

# Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

## Bird creatively teaching Cree language

Simon Bird working on his morning posts for his #CreeSimonSays Facebook page. (Photo by Sabriya Bird)



By EFN Staff

As summer ends and kids return to school, one life-long educator and language advocate believes it's never too late to start learning the Cree language.

Simon Bird has spent almost his entire career in the education field, save for a short stint in regional politics.

He was fortunate to grow up with the Cree language and while living in Saskatchewan he always had the opportunity to speak and hear it.

However, in 2015, that all changed when work took Bird and his two kids to Alberta and into the heart

of Nakoda territory.

Being surrounded by language that was not his own made him lonely.

"One day, I was trying to teach my little girl and I said, 'meyokesikaw,'" said Bird. "It was almost like I was trying to force the lesson and she kind of laughed at me. I was saying, 'meyokesikawin' and she said, 'Daddy, it sounds like you are saying, may you kiss a cow'."

He thought her response was pure genius because it was a way for her to remember the phrase, which translated means 'good day.'

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CPMA #40027204

# No one too young or too old to learn language: Bird

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Bird posted the interaction between him and his daughter on his Facebook page.

“There was a lot of people who commented saying, ‘it was a fun and unique way’ and ‘it was easy to remember the lesson and the words,’” he recalled. “There was a growing number of people who suggested he start a Facebook page.”

On May 4, 2015, he launched the Cree Simon Says Facebook Page.

That first post included a meme of Darth Vader saying May You Kiss A Cow. Bird also included the Cree phrase Meyokesikaw along with a phonetic spelling of Mee-you-Key-see-cow and the literal translation “It is a nice/good day” from the Cree Y - dialect.

Today, the website has more than 14,400 members from around the world.

One of those members is the now 20-year-old Cameron Adams from Gimli, Manitoba.

“I was added to the group by a cousin and began learning a little bit of the basics,” he said. “I was in Grade 11 and it just started a passion. I started putting (Cree words) in my journal and I started posting (what I learned) on Facebook. I bought an Alberta Elders Cree dictionary.”

The more words he mastered, the more he learned about the different dialects of the Cree language.

By his second semester of Grade 12 he would do his school’s cafeteria menu completely in Cree.

Now a student at the University of Winnipeg, Adams is pursuing an Integrated Bachelor of Education with Indigenous Studies. It is the first step in his goal to becoming a Cree language teacher in Northern Manitoba.

Adams said the last fluent Cree speaker in his family was his great grandmother who was originally from Norway House.

In 2017, he took an introductory Cree language class that helped teach him the basics of the Cree language and in 2018 he began working on a Cree language app.

He connected with Ellen Cook a knowledge keeper from Grand Rapids, Man. who has helped him transcribe 20,000 Cree words all in the N-dialect. Adams hopes to launch his app by the end of the year.

“(Bird) ignited a passion in me because he would always help me with Cree translations,” said Adams.

Adams shares what he knows online and with his own family and one day would like to pass the language down to his future children.

Being able to speak the same language his great grandmother spoke has connected Adam to his own history. His grandmother, who is not fluent, encourages him to keep learning and has told him how proud she is of him and his efforts to revitalize the language.

Like Bird, Adam believes it is important to share what you learn.

“If you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem,” he said.

Bird said no one is too old or too young to learn their language and fluent language speakers, like himself, have a responsibility to do what they can to keep the language alive.

He takes no credit for students like Adams but does feel a sense of pride in what one young person has been able to accomplish in terms of language preservation.

Bird says the Facebook page has reignited his own educational desires and would like to pursue a doctorate in indigenous language, so he can become a language teacher.

Both Bird and Adams believe anyone can learn their traditional language and are grateful for technological advancements because learners have the ability to connect with language experts online through social media or by accessing language apps.



Simon Bird’s #CreeSimonSays Facebook page has 14,400 followers and he has inspired a new generation of Indigenous people to learn Cree.

(Photo by Sabriya Bird)



## Annual General Meeting 2019

**Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre**  
168 Wall Street, Saskatoon

**Wednesday, September 25, 2019**

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Soup/Bannock
6:00 PM	Annual General Meeting

Board of Director applications/ documentation will be accepted until September 18, 2019 at 4:00 pm.

Proposed Bylaw Amendments, Election for Board of Directors and Auditor Presentation for year ended March 31, 2019.

Proposed Bylaw Amendments and Financial Statements are available for pick up during regular business hours.



**Cameron Adams a #CreeSimonSays member who is learning Cree and developing a Cree language app (Photo supplied).**



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# Cowessess students doing their best learning outdoors

**By Jeanelle Mandes  
Of Eagle Feather News**

Students at a southern Saskatchewan school are being given a chance to learn more out of their classroom and out onto the lands as part of their school curriculum.

Cowessess Community Education Centre has introduced a Land Based Learning program in their school this year, spearheaded by teacher, Andrew Starblanket.

It was something that Delrae Sparvier, who is in Grade 8, didn't expect to be a part of but appreciates now that he is gaining plenty of skills such as sage picking.

"I am learning respect and patience," he said. "I am happy our community has this now. Before Andrew came to school, we didn't have any of this."

Sparvier is looking forward to gaining more skills on how to live off the land and he hopes to put his skills to use outside school. Sparvier owes his gratitude to Starblanket who is not only a teacher but a cultural target behaviour teacher. He takes his students of various ages out of school to learn how to be elder helpers, serve at feasts, pick medicines and participate in ceremonies

such as a sweat lodge.

"This is to show people that come from not so healthy homes that there is a healthy choice for them to make," he said.

"Sometimes their families aren't culturally connected so that's kind of my goal is to show them to have those skills and knowledge to prepare them."

In the winter months, Starblanket shows them how to pick certain willows to make headache medicine and hand games. Storytelling is another big part of the program that Starblanket wants to put back into his students' lives, a tradition that dates to time immemorial.

Every January, he takes his students to Ministikwan for four days to go dog sledding, ice fishing, snaring, trapping, learning how to start a fire with damp wood and other life skills and cultural activities.

"This is all curriculum based. So, sage picking. I took the curriculums out of health, science and social in Grade 6 and tied them to an activity I did such as protocol, the importance, and (teaching them) how to clean the sage.

Throughout the year, Starblanket will be including

other grades as part of the Land Based Learning program and he hopes to target younger students who are also eager to participate.

"Land based learning is important here (at Cowessess school). The community support is so strong that it makes it easier to do so," he said.



Cowessess teacher Andrew Starblanket took his students out to pick sage, one of many activities in a program he created.

(Photo submitted by Andrew Starblanket)





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# Now that's an education

I wish I had teachers like this when I was back in school.

Three of the women below are graduates of the SUNTEP program, and one is due to graduate soon.

In the SUNTEP program they take Métis students and immerse them in their culture and history and build them up as powerful Métis people ... and then they make them awesome teachers.

Then they take that skill and cultural knowledge into our classrooms across Saskatchewan to inspire other Indigenous students, and non-Indigenous, and teach curriculum from the Métis perspective. How incredible. And at one time, unheard of.

Looking back with what I know now, our education system and Eurocentric curriculum failed Canadians miserably. They never taught us properly about the treaties. They explained it from the benevolence of the government's tender heart to save the poor starving Indians. They never taught about the Indian Act or, God forbid, the residential schools.

For the Métis, we received the government's version of the Métis story.

They never talked about the violence our people faced in the Manitoba region following the Manitoba Act. They never talked about the massive land theft that happened.

We heard about the mad man Louis Riel, with little or no balance in the story. And most Canadians never were taught about the Métis story post the North West Resistance in 1885. Not one thing.

I never heard about the road al-

lowance people until university. You never heard about the farm colony experiments the provincial government set up for us. It was like we disappeared in the fall of 1885 and haven't come out of our caves until the 2000s.

The impact of Canadians not understanding Indigenous/Aboriginal rights or treaty rights has led to many myths and misconceptions that have muddied the water in our relation-



Several Métis women were honoured at the CUMFI Métis Days. These educators were among them and are all alumni or a student of SUNTEP and are leading or soon to be leading Métis educators. From left, student Autumn Larose-Smith, SUNTEP faculty Angie Caron, SUNTEP Director Sheila Pocha, and Oskayak teacher Jacqueline Lavallee. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

ships across this great land. Indigenous folks are seen as a burden and Canadians don't understand, or appreciate, the wealth that was made available to them after the government and their policies took our land and left us poor.

The poor curriculum really hurt our community as well. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation did a study of 1980s era history text books in Canada and they found that 80 per-

cent of all references to Indigenous people were negative or biased. And we, as Indigenous students, had to read that about ourselves. Not a good thing for the self-esteem.

Back in the day, I did not see Métis people in the teaching profession. Now that I know many families from around the province, it turns out we had at least two Métis teachers in my high school. But I never heard ei-

ther of those teachers bring up their background or heritage.

I was of the era where it just wasn't talked about. And that mentality slipped down into the student body. Now, decades after my Grade 12, I can say for sure there was a dozen or so fellow Indigenous students in my graduating class.

And not one time did we ever talk about our heritage to each other. Never. Not promoted, not welcomed.



Publisher's  
Notes

John Lagimodiere

Best to keep that to yourself because there was no benefit to it.

But, thankfully, times have changed. This past generation and the future generations have lots of teachers to role model after.

SUNTEP, ITEP and now NIS-TEP and other innovative programs are bringing teacher education to the communities and those graduates are staying or returning home to bring their knowledge to their relatives and community members.

Curriculum has caught up. It has been legally mandatory to teach Treaty education from K-12 since 2007 and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner has developed excellent curriculum for that.

My son learned Métis content in high school that I had to wait to receive until second year university. It wasn't taught by an Indigenous teacher, but he had a teacher that was professional and cared and taught it in a good way. And that is quite all right.

The change is good news for all of us in Saskatchewan. New generations of Canadian

students are getting it. Indigenous students are seeing themselves and their family stories properly reflected in the curriculum.

And our young people are seeing professional, credible teachers from their community welcoming them back to school and inspiring them into the future.

The times, they are a changing. Almost makes me want to go back to school. Almost.

**Eagle Feather  
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# So glad librarians love geeks like me

Going to the library has always been an adventure – which is probably the dorkiest thing I have ever written.

But I still remember those earliest visits. When I was six, our class would line up and walk in tight formation through the halls. I went to a small town school with Kindergarten to Grade 12 so it was always exhilarating to see the sheer number of students (about 300 tops but big to us).

Plus, the Grade ones averaged about three feet – except for that one kid who was always a foot taller than everyone else, you know who you are, Roy – and how tall the other students were in the bigger grades!

Basically, giants. And the older students would offer our tiny convoy a quick glance, maybe one girl might say, “cute,” which we would smile crookedly at but be secretly offended: “Hello, we’re six, we can read – we’re not stupid kindergarteners.”

Once inside the library, we would head off into different directions, scattering to the winds. About 90 per cent of us were looking for toys that might be hiding in the corners of the library. The rest were combing through old issues of Highlights magazines learning to make kites that would break apart in the wind and litter the front yard with paper and sticks and then your brother would say, “Gees, you’re an idiot.”

But I was different. I had taken to reading like a dog takes to tearing everything in your house apart. I even had reading preferences. I went to the school librarian, a slight woman named Mrs. Townsend and asked, “Do you have any books about God?” Her

head nearly exploded from happiness.

I wasn’t interested in God, per se. But I did like books based on the biblical stories. I was big fan of the Christmas Story, for instance, because I knew how that ended, with toys.



I also liked the story of Daniel and the lions where Daniel, who was a Christian, got locked up with lions and the lions refused to eat him. Though I later learned (through reading!) that the lions did eat a lot of Christians without compunction and perhaps it was less of a miracle and more that Daniel was lucky enough to have ended up in the lion’s den after the lions had had a big Christian supper.

Mrs. Townsend led to me to a shelf, patted me on the head and committed my name to memory. Little did I know that I had made a friend for life.

Throughout my school career, she led me to books that she thought I would like. Books like Wild Geese and Fahrenheit 451 that weren’t on the school syllabus but which stuck with me for years.

Unfortunately, there weren’t many First Nation writers and so my native content was – white guy W.P.

Kinsella’s series about First Nations people and white lady Jean Craighead’s tale, Julie of the Wolves. Yikes. But this is what she had to work with as she built her little army of readers.

(Mrs. Townsend also let me sleep in the library at lunch times as per my lifelong obsession with naps.)

Librarians are warriors for the written word. In a world of YouTube, Netflix and video games, librarians still push on because books are necessary.

Books are anti-capitalism because a poor person has the same access as a rich person thanks to public libraries. They are pro-travel because you can visit any nation in the world via their work (please choose Indigenous authors lest you ended up reading the collective bullshit of Namibia’s WP Kinsella).

And they are the easiest way to time-travel. In one day, you can travel from Jane Austen’s 19th century England to the northern residential school where Augie Merasty received his “education” to Suzanne Collins post-apocalyptic Panem.

And yes, I know that Panem does not exist but I sure do think about the Capital every time I see a person with lavender coloured hair.

Basically, a library can contain all of the human experience. And when it gets too big you can find someone to guide you through – the librarian.

Plus, they are the only person who will understand that shakiness you get when you’ve just finished a great book and need to find another one.

Librarians are, fortunately, pro-dork.

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# Treaty 4 empowering nation builders

By Jeanelle Mandes  
Of Eagle Feather News

The Treaty 4 Education Alliance (T4EA) had a kick off to the new school year for their teachers and staff to empower their students.

On Aug. 30 members of the T4EA held their annual school kickoff, held at the Delta hotel in Regina, made this year's theme based on "Empowering Nation Builders."

There were many different sessions that were held throughout the day that T4EA teachers, educational assistants and principals were able to choose from.

"We started off the day in school focus sessions and we asked the schools to talk about their own strengths and what they bring to their own communities," said Megaen Reader, who is a student engagement consultant with T4EA.

"We also identify the strengths within their communities. We wanted to start off the (school) year in a positive way."

The kick off was only open to teachers, EAs and principals from Cote First Nation, Kawacatoose First Nation, Fishing Lake First Nation, Keeseekoose First Nation, Muskowekwan First Nation, Ocean Man First Nation and White Bear First Nation – all members within the T4EA.

It was a place where they were able to share positivity within each school. The event's sessions included school focus groups, Treaty Based and Inherent Rights to Education, Always Moving Learner, Tracking Mapping and

Investigating, Microsoft Teams, Nation Builder Youth Leadership, Cards Dice and Math Games, Classroom Gardens, Science Kits, Writing Conferences, Apps, Coding, Traditional Games and Trauma.

The Regina Police Service also attended to present on providing information on the current gang situation in Saskatchewan. Classroom teachers were provided with information on how to recognize signs indicating gang involvement/activity and resources for dealing with gang activity within their schools.

It was an excellent turnout and there was a buzz of excitement in the air when the event was over.

"For me, it was great to see everybody start off the school year in a positive way and understanding not only their kids have strengths and positives to build on, but they too are also bringing great things to the classrooms," said Reader.

"They have a lot of supports within their community. A lot of times, we focus on the negative or there's so much negativity we see in the news or when we look at our schools' data but this was a really positive way to start things off."

On the day of the kickoff, they had a social media bingo that people participated in by using the hashtags: #T4EA and #empoweringnation-builders.

The former Chief of White Bear First Nation, Brian Standingready, held a session and spoke about Inherent and Treaty Based Rights to Education and what it means to educators.



T4EA staff member David Riddle with former Chief of White Bear First Nation Brian Standingready who gave a session at the kickoff on Treaty Based and Inherent Rights to Education.

(Photo supplied)

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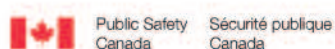
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Congratulations to our 2019

# Northern Saskatchewan Scholarship recipients

# Backpacking back to school

By Jeanelle Mandes  
Of Eagle Feather News

An annual event that helps families in Saskatoon acquire free backpacks filled with school supplies gets bigger every year. The Back-To-School carnival was held at White Buffalo Youth Lodge where over 2,000 backpacks were handed out.

Shaylee Taniskishayinew, mother of four children, said it was her first time participating but had heard about it through social media.

"I brought my kids out here to enjoy their day and to get their school supplies," said Taniskishayinew, who is from the Yellowquill First Nation.



Shaylee Taniskishayinew with her five-year-old daughter received a backpack along with her other three children (Right) Shane Curley, who is Nutrien's VP of Procurement, engaged with the families by handing out backpack. (Photos by Jeanelle Mandes)

"I'm very grateful and I feel happy that my kids have supplies to go to school. It means a lot to me. It's a huge money saver which is a bonus. The children won't feel left out."

Taniskishayinaw said her kids enjoyed the fun filled activities, entertainment and free food that closed down two blocks on 20th street in front of White Buffalo.

"I liked everything, like the bouncy castles, the face painting and the balloons. They did all this for the kids, they went out and beyond for the kids and I appreciate the organizers for that," she said.

"I will definitely be back next year."

The event was organized by the Saskatoon Tribal Council (STC) and they had many community partners who were involved. STC Tribal Chief Mark Arcand said they raised over \$140,000 to get 2,500 backpacks ready for families.

"When I became vice-chief four years ago, I thought the investment has to be in our people to change our lives, which is educa-

tion," he said.

"We have too many incarcerated youth, men and women in jails, we have too many kids in child and family services. We need our people to be educated and employed, this is the best way to get a start.

"So, when the kids go to school, they feel like they belong in school and they don't feel deterred if they don't have the proper supplies."

STC raised money through corporate sponsors with Nutrien as their main sponsor.

Shane Curley, who is Nutrien's VP of Procurement, engaged with the families by handing out backpacks and was pleased to see the sea of smiling faces.

"We have an expectation as Nutrien and we're going to be involved and participate in the community. We want our suppliers and partners to do the same," said Curley.

"We provided the backpacks and our suppliers have provided all the materials to go in. It's not about the cost for us. It's about providing and giving back to the community."

Curley said some people lined up for those who weren't able to attend the event. That was the case for a young family who were making their way to the backpack event before an accident halted their destination.

Saskatoon Police Service Inspector Patrick Nogier and his partner were heading over to assist with the backpack event when they received a call from the dispatcher asking if they were heading to the event and asking for a favour from the two officers.

"(The dispatcher) overheard a call where someone was reporting a car versus pedestrian accident. As it turned out, the pedestrians were trying to make their way to White Buffalo to participate in the backpack event," said Nogier.

"Luckily there was no major injuries, but they ended up heading home. The dispatcher was asking me to grab a backpack full of school items and to drop it off at the family's house."

When the two officers got to the event, it was a long line-up and they knew it would take time to receive a backpack. Nogier noticed a young boy and he asked him if he wanted to make some money by grabbing a backpack and filling it with supplies. The boy happily agreed.

When he was finished, the boy took the money and placed it inside the backpack for the family who was involved in the accident. It was a huge act of kindness that Nogier did not expect.

"We shook hands. We never really exchanged names or anything. He just had a smile on his face and he turned, walked away and didn't ask for anything," he said.

"It was a really good day. When you open the paper, you don't hear about the good things in life that's going on. This is one of those examples."

The backpack event was open to all families, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who were in need of help to alleviate the costs of going back to school.



These two boys were happy to receive their backpacks. (Photo by Jeanelle Mandes)



**GAIL GRZESIAK**  
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Nation: Métis  
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# Canoe Lake students discover learning from the land

**By NC Raine  
For Eagle Feather News**

Canoe Lake Miksiw School may be a small institution in the northern community of Canoe Lake Cree Nation, but their ideas and initiatives are as progressive and culturally-minded as any school in the province.

This school year, the Canoe Lake school is wasting no time boosting its cultural programming for students. They kicked off the school year with a medicine walk offered to the students. Later in September, students from the school will attend at hunting camp where they learn to hunt and harvest an animal from the land. From there, a school led community feast will take place in October.

“It’s about common values, that we’re out on the land and teaching the students about respect, that relationality and reciprocity,” said Geraldine Rediron, vice-principal of Canoe Lake.

“The students learn that things aren’t always linear, they’re circular. We’re giving them the opportunity to understand their way of knowing.”

Together with local knowledge keepers, elders, and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Canoe Lake School has established a Lands, Language, Relationships, and Culture curriculum for its kindergarten to Grade 4 classes.

They are also developing curriculum for their Grade 5-9 students based on the same culturally focused principles.

“The classroom is not just within the walls of this building. The classroom that we learned from long ago was the land itself. That’s the best learning you can have,” said principal Arliss Coulineur.

“When the kids say how much fun they had out there, it means there was something they acquired when

they were out on the land,” he said.

But the teaching staff at Canoe Lake understands that if they are to teach out on the land, they need to experience it themselves. Before the school year, Coulineur took his staff for a medicine walk – a full day out on the land.

“It gave them a bigger appreciation for why land-based learning is needed,” said Coulineur. “We had a circle talk and a lot of emotions came out during that time. We really reconnected.”

“Some of the feedback was that this was the most powerful professional development they’ve ever had. And this was just in our own backyard,” added Rediron.


Of course, remote school locations bring their share of challenges. This summer, Highway 903 – Canoe Lake’s main access road – washed out after heavy rains. Access to reliable transportation is the biggest challenge for the school, said Coulineur.

But some of these challenges are mitigated by the great benefits of a northern school.

“It’s personal, it’s home. Everyone feels like they’re part of the school. We really work hard on providing a sense of belonging,” said Rediron. “We’re promoting a positive space for everyone to grow and learn.”








Students participate in a few of the many out-of-classroom trips and lessons for students at Canoe Lake Miksiw School. (Photos by Geraldine Rediron)



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CUMFI recognized 12 women at the annual Métis Cultural Days. From left are honourees Laura Burnouf, Lydia Gardiner, Autumn Larose-Smith, Angela Daigneault, Angie Caron, Sheila Pocha, Tammy Mah, Tavia Bitz, Lorraine Stewart and Jacqueline Lavalée. Missing are Rose Richardson and Breanna Lizotte. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

### By John Lagimodiere Of Eagle Feather News

What an event. The Second Annual Métis Cultural Days hosted by CUMFI Métis Local once again packed the Western Development Museum in Saskatoon for three straight days of Métis culture and community building.

Last year, the event won a national award from the Indigenous Tourism Association so the pressure was on this year. President Shirley Isbister and the staff and volunteers from CUMFI delivered again.

“We do this in the spirit of reconciliation, it is important to promote the sharing of cultures. We believe that this event can foster appreciation and support of the Métis artistic and cultural life and promote direct interaction between Métis Culture and the non-Métis public to increase understanding and appreciation of Métis Art and Culture,” said Isbister.

“And it is about food and eating together.”

Fittingly, the weekend kicked off with a banquet. The theme was Honouring Our Métis Women and was hosted by the hilarious and endearing Alphonse and Ernestine (played smashingly well by Dwayne Favel and Maureen Belanger).

Twelve Métis women ranging from youth to Elder were honoured for their contributions and accomplishments. Artists, activists and educators were all brought

forward and wrapped in a Métis style shawl as their achievements were listed.

The night ended with an emotional tribute to missing and murdered Indigenous women through the song Red Dress by Mitch Daigneault.

Friday was about children. Over 1,500 school children were bused in from Saskatoon and area for a day packed with events that showcased Métis culture and history. The students had the opportunity to witness cool things like this: Cort Dogniez telling stories from the road allowance; Billyjo De la Ronde telling the story of the Bell of Batoche (Marie Antoinette) and letting the kids even ring her; Elder Norman Fleury speaking Michif and telling stories of olden days; King and Queen Trapper competitions. Jigging lessons from Yvonne Chartrand and a jigging contest; A scavenger hunt to find 12 Métis women and to hear their story.

The food was amazing all weekend. And affordable. There was a free bag lunch for each student. A bannock cheese burger cost \$4. Water \$1. Fry bread \$1. You could cook a bannock twirl over the open fire for free. Sunday started with a free pancake breakfast. CUMFI always strives to make their events accessible, removing costs for participants when they can and the staff at the Development Museum delivered great buffets all weekend.

And if you were lucky enough, you could eat all the neckbones you wanted in five minutes if you were in the

# Métis Cultural

neck bone eating contest. The talk of the weekend, everyone had their targets set on defending champion, Saskatoon Police Chief Troy Cooper. Despite heavy competition in the VIP contest from folks including myself, Fire Chief Hackl, Lisa Mooney from Nutrien and even Senator Nora Cummings who showed up with her own bib, Chief Cooper, a regular neck bone eater from way back wasn't to be denied and he went home with the t-shirt and glazed neck bone necklace for the second straight year.

I got a sympathy third place. I was ashamed. The second contest was diverse and included historic characters like Louis Riel, his sister Sara Riel who is a nun and others including Ernestine, but it was ultimately won by Madelaine Dumont.



Saskatoon Police Chief Troy Cooper is now the two time defending champion in the neck bone competition. He shows off the t-shirt and glazed neck bone necklace he earned. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)



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# Days a resounding success



Cort Dogniez told his family story of the road allowance to students and tourists. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

It turns out Sister Sara Riel, holy though she is, is a very sloppy neck bone eater.

CUMFI also uses this event to raise funds for their elders and youth Christmas party. This takes shape in an art auction.

Local artist and philanthropist Ernie Scoles rounded up 20 beautiful paintings and sculptures and businesses donated 20 other items that were up for silent auction.

With auctioneer Orest Murawsky cajoling the folks to open those cheque books, many pieces found new homes and many children will have a wonderful Christmas because of it.

At the end of the night, all of the dresses worn by the models who were displaying the art were also auctioned off.

Designed, created and donated by Métis artist Lydia Gardiner, all funds raised in that sale will go to women's programs around supports for families of missing and murdered women.

The event couldn't be done without the sponsors and the support of the Western Development Museum.

Because of the support, the museum was open to the public for free for three days.

Besides school children and Métis folk checking out the event, hundreds of ordinary Canadians of all cultures had a chance to live and appreciate Métis culture and community.

What a powerful event. Next year it happens Sept. 17 to 20.

Mark your calendars. I'm starting training for the neck bone competition already.



Billyjo De la Ronde, the Keeper of the Bell of Batoche posed with Lisa Mooney from Nutrien with the captivating Bell. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

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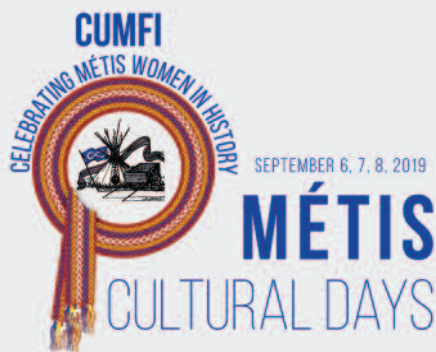
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# New school year brings welcome challenges

The summer is over, a new school year begins.

It is time to embrace change, and transition, and find a routine.

In my home, my eldest is starting kindergarten, which for most parents going through this transition, it's mind-blowing.

Like how did this happen so fast? As my baby starts her first year on her education journey, I start the first day of my last year of law school. Now to put in the work and balance our new schedule. Here is to another year and more growth.

Currently, I am the vice-president of Indigenous Relations at the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan. My responsibilities include being on the Law Students Association (LSA) executive and general council and the Indigenous Law Students' Association (ILSA) executive and general council.

My mandate is to bridge Indigenous and non-Indigenous students being the voice in the LSA meetings where since before this year there was only one Indigenous student present in these meetings.

All other VPs on exec at the college have two representatives each. Since last year the constitution in the college was amended. Now there is a rep for the VP Indigenous Relations position. This year is the first year there will be two Indigenous students on the LSA council and this makes a huge difference.

The U of S is unique for the College of Law because the Wiyasiwewin Mikiwahp Native Law Centre is located here. Many Indigenous scholars have started their careers here and have now gone on to become lawyers, politicians, judges, professors, and people of high influence.

This is important to have Indigenous representation especially in our legal system where there are many ongoing violations happening to our people, communities, and land. Rather than remaining stuck in embedded negative colonial stereotypes and biases that have been passed down from generation to generation keeping Indigenous peoples out of the economy and professions, these barriers need to be broken down.

At the same time, the weight of trying to teach and show others who we are as a people should not only fall on Indigenous students' shoulders. This should be community-driven where everyone is able to take the time to unlearn and relearn different worldviews and the truths about the land in which they live and are proud to call home.

Learning the truth can only benefit the future and what we are passing on to our children. I do not want my daughters

to grow up in a system facing discrimination. I have a vivid memory as a child being made fun of in my pow wow regalia at age six when I wore it to school on a culture day.

I was one of the few Indigenous students at an urban school and I quit dancing after this. Truths need to be acknowledged by the wider society. A foreign system was forced on us and in the process of that imposition, it dismantled our own systems that governed us through Indigenous laws.

I want to highlight the new logo the Indigenous Law Students' Association is proud to introduce this year. As quoted by the president of ILSA, Rheana Worme,

"This logo was created by artist Tanis Worme. Lady justice takes a new form as a visibly indigenous woman. Racialized Indigenous women and visible minorities in the legal system undergo unique challenges that we must acknowledge. Lady Justice is blindfolded (due to the ongoing injustices that we are challenged to see/study but overcome as Indigenous students) but her expression of seriousness is still very much felt. In our logo, she is holding the scales of justice in one hand

and an eagle feather in the other, signify Indigenous culture's inherent value in truth-telling. Her judge tabs have been replaced with a bone choker and dentalium shells. The red moon behind her represents the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's calls for justice and is a symbol of protection for all Indigenous women.

"Tanis Worme is an emerging visual artist from Treaty #6 territory. She is Nehiyaw and a member of the Poundmaker Cree Nation with roots to Mistawasis and Kawacatoose First Nations. Her growing body of studio work considers notions of storytelling while questioning the impulse of colonial thought. Tanis is a recent graduate from the Ottawa School of Art. The scope of her practice also includes tattooing, drawing, collage, performance, and sculpture. Tanis is currently a student at the Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism at Carleton University."

It is important to support and highlight Indigenous artists and students. We need to uplift each other and continue to open doors as those who have come before us.

Breaking down misrepresentations and creating space for more Indigenous knowledge and youth to have a voice and opportunities to continue to help lead the way for our children.

Pidamaya  
Alyson Bear



# Program aims to address need for Indigenous teachers

A new teaching program aimed to address the need for more teachers was recently launched in La Ronge.

On Sept. 5, a newly introduced program called the Northern Saskatchewan Indigenous Teacher Education Program (NSITEP) was announced. The program is rooted in Indigenous cultures and languages, and land-based pedagogy which created a partnership between the University of Regina Faculty of Education, Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI), and Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB).

"Effective teachers have a huge positive impact on the lives of our young people," said LLRIB Chief Tammy Cook-Searson in a media release.

"Indigenous students are more empowered when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum, study resources, and in their teachers and school administrators; and all students are better off when diversity is embraced in schools."

The four-year Bachelor of Education - NSITEP is aimed at addressing the need for more teachers, especially the need for Indigenous teachers in Northern Saskatchewan and across the province.

Nina Bird from the LLRIB was stuck in a job that couldn't get any higher. She was hoping for some sort of change in her career. It was then that she saw an announcement for the NSITEP and Bird knew that it was meant to be.

"I was looking for something else to do. Then this program was announced and I knew this was the one for me," said Bird.

"There is a need for teachers in the North, there's job postings all the time."

Bird's goal is to teach Grade 7 after she's done the NSITEP in four years and hopes to also work with at risk youth and open a facility on the trapline for them so they can learn to live off the land. Bird is determined to make her goals a reality but is eager to complete the



**There are 26 students enrolled in the NSITEP program – a first of its kind held in the LLRIB to address the need of Indigenous teachers in the North.**  
(Photo submitted)

NSITEP and become a teacher in her own community.

"I am so glad to be in this program. It's a first-time program of its kind for our band and for GDI to partner together. I'm excited about it," she said.

NSITEP will focus on Indigenous worldviews and will prepare a new generation of Indigenous teachers equipped to build on the strengths of Métis, First Na-

tions, and Inuit students, families, and communities, while also addressing their unique needs. The program will be delivered by Gabriel Dumont Institute in collaboration with the LLRIB.

"The new NSITEP developed and offered in partnership with GDI and the LLRIB and located on the territory of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band demonstrates how the Faculty of Education and the University of Regina are committed to more fully realizing their relational obligation to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples," said Dr. Jerome Cranston, Dean of the U of R Faculty of Education.

"The NSITEP recognizes the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, places a premium on learning within community, and is an attempt to better balance the typically asymmetrical relationships that have historically existed."

Gabriel Dumont Institute also expressed their pride to be a part of this important initiative to expand educational opportunities in northern Saskatchewan.

"The Institute has been offering teacher education programs over the past four decades through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) in partnership with the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan," said Dr. Earl Cook, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan Education Minister and Chair of the Gabriel Dumont Institute Board of Governors.

"NSITEP is another important step in continuing our mandate of training Indigenous teachers."

The first cohort of 26 Métis and First Nations students have been accepted into the NSITEP program and have started their studies the first week of September.

# SUNTEP grads continue to pursue education

By NC Raine  
For Eagle Feather News

Socrates famously said, “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.”

Two students out of Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) are living examples of that philosophy as they continue their academic pursuits.

Janice Thompson has 30 years as an Indigenous educator, the last eight of which she spent as Program Head of SUNTEP at the Gabriel Dumont Institute. With her kids now graduated from university and in their own careers, she decided to return to school as a student.

Thompson is a PhD candidate in Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria (UVIC), specifically trying to unpack the innate leadership qualities that exist in Indigenous women. She said that seeking gender and social justice were

two of the main reasons for returning to school.

“In unpacking women’s leadership, I’m breaking it down to try to understand the colonization of a group of Indigenous women that are experiencing, reclaiming, and sharing the teachings of who they are in their own leadership practice,” said Thompson.

“How they do that is how they negotiate where they get the opportunity to define grounding principles like respect.”

Thompson’s return to the classroom as a student, rather than an educator, seems to be rust-free. UVIC has awarded Thompson a Graduate Award and a Tier 1 Graduate Award for her research in Leadership Studies. One of the questions she asked in her studies is where the innate leadership in Indigenous women come from – as Indigenous women, despite marginalization, are often considered the backbone of their communities.

“I believe it comes from the past, before contact. Women were in societies as being equal to their male counterpart, and so with that you get a sense of respect and responsibility,” she said.

Thompson said after contact, relationships dynamics became more colonial and patriarchal.

“Women had a very strong sense of self in who they represented by carrying those foundational teachings ... the poten-

tial was there for our leadership but it was never brought out.”

Thompson is still a couple years away from earning her doctorate, but hopes her research brings understanding in how cultural teachings are at the foundation of leadership. She said it’s about protecting, collaborating, and empowering one another to be leaders.

“I would like to think that by the time my granddaughter becomes my age, Indigenous women will have equal footing in this society and in Canada, and gender justice will prevail.”

That innate leadership Thompson embraces is certainly reflected in Jenny Veilleux, a fourth-year student at SUNTEP. Growing up, Veilleux has had a complicated history with her culture, being one of the only Indigenous students at her school in Moose Jaw, she often had difficulty connecting personally to her culture.

“SUNTEP has really opened the doors for me to discover who I really am,” she said. “I knew about my people but not a lot. The community of people that run SUNTEP, there’s a lot of support, they push you to be proud of who you are.”

Veilleux has had no shortage of challenges during her time at SUNTEP. In her first year, her step-father committed suicide. Veilleux said she was given time to grieve, and return to the program when



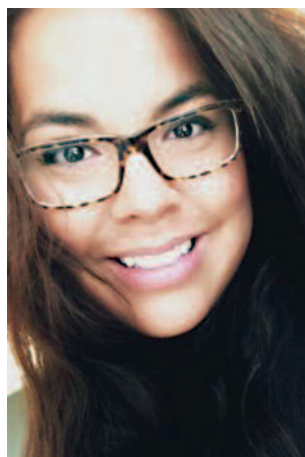
JANICE THOMPSON

she was ready. She was also a stay-at-home mom before deciding to go back to school, which also presented its share of challenges, including commuting daily from Moose Jaw to the SUNTEP campus in Regina.

“Sometimes it’s been really challenging, but I know the outcome is something I’m really pushing for, so I’m committed,” she said.

This fall she starts her first internship in Moose Jaw, a place she struggled to connect with her culture while growing up. She said she looks forward to returning there with a new perspective.

“Most places I go in Moose Jaw, I’m the only visibly Indigenous person,” she said. “The SUNTEP program teaches us to not call out students but teach them what we know. So, I’m excited to teach them and to be who I am.”



JENNY VEILLEUX



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## Arts Board Deadlines

The Saskatchewan Arts Board announces the following deadlines for applications to programs that support the work of Saskatchewan artists and arts organizations:

**Independent Artists**  
October 1

**Artists in Communities\* – Micro-Development**  
October 1

**Artists in Schools\* – Micro-Development**  
October 1

**Indigenous Peoples Art and Artists**  
October 15

**SaskFestivals\* – Project**  
October 15

**Micro-Grant Program**  
October 1  
November 1  
December 1

**Artists in Communities\* – Projects**  
November 1

**Artists in Schools\* – Projects**  
November 1

For applications, visit: [saskartsboard.ca](http://saskartsboard.ca)

**APPLICATIONS AND SUPPORT MATERIAL MUST BE SUBMITTED ON OR BEFORE THE DEADLINE DATE UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.**

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*\*Funded through the financial assistance of SaskCulture Inc., thanks to funding from Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund for Sport, Culture and Recreation.*



**cultivating the arts**

# Hunting, fishing all part of the curriculum for Fort Qu'Appelle's Bert Fox students

By NC Raine  
For Eagle Feather News

Imagine, as a Grade 10 student, spending an average day in class learning about hunting or fishing, and being pushed to be strong leaders, collaborators, and independent thinkers rather than studying from a textbook.

For some, it's a pretty big adjustment from conventional class structure.

"The students are so institutionalized to get that piece of paper, to have something to hand in," said Megan Gurski.

"They sometimes get a sense of stress at first that they aren't getting marked. But it's getting them to take hold of their own learning, which I think is very important."

Gurski teaches Learning from the Land at Bert Fox Community High School in Fort Qu'Appelle. The class is focused on 'outside the box' learning – students engaging in experiential learning stemming from local language, history and culture.

"The students are more engaged. I personally see that they're happy to come to class, their attendance is higher, and their academics are going to be higher because it's a lot of hands-on learning," said Gurski.

"I tell my students, 'I can test you to show me exactly what you don't know. But I don't want to know what you don't know. I want you to show me what you do now,'" she said.

This year, students in the Learning from the Land class will be doing everything from tipi building and ice fishing to working with elementary school students. In the classroom, they are encouraged to start discussions, talk out problems.

And if a student has more knowledge than others on a certain subject, even the teacher, they are encouraged to lead the class.

"The students love it because they're always doing something different," said Gurski. "They become more comfortable in themselves because they're encouraged to take those risks. I really try to push them."

The impact of this sort of learning shows, said Bert Fox principal Julie Stiglitz. Students in last year's Learning from the Land class had a ten per cent better attendance rate than students not in the program, and credit attainment was eight per cent higher.

"It's more real. The students are engaging in their culture and spirituality in authentic ways," said Stiglitz.

This is the first year that Bert Fox has adjusted the students' timetables, allowing flexibility to be out on the land for longer periods of time, sometimes for a full day.

And this type of education doesn't begin and end with Gurski's class. Students at Bert Fox also have the opportunity to learn subjects like Cree culture, wildlife management, Indigenous-centric health and fine arts, as well as take part in sweats, smudges, and other traditional ceremonies.

"We as a school have a high Indigenous population and need to teach ways that Indigenize the curriculum. Land based learning makes a lot of sense for us," said Stiglitz.

Last year's group of land-based learning students speak highly of the program and the impact it had inside and outside the classroom.

"I enjoyed being around these people constantly, going on all these adventures together and learning as a group. It makes me feel like I belong," said Tasia S.

"I like that we do lots of hands-on stuff, it teaches us a lot more instead of being at a desk," said Caleb L.

"I wish that it went on for the whole year because it teaches us our language, our background, and who we are."



Last year's Learning from the Land grade 10 students, out honing their skills and learning traditional methods of hunting, preparing food, and tipi creation.



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# Tablespoons put to good use as symbols of Virtues and Community Belonging Project

**By Jeanelle Mandes  
Of Eagle Feather News**

A community project aimed at encouraging students and their families to incorporate virtues in their lives has begun.

Each family participated by donating metal tablespoons and having various virtues engraved that will be practiced at home.

The tablespoons were hung onto a symbolic teepee monument to create a giant wind chime in the heart of the community, near the intersection referred to as Four Directions in Onion Lake Cree Nation.

The Virtues and Community Belonging Project team held an opening ceremony on Sept. 3

“We work with youth at risk or children that we serve in a crisis situation. We thought ‘what is it that we can do to build some kind of a parental role or involvement with the parents?’” said Peggy Harper, guidance counsellor at Eagleview High School in Onion Lake Cree Nation.

“The teepee structure came into play because it has the virtues on it and it has teachings. We thought everyone has (tablespoons) in their home so everyone could put their names on it and have the virtue (engraved) in the dip of the spoon.

“If everyone could do that, they could be part of the bigger picture which is our community.”

The first set of spoons was hung onto the 31.5-foot metal structure that was constructed to increase parental engagement in the education system by celebrating identity and belonging with families in the community.

The placement of the spoons was part of the first phase.

The second phase is placing the virtue above the doors of homes to share and practice the virtues. The last phase is to develop the monument area into a historical park.

“The people of Onion Lake need to understand that by submitting a tablespoon, there is to be not a negative connotation, it’s just when we’re dealing with kids at risk, I’d rather practice a (virtue) teaching,” said Harper.

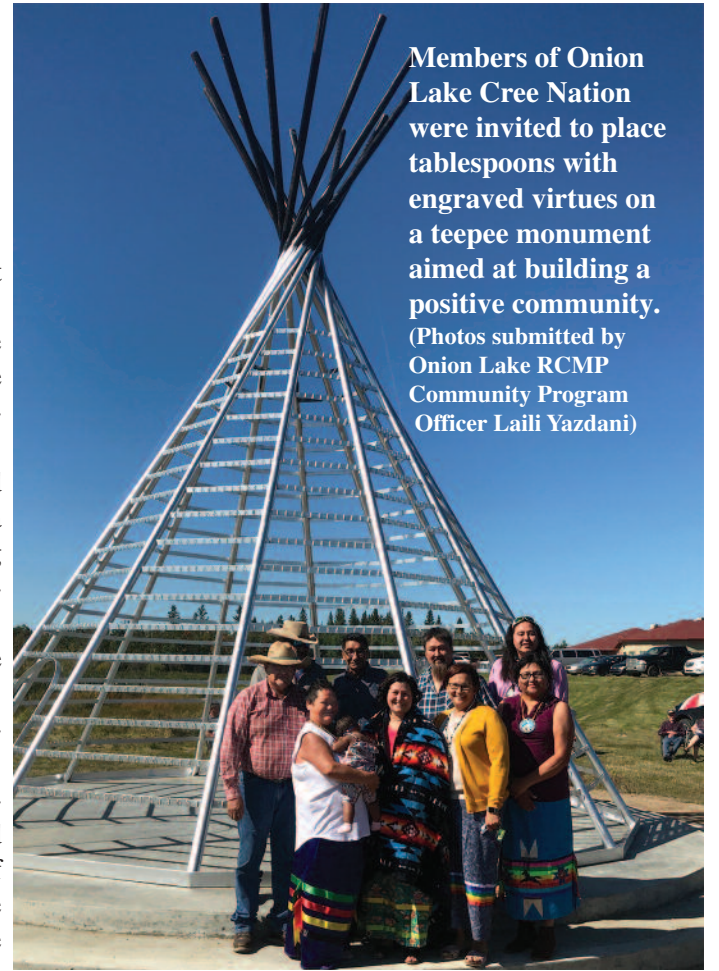
“I’m really hoping people will look at the virtues that they serve in the home,” said Harper.

Families and community virtues will be celebrated annually at the monument on Family Day.

Onion Lake RCMP Community Program Officer Laili Yazdani participated in the Virtues and Community Belonging Project over two and a half years ago along with Harper and another guidance counsellor from the school. Yazdani said the teepee monument idea stemmed from a project commissioned by the British Ironworks Centre that aired on an episode of the television series, *Escape to the Country*.

“The more spoons we have, this large monument will become the biggest wind chime which is really nice,” said Yazdani.

We intend to paint the teepee poles the colours of the medicine wheel. (At the bottom) of the teepee, we’re looking (to place) a solar light to symbolize the home fire. We still have a little bit of work to do before the monument is quite finished.”



Members of Onion Lake Cree Nation were invited to place tablespoons with engraved virtues on a teepee monument aimed at building a positive community. (Photos submitted by Onion Lake RCMP Community Program Officer Laili Yazdani)

Aside from Yazdani and Harper, the Virtues and Community Belonging project team includes Eagleview Comprehensive High School staff Harper, Brenda Rediron-Chocan, Nelson Carter and Aron Strumecki; Onion Lake Department of Education staff Terry Clarke.

The project was funded by the RCMP Family Violence Initiative and Onion Lake Cree Nation. The teepee monument was launched the week students went back to school.



## BHP

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We thank you in advance for your interest in this opportunity.

BHP Potash



[bhp.com](http://bhp.com)

# Saskatoon Salsa dancers a hit in Vegas

By Angela Hill  
For Eagle Feather News

A group of young salsa dancers from Saskatoon left their mark in Las Vegas when they won the Ultimate Latin Dance Championship at the Salsa and Bachata Congress this summer.

"It was incredible. It was amazing. We were just so happy. We were crying we were so happy," said Arri Alemida, 11.

There were eight on the team from Saskatoon Salsa, and many of them First Nations and Métis. The 11-to-13-year-olds from Salsa Saskatoon qualified, and then won, the salsa junior team category beating out the home team.

"That felt pretty cool because we beat the people from Las Vegas," said Raha Rashidi, 11.

Their coach, and owner of Salsa Saskatoon, Kimberly Parent, said the win makes all the hard work worthwhile.

"It feels almost unreal that we could take a team from Saskatoon and win in that competition. It feels amazing that we can even go there in the first place," she said.

"To win was a happy surprise, (but) at the same time I felt like my kids deserved it because of how hard they have worked."

This is just a recent success for Parent, who made the decision to make her dance studio a full-time career four years ago.

In March this year, she was named Indigenous Entrepreneur of the year at the Women Entrepreneur of Saskatchewan's Celebration of Achievement and En-



The Salsa Saskatoon Team, trained by Kimberly Parent, took home top prize at the Ultimate Latin Dance Championship in Las Vegas in July. (Photo supplied)

trepreneur Awards.

"I was completely shocked that I received that award because the people that I was up against, the women entrepreneur also in that category, are amazing people and have achieved a lot," Parent said.

Things aren't slowing down. Parent and Salsa Saskatoon are gearing up to be busy over the next year.

In February, Parent will lead a trip to Cuba for 24 adult students, who will take salsa lessons by day and practice what they have learned to live music by night. She is working to expand the annual Holy Guacamole dance event, raising the event profile and getting festival status. In April they will host dancers from across North America and Mexico in Saskatoon.

In June, a team from Salsa Saskatoon is travelling to Winnipeg International Salsa Congress, and a second youth team will travel to Puerto Rico for the World

Children's Salsa Congress.

Parent also continues to train as a dancer herself, traveling to Cuba to learn.

For her students, her studio is the most important place they can be.

"With dancing I can really express my energy and how I feel about life. I can really express everything I have inside," Alemida said.

It's their community.

"They're really close to me, I've known them for a pretty long time now. They just always make everything better for me, especially Kim, she is the best," Rashidi said.

"She is always there for me, and if I ever need help with anything, she'll make sure that I understand it before I do something else. She is just always pushing us to work our hardest."

# Humboldt to Fort Carlton 2019 a memorable walk

By Louise Halfe  
For Eagle Feather News

Feeling the call to walk, I looked forward to the 105 Mile trek along the Carlton Trail from Humboldt to Fort Carlton. My grandfather and father were long distance walkers. My grandfather's nehiyaw name was "Prairie Walker."

My nohkomp would arrive at our house on horseback, or cane in hand, to visit us. I loved her stamina.

In my youth I worked in the sugar beet fields hoeing in the hot sun. I've always known my body craved physical activity.

I realize that many have walked more miles for their own purposes, however, I wanted to articulate and share what I saw and felt. Walking is in our blood.

Last year I completed a 56 mile five-day hike on the Frenchman's trail.

These walks were researched by the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society and Hugh Henry, who has given



People of all ages and backgrounds came together to walk a 105 mile trek from Humboldt to Fort Carlton. There were blisters and tough days but they all made it. This is the group photo taken at the Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation. (Photo supplied)

a lot of time and effort mapping and marking them. He called town councilors and historians to gain their knowledge.

He gave tobacco to various nehiyaw reserves to inform them that we would be passing through their territories. He provided information on farms, motels, bed and breakfast house or retreat centres along the route.

He mapped gravel, dirt, or pavement, pasture and prairie routes and calculated the length of time it would take to cover the trek.

He arranged volunteers to provide transportation. They carried water, and ferried us back to our vehicles.

It was free, except for the cost of park entrances and accommodations. We pitched tents and organized our own camp.

It was a community effort initiated by Hugh.

We came for different reasons from different backgrounds and places.

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# Kokums rap encourages self-expression by youth

By Angela Hill  
For Eagle Feather News

Four kokums in Saskatchewan are rapping in a music video to voice their acceptance of the music that youth use for expression.

“It doesn’t matter what language it comes in. I just think everybody deserves to be heard and we can all learn from that,” said Maxine Roy, one of the kokums.

Roy, Maria Campbell, Rita Bouvier and Louise Halfe joined with poet and community-based educator Zoey Roy to create Kokum Rap.

“For me it was the most beautiful experience I could possibly ask for, to have multiple opportunities to sit around the table with these women,” said Zoe Roy, of the authors, poets and elders who worked on the rap.

“These women all have traits that I aspire to have one day.”

The project was born in conversation between Zoey Roy and Campbell, sup-

ported by the University of Saskatchewan Art Galleries, and written around a kitchen table laden with coffee, tea and bannock.

“Being an Indigenous grandmother, it’s not always easy, working with families and with people where there are a lot of sad things happening, so to work on something like this was so different,” said Campbell.

The song is in Cree and English.

“The language really helps us of course ... it was really easy for us to do our rhyming because a lot of the Cree words gave themselves to that rhyme and rhythm,” said Bouvier.

She says the message to youth is that these kokum’s embrace the way youth express themselves.

“It was also a way of saying to our communities, let’s stand up and support the youth and let’s let them know we love them and are proud of them.”

For Maxine Roy, the project holds a special place in her heart, as she got to



Kokums from left Maria Campbell, Louise Halfe, Rita Bouvier and Maxine Roy surround artist Zoey Roy who convinced the kokhums to make a rap video. The result went viral. (Photo supplied)

work alongside her daughter Zoey.

“She’s always been very creative and very interested in what life has to offer. It’s very therapeutic to watch your child teach you, and you grow from their growth ... It’s a joy, it’s a pleasure.” she said.

“We as grandmothers ... we want people and kids to know that we support them, no matter how it is that they try to articulate their selves, we are going to listen.”

Zoey says the rap gives permission

for young people to approach their culture and their languages exactly who they are.

“It sends the messages that our cultures, our languages, our stories, they’re not only alive and well, but they are evolving, they are growing, they are within us. We are our nations.”

And the name? “To be honest, kokum rap was just supposed to be a working title, but it’s just so catchy that it was just the perfect title for the song.”

# “We cried and laughed, farted like horses, snored in our tents”

• Continued from Page 16

Our ages ranged from the thirties to the eighties. I am very aware of the ecosystem, destruction, racism, the colonization and its long-term impact. I did not walk in bitterness and anger, however, my whole being is invigorated by my aching body and “walk forward.”

To walk, pimohte, is to walk forward and eat life with your heart. ashtewak translates as hearts walking together. These are my attempts at interpreting nehiyawin. Forgive me if I’ve made an interpretation error.

There are metaphors in camping, walking and backpacking. For example, “pitching up our tent” is using and living with the sustenance that is provided. “Packing our tent” takes an inventory of

our lives and our final return to the earth-mother. “Backpacking” is to carry what will sustain or hurt us. “Carrying our water” not only provides as life’s blood but is something we empty along the way.

“Our blistered feet” are the scars or hurts that we’ve done to ourselves, and remind us we aren’t perfect. Walking provides teachings. We simply need to stop and reflect and consider the choices in our journeys. There are always consequences.

The Elder’s teach payahtik, go slowly with gentleness and patience, not only in our walk but in our behavior and speech. I’ve had hard lessons as I’ve asserted myself in inappropriate ways.

Yes, I had a lot to consider on the walk.

We smudged in the mornings, every one participated, regardless of belief. We respected what our people have long practiced.

We meditated, walked alone in silence or in twos’ or in groups. We shared stories, personal and life changing perceptions, we cried and laughed. We farted like horses, snored in our tents and no one ridiculed the other.

We staggered, limped, shuffled, and pushed our fire-felt feet, strained groins and screaming buttocks. We observed one another’s gait and could tell the distant leader of the moment.

We took turns as our bodies adjusted to the rhythm.

We marveled at the landscape, the birds, the deer, plants and a pelican skull.

We watched bee-keepers and stopped to gather chokecherries. A key was lost. We crawled, brushed the grass, unloaded a car, dumped clothes, searched and found. Another metaphor. At meals we shared our food.

We groaned in unison when we got up after our rest. At dawn we were refreshed, packed, and ready for another day.

It would be good for our “oral historians” to correct the settler narrative of our shared story. This life, this history was not experienced on a one-way street.

We are taking back our rightful place with our voices, songs, stories, drums, and ceremonies.

I thank the heavens for those who lead us.

**SHERI BENSON**  
for Saskatoon West

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# Wicihitowin embraces reconciliation

By EFN Staff

Overwhelming support for a conference on reconciliation and inclusive representation of Indigenous people in the workplace will be back for another four more years.

Organizers of the Wicihitowin Indigenous Engagement Conference said this year's event will be its biggest and best to date. It has not only added an evening kickoff event but will feature a couple of stars from reality TV.

The keynote includes Anthony Johnson and James Makokis better known as Team Ahkameyimok from The Amazing Race Canada.

Neal Kewistep, Wicihitowin spokesperson and co-founder, said he's excited to bring the conference back to Saskatoon, because he's seen the positive impact it has had not only on Saskatoon but on the province as a whole.

"We are really embracing the idea of reconciliation in real ways," he said. "It is no secret, we had some major events that could have easily knocked us off track, I am referencing the Gerald Stanley case that really rocked Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations and really impacted the reconciliation movement as well, but I think by continuing to have these types of events only makes it easier for us to endure tough times."

Looking back, Kewistep, is amazed at how far the conference has grown. It all started with a conversation between four friends over a cup of coffee.

They not only discussed aboriginal engagement in their workplaces, but about reconciliation.

From that conversation, they decided to pool not only their resources, but their networks together and create something specifically for program delivery people and answer the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.

"When we are looking at ways to engage Indigenous people, I think, who better than Indigenous folks to tell you ways to do it," said Kewistep.

The first year, they had no idea what to expect.

They booked a venue for 300 people but were overwhelmed with the response and ended up turning away another 300 potential participants.

Kewistep said the momentum has continued to grow and shows no signs of stopping, which tells him that people are not only eager to learn, but are hungry for information.

The conference kicks off with a showcase of artist Carol Wylie's, They Didn't Know We Were Seeds, art exhibit, which consists of portraits of residential school and Holocaust survivors.

This year's theme is 'Be a good person and try to live a good life'.

It comes directly from the traditional teachings of the late Walter Linklater a well-respected Saskatoon-based elder and residential school survivor.

Wicihitowin is to take place at TCU Place in Saskatoon October 16-17. The cost to register is \$200 before Sept. 15 and \$250 after that date.

More information can be found online at wicihitowin.ca.



Neal Kewistep believes the Wicihitowin conference has been a boon to reconciliation across the province.

(Photo by Rachel MacKenzie)

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# Whitecap Dakota continue to push for Treaty

**By John Lagimodiere  
Of Eagle Feather News**

It is a little-known fact that the Dakota First Nations in Saskatchewan have never been offered Treaty.

When the numbered Treaties were negotiated in the prairies in the late 19th century, the Dakota came to the negotiations expecting to be included, but they were put to the side on the premise that they were not “British Indians.” The result? Very limited reserved lands and penalties to other Treaty First Nations that married into their community.

“We did not get lands based on Treaty, we got our reserve through order in council with a lesser land quantum of only 16 acres per person compared to 128 acres per person for the Treaty First Nations in this territory,” explains Whitecap Dakota First Nation Chief Darcy Bear.

“Also, if someone marries into our community that is Treaty, they lose their treaty benefits like the annuity. We believe not being in the process was inherently unfair, especially if you look at our history and relation with the British Crown.”

The government has always taken the view that the Dakota were American Indians and hence, did not qualify for Treaty.

Chief Darcy Bear disagrees and has presented evidence to the government as they embark on a Treaty process.

“We were allies of the British back to 1787. They had a treaty on peace and friendship and military alliance and trade and we fought with them against the Americans in the War of 1812. We, the Dakota always honoured that,” said Chief Bear.

“The irony of it all is that Canada will not dispute that the Dakota were allies of the British Crown. The question we ask is how can you be allies of the Crown yet not be British subjects and part of treaty?”

The evidence in favour of the Dakota occupation is actually quite overwhelming. According to the research compiled by Whitecap staff including Senior Analyst-Governance Development Stephanie Danyluk, they have extensive oral and historical evidence which established their occupation of Canadian territories. Archaeological evidence indicates that Dakota/Lakota people traditionally inhabited lands which spanned over the international border between Canada and the United States.

This evidence indicates that at least some of the area along both sides of the 49th parallel between Lake of the Woods and what is now southeastern Saskatchewan was occupied by ancestors of Siouan-speaking peoples many centuries prior to European contact. Between 1763 and 1862 numerous historical records documented Dakota/Lakota seasonal hunting of the great eastern and western buffalo herds in southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. They also record Dakota/Lakota trading and

raiding in these parts of the country.

The occupation of significant parts of the prairies by the Dakota (or Sioux as they are also referred to) is also confirmed in an 1857 map prepared by the Hudson’s Bay Company for the British House of Commons that shows Dakota extensive occupation in what is now Canada.

“Chief Whitecap was at Fort Qu’Appelle for Treaty 4 and Fort Carlton for Treaty 6 and requested to be allowed to enter into the treaty and they stated their reasons why. They were still denied,” said Danyluk.

“Some people say it was benevolent of the Crown to set aside reserves for the Dakota even though they did not get treaty, but the reserve system was a system of control in itself. They were trying to get the Dakota to settle down and become farmers in one spot. And then they were able to enact the pass and permit system because people were forced to settle onto and stay on reserves.”

This is where the trouble started for the community. Under control of the Indian Act, a once thriving cattle operation was scuttled.

“We had about 10 sections of land leased on the Department of National Defence. We did leasehold improvements and fenced it and had 500 head of cattle. Then the Natural Resource Transfer Agreement happened and a lot of that land got taken away and our cattle industry was gone,” said Chief Bear.

“Then welfare came in the early ‘60s and created dependency. And that allows them to have power over you. They set up all our nations like that across the country, to fail.”

The community suffered in poverty for years. Things changed for the better in the 1990s when Chief Bear became the leader. Using policy and partnerships, the community is now a thriving hub of economy, boasting a golf course and a casino with a new hotel due to be finished early next year with a Nordic Spa to follow. They have 700 jobs there now and expect over a thousand jobs by 2025. They are a major player in the economy of the region.

Whitecap has been in negotiations with the federal government for a Whitecap Dakota Treaty. If realized, Chief Bear says it would benefit them, and the surrounding region.

“One of the strengths of the Dakota has been building alliances. Even the word Dakota means ally. Now we are at the point as to what will be in the Treaty. We are talking about a sustainable land base into the future. They want us to define that. So, we are looking at what makes good business sense and also in and around our reserve for housing and traditional ways.

“We are also looking for infrastructure dollars and some facilities for our community and then language and culture,” added Chief Bear.

“We also want treaty implementa-

tion agreements all the way around on important things like education and governance. We want a living breathing treaty with the federal government that can be reviewed every five years. They want us to define all of these things. That is what we are doing right now and putting that together for Canada and hopefully get to the point where we go back and forth and eventually get their mandate.”

For Chief Bear, it is about justice and prosperity for his people. For Stephanie Danyluk it is all in the history.

“Watching the historical, colonial records start to corroborate the oral histories of the Dakota people about the presence in the territory was a slow building aha moment. We have been compiling information for the last eight years building it record by record and visiting various archives in Canada and the United States and new information continues to come out,” said Danyluk.

“We believe the oral histories, but to see a case come together and be accepted by people who don’t want to put as much weight on the oral histories, and now watching the weight balance between the written and oral histories in a way that should be undeniable that the Dakota used territory north of the 49th parallel has been most gratifying.”



Standing in front of the soon to be completed hotel between the golf course and casino in his community, Whitecap Dakota Chief Darcy Bear presents a medal the First Nation received from Canada to commemorate their alliance during the War of 1812.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)



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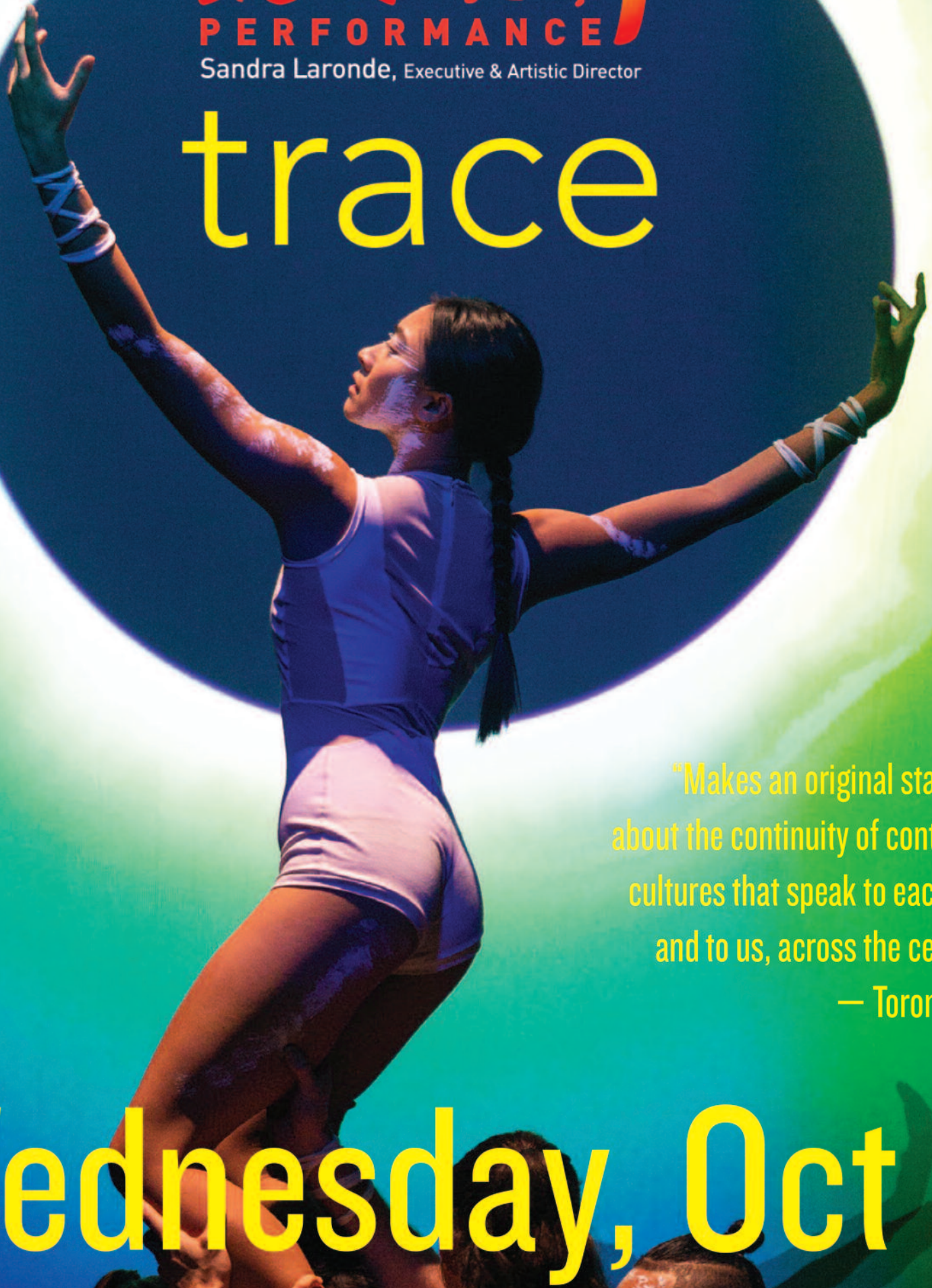


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