

# Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

## Our graduates overcame obstacles

Brianna Morin and her daughter Kessi Cook took top prize in this year's graduation photo contest. Brianna and Kessi symbolize perseverance and love and hope for the future of Saskatchewan.



### Young mother persevered to obtain Grade 12 diploma

By Tiffany Head  
For Eagle Feather News

**REGINA** – For one new mommy who just finished her Grade 12 and is currently living in an evacuation shelter in Regina because of forest fires, winning the Eagle Feather News grad photo contest is good and needed news.

Brianna Morin sent Eagle Feather News a graduate photo of her and her daughter Kessi Cook who was born in March. Morin is a teen mother who just turned

18 years old. She says it was hard being pregnant going to high school and wanted to sleep all the time.

“I was scared to fail. I pushed myself and so did my mother. If it wasn't for her I'd probably be doing my Grade 12 again.

“She has helped me a lot in school, she was the one to wake me up when I was trying to sleep in,” says Morin who graduated from Little Red, part of the Montreal Lake community.

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Chief Tammy Cook-Searson has a lot on her mind as fire threatens her community of La Ronge. - Page 3



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The first group of nurses in the U of S's northern nursing program has graduated. Page 7



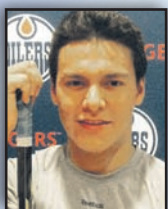
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Jolene McKenzie, a Senator Myles Venne School graduate has earned a \$250 bursary. - Page 10



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Ethan Bear was selected by the Edmonton Oilers in the recent draft and now he's closing in on a dream. - Page 16

Welcome to our  
Graduation Edition

Coming In August - Justice Issue

CPMA #40027204

# Red Earth grads postpone ceremony until smoke clears

By Tiffany Head  
For Eagle Feather News

**RED EARTH CREE NATION** – Summer is a time for graduations, but for most communities in the North who did not have their ceremonies yet, they will have had to hold off due to the wildfire and smoke.

Red Earth Cree Nation was supposed to have their grad ceremony last week but had to postpone it after the Chief and headmen decided to send the moderate and high risk community members to Regina for their safety.

Upcoming graduate, Amberly Young, was not happy to leave her community but it was for the sake of her six-month-old baby. She says on the other hand, she was also glad.

“I was relieved because I wanted everything ready and now I have more time to buy things for that when I get back,” said Young.

She says she will be wearing a blue dress and will be escorted by her 15-year-old brother, Niska McKay.

She says one day she will become a nurse, if she does not change her mind, but will be taking a year off before making any plans to go into post-secondary education.

Kaylee Whitecap says she was okay with the graduation being postponed, as it will eventually happen and there is no rush. She was pretty much ready for the graduation and had everything set for the big day.

The graduates could not decide what their colours would be so everyone just chose what colour they wanted to wear.

“The colours are red, purple, green, sky blue, navy blue, royal blue, and orange. I don’t know how they will decorate the gym, but it will probably follow the colours,” said Whitecap.



The students at Red Earth Cree Nation have to wait until the forest fires are under control and the evacuation lifted before they can have their graduation ceremony.

She will be wearing an orange dress and her escorts will be her oldest nephew Rayden Whitehead and her niece Kadence Whitehead.

Whitecap is not sure about what her plans are for the future and is quite undecided.

“I don’t know why I’m changing my mind, and no I haven’t, I was going to apply at U of R for the educa-

tion program but I thought it was already too late to apply. Now I’m thinking that taking a year off of school,” said Whitecap.

The graduates will be more than ready when the big day finally comes, but for now they will await eagerly for when the time comes for them to go home to their community.



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# Wildfires displace 13,000 people

By John Lagimodiere  
Of Eagle Feather News

As wildfires rage in Saskatchewan's North, thousands of evacuees have been taken to Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina and some from La Ronge have had to travel to Cold Lake, Alberta.

Red Cross says this is the biggest wildfire evacuation in the province's history, with more than 13,000 people forced from their homes at its height. More than 600 personnel have been battling the fires and that number has risen with the 1,000 Canadian Forces personnel who were called in.

It has gotten so bad that a State of Emergency was called jointly by Chief Ed Henderson of Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Grand Chief Ron Michel of the Prince Albert Grand Council and Chief Kim Johnathan of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. They demanded immediate action of the Government of Canada, including the military, and the Government of Saskatchewan in controlling the wildfires threatening the communities at risk.

While people displaced by the raging forest fires in the North are grateful to have somewhere safe to go, the evacuations aren't without their difficulties.

Community members from Red Earth Cree Nation first travelled to Melfort to seek relief, only to find that there was more smoke there than there was back home. As a result, they had to continue travelling much further south to Regina.

Hilliard Umperville and his family were among those evacuees. Finding clean air (a relative term, as much of the province has been blanketed in smoke at some point during the fires) was very important as his 10-year-old daughter has



been asthmatic since birth.

"So we had to take precautions. My daughter is the main priority for coming here," said Umperville.

On the morning of the evacuation, his daughter was already congested from the smoke, which made the hot air even stuffier.

Red Earth's evacuation has also been trying for Marina Head and her family. The four-month pregnant mother of six arrived with her children and husband in Regina after a long bus journey.

"It was tiring, and I had a back ache when I got in. The bus was stuffy because we could not open the windows, there was no air-conditioning, and heat was coming out of the vents," said Head.

She is grateful for a place to stay, but says it's hard with small children.

"The younger kids kept falling from the cots the first night we were here, as they did not have enough play pens, but they got lower level cots for them now," said Head.

Head says the cots were hard to sleep on, especially for expecting mothers. The chief and headmen from their community bought sponge mattresses for them to make their nights more comfortable.

She said it is not easy being in a new place with six children. The first day

was especially hard as there were hardly any activities going on to interest the kids or hold their attention for very long.

She said the kids later became occupied with bouncy houses, face painting, crafts, and a gym was opened up for them to play in.

Support for the evacuees and those who are fighting the fires has been phenomenal. Music festivals coordinated by Sheryl Kimbley with artists donating their time and travel have raised thousands. People are offering homes and yards for people to stay or camp. Random people are showing up at evacuation centres and donating necessities like toiletries and socks and toys. Beardy's and Oke-masis and the James Smith First Nation have both opened their communities to those looking for a temporary place to call home as hard working firefighters try to save their homes.

Fire Departments around Saskatchewan are also sending trucks and manpower north to help protect La Ronge and Cameco has been sending heavy equipment to Pinehouse to help cut fire lines to protect the threatened community.

Fires are ravaging the North in an unprecedented natural disaster. (Below) Chief Tammy Cook-Searson has been busy coordinating a response to the danger.



Volunteers and those that stayed behind are feeding pets left behind and supporting the fire fighters.

Right in the middle of the chaos is Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson.

Chief Cook-Searson has been one of the most effective communicators, using her Facebook account to keep her followers as up to date as possible.

She has also been a uniting force in coordinating an intergovernmental response to the natural disaster.

She has rarely left the command centre and is one of the last people left in town.

She summed up the collective efforts of the province very well on her Facebook.

"Collaboration of Community is amazing, together we are battling the best we can."



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# Some do's and don't's in these trying times

It has been a harsh summer so far. The North is burning and abandoned. Evacuees are filling centres, hotels and basements in cities to the south and people's nerves are frayed. Some folks have been away from home for two weeks, leaving home with barely a bag of clothes. Sadly there is no end in sight.

Facebook has become the de facto source of spreading and finding news about the fires. Sometimes true, sometimes not. There is just so much misinformation out there it is overwhelming.

Lac la Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson has emerged as a true leader and her use of Facebook to communicate has been effective and thorough. Many groups are using Facebook to rally the troops and organize events. But then there are some yahoos on Facebook who attack those trying to help their community or spread rumours and hate.

With all this misinformation out there, I figured I would make a list of fire and evacuation do's and don't's.

Do ... get information from Chief Tammy Cook-Searson's Facebook or the Province of Saskatchewan, other northern leaders or reputable news outlets.

Do not ... read on your cousin's friends Facebook that a house burned down and declare to the world that Montreal Lake has burned to the ground ... and if you read that on a friend's Facebook, verify it with someone legit ... save us all some panic.

Do ... give of your time or your resources to the evacuees. Life in a shelter is miserable ... no matter how hard the hosts are trying. Imagine sleeping on a stiff cot with 150 other people surrounding you and the noises we all make as we sleep. Boredom in the day is real and the need for supplies is real.

Don't ... donate to a random GoFundMe page that is set up to raise money for evacuees. The Tribal Councils are handling matters in P.A., Regina and Saskatoon and the FSIN is communicating well about where to direct donations.

Do ... cut the Red Cross and Salvation Army some slack. They are working as hard as they can with strict mandates and a few rumours out there are riling up ill feelings. Not helpful at this time.

Don't ... tear people down out there.

Do ... be grateful for the firefighters, heavy equipment operators, volunteers and leaders who have stayed behind to fight for our communities.

Don't ... vote for Stephen Harper, he doesn't really care.

Do ... be hopeful. The community has continued to rise to the challenge. It is heart-warming to see so many stories of people giving and Beardy's and Okemasis, James Smith and Muskeg Lake have all opened up their communities to evacuees. Everyone just has to keep giving and grinding. That, and pray for rain.

Now on a totally different note, the City of Saskatoon welcomed some internation-

al Indigenous visitors in June. His Worship Mayor Atchison was the tour guide for Taiwan's Minister of the Council of Indigenous Peoples delegation consisting of Minister Mayaw Dongi, seven village mayors, two staff and an interpreter.

The tour began June 18 with a trip to Wanuskewin. That followed with a tour of urban reserves and a presentation on the Urban Reserve model. They also had discussions on some best practices of Aboriginal inclusion in the community such as Aboriginal Pre-employment programs, the Treaty 6 and Métis Nation Flag raising and Aboriginal Awareness and cultural competencies training for city employees.

The delegation was then greeted by the host organization at the National Aboriginal Day celebration in Friendship Park. They were welcomed into the grand entry and honored by Senator Nora Cummings in the opening Prayer. Gifts were exchanged and many pictures were taken.

The Minister addressed the crowd thanking them for their hospitality and talked about the indigenous people's situation in Taiwan.

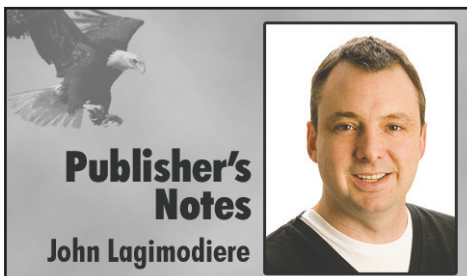
Minister Mayaw pointed out that Indigenous people in Taiwan control 46 per cent of the land base, yet they are still the poorest in the country. They are also having trouble with a registry and deciding who is actually Indigenous (sound familiar Métis Nation?).

The Taiwan delegation even went to the Métis National Council and asked how they determine ancestry and status.

The tour continued on to meet with Chief Darcy Bear at Whitecap Dakota First Nation on Friday afternoon to learn about the development of their First Nation and their economic success.

The visitors were feted with gifts and praise and about a million pictures were taken ... just another National Aboriginal Day in Saskatchewan.

Safe travels this summer and our thoughts are with the evacuees, fire fighters and volunteers in this very trying time.



Métis Senator Nora Cummings and City of Saskatoon Mayor Don Atchison exchanged gifts with this visiting Taiwanese dignitary. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

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# Who wants to switch races when you've got the best jokes?

Rachel Dolezal is a white woman who decided one day that she was African-American.

This crazy white lady braided in some fake hair, darkened her skin with tanning sessions and then became the leader of Spokane's NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People).

I had no idea that we could switch races whenever we felt like it. I've stupidly been Cree just because I emerged from a Cree v-jay-jay. So, for the rest of the month, I'm choosing to be Tibetan. Since this morning, I've already sherpa'd six people up Diefenbaker Hill. (I really should have chosen a less hardy race.)

When I look in the mirror, I see a round-cheeked First Nation female looking back at me, but the world begs to disagree. I've been mistaken for Vietnamese, Spanish, Hawaiian, and Mexican-Japanese (which seemed oddly specific.) But I don't have any identity issues.

Probably because I lived on a reserve for the first 18 years of my life where I consumed enough deer meat, bologna steak and KFC family meals to keep me real for a lifetime.

It wasn't until I got to university that I discovered people struggling with their identity. In my first year, friends would point out First Nations people in the hallways who were passing as white. They would casually say: "That's Jason, he's from Kawacatoose but he's white now," as if he had just switched banks.

Racism in Saskatoon at that time was virulent. I'd be walking down the street with my friends and cars would drive by while white faces shouted insults at us. There were places that wouldn't rent to you (yes even to Asian-looking Indians like myself) and you could spend hours in a room with white people and none of them would even

acknowledge you (good luck getting service at Pizza Hut).

So if some enterprising, light-skinned Native person wanted to bypass that bullshit, who was I to judge them? It



wasn't a choice I could – or would – ever make because I enjoyed the company of Native people too much ... cuz we have the best jokes, the loudest laughs and the juiciest drama.

That was my experience with race-switching until I got to law school. The town where I went to law school was next to a reserve but those Indians never came to town.

So basically the only chubby brown face I ever saw was in the mirror. Over the school year, I sought out other Indigenous students and found five of them. We huddled together at the Indigenous Student Centre, which had a kitchen and free computers (yes, it does pay to be Indigenous sometimes).

Together, we watched movies like Once Were Warriors and stuffed ourselves with frybread. Over time, our greasy comings and goings attracted other people.

One of them was Marie, an older white lady prone to wearing long skirts and making her own jewelry. Whenever Marie talked to me, she wanted to know about my "culture" and "did I have a Shaman?"

The year after we met, I overheard her telling another student that she was "actually Metis." Really?

I thought, did you take a class or something?

A year later, Marie had graduated from Metis to full blown First Nation status and by now, she's probably head of the Native Studies Department. This was my first brush with people from tribe "Wanna-be."

But the longer I spent at that university, the more of them I ran into. People who confused having an "interest" in Indigenous culture with "going full redface."

We organized a student pow wow and some of the attendees had clearly studied at the Grey Owl School of Indian fakery. They showed up with feathers in their hair and introduced themselves with names like, "Running Wolf."

I remember that name very clearly because it belonged to a man well over 300 pounds and I remember cattily whispering that a better name would have been: "Sedentary Wolf."

But though we suspected these people were about as traditional as dreamcatchers, nobody confronted them about their identity shopping. Or about the privilege that it took to make a choice like that.

We didn't – because we felt sorry for them. Somewhere along the way these people had lost their tribes and now they needed a place to belong. Besides if we kicked them out, who was gonna help us eat all that damn frybread? Us original five Natives were basically a couple bites away from coronaries.

I wonder if Rachel Dolezal's coworkers had the same concerns. Like, were there moments when they wanted to say: "Hey Rach, why don't you ditch the dashiki and check out these golf shorts? I'll bet you find them way more comfortable!"

And, maybe she would have benefitted from a friend sitting her down to tell her: "It's okay to be white, Rachel, we'll still like you."



## Education just the beginning of exciting future: Morin

• Continued from Page One

Morin's other biggest challenge came after she had her daughter in the second semester of school. She did home-schooling for four weeks before being able to return to classes.

"It was a struggle to bring her to school hauling her around and trying to do my work plus I was breastfeeding and it made it particularly hard because I didn't like breast feeding in public around people I know," says Morin.

The advice she gives to other students that have their own challenges is to keep going as eventually you will reap the rewards of hard work.

"Don't drop out of school. You need your schooling for many reasons. You will make your parents proud. There is so much out there for you to experience and to see, so please finish school because that just the beginning of your exciting future," says Morin who has applied to the policing program at Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Prince Albert.

Morin says she will be able to buy her daughter more clothes today from the \$150 she won for first in the photo contest. She and her daughter are one of the hundreds of evacuees who had to leave their communities and more clothes and supplies would be nice as they have been in Regina for a week already.

The other photo winners are Brendan Kenny Joseph who won \$75 for second and Johnathan McAdam and Brent Ahenakew who won \$50 for third.

**Brendan Kenny Joseph of Big River First Nation took second and pals Jonathon McAdam and Brent Ahenakew of Ahtahkakoop First Nation pointed their way to third place.**



# The TRC: Indian Act and democracy

The commission's recent report is a big one. It is actually a summary of a full report to be released later. It contains much that is to be applauded.

One fairly common myth I was happy to see the TRC debunk was that the Indian Act had created the legal authority for Indian agents to operate the notorious 'pass system' which prohibited travel off-reserve for its residents without a pass.

The Act may be blamed for many serious wrongs but not this one.

The pass system was operated without the authority of any statute law: the Indian agents did it because they could do it and get away with it.

The pass system was used for political control of the movements of individuals, and was a feature of the government's policy and practice to prevent political action by Indians who wished to unite in opposition to the draconian reserve system being imposed upon them during the Treaty-signing period in the 1800s.

The Indian Act is the legal foundation for the IRS but it went far beyond that in authorizing government actions that do not meet the international and constitutional standards that bind Canada today in its relations with Indigenous people.

First enacted in 1876 as a consolidation of existing colonial Indian legislation, and with provisions that applied particularly to regions that now comprise Western Canada, the Act still stands as an affront to the contemporary universal human right of all peoples to self-determination.

There are and have been good advocates for its abolition but the challenges inherent in doing away with legislation that applies to so many diverse communities across Canada, some with historic Treaties, some with modern Treaties and some without any Treaties, has defied an easy abolition of the Act.

One response is the 'opt-in' approach of amendments by those Indian Act 'bands' that adhere to them, such as the First Nations Land Management Act.

It is a tough job to move from the effects of historic legal, political and economic subjugation of 'Indians' to the recognition and implementation of the right of self-determination of all peoples

to decide for themselves what is in the best interests of their people.

Today in Canada there are many voices who proclaim to know what is best for others, in both the individual and public spheres.

If the right of self-determination means that every person should be recognized as in the best position to decide what is its own 'public interest' then the issue of self-determination of those who are still governed by the Indian Act can be fairly described as one of 'competing public interests'.

Democracy demands a role for legitimate representation in designing and applying laws that are made to protect and advance the public interest.

We know that by and large the current provincial and federal governments that make the laws have little if any legitimacy in deciding the public interest of the Indigenous peoples. The case of the First Nations and of all the indigenous peoples remains a sore upon the body politic of our country.

The prospects for change towards a modern conception of Canada as a truly democratic nation appear rather dim today as more and more it is being realized that Canada is the least democratic of all the modern states, principally according to the best analysts, on account of the centralization of political authority in the office of the prime minister, an office that grew out of the constitutional evolution of Canada and that has recently moved beyond the bounds of a constitutionally legitimate and democratic institution.

In the long run we know that politics trumps law. Political action is needed for a true reconciliation of the competing public interests of all of Canada on the one hand and the public interests of the First Nations on the other hand.

The TRC has made recommendations for reconciliation on some levels concerning Indian Residential Schools.

The political project before Canada now is to seek and find a common truth and build upon that truth a practical, feasible foundation for the reconciliation of competing public interests. It will not be easy.

With a looming federal election, can we see prospects for change?



**Comment**  
**Paul Chartrand**

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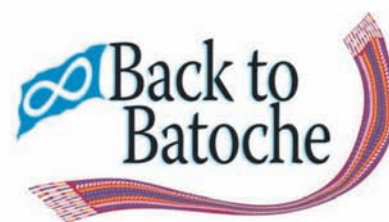
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# First group of nursing graduates from La Ronge and Ile-a-la-Crosse

By Tiffany Head  
For Eagle Feather News

Nursing students from northern Saskatchewan would usually have to leave their home communities to move to Regina, Saskatoon or Prince Albert to complete their studies.

The cost and hardship from being away from home was interfering with the focus on schoolwork. Innovative thinking and the use of technology allowed the University of Saskatchewan's College of Nursing to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program in La Ronge and Ile-a-la-Crosse in 2012.

This year the College of Nursing was extremely excited to celebrate the very first graduates to complete a nursing degree in the North. Events were held in May in Ile a la Crosse and La Ronge to honour the graduates.

"We are celebrating graduates who may not have completed their nursing degree if we did not offer our program in La Ronge," said College of Nursing Dean Dr. Lorna Butler.

"The pursuit of post-secondary education should not be disadvantaged by geography and although the program was new, we were using innovative technology not previously used in educa-

tion. It was the first time we had connected faculty from Saskatoon with students in La Ronge (and) these students worked extra hard to make this happen."

La Ronge graduate Christina Davies said taking the program in the North brought many unique experiences including learning via the robot. Davies also said it was a blessing to learn from home as she was able to focus on her studies without having the pressure of living away from family and friends.

"Now that I have completed the program, I look forward to giving back to my home community of La Ronge, as a Registered Nurse," said Davies.

The program used a Remote Presence via the Robot to deliver the nursing program which allowed the students to have a hands on experience, even though a professor far away controlled the robot.

Phyllis Probert from Beauval graduated from the program as well and says it will improve her family's lifestyle and overall well-being. She looks forward to be an additional Cree/Dene speaking nurse in Northern hospitals in the area. She plans to continue her education after gaining some work experience.

"The Remote Presence technology



The first La Ronge graduates from the University of Saskatchewan's College of Nursing BSN pose with Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson.

used in Ile-a-la-Crosse to deliver the nursing program here has provided so many opportunities and inspired me. After working for a while, I am looking forward to continuing my education in U of S Nurse Practitioner Program, which I can also do from home, not requiring me to leave the community and my family to obtain my education," said Probert.

Graduate Savannah Sylvestre, commuted 300 kilometres to Ile-a-la-Crosse from Buffalo Narrows every day. She says that is a pale comparison of what she would have had to go through, if she had had to move from her community for her education.

"If this program was not offered

here in Northern Saskatchewan, I probably wouldn't have obtained a degree," said Sylvestre.

"When the idea to deliver nursing education in Northern Saskatchewan was brought forward, I had never been to Ile-a-la-Crosse," said Dean Dr. Lorna Butler.

"But the one thing I did know was the College of Nursing is committed to a 'learn where you live' philosophy and if Northern Saskatchewan needed more nurses, we wanted to help."

All the graduates found employment as soon as they finished the program. It shows that there is a profound need for their services in the North.

## Dirk on political correctness, science and truth

I saw this recently, somewhere, and it bugged the hell out of me ...

"Truth. The new hate speech. Political correctness is destroying the very fabric of society. Never before in history have people been so afraid to stand up against absurdity for fear of being labeled a racist, a homophobe, or a bigot. Get rid of political correctness. Let's get people talking again."

I, Dirk Delicious Dashing, agree, but just not the way you want.

Yes, political correctness is in fact destroying the very fabric of an increasingly small segment of society. And that segment is getting smaller. So yeah, your pain is real.

Even the rest of your statement is almost true. Almost. Let me demonstrate ...

The next phrase in the "Truth" statement is, "Never before in history have people been so afraid to stand up against absurdity for fear of being labelled a racist, a homophobe, or a bigot." This is absolutely true, and it has happened before.

There was a time, a few hundred years ago, when everyone in Europe – in other words everyone that mattered – was required to believe the world was flat or man was the centre of the universe.

Anyone who argued against these

facts was labeled a heretic, a blasphemer, or from Kindersley, and was thusly placed under house arrest. If that didn't shut them up they were sentenced to Cupar, a former Klingon penal colony.

By the way, I like that word, "thusly."

It may reappear throughout this column.

"Column." An odd word for what I am doing here, since the thoughts I am unleashing here are

appearing in, as I count 'em, four columns! I demonstrate thusly – imagine me waving my hand across the page as though I am showing you something you have not noticed before.

You took a break from reading to count the columns, right?

Hence, "thusly."

But I digest myself.

At any rate, at one point in history it was absurd to believe the world was not the centre of the universe. Then some yahoo by the name of Copernicus came along and he said, "Yo, sports fans, we revolve around the sun, dudes!"

I'm translating from his native Polish.

Copernicus was placed under house

arrest by the church bosses of the day, who realized the implications of this discovery. But once Copernicus' ideas took hold other facts revealed themselves. And as open-minded people experimented with the new ideas they began to expand their understanding of the universe and their place in it.

That's right, the universe does not revolve around us.

We're just one little planet amongst trillions in the universe.

Real word that. "Tri-gillions." It even feels right when you mumble it.

There's only one thing wrong with this comparison. The writer of "Truth" is no Copernicus, though he feels unjustly condemned for his truth. No, he's more like the nervous, bent and corrupt church bosses who were afraid of losing their grip on the world and their cherished fantasies about their lofty place in it.

At any rate, let's get back to the rest of that deceptively simple "Truth" about political correctness.

The next phrase is a plea, as though delivered by an evangelist in full sweat

across his fat, red brow: "Get rid of political correctness."

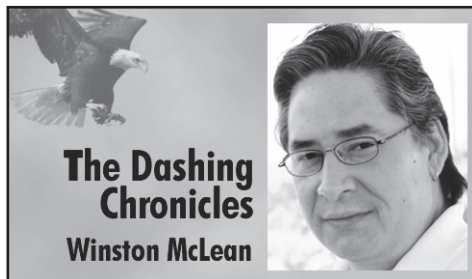
What an enticing offer. Having to address people as they want to be addressed, with respect, is too much like work. Mental work. It's almost like thinking before one opens ones' mouth. It's much easier to slander other people with handy, dandy stereotypes.

And while we're at it, let's get rid of science since it is responsible for knocking us off our "centre of the universe" perch we "men" enjoyed in them olden' days.

Ah, the olden' days. Back when you could smack your woman and kids. When you could ridicule and demonize others, and after say it was only in fun. When you could deny people things based on their race, and maybe shove them into ovens or brutalize their kids in institutions.

When you can degrade a person or a people through language,...you damn right, it becomes easier to do unspeakable things to them.

**Dirk says, "I won't say I was slow developer, but teacher was quite pleased to have someone her own age in class to talk to." – Thanks to Chic Murray for that one.**





Graduates of the SIIT Adult Basic Education 12 class in La Ronge celebrate their accomplishment. (Right) Leadership Award winner Deanna Howe celebrated her graduation by posing for a photo beside Lac La Ronge.

(Photo by Ashley Howe)



# Adult Grade 12 grads ready to continue their education journey

By Linda Mikolayenko  
For Eagle Feather News

**LA RONGE** – Students of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) Adult Basic Education 12 class in La Ronge were recognized at graduation ceremonies at the Jonas Roberts Memorial Community Centre on Friday, June 12, 2015.

“I’ve been here since 2008,” says instructor Anne Cook, “and this is the largest graduating class I’ve seen.”

Sixteen of the 18 students who began the program in September completed it. Both Cook and fellow instructor Lyle Riley give some of the credit to a bus service and access to a daycare at nearby Senator Myles Venne School for the high success rate.

“Because we are in partnership with the (Lac La Ronge Indian) Band, students can take advantage of extra resources,” says Cook.

The program also endeavours to help students make connections with the world outside of school, collaborating with Elders for a Cultural Day, and with Indian Child and Family Services and its parenting course. As well, following a violent incident in the community in February, the whole school focused on learning about murdered and missing Indigenous women and got involved in a beading project that raised money for the Piwapin Women’s Centre.

“It’s all about community,” says Cook. “When they see the connections, that’s what they remember.”

In addition to receiving certificates of completion and gifts, four students were presented with SIIT Achievement Awards.

Alysha Roberts received the Academic Award and the Most Improved Award went to Sabrina Halkett. Stacey Bear was given the Best Attendance Award and Deanna Howe was honoured with the Leadership Award.

“I was very surprised,” says Howe, who returned to school for the first time since completing her Grade 10 at Northlands College in 2001. She felt it would be easier now that her four children, ranging in age from 13 to 22, are older. She also had another reason.

“My teenagers are struggling with school; I wanted to be a role-model for them,” she adds.

Still, she says, keeping herself motivated was one of the biggest challenges. She admits that there were times when her alarm went off in the morning and she didn’t want to get up.

“I’d give myself a pep talk,” she says.

In order to get her work done without distractions, she would often stay at school after classes.

In his address, Elder John R. Halkett honoured the graduates for their accomplishments and congratulated them on overcoming obstacles. He noted that past leaders such as Senator Myles Venne had a commitment to education and he encouraged the students to carry on that vision.

Howe intends to do just that. She has been accepted into the Northern Professional Access College and hopes to major in Native Studies.



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# Shoal Lake grad a colourful celebration

By Tiffany Head

For Eagle Feather News

**SHOAL LAKE CREE NATION** – On a beautiful sunny spring day, the Wacihk Education Complex in Shoal Lake Cree Nation had their graduation.

As soon as the guests were all settled the graduates performed the grand march to their chosen song, What are you waiting for by Nickleback. Each graduate was introduced, along with their escorts.

The gym was decorated in colours of black, silver and white. The nine graduates wore varied colored formal wear that was of their choosing.

The community's chief and council were present and said a few words of encouragement to the graduates. Special guests, Former FSIN Chief Lawrence Joseph, FSIN Second Vice Chief Bobby Cameron, and PAGC Vice Chief Brian Hardlotte were invited to the event. Barbara McMan from Nipawin, known as "lady barber" to the community, was also a very honoured guest this year.

Grade 12 teacher Stan Merasty said the students worked really hard in their studies, especially their valedictorian, Carlanda Bear, daughter of Chief Carlton Bear.



Graduates of the Wacihk Education Complex on Shoal Lake Cree Nation were celebrated by their community and dignitaries at their graduation.

"Carlanda Bear, who had an average of 87 per cent in all of her subjects, won the Stan Fuller-Bey award, an award that is based on the 3 A's (Attitude, At-

tendance and Academics). All the staff members chipped in to buy a laptop for the student to use in her post-secondary this fall," said Stan Merasty.

Denesha Nawakayas was among the graduates and says she was very nervous and excited when grad day finally came.

In Shoal Lake, they started a rose giving tradition in 2003 in respect and honour to the ones that supported them in their education, be it a parent, grand-parent, other family member or close friend. It is the most emotional part of the ceremony for graduates and guests.

"When we were handling roses for our family," said Nawakayas of her most memorable moment at her grad.

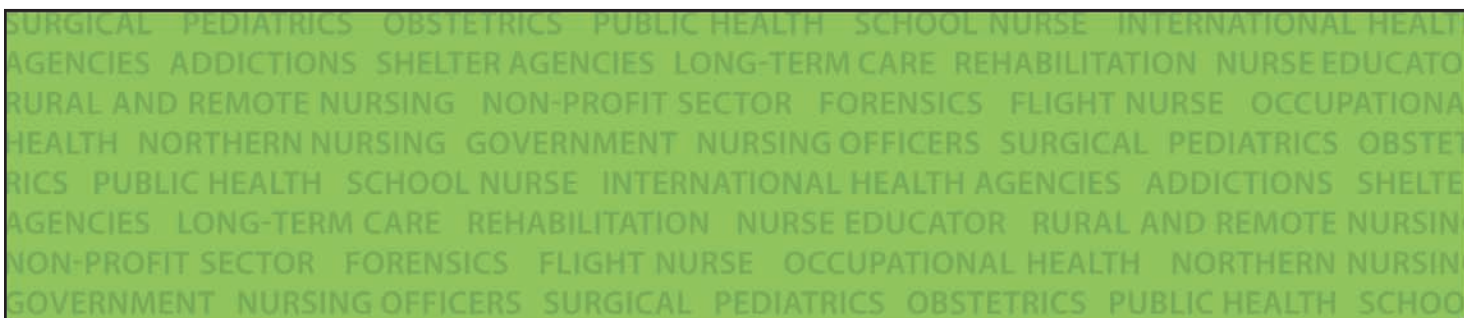
Graduate Feather Bear plans to be a police officer someday and has applied at Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Prince Albert in hopes that she will get in.

Bear had chosen her dad as her escort for a very special reason, one that she and him will remember for a long time.

"I chose because I wanted him to walk beside on my grad, just like he would on my wedding day," said Bear.

Every graduation has their special and memorable moments. The 2015 Shoal Lake Graduates enjoyed their grad ceremony.

They now look to the future as they go on to pursue other educational possibilities and chase their dreams.



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## Kikinahk hosts community graduation recognition banquet

By Linda Mikolayenko  
For Eagle Feather News

**LA RONGE** – Senator Myles Venne School belongs to the Lac La Ronge Indian Band. Churchill Community High School, part of the Northern Lights School Division, is located in the Town of La Ronge. Situated geographically between the two is the Village of Air Ronge. To celebrate the accomplishments of this year's graduates from the two schools, all three communities joined together at a graduation recognition banquet hosted by the Kikinahk Friendship Centre.

Community and community support were themes that were reiterated throughout the evening.

Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson noted, "Even though we are different jurisdictions, we share a lot of services."

As well, some of the graduates have attended one school for a period of time, then the other, observed Churchill Community High School principal Martina Cain.



**Jolene McKenzie, a Senator Myles Venne School graduate, was honoured with a plaque and a bursary for \$250 at a community graduation recognition banquet hosted by the Kikinahk Friendship Centre in La Ronge.**

(Photos by Linda Mikolayenko)

Each graduate received a congratulatory plaque, jointly presented by Cook-Searson, La Ronge Mayor Thomas Sierzycki, and Air Ronge Mayor Gordon Stomp.

This is the second year Kikinahk has organized such an event, but for the first time, students pursuing post-secondary studies were eligible for bursaries. Less than a month before the banquet, businesses and organizations were approached to sponsor a bursary, and very quickly \$6000 was raised, allowing more than 20 of the 67 graduates to receive bursaries of \$250.

That shows how much the community values education – and the graduates, said Kikinahk Executive Director Ron Woytowich.

The bursary recipients are interested in a wide range of careers. Aaron Vancoughnett hopes to become a wildlife technician, while Cora Eninew's passion is cooking. Both have enrolled in programs at Saskatchewan Polytechnic.

Jolene McKenzie will be attending Northlands College in the fall and has her sights set on becoming a social worker, "so I can help my people in my community," she says.

McKenzie is from Grandmother's Bay, where school only goes up to Grade 9, so she took advantage of a boarding and transportation program that allowed her to complete high school at Senator Myles Venne School. During the week, she stayed at a private residence, but was able to go home for the weekends.

While she enjoyed the banquet, McKenzie was also looking forward to her school's graduation ceremonies, when more of her family could attend.

"This year, there are six of us from Grandmother's Bay that are graduating," she says, more than most years.

Not all the graduates are going on to further their education right away. Cook-Searson's daughter, Aileen Searson, wants to fol-

low her dream of becoming an actress.

"It's a pretty bold move," says Cook-Searson.

"That's her polite way of saying, 'she's going to fail at it ... it's not going to work out'," comments Searson, already displaying a flair for the dramatic.

Searson, a Churchill graduate who has experience acting in school productions, has a plan to research theatre companies and request auditions. Although she says her mother is not overly enthusiastic about her decision, she acknowledges that "she's okay with it."

"We're going to support her, as her parents," says Cook-Searson. "We have to support our families; we have to support our children."



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# Congratulations to the 2015 graduates

I bet you were excited about graduation, but worried about your life after the speeches are said and caps are thrown onto the air.

Will you discover your true passion? What about failure and success? How will you say goodbye to people you will be leaving behind?

It's important to acknowledge the people who have touched your life.

I am fortunate to come from a large family and we have had many graduations to celebrate this summer from kindergarten, Grade 8, Grade 12, University Convocations and an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University of Saskatchewan.

Each educational achievement is a milestone. In kindergarten we see our little ones becoming more independent and mostly happy to spend the half days at school. The next eight years will be challenging with many changes happening at the same time.

Classes are getting tougher, friendships trickier and then puberty strikes – parents ... hang on and encourage your children because before you can blink your children will be saying farewell to Grade 8.

High school is the next step which some people say it is the best time of their lives while others (including me) disagree. High school was difficult for an Aboriginal teenager in the 1980s as we dealt with racism and ignorance daily and don't get me started on the bullying!

On a positive note it was wonderful to see nephews from Grade 12 and grandson from Grade 8 graduate. Quite an accomplishment from our young adults and future leaders.

There are tough times ahead for these young graduates. They will have to decide what they want to do with their futures. University or trades? Travel or work?

Some young people know exactly what they want to do, be it a teacher, lawyer, carpenter or mechanic. Don't worry if you don't know what you want to do right now, Steve Jobs said, "If you haven't found it yet, keep

looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know it when you find it."

I was extremely proud of my older sister who received an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University of Saskatchewan. She worked hard to be where she is and as she gets closer to retiring it is wonderful to see others acknowledge her for her dedication to education and social justice.

In her speech she told graduates to be proud of who they were and where they came from.

"Be bold, curious and open, take a risk. It's a tough lesson, but you need to accept failure as a part of the learning process. Don't worry if you don't know what you will do with your life. Things happen, your views change and new opportunities appear."

She ended her speech by telling graduates to remember that a good education and a good standard of living is a privilege, not a right. Think about your neighbors or the people you see on the street. What can you do to help them and the community?

"There are many challenges in our world right now. Sometimes it can be overwhelming there are social issues such as racism and inequity, environmental issues and economic problems.

"We can't take them all on but we can do our part. Get involved make a contribution do your part.

"This is an exciting time for you; there is lots of

learning and adventures ahead of you. Enjoy the journey ahead; learn who you are and where you can make

a difference. Life is short, enjoy it and be happy."

I'm so very proud of all the graduates. As they take their place in this world let's encourage and support them; love and acknowledge them.

Advice for us all – enjoy your life. Spend time with your family and most importantly; love yourself. Remember your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.

Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice.

Have the courage to follow your intuition and heart. It is my hope that all of you reading will choose to take care of your health and make good choices for your futures and the futures of the graduates.

I enjoy hearing from you. Contact me at Sandee Sez c/o Eagle Feather News, P.O. Box 924 Station Main, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3M4. Email sandra.ahenakew@gmail.com








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# U of S medical program a leader in Canada

By Fraser Needham  
For Eagle Feather News

**SASKATOON** – Aboriginal engagement is one of the core pillars of the University of Saskatchewan’s mandate and it appears the policy is working in terms of student enrolment and graduation numbers.

This spring, the U of S graduated the highest number of Indigenous students in the institution’s history at 363 self-declared Aboriginal students which is roughly 11 per cent of the total graduating class.

These numbers include an impressive 10 Aboriginal out of 84 graduates in the medical doctor program which accounts for roughly 12 per cent – the highest of any medical school in the country.

Lastly, this past fall the highest number of Aboriginal students on record enrolled at the U of S at 2,155 which accounts for about 11 per cent of the total student population.

Keith Carlson is a professor in the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan and the research chair in Aboriginal and Community-engaged History.

Carlson believes one of the reasons for the improved enrolment and graduation rates is the comprehensive effort across a number of departments at the university to incorporate relevant Aboriginal content into the curriculum.

For example, in the Canadian Aboriginal History class he teaches he has his students look at current Globe and Mail headlines and identify which issues are most affecting Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations.

The students then identify the top eight issues and design a course around looking at how the history of these issues has affected these Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations and what might be done to improve them.

“Aboriginal issues aren’t simply something from the past and neither are they something simply a contemporary issue that’s disconnected from history,” he says. “For awhile there, there was an effort 25 years ago to treat Aboriginal people as just another cultural com-



U of S College of Medicine Aboriginal coordinator Val Arnault-Pelletier (right) shown here with Dr. Melvyn Lavallee of Cowessess First Nation. Lavallee, who graduated from the U of S’s College of Medicine in 1970, is the first known First Nations person to graduate from a medical doctor program in Western Canada.

munity and obviously that’s not the case. These people have Aboriginal rights based on their prior occupation and that means that has to be situated in a historical context and a contemporary one.”

In the past, Aboriginal students have tended to enroll in the arts and humanities and programs like law rather than in the math and sciences.

However, Carlson says he is not surprised to see a number of Indigenous students entering engineering and medical programs, as this is just a continued progression of identifying community need.

“What we’ve seen for Aboriginal people is much more pragmatic decisions about academic and career

paths. They look around in their community and they say, ‘we need social workers or we need teachers.’ Those were the areas back in the 70’s and 80’s where almost all First Nations people were going because that’s where they could have the biggest impact, that’s where they could help their community. Now were seeing that spread. It went to law and Native Studies and now we’re seeing Aboriginal students pop up in engineering, medical schools and the hard sciences. To me, that suggests that there’s still these burning issues in their communities that they want to contribute to, to help to fix or make better.”

• Continued on Page 13



## Work Environment

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Kurt Delorme, Community Relations Coordinator, Saskatoon Fire



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Métis student Adam McInnes is now Dr. Adam McInnes, one of 10 Aboriginal graduates this year.

## More Aboriginal grads expected in coming years

• Continued from Page 12

Prior to 1992, only three known students of Aboriginal ancestry had graduated from the U of S's College of Medicine.

At this time, it was decided that three seats in the first year of the medical program would be reserved for students of Indigenous ancestry.

In 2006, this number was increased to 10 per cent of the entering class.

Since the Aboriginal Equity Program was instituted in 1992, 63 Indigenous students have graduated from the College of Medicine.

Val Arnault-Pelletier is the Aboriginal coordinator in the College of Medicine.

She says reserving seats in the program for Aboriginal students has been critical to increasing their enrolment and graduation numbers.

"When we look at Saskatchewan and Canada and the demographics of our people, we certainly aren't represented yet in medicine but we're getting there and I would say the last few years have been wonderful. But those early years, I just don't think our people could see themselves in terms of dreaming and thinking we could actually do medicine. So I think we've come a long way."

Adam McInnes, who is of Métis ancestry, is one of the 10 Aboriginal graduates this year from the medical doctor program.

He says he believes the increased Aboriginal enrolment in math and sciences programs is due to the ongoing process of elimination of long standing social and institutional barriers.

"The growth in Aboriginal students in these STEM fields – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – now that Aboriginal people are starting to come out of the long standing institutions and policies and racism that existed in Canada for so long. Now that this generation is starting to come out from under that and starting to be able to regain their rights and position in society and their abilities that were destroyed through all of this cultural genocide that went on for so long."

There are currently 30 Aboriginal students enrolled in the College of Medicine that are expected to graduate in the next four years.

# Province not rushing Sixties Scoop apology

By John Lagimodiere  
Of Eagle Feather News

**SASKATOON** – Premier Brad Wall has announced that his caucus has agreed to make a formal apology to victims of the Sixties Scoop, but not until later this summer or in the fall.

"I was really moved by the story told by President Doucette. He also said that an apology would mean a lot to him. That is why the caucus has agreed to do a formal apology for the so called "Sixties scoop"," said Wall at a media scrum outside of the cabinet office in Saskatoon.

"We will engage our appropriate ministers from Social Services and from First Nation and Métis Relations and myself including First Nation and Métis leaders from the province to make sure we do it right. We want to discuss how we can formally offer it and that the apology is freely offered and freely received and accepted as well."

The Province of Saskatchewan has been under pressure to apologize for their social services policy in the 1960s and '70s that saw social workers scoop thousands of children from their families to be adopted

out or placed in foster homes around the world. The Province of Manitoba recently apologized for their involvement and there were calls from NDP Leader Cam Broten and Métis Nation-Saskatchewan President Robert Doucette for Saskatchewan to follow suit.

"We have been working on regulations around adoption, for example, that makes it easier for people to find their birth parents. Our government also introduced, in 2007, mandatory curriculum on treaty education for K-12 students. Of course the residential school situation is dealt with in that curriculum but not a lot of people know about the so-called Sixties Scoop.



BRAD WALL

"That's another change we can make," said Wall. "But we want to do this in consultation with the FSIN and Métis Nation. We want to make sure the apology is meaningful and if there are other things we can work on."



*SIMFC*  
31st Annual  
Native Graduate  
Recognition Night

Each year we gather as a community to honour, recognize and empower our Aboriginal Grade 12 Graduates. This year the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre hosted with excellence the 31st Annual Native Graduate Recognition Night at Prairieland Park. To encourage lifelong learning and post secondary education, 24 scholarships were handed out. With 146 Graduates and 690 people in attendance, the banquet and ceremony to recognize achievement. Thank you to our Elders, Sponsors, Scholarship providers, Supporters, Event Coordinators and SIMFC Staff for another wonderful Annual Native Graduate Recognition Night.

*Annual Native Graduate Recognition Night Scholarship Recipients:*

<p><b>Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Saskatchewan Scholarship</b> Heaven Adams</p> <p><b>Amiskusees: Semaganis Worme Family Foundation Scholarship</b> Kiona Sanderson Reagan Stanley-Nippi Matthew Lerat Raven Bigsky</p> <p><b>Aboriginal Student Achievement Scholarship</b> Alia Hogan</p> <p><b>Building a Strong Métis Community Scholarship</b> Hailey Lavalee Connor Johnstone</p> <p><b>Indigenous Studies Scholarship</b> Briana Daniels Zachary Lischka</p> <p><b>Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Year of the Métis Legacy Bursary</b> Wyatt Tyndall Nolan Mckay</p> <p><b>Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Spirit Award</b> Kelsey Whitehead</p> <p><b>Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools Academic Award</b> Justice Thorne</p>	<p><b>Gordon Tootoosis Memorial Scholarship</b> Rochelle Robillard</p> <p><b>Les Bird Memorial Scholarship</b> Tyson Brittain</p> <p><b>SIMFC Athletics Scholarship</b> Keisha Ermine</p> <p><b>Community Justice and Policing Award</b> Ethan Constant Kiona Sanderson</p> <p><b>Saskatoon Public Schools First Nations Youth Cultural Award</b> Avery Kewistep</p> <p><b>Saskatoon Public Schools Métis Youth Cultural Award</b> Sheldon Lacerte</p> <p><b>Saskatoon Public Schools Academic Achievement Award</b> Naomi Bird</p> <p><b>Saskatoon Public Schools John Dewar Spirit and Resiliency Award</b> Briana Daniels</p> <p><b>Scotiabank Bright Future Community Involvement Scholarship</b> Avery Kewistep Nitanis Vandale</p>
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**Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre**

# Homelessness program begins the “Journey Home”

By Fraser Needham  
For Eagle Feather News

**SASKATOON** – A new report says a strategy to reduce homelessness in Saskatoon is showing positive results after one year.

The Housing First program, one piece of Saskatoon’s Plan to End Homelessness, places the priority on a rapid and direct move from homelessness to housing. Once the person is stabilized, the delivery of high quality housing support-services tailored to the needs and wishes of clients is a critical success factor.

The report says in the initiative’s first year 24 participants were able to find housing and the inappropriate use of various social services was reduced by 82 per cent.

For example, emergency room visits for these first 24 participants dropped from 399 to 84, ambulance rides from 286 to 66 and one-day brief detox from 647 to 43.

It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in the program \$2.23 is saved.

Program participants had been homeless for an average of three to five years with one participant going without shelter for a total of 17 years.

Shan Landry, who heads up the United Way’s homelessness reduction initiative, says according to 2011 figures there are about 372 homeless people in Saskatoon with roughly 72 of these individuals being chronically without shelter.

She says the Housing First initiative is making headway but homelessness remains a serious issue in the city.

“When we talk about chronically homeless peo-

ple, that is people for the most part who have nowhere to stay every single night. A number of the participants in our program actually were people who slept rough. That is they slept on the riverbank, under the bridge,

many serious infections – HIV, TB – those kinds of things that tend to thrive in environments where you are not safe, you’re not getting enough sleep, you’re not bathing enough.”



**Sleeping in a vehicle, under bridges or at construction sites are some of the options for homeless people in Saskatoon. Journey Home aims to change that.**

in construction sites where there might have been a bit of hoarding that gave them some protection, in stairwells...”

Landry also says years of living on the street tend to take a heavy toll on a person’s health.

“When you’re moving around and you have no stable place to wash, to take care of your personal hygiene and other things, that can make you more likely to want to turn to alcohol or some other substance to forget about your troubles,” she says.

“Chronic health problems, some of our clients had

United Way Saskatoon and Area Interim CEO Myra Potter says one of the benefits of the Housing First initiative is that it gives participants the choice of what type of housing arrangement they want to live in whether it be an apartment, boarding situation or care home.

She says although it certainly won’t be easy, eliminating homelessness in Saskatoon is a realistic and attainable goal.

“Our homeless population is not as huge as it is in bigger cities but we’re growing and I think we need to get out front on this and manage it while it’s manageable. But it’s absolutely doable. There’s no need for anyone in Saskatoon to be homeless.”

The next goal of the program is to create sustainable housing for another 100 homeless people over the next three years.

It is estimated that the \$2.7 million invested in the initiative will save the public system about \$5.7 million in reduced need for services.

United Way has contracted Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Centre to deliver Saskatoon’s Housing First program, including these wrap-around supports to our community’s most vulnerable citizens. The Housing First program in Saskatoon has also been officially named “Journey Home.”

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### PROGRAM CONSULTANT: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The role of the Program Consultant – Community Engagement is multifaceted and dynamic. As a member of a talented team of consultants, you develop and deliver funding programs and special initiatives that provide opportunities for communities, organizations and schools across the province to engage in inquiry-based arts activity in partnership with Saskatchewan artists. You work with a broad variety of clients, including professional artists working independently or collaboratively, arts organizations, schools and communities, and those who are seeking to benefit from involvement in the arts. You are responsible for decisions that require professionalism, independent judgement and creative approaches to problem solving.

The successful candidate will demonstrate at least five years’ experience working with collaborative arts programming and have a track record of success working with artists and community groups. A background in the visual arts and fluency in French (both oral and written) are assets. This full-time permanent position is based in Regina and work is undertaken both in an office and in the field. Travel is required.

**A full job description is available on the Arts Board’s website at [www.artsboard.sk.ca](http://www.artsboard.sk.ca)**



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Myrna LaPlante accepts the recognition on behalf of Iskwewuk E-wichiwochek, chosen as top newsmaker of the year.



Joel Pederson (Left) North Saskatchewan regiment chief warrant officer Joel Pederson prepared youth to run the Metis Veterans Memorial Run in July 2014. He was chosen by Larissa Burnouf because of the strength he managed to show despite losing his son recently and still managing to help the community when he can, he truly is an unsung hero. Belinda Daniels – Helps the communities regain the power of language by holding camps with youth, she has won awards such as the Aboriginal Research Excellence Award. She was chosen by Betty Ann Adam for her work she does with the youth and her continued desire to build stronger communities by bringing back the languages. Other newsmakers highlighted but who were unable to attend were the leadership of Chief Darcy (chosen by Creeson Agecutay), the resiliency of Marlene Bird and resulting advocacy that arose from her ordeal (chosen by Mervin Brass), and the entrepreneurial Kendal Netmaker (chosen by John Lagimodiere).

# Positive newsmakers recognized

Commentary By CeCe Baptiste  
For Eagle Feather News

**SASKATOON** – The Saskatoon Aboriginal Professionals Association (SAPA) hosted its ‘Celebrating Success – Indigenous Newsmakers’ event on June 19 at the Bessborough Hotel.

This event showcased top stories that our Indigenous media experts have covered in the past year and culminated in the acknowledgement of the panelists’ top story.

The vision was to highlight positive stories of individuals or organizations that covered Indigenous people, promote role models, including possible ‘hidden heroes’. The SAPA team hosted this celebration in recognition of Aboriginal History Month and in honor of the Summer Solstice.

An event of this type focuses on the good within our community, and provides a venue for the non-Indigenous community to witness the many encouraging things happening in Saskatoon.

What we found interesting at the event is that, while we wanted to focus on positive stories, in reality there are many hardships and difficult issues that are inherent in who we are and what we face.

While the media panel did a great job identifying inspiring people, the discussion continued to circle around the MMIW movement, the call for an inquiry, and the TRC work. In the end, the media chose MMIW and the advocacy of Iskwewuk E-Wichiwochik.

This was a tremendous moment, as it acknowledges that within the context of difficulty and hardship, we are a resilient people who will not be quiet and will continue to be the voice for those that cannot speak for themselves. While the reason behind the MMIW movement is not positive or exciting, the work that people such as this group does is important and critical in order to push for understanding in the wider Canadian society.

SAPA also took this opportunity to unveil our visual identity. Creative Fire was instrumental in guiding this discussion, providing the in-kind contribution to capture our vision into a strong professional identity. The Interprovincial Association on Native Employment has been our strategic partner; this partnership enabled us to provide Saskatoon with premium quality programs that are focused and relevant for the Indigenous community.

This is the fifth business function that SAPA has hosted since January 2014, with an average of 100 attendees. Recently, SAPA also hosted four Breakfast Bites, which gave the audience opportunities to delve deeper into work related topics. Interest is buzzing about SAPA and its continued impact in Saskatoon. Organizations have approached SAPA to fill board and work opportunities, and more and more we are seen as a great place for organizations to create Aboriginal partnerships.

This year we are pleased to work with the Friendship Center and have access to a program coordinator. This will strengthen SAPA as we move to incorporation and plan for the years ahead.

The SAPA team is a passionate group. We believe in the importance of our work, and will continue to provide Saskatoon with networking and career building opportunities. Yet we are dependent on the business community to fulfil our objectives.

If you have ideas, feedback, or are interested in partnering with SAPA, please contact us at [yxeapa@gmail.com](mailto:yxeapa@gmail.com).



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# Bear hopes to graduate to the big leagues

By Allan Beaver  
For Eagle Feather News

**EDMONTON** – Ever since he first laced on a pair of skates, Ethan Bear dreamed of being in the NHL.

Now that the Seattle Thunderbirds star has been drafted in the fifth round by the Edmonton Oilers, the real work begins for the recently turned 18-year-old.

Bear has had quite the schedule since being drafted and most recently showcased his hockey skills at the Edmonton Oilers Orientation Camp.

“It’s been very good,” said Bear of the whirlwind two weeks since the draft.

“Ever since I arrived and met the guys, they have been very respectful and have welcomed me in a good way. I’m really happy to be here and it’s very exciting.”

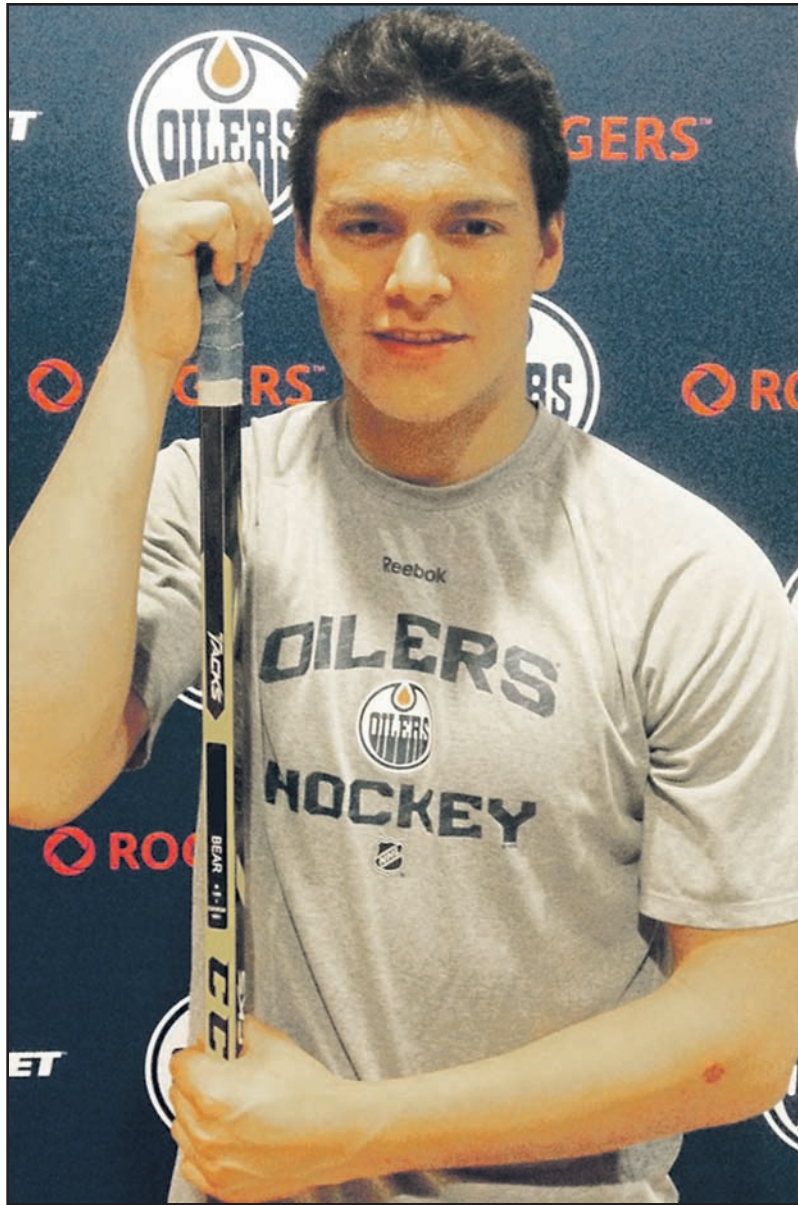
Bear proudly speaks of his NHL Draft 2015 experience as he was joined by family.

“My parents were there along with my brother and two sisters, it was great having them all there. It was a very exciting time when I heard my name being called.”

The Edmonton Oilers expressed strong interest in the young defenceman and had previous conversations with Bear before the big day.

“Each time the Edmonton Oilers name came up, I was excited knowing that they were very interested in me,” added Bear.

Sitting at the NHL Draft is a test to the nerves for every young hockey player waiting for their name to be called and it was certainly no different for the 5’11” and 198 lb Ochapowace First Nation youth. Finally, the moment came when the Oilers brass went up to the podium to call up Ethan Bear



Ethan Bear is one step closer to realizing his childhood dream of playing in the NHL.

from the WHL’s Seattle Thunderbirds.

“When it all happened, I think I blanked out, I can’t remember certain parts of it all as I was a too excited. It was just an exciting time for me and my family. It was very emotional for my mother and I think she was more nervous than me.

“I made sure I hugged her last because I knew she had some happy tears and my dad was happy,” added Bear.

Proud mother Geraldine was over the moon.

“We were anxious, very nervous, and when my son’s name finally got called by the Oilers – I just had tears of joys for him knowing all the hard work he’s put into his game to be where he’s at today.”

“It’s his perseverance that has taken him this far. I know when he (Ethan) does something in sports, he wants to be the best at it by putting in extra work,” added the mother.

The pride and joy felt in the First Nation community of Ochapowace First Nation was no doubt felt across the country by many followers of Indian Hockey. This not only puts a stamp of approval on Ethan Bear but an encouragement to the many young hockey players who dream of playing in the National Hockey League that it is within their grasp if they are willing to put hard work and the determination of making their dream a reality.

“I want to encourage the young people to stay humble, work hard, and be yourself. Be respectful and take everything one step at a time,” said Bear.

“Keep on task and stay focussed.”

Ethan Bear will spend the off season training in Regina and is expected at the Oilers camp in the fall.

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