like to see a portion of that money come into my community.”

The FSIN will revisit the issue at the February legislative assembly.

BY DARLA READ

Lake First Nation Chief Marcel Head, who said many of the reserves have deficits and programs to pay for as well.

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National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)
Organisation nationale de la santé autochtone (ONSA)

The Métis Cookbook & Guide to Healthy Living

Call for Recipes!

The Métis Centre at NAHO is collecting new contributions for the second edition of its highly successful Métis Cookbook & Guide to Healthy Living. Please send traditional or contemporary Métis recipes, with stories or photos to the address below. Remember to also include your name, address and phone number (and e-mail address where possible). All photos will be returned to the sender.

Send your recipes, stories or photos by December 28, 2007.

Métis Centre - Recipe Collection
National Aboriginal Health Organization
220 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 1200
Ottawa, ON K1P 5Z0

Email: mdvcelc@naho.ca
Fax: (613) 237-8707

For more information contact Miranda Dyck @ 1-877-602-4445 ext 513.
Matthew Whitecloud from Standing Buffalo said that the pow wow means coming together as a family and seeing all his friends together and dancing and celebrating a good weekend. He is in Grade 10 and wants to be a police officer. Matthew believes that the pow wow strengthens his spirit, mind and body and will help him become a good police officer.
MGM Communications announced that it has been named as one of the official Agencies of Record (AOR) for Siemens Canada Limited. MGM will be responsible for the strategic development and execution of Siemens’ communication efforts targeting First Nations and Aboriginal communities and stakeholders in Saskatchewan.

As the AOR, MGM will offer creative services including public relations, media placement, sponsorship, graphic design and interactive.

One of MGM’s missions is to create entrepreneurial, career and mentorship opportunities for Aboriginal men and women leading to improved communications among all Canadians.

“An incredibly exciting time for the First Nations people of Saskatchewan and Canada,” said MGM President, Paul O’Byrne. “I am proud that our agency has partnered with Siemens Canada, who will play a major role in the future development of First Nations communities, businesses and economic development.”

Siemens is one of the largest and most diversified companies in the world, providing innovations in areas such as automation and control, power, transportation, medical, information and communications, and lighting. In Canada, Siemens is headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario, with more than 7,500 employees located in 76 offices and seven major manufacturing facilities.

“Siemens has made a commitment to work within the Aboriginal sectors in Canada,” said Frank Suraci of Siemens Canada. “Through our innovative solutions and technologies, we are determined to enhance the quality of life for all Aboriginal citizens in the areas of healthcare, water, and connectivity. We can provide a broad portfolio of technologies to stimulate economic development and community growth.”

“We look forward to working with MGM, and extending our communication process of informing Aboriginal communities of all future activities.”

Darcy McKenzie is a senior communications strategist with MGM and realizes that this deal will mean much to the future of the communications industry in Saskatchewan.

“Here at MGM we have been trying to build a place in the industry for all those young people coming out of college who can write and design and want to stay in Saskatchewan,” said McKenzie.

“Siemens is currently working on the development of numerous projects in partnership with First Nations bands across Canada. Communications, public awareness, education and marketing will play a pivotal role in the development and successful implementation of these projects.”

Communicating with First Nations communities and target audiences requires a special communications partner with unique expertise in this area. MGM Communications is only one of a handful of companies in Canada who possess these unique communication skills and personnel.

“For us it’s just a partnership that makes sense. We both understand and appreciate the value of investing in our First Nations communities and people.”

“We are excited about the opportunity to work with an innovative world leader like Siemens Canada Limited,” said O’Byrne.

DOLORES SAND HAS JUST RELEASED A CHRISTMAS CD

Dolores Sand has just released a Christmas CD. Dolores Sand is not your typical rock star. Sand is a teacher by trade and her heart lies with spreading the Cree language through teaching youth at the kihíw waciston School on the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation.

She lists her special interests as her family, Cree language and the listeners of MBC. “Her latest release, Nosisim Natohtawin (grandson listen), has been named as one of the official Aboriginal Radio Network’s Christmas albums for 2007. Dolores Sand and I are very happy to see Cree music being recognized,” said McKenzie.

Dolores Sand has five albums out now, including the newly released Cree Christmas. Her others are For Family and Friends, Cree Gospel Songs, Cree Children’s Songs and Classics In Cree.

“Dolores sings all of her songs in her first language, Cree, and has become very popular on our station,” said Steve Kimball, music director for Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal Radio Network, MBC. “Her latest release, Nosisim Natohtawin (grandson listen), was featured on the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Music Countdown for four weeks reaching #3 on this chart. The Cree audience of MBC has become very fond of her songs on the airwaves, including her ‘Classics in Cree.’ It takes a very special and talented person to translate these songs into a different language and not lose the original storyline, the humour of a song, sung and translated in Cree. It is not lost on the listener.”

Dolores is from a huge family whose mom, Freda Ahenakew, was a trailblazer in the field of revitalizing and preserving the Cree language so she comes by her passion honestly.

“We have to pass on our language,” said Sand. “My mother started the Cree literature revival and this is my small way to continue my mom’s legacy. If we can do a little of what she has done, then that would be great.”

Like most rock stars, once you have reached the pinnacle of your career, it is time to create the ultimate Christmas album for the fans. A Cree Christmas was just released in time to help fill stockings around the province. It is not your typical Christmas album through.

“Of course all of the songs are in Cree," adds Sand. "And I got this young gentleman Marc Longjohn who is a renowned round dance drummer and singer to drum on three of the songs on this album. The drum makes these songs really special, and he had to work hard at it because it was not the usual beats for him. They sound great.”

Ultimately Sand is not in it for the money.

“I think the people relate to it because it is in Cree. The language is ours. It belongs to all of us. I encourage people to share the music with others and even to pass it on,” she said. She even added that people should burn her disc to share if they have to be.

“If you want to pick up a Cree Christmas go to www.drumgroups.com or email Dolores at sand.d3@gmail.com}
The Saskatchewan Roughriders have given their fans a regular season to remember. The new regime of Kent Austin and Eric Tillman have come in and done a great job at restoring the RIDER PRIDE!

However, it will be all for naught if the club does not win their home playoff game, the club’s first since 1988. If they go into BC and lose a close game, then we have the success of this year to build off. But I think they have the talent, and leadership to win it all. The Lions will be tough to beat, but I think the Riders go to BC and win a nail biter.

Toronto looks to be playing the best in the East right now, and they will be a difficult opponent. The Riders will prevail, winning the Grey Cup 27-24!

And a congratulations goes out to this year’s CFL MVP Kerry Joseph (it’s gonna happen). The year he had despite losing Matt Dominguez was just phenomenal. I tell you, but they lost nobody. Until someone can stop Duncan, Ginobili, and Mr. Longoria, they will continue to play slow ball and bore other teams into a loss.

Too bad for the NBA that the top five teams in the league are all in the West. Leaving Phoenix, Houston, Dallas, and Denver out of the finals and wondering what might have been. The East is a little more wide open. The Celtics made some huge moves adding Ray Allen and Kevin Garnett, but will it be enough? I think not, at least not this year. The Detroit Pistons have the experience and team unity that will help them get back to the NBA Finals.

The Raptors are getting better and have a great team with a tonne of depth. But they are still not gritty enough and lack a proven clutch scorer to be considered real contenders.

Buckle up.

Whether you’re travelling in the city or in the country, everyone in the vehicle needs to buckle up.

Life is a gift. Please respect it.

Original feather illustration by Gary Noltemeyer.