

# eaglefeathernews

Newspapers will not transmit the Coronavirus

CPMA #40027204



*By Louise Bernice Halfe  
for Eagle Feather News*

I've been thinking of the inexhaustible list of accomplished young Aboriginal women and the kehteayak or Elders who've been outstanding warriors. Some of them are well known while others are still gathering their medicine bundles and moving forward. Many have overcome great adversity and many are single mothers.

These are my heroines: Maria Campbell, Marie Linklater, Lillian Dyck, Candace Wasecase-Lafferty, Valerie Arnault-Pellitier, Holly Graham, Lorna Arcand, Verna St. Denis, Lee Maracle, Judy Pelly, Peggy Vermette, Leah Dorian, Kateri Damm, Katherena Vermette, Carol Rose GoldenEagle, Cherie Dimoline, Renae Watchman, the late Janice Acoose and numerous sixty-scoop survivors. I'm often blown away by the bits and pieces of their survival stories

they have shared with me.

Survival is not an easy task. Frankly, we as Indigenous people are all survivors and that in itself is a great accomplishment. The questions that need to be addressed are how have I done it? Where were my glimpses of hope, encouragement and kindness? How do I forgive myself for the mistakes I've made, the people I've hurt and who've hurt me? How do I gather the trust and the courage to move forward?

The seven Grandmothers and the concept of w-hkohtowin are great cultural teachings, but difficult to carry out. At the very least, one can use cautious respect. One has to live with oneself and be satisfied that they have worked at living and honoring their life. These teachings have carried us for many generations. I haven't met any saints and certainly I don't fit that category. We all carry mixed bundles.

*continued page 2*

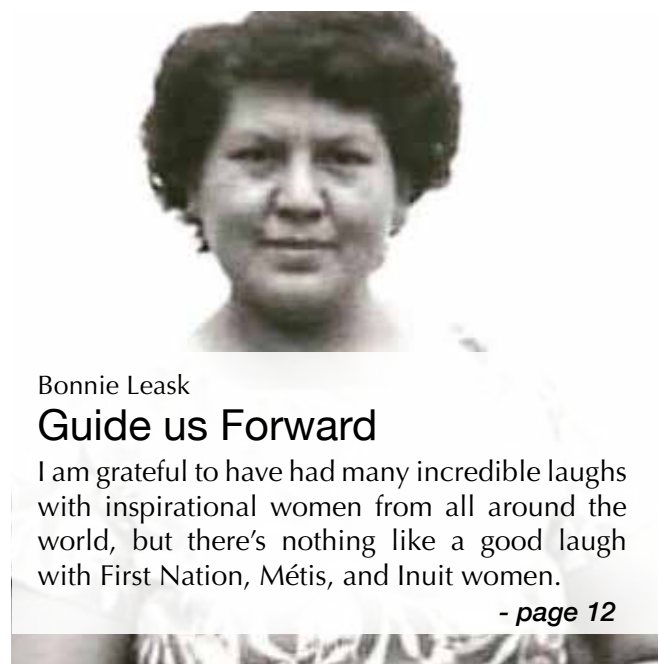


Erica Violet Lee

## Search for Recognition

What, then, is culture without land? What is culture without self-determination? I do not want recognition from Canada on being a Good NDN ...

- page 22

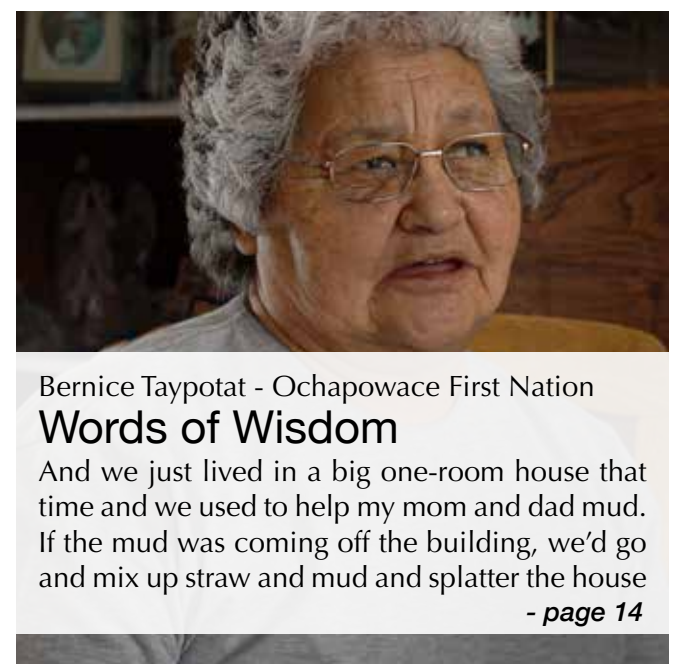


Bonnie Leask

## Guide us Forward

I am grateful to have had many incredible laughs with inspirational women from all around the world, but there's nothing like a good laugh with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit women.

- page 12



Bernice Taypotat - Ochapowace First Nation

## Words of Wisdom

And we just lived in a big one-room house that time and we used to help my mom and dad mud. If the mud was coming off the building, we'd go and mix up straw and mud and splatter the house

- page 14

March 2021 is our  
**Women's  
Issue**

NEXT MONTH:  
Arts'n Culture



# Warrior women survive and lead

*continued from page 1 ...*

It is these very gifts that call us to pay attention, to move forward, to live and to heal ourselves. We have many resources within reach if we accept responsibility and have the will to move beyond fear and mistrust. We must search for the appropriate help. No one can do it for us. As Old JP used to say, "It's up to you."

*Survival is not an easy task. Frankly, we as Indigenous people are all survivors and that in itself is a great accomplishment. The questions that need to be addressed are how have I done it?*

At times it may feel like one is going through a maze, and with some steps forward there will be a few back. Progress is slow but worth it. Our children, grandchildren, our land, the winds, waters are dependent on us. We must rekindle the fire, the spirit within. awasis years to live.

There is a host of other Indigenous women, younger women, answering the call. Women like Rachel Fiddler, Joshua Rafael, Hannah St. Denis, Omeasoo Wahpasiv and many, many more. There are also many silent warriors. The list is less important. What is, is that they are walking, celebrating and opening the way. They are all my heroines and I am proud to be a nehiyaw iskwew.



**Louise "Sky Dancer" Halfe is one of Canada's most distinguished poets. Award winning author of four books of poetry, Louise was recently appointed as the new Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate.**



During Indigenous Achievement Week this February, over 40 Indigenous Students received awards for their accomplishments in academics, community engagement, leadership, resiliency and research. Congratulations to everyone and thank you for all you do!



# Ongoing genocides examined on International Women’s Day

By **Betty Ann Adam**  
for *Eagle Feather News*

On International Women’s Day, the tragic freezing death of Kimberly Squirrel and the atrocities of coerced sterilization were top of mind for First Nations leaders in Saskatchewan.

The disastrous effects of practices in the corrections and health care systems upon Indigenous women are examples of ongoing genocide, members of a women’s panel said March 8 at Whitecap Dakota First Nation.

“We as Indigenous women... It’s been generations, 152 years of abuse and victimization. You look at the incarceration rates, how they’re (increasing). It is simply wrong,” said FSIN Vice Chief Heather Bear.

Squirrel, 34, a mother of six, had been released from Pine Grove women’s jail near Prince Albert on Jan. 20, when overnight temperatures dropped to minus 30. Her body was discovered three days later in Saskatoon. Squirrel’s sister said she didn’t know Kimberly had been released and mourned the missed opportunity to take her in.

The provincial government is doing an internal review into release practices.

Squirrel shouldn’t have been in jail in the first place, says Patti Tate, executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society, a women’s prisoner advocacy group.

Too many Indigenous women are kept in jail before they are convicted of any crime, Tate said - 123 of the 190 women at Pine Grove are on remand.

Tait has worked with women who have spent a year in jail— sometimes because of COVID-19-related

delays - waiting for trial, where they were found not guilty.

“There needs to be alternatives. It needs to start long before those women went to Pine Grove,” she said.



**FSIN Vice Chief Heather Bear March 8, 2020 (Photo Betty Ann Adam)**

There should be more help for women with mental health issues, addictions and in need of housing, she said.

“We don’t want them to build a huge prison for remand situations in Saskatchewan. We want them to spend those millions of dollars... on resources in the Indigenous community.”

Over 90 per cent of women at Pine Grove are Indigenous, she said.

Saskatchewan has half to two-thirds more people on remand than any other province, she said.

“That’s genocide when we look at Kimberly Squirrel’s death,” Tait said.

“They’re our sisters and brothers and they need not be in those places where they are not able to be with their family.”

Bear agrees.

“Our wounded women (are in institutions) when they need more mental health services, more culture, more traditions, more of our values... because of our terrible history of that being taken away from us.

Lawyer Alisa Lombard, who represents more than 100 Indigenous women sterilized against their will in hospitals across Canada, said that since 2015 she has taken the matter to governments in Canada and numerous international bodies.

The United Nations Committee Against Torture determined in 2018 it was cruel and unusual treatment and directed Canada to “prevent, punish and repair” the damage from coerced sterilization, but nothing has happened, Lombard said.

Days after she spoke about sterilization in Switzerland, she received a call from a 29-year-old woman in a hospital bed, “asking how can she undo this?” Lombard said.

“These are not historic occurrences. They are happening right now.”

“As systemic problems they require immediate systemic action and systemic solutions,” she said.

Vice Chief Bear said there have been “many, many victims of that terrible genocide of our people. That’s still happening in this day and age and it should not be.”

*Nutrien aims to be an agent of positive social change and strives for equality across our company and communities.*

On International Women’s Day, Nutrien is proud of the women whose hard work and talents are integral to growing our company. During the pandemic, many women are taking on additional household and parenting responsibilities. We are working hard to support women through our ongoing commitment to workplace diversity as well as initiatives in the communities we value.

In honour of women, we celebrate one of our young leaders, Caitlyn Lahonen, a process engineer at our Patience Lake mine. Caitlyn is creating a path for others to follow.

**Caitlyn Lahonen**  
Métis Nation – Saskatchewan

While studying chemical engineering and goal-tending on the varsity hockey team, at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Caitlyn learned about our Indigenous Internship Program (IIP). It offered her an opportunity to come home and get practical work experience.

Caitlyn’s story with Nutrien has grown from a term position to a full time engineer, mine rescue team member and IIP mentor. She is on the Patience Lake team that won the Saskatchewan Mining Association 2019 Overall Surface Rescue Skills Competition.

Thank you Caitlyn for and being a valuable part of our success. Together we are building a place where everyone’s contributions are valued.

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# Taking stock on International Women's Day

I love that International Women's Day falls near the end of winter, just as we notice the days growing longer and the sun shining warmer.

The emotional lift that comes from nature's resurgence is not unlike the joy of the annual celebration of women's ongoing emergence from the oppression of colonial patriarchy.

This special, women-only edition of Eagle Feather News features the voices of some of Saskatchewan's most prominent and respected Indigenous Women.

It's a bountiful feast to be savoured; its variety of flavours to be enjoyed in small bites or in one super-satisfying sitting.

More Indigenous women than ever now lead Saskatchewan First Nations, teach in schools and universities, own businesses, fight as lawyers and hand down verdicts as judges, so we celebrate progress on many fronts.

Yet, women in Canada still earn 75 cents to the dollar earned by men, a Statistics Canada finding that shows the gap is even greater for Indigenous and other racialized women.

Jobs predominantly held by women are less valued than those more commonly held by men – a truck driver can expect to earn about \$45,000 per year, while early childhood educators bring in a little over \$25,000.

We're more likely to work at minimum wage and part time jobs. Even among people with bachelor's degrees, women earn on average, \$69,063, compared to men's \$97,761.

There's clearly greater equality to work for.

In this issue, we learn what our sisters are doing.

Louise Bernice Halfe sets the tone, lifting up some of her favourite women warriors.

Senator Lillian Dyck shows us how embracing her Indigeneity empowered her.

Other warriors are fighting racism and discrimination on the front lines, where we are still dying and our bodies still harmed in colonial systems.

Erica Lee takes us on a walk in the neighbourhood, where police too often behave like an occupying force and small civilities can't be tak-



## Commentary

Betty Ann Adam

en for granted.

Alyson Bear and Patti Tait take aim at the legal and "correctional" complex that too often operate with a cold disinterest of the safety of our sisters, like Kimberly Squirrel and Cindy Gladue; Alisa Lombard takes the battle against coerced sterilization to international fora that demand, but have not seen, substantive action by Canada.

The bane of domestic violence remains a reality for too many women: Kerry Benjoe shows us her journey of coping with the aftermath, her refusal to stay down and her determination to embrace her whole being.

Humour is the powerful tool Dawn Dumont, Judith Iron and Bonnie Leask celebrate - the laughter that helps us slog through the hard times, enlivens togetherness and allows us to take ourselves less seriously, broadening and deepening

the image of Indigenous womanhood.

The intimate, bonding conversations among women practicing traditional arts and replenishing reserves of self-love glows in Tenille Campbell's warm words;

Maria Campbell's childhood memories of friendship that bridges race and culture reminds us of the many non-Indigenous women we love. This month's Reconciliation Ally is Jeanne Coe, who found ways to make the health system work better for many who need it most.

Merelda Fiddler's deep dive into her family's history and her daughter's awakening interest in it shows us our own roles as strong links in the chain of generations.

Likewise, Sophia Lagimodiere's physician sister brings the holistic wisdom of our people to mainstream medical practice; Jordyn Burnouf's visions of the old ones on the water and land resonates with us all. Elder Bernice Taypotat's remembrances remind us how much things have changed.

Karon Schmon and Leah Dorion introduce us to the ancestral Métis matriarchs, whose teachings and kindness are sources of pride and strength.

Writers among us are inspired by the late Bernelda Wheeler, the first Indigenous woman to take the mic at the CBC and amplify our people's voices. Her daughter, Winona, does her mom proud every day.

Shayla Sayer-Brabant brings us word of Nicole Akan's subversive side hustle that delivers Cree language and philanthropy in the guise of fluttering feminine lashes.

It's a lot to chew on. We hope you enjoy this issue. Keep it to read again or pass it on to another woman who will see herself and love herself and her sisters a little bit more.



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Watch for DAILY news  
on our website

[www.eaglefeathernews.com](http://www.eaglefeathernews.com)

### CHECK OUT OUR LATEST TOP STORIES



Vaccinations give Regina Elders hope

Wellness Wheel Clinical Coordinator Susanne Nicolay administers vaccination to Elder Lillian Piapot as Wellness Wheel Research Director JoLee Sasakamoose offers emotional support.



Co-operative business model can benefit Indigenous communities guidebook

The Co-operatives First Guidebook, launched on March 2, 2021.



INCA students tackle water issues with investigative journalism

From left, Charmaine Ermine and Taryn Acoose at the treatment plant with water operator Marnie Francis at Piapot First Nation.



# Solutions needed to ensure safety for all

As the pandemic persists, solutions need to come to the forefront to protect all people in society, which means creating more safe spaces for everyone. As this month is Women's History month, I want to highlight some women who left us too soon due to ongoing systemic racism that is imbedded in our society.

Kimberly Squirrel was found frozen in Saskatoon three days after being released from Pine Grove Correctional Centre in late January. There should be a public inquiry into the death of Kimberly, a 34-year-old mother of six from Yellow Quill First Nation. Her death demonstrates the inadequate services and programs for people who are incarcerated and released from Saskatchewan's corrections system.

This is not uncommon for those incarcerated to be faced with extreme adversities when they are released. It is known that Indigenous peoples are over-represented in the criminal justice system and this is the result of the lack of prevention being implemented in our communities. There is an ongoing lack of services, programs, supports and safe spaces to heal. Colonialism continues to intrude and impose itself in our lives like a plague, with only band-aid solutions offered.

Programs such as the Elizabeth Fry Society visit institutions to try to connect with the women and build relationships, but cannot do that right now because of the pandemic. Access to resources for incarcerated women is difficult, and that situation has been made worse by COVID-19.

Why are there inquiries but no action, no preven-

tion, no safe spaces? Why is it that Cindy Gladue's murderer was finally charged with manslaughter 10 years since her death and this is seen as "justice?" Do not get me wrong, it is a good thing that 52-year old Bradley Barton has been finally convicted with manslaughter, but this should have never happened in the first place.



## Comment

Alyson Bear

Cindy should not have been in that situation and it could have been different if there were adequate access to services, programs and safe spaces in the first place. Cindy was a 36-year-old Métis and Cree mother of three. Barton was acquitted by a jury in 2015. The case made it to the Supreme Court of Canada, where judges ordered Barton to stand trial for manslaughter. It only took one day of deliberations for the jury to find him guilty.

These are the women we must remember. Kimberly's and Cindy's lives mattered, just as the many Indigenous men, women and children who have died in the care of the Saskatchewan government.

Inquests have resulted in recommendations for the government that appear to not be followed as these injustices continue to persevere and expose the lack of action being taken.

Why is it our community continues to focus on creating better opportunities for those who already have opportunities and not for those who have barrier after barrier to navigate due to colonialism and capitalism? When will enough be enough? Why are we not taking care of the most vulnerable in society? Why is it we are unable to close the gaps on the disparities our community faces when it comes to systemic oppression and homelessness?

As stated earlier, it is Women's history month and emerging from a world in which strength is associated to men and not women, where patriarchy has infiltrated our homes, communities, lives and thoughts, the only defence against this thought of superiority and inferiority is to address the issue. The next step is to implement action rather than just speaking about it. It is time to create those safe spaces for our women and children to thrive and feel safe.

This is close to my heart as a mother when I hear these stories about Cindy and Kimberley and how their children have to now navigate this world without their mothers for reasons that could have been prevented if our society took taking care of its people more seriously. This is the goal for the future - to connect, build and create more safe spaces for everybody in society - women, children, elders, and men, because at the end of the day we are all in this together.

# SHARE YOUR CULTURE

## ARE YOU LOOKING FOR FUNDING TO SUPPORT A CULTURAL ACTIVITY PROJECT?

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**Deadline: April 15**

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**Deadline: April 30**

Visit [SaskCulture.ca](http://SaskCulture.ca) for more information. To discuss options, contact: **Damon Badger Heit - 306-780-9251 - [dbheit@saskculture.ca](mailto:dbheit@saskculture.ca)**

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# Remembering Bernelda Wheeler

By Winona Wheeler  
for Eagle Feather News

"My Name is Bernelda Wheeler, and this is Our Native Land."

For most of us, our mothers had a huge influence on shaping the people we became. Our late mother instilled in us a love of story and the arts, and a commitment to do what we could to help our communities retain our values and histories, and grow strong and healthy again. She was a writer, an actress, a community activist and among the first Indigenous women in media and journalism in Canada. What I did not realize until later in life, was that she had a huge impact on people across this land, people we never even knew.

Over the years many people shared that they looked forward to listening to her radio broadcasts and reading her newspaper columns. In rural communities and reserves, especially in those early years when there was no TV, folks relied on radio, newspapers and letters for information. She was most well-known for her ten years (1972-1982) as host and story producer on Our Native Land, the first national CBC weekly program dedicated to Indigenous history and life in Canada.

In the 1970s the radio program grew in popularity, along with the resurgence of Indigenous rights and cultural revival movements. It was a provocative, politicizing, Indigenous radio show dedicated to the histories, cultures, and current affairs of Indigenous peoples across Canada and beyond.

Like many trailblazers, our mom had to navigate the often conflicting intersections between two worlds. She practiced her media work with utmost professionalism and at the same time respected and followed traditional protocols and values. We watched her interviewing in pristine studios one day, then the next day she was out on the land, in tipis, or at political and social cultural events. While covering the Native Peoples Caravan protests on Parliament Hill in 1974 she got bashed up by the newly formed RCMP riot police unit, along with everyone else, and used her nursing skills to help patch up the wounded. She was back on parliament hill in the early 1980s during the Constitution repatriation talks. She regularly attended the annual Morley Ecumenical Conference—the culture teaching camps—on the Stony Reserve as a participant, and interviewed many Elders there. She went out of her way to discover little-known Indigenous musicians, and promoted them along with our better known musicians like Buffy St. Marie, Floyd Westerman, Paul Ortega, Willy Dunn, Shannon TwoFeathers, and many more, including traditional singers and drummers.

In 1982, our mom received the CBC "First Lady of Indigenous Broadcasting in Canada" award for her cutting edge journalism and programming. She was also nominated for two ACTRA awards for Best Writer and Best Radio



**Bernelda Wheeler was known as the First Lady of Indigenous Broadcasting in Canada when she hosted the national CBC radio show Our Native Land from 1972-82. She went on to write children's books and had a strong acting career. She was also a columnist for many years with Eagle Feather News.**

Program for two outstanding investigative reports. One of these was on the treatment of Indigenous peoples on skid row in Winnipeg. I remember that time. She had her big tape recorder under her jacket and recorded the bouncers brutalizing patrons. She got knocked around in the crowd that time also.

After she left Our Native Land she was a counsellor at a men's treatment centre, continued writing newspaper columns, and wrote awesome children's books that are still being used today. Then she discovered acting and appeared on television, film, radio and on stage, all Indigenous productions, including The Rez Sisters. She loved the theatre. Our mom also continued writing.

In her later years she was a regular columnist for Eagle Feather News where she shared bits of history, commentary on contemporary issues, words of wisdom from Elders, life experiences, good stories, and deep thoughts. She was a philosopher, an artist, a political critic, a dreamer, and trailblazer who kicked down doors and created space for the next generations.

Our mom has been gone almost 16 years now and I'm heading into my mid-60s. But even after all that time, people still come over and shake my hand, "Oh! you're Bernelda's girl." And they tell me they always looked forward to hearing her voice on the radio or reading her columns. Ya, I miss her too. But am so grateful for the legacy and teachings she left us with.

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# Elder Liz Settee focuses on youth

By Leah Marie Dorion  
for Eagle Feather News

Living and working in Prince Albert, Elder Liz Settee is a lifelong advocate for the healing of Indigenous youth and families.

When I first met Liz, she embodied grandmotherly strength, love, and leadership. Her warm bear hugs immediately made me feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. Liz is direct and honest with her teachings and many P.A. youth have adopted her as the grandmother figure in their lives. Liz always teaches the youth to connect their head with their hearts so they can live in their own truth. I love listening to her "Liz-isms," which are catchy sayings and phrases based on her traditional teachings.

I asked Liz about how she promotes wellness and healing with community members and about her primary goal in life to restore our cultural knowledge with Indigenous youth. She currently works as an Elder with the P.A. Youth Outreach, in partnership with Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, and often provides cultural awareness to the students, staff and administration in the region.



From left Danielle Castle, Leah Dorion and Elder Liz Settee at a pre covid event at Mann Gallery. (Photo by All My Relations Photography)

Liz shared how she has a cart she uses to go classroom to classroom to bless and conduct smudging ceremonies with students who want that form of self-care. Liz makes no apologies for bringing Indigenous culture into the schools and she has to constantly educate others about why culture is vital in our educational system, but she does it with dignity and respect.

I asked Liz to share one of the most memorable community projects she has been involved with and she credited the Heart of the Youth Powwow because it gives youth pride, belonging, and healing. The powwow has also enriched Liz's own cultural knowledge, she proudly says.

"This year's powwow is non-binary, as so many of our youth have requested this, and we are responding to their needs."

Liz is a life-long learner and is humble about her own journey to learn culture and language. Her late father Tom Settee was impacted by the residential school system, so the language and many cultural practices were not passed forward to her generation. As such, Liz wants our children to be free of any barriers and stigma when they want to learn their culture and teachings. Thus, she is the Elder with the new Cree Immersion Kindergarten program offered this year at John Diefenbaker School.

Liz has experienced her own recovery and healing journey, and speaks openly about this process. Liz promotes traditional cultural healing methods in our community especially reconnecting urban youth and families with the land and traditional medicines. She is so happy that she is still physically able to, "attend ceremonies, harvest medicines, and be active in the culture."

Liz carries the traditional name "Yellow Calf," and we both had a big belly laugh about how fitting her name is since she is called to work with little ones and how she wanders where she is needed with a child-like innocence. She says, "even though I have seen 63 winters, I feel my journey is just beginning."

**I GOT  
THE SHOT**



*"I want my family and my community to be safe - my parents are elderly, my kids are young and we have fewer and fewer elders, so it's important to protect them."*

Darlene Gazandlare -  
Wollaston/Hatchet Lake  
Community Liaison



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Darlene Gazandlare is sharing her  
reasons for getting the shot.**

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# The Queen's Gambit

The Queen's Gambit is a stunning Netflix series about a little girl who learns chess in the basement of a school and goes on to become a chess master. The movie explores the complicated relationship between genius and madness, and hotness and red hair.

When I was younger, chess was a game associated with genius and there is nothing more I wanted in life than to be a genius. My sister had gotten the height gene, the pretty gene and even the slim jeans. My brother got the penis gene. I was betting on the smart gene to be my ticket. When my parents bought a whole set of encyclopedias, I knew it was my time to shine. I would peruse them, looking up things in order of importance rather than alphabetically (which I suspect is what a boring genius would do).

I looked up largest spider first (obviously.) Then I looked up diseases, because: gross pictures. I finally looked up "genius" and was haunted to learn that most geniuses were discovered in their toddler youth, not at 11 years old.

Still I didn't lose hope. Perhaps I was a genius who had been prevented from becoming a genius due to my environment. Like a child raised in the jungle. My brother certainly bore a resemblance to an ape, in carriage, demeanor and eating habits.

One Christmas, my parents bought a chess set. We stared at it and tried learning it by reading the instructions. This was not effective. We had to wait for Uncle Johnny to stop by on Christmas Day. He had learned to play while in jail. He patiently taught me, my sisters and my dad. I don't think my brother

learned but that was because none of us knew the proper hand commands to teach old Coco.

This was it. This was my chance to prove to the world that I was smart. Not just A's smart or smart enough to cover up all the thefts of potato chips in the house – like smart enough to program a NASA space shuttle or to orchestrate a coverup of a moon



*That's what she said*

Dawn Dumont

landing. I would be able to do all that shit.

As it turned out, most people in the house beat me. And when I taught my high school friends, most of them beat me as well. There was one high stakes game at a friend's house against one of my guy friends – the bet was that if I lost I would have to flash my boobs and if he lost he would have to wear a toque with the word loser written on it to high school. Turns out I'm not very good at making bets either.

Towards the end of the game, I could feel myself losing. I could feel the floor coming out from beneath me. Even my boobs were sweating; like me,

they are shy and would probably have to get drunk first before carrying out the bet.

I was two moves away from losing, when my girlfriend who was standing over the table, suddenly pointed at one of my pieces: "Doesn't that bishop thing move both ways?"

"Yes, it does." I said, suddenly coming alive. My next words were checkmate and my next vow was to stop playing chess.

But I didn't quit. In my twenties, I used to play against my boyfriend. I taught him and then he really got into it. He started studying it on the internet learning "openings" and "closing games." Our chess games became utterly humiliating. I would attempt to regain my dignity by throwing tantrums and telling him I wouldn't play anymore if he kept beating me.

We compromised. For a single game, he wasn't allowed to kill my Queen.

What power I felt! I could do anything and get away with it. This must be how white people feel all the time, I mused. I devastated his defenses and destroyed him in about fifteen moves – which is actually a lot in Chess. There was nothing he could do to stop me; I was all powerful.

That was the last game we played together. I won't say that it caused our break up – but I'm sure it didn't help.

I still play chess from time to time on my phone. I recently changed the setting from easy to medium to challenge myself. After a few games, I set it back to easy. Because if you can't be a Chessmaster, you can at least enjoy the delusion of being one.

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Saskatchewan is home to a wealth of natural resources that will drive our economic recovery. The energy, forestry and mining sectors are important engines of economic growth, significant job creators and key to our future success as a province.

In 2019, the energy sector achieved \$10.5 billion in revenues and supported 32,000 direct and indirect jobs. Mineral sales were valued at \$7.4 billion and generated an estimated 10,000 direct jobs. Combined, these sectors contributed almost 25% of Saskatchewan's gross domestic product (GDP).



As northern Saskatchewan's largest employer, the forestry sector saw nearly \$1 billion in revenues, supporting almost 8,000 direct and indirect jobs.

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For more information on Saskatchewan's resource sectors visit [Saskatchewan.ca/invest](https://www.saskatchewan.ca/invest).

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## Nokom and the Mrs.

By Maria Campbell  
for Eagle Feather News

It was a clear sunny day, almost hot. The kind of day you remember when you start to become an old woman and you search for role models to help you make the transition. The kind of lazy day when you can smell wild roses, brown eyed Susan's, the rich black dirt and amo may, bee poop in Cree, or honey as it is called in English.

A soft breeze touched the willows where I, an eight-year-old girl, sat with my Kohkom Mariah and her friend the "Mrs." They were making medicine; sitting on a blanket spread out on the ground, grinding roots between two stones. I was their helper, running errands, snaring a partridge for our lunch, hauling wood for the little fire where a tea pail hung from a tripod. I was as full of self-importance as a little girl can be when she is chosen of all the girl cousins, kah weechihauht notokwewah, to be the helper of the old ladies.

I was hot and puffed out, taking a breather after making a one mile run to the store for tea and black licorice candy. Do you know that even today I think of black licorice as old lady candy, and no I haven't started to eat it yet because I am never going to get old.

Anyway, there I was taking a break, leaning back against the old canvas bags that contained the dried and ground medicines. I listened to Kohkom Mariah sing as she ground the roots and watched as the fine red powder fell into a clean sugar bag. Without thinking, because I certainly knew better, I reached out and touched the powder with my finger tips bringing it to my face, rubbing it around on my cheekbones like I'd seen my aunty Mary do with a box of rouge.

"Hey hey awa!" Kohkom Mariah reached out and smacked my hand. "Muskeekke anima! That's medicine!"

The Mrs. laughed, her body shaking like an old bear's. Still laughing, she dug into the old blue apron she always wore and pulled out, not an old black piece of licorice, but a red one. Patting my shoulder gently she handed me the candy, then went back to grinding the medicine. Kohkom Mariah pretended not to see.

I can still see those two old women: Kohkom Mariah, as tiny and skinny as a burnt willow. "The Mrs.," big and round like a brown bear. Both in long, much mended dresses and old sweaters. One in moccasins, the other in laced up felt boots.

Sometimes I see them on a hot day, bent over digging sticks in wet meadows or picking berries along the road. I see them in the garden exchanging wild ginger and dill. In the summer kitchens making head cheese, cooking moose nose. I see them helping my mother deliver our baby brother. I walk with the two of them to the place where old women bury the placentas.

I sometime hear them talking, one in Cree, the other in low German, although I didn't know then that's what it was called. Nor did I know that they didn't speak each other's language. All I knew as a child was the love and respect they had for each other: their laughter, their sharing.

Many years later, when my father and I were walking around Kohkom Mariah's home place, we came to the willows where these two old women often sat. The willows are gone, cut down for another bushel of wheat, the farmer oblivious to the history of this place. Dad and I laughed as we remembered the things we had learned about life as we sat with the two of them.

"Dah Mrs. was a strong woman." Dad said, remembering the time our horse got stuck in the muskeg. "Me and Alec we just can't pull him out. Den, dat old lady he come along and he talk to dat horse so he stop jumping and being scared, den he pull him out. Boy we shore feel stupid us two big mans."

I remembered the time I went blueberry picking with them and we ran into a mamma bear and her babies. I was scared and they were too. The mamma bear was not going away, she was pacing back and forth sniffing the air. Quickly the two old women opened their grub sacks and out came our lunch. Head cheese and bannock, then slowly we backed away until we were out of sight, at which time they grabbed my hands and ran as fast as they could dragging me between them.

"Why did we call her "The Mrs.?" I asked dad.

I don't know what his name was," Dad said. "Dat's what his old man he always called him."

Many years after that conversation I decided to go to University to get a Master's degree. I went so stories like this one would have some authority. We all know that the oral tradition does not have much power in the academic or white world unless you have some letters behind your name. Then as my uncle Robert said, "You can put them up there with high language and everyone will think they are sacred." So off to University I went to learn high language and footnoting and for my first research paper, I asked the question: "How do a people retain their identity when they have lost their homeland."

I wanted to prove that for my people, who had been displaced and dis-



**Maria Campbell at the release of the updated version of her masterpiece and bestseller *Half Breed*. Her story of life on the road side allowance exploded onto the scene in 1973 and has been required reading for any native studies student in Canada. (Photo by Andrea Ledding)**

possessed for over a 150 years, identity had been preserved, maintained and nurtured through music and storytelling. I wanted to tell the world that the music and stories born on the homelands had been, metaphorically speaking, wrapped in the finest fabric the people had and carried from camp to camp, from one hastily built log shack to another, where each night the bundle was lovingly opened and the music and stories shared with the people, most especially the children. In my family the stories are not about a place called Park Valley, rather they are about Nukiwin, not about the Ladder Hills, but about Kisaynew Sputinahwah. Not about Bergan's Meadow, but about Omisimow Pasqua. Not about Lemire's field, but about Notokeew Nepiseatikwah place of Two Old Women. And among these stories is the story of Kohkom Mariah's friend, "The Mrs.," an old Mennonite woman who understood what it was like to be erased and invisible.

Hiy hiy, maarsi.



## Supporting cancer patients in Saskatchewan



We're thankful for the meaningful work our members at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency continue to do to care for people throughout the province. In recognition of their efforts, SGEU is proud to donate \$50,000 to the Cancer Foundation of Saskatchewan. The funds will be split between helping finance a new 4D CT Simulator at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre and the Renewal Campaign at the Regina Cancer Patient Lodge. If you're able to support this incredible organization please consider donating:

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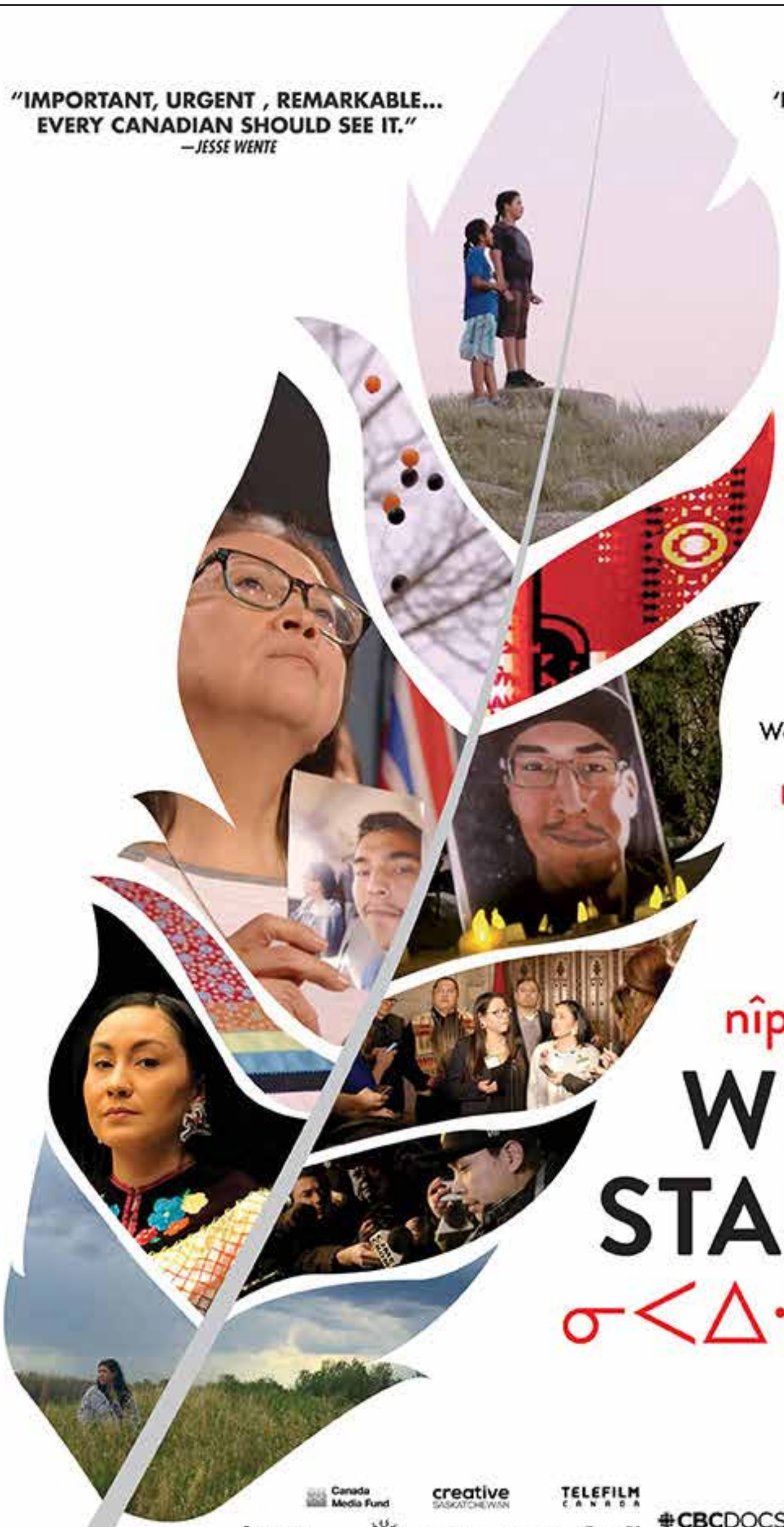
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## Through laughter and leadership, Indigenous women guide us all forward

By **Bonnie Leask**  
for *Eagle Feather News*

What a year it's been.

After 12 months of surviving a pandemic, just like many others I am trying to stay afloat and find a way to the other side of this hardship.

Personally, I manage difficulty through laughter. I love to have big belly laughs with my people. Laughter isn't only a release, it creates a space for vulnerability, friendship, and kinship. Sharing laughter means that we share our experiences and provides a real opportunity to open up, learn, collaborate, and act.

I am grateful to have had many incredible laughs with inspirational women from all around the world, but there's nothing like a good laugh with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit women. Our laughter is threaded with shared and individual histories, culture, tradition, and colonial experiences. Sometimes we laugh at serious things that we shouldn't laugh at. But what else are we going to do?

Our laughter is a seed for our kinship and brings us together during moments of joy and sadness. It gives us strength to work together to make better lives and set examples for our families, our communities, and our people.

Throughout the pandemic, I have thought about the things my grandmother, Alpha Lafond, and her generation faced. She was a residential school survivor, entered adulthood post-World War II, lived through a global call for civil rights and justice, and saw the rise of Indigenous pride in the face of colonial violence.

She faced history while bringing joy into our home and into our lives. In these times of change, women just like my grandmother played an undeniable role in collectively guiding our communities forward. And they often did so outside of formal institutions or leadership roles.

Indigenous women have always led change. Despite their exclusion from formal institutions and leadership roles after colonization, Indigenous women led in their own ways, charging ahead with humility, respect, kindness, courage, wisdom, honesty—and yes, humour.

And it's because of these values that Indigenous women were, and continue to be, the best collaborators and leaders I have ever met.

I want to share some stories of true collaborative leaders who make change for our people without being elected into political positions. Women such as Priscilla Settee, who educates countless young people through her work in food security and governance at the university level, influenced by kinship and our cultures and traditions. She collaborates every day with people in service of building a better earth, a better Nation, and a better community. And she has a really good kokum laugh, too.

I think of Tasha Hubbard, an award winning filmmaker, who educates people on the long-term impacts of continued colonialism. She's relentless in her push for justice, inclusion, and honesty. She grounds her films in a holistic truth, and mobilizes action by kickstarting uncomfortable conversations that engage both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. Of course, she showcases some solid First Nations humour along the way.

There are so many other Indigenous women I admire, such as the late Carole Sanderson, Sylvia McAdam, Bev Lafond, Jade Tootoosis, Debbie Baptiste, Eekwol, to name a few. I admire them because of their ability to shake up the status quo and hold up a mirror of responsibility to ourselves, our Nations, and our Earth. These women lead through their values rooted in our cultures, languages, and traditions, and deeply understand that when we work together, we are stronger.

Yet, so often people in our communities subscribe to a false idea that one needs to be an elected leader to be a legitimate leader. Or a serious, solemn leader. Each of these women, and many others, have meaningfully pursued change not only for themselves, but for those to come, across sectors and spaces without a formal title. Indigenous women talk. We listen. We observe. We learn. And we communicate what works and what definitely doesn't work. We rely on each other. We share laughter while we share wisdom.

The large-scale challenges the entire world is experiencing right now are testing colonial systems that have long governed our people, community, and institutions. And guess what? Under these pressures, many of these systems are failing. This isn't surprising, because they've always been at odds with our traditions, our culture, and our language.

They aren't designed to support joy, laughter, or kinship. Instead, they enforce rigid processes and present barriers to shared progress. Being thrust into uncertainty is difficult and sometimes scary, but it also provides an opportunity for us to make real change.

And now more than ever, we need better systems.

We need Indigenous women's vocal, vulnerable, and values-driven style of leadership to get us there. And along the way, we'll have some seriously good laughs, too—the kind of laughter that feeds the soul and makes your belly ache.



**Alphonsine Lafond, elected Chief of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in 1960, is a role model for her granddaughter Bonnie Leask. Here she is with four of her children on election day from left, Al, George, Robert and Carol. Missing are Judy and Albert Dean.**



**Blair Bowman**

**Hometown:** Saskatoon, SK  
**Program:** Integrated Resource Management diploma

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# Daybird Beauty combines lashes, language and giving back

*By Shayla Sayer-Brabant  
for Eagle Feather News*

When Nicole Akan launched Daybird Beauty, a Regina-based company that specializes in reusable faux mink eyelashes that honour her Cree name and language, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Daybird Beauty's Cree Lash Collection, named from one to 10 in the Plains Cree language, sold out after its November launch.

Akan, a self-taught entrepreneur from Muskowekwan First Nation, didn't expect the wide-spread popularity that greeted her faux mink lashes.

"I was thinking you know, 'Maybe, worst case scenario, I have a lifetime supply of lashes for myself.' But when they started selling out right away, it just snowballed. I was able to buy more stock and then those sold out."

That success led to the creation of Akan's Resiliency Lash Collection, named after the women and Two-Spirited people who inspire her. She donates 20 per cent of proceeds from that collection to the community.

The naming of Daybird Beauty came from reclaiming ancestral names and language, inspired by Akan's mother who discovered, a few years ago, that their family name had been changed from Daybird to Bitternose. Her mother legally changed her name back to Kisikaw Piyesis.

Akan reclaimed the name and wants to learn more of her family history.

"Why was the name changed? Was it the Indian agent that changed it to Bitternose from Daybird?"

Daybird Beauty has also helped spark interest in the Plains Cree language through the names in the Cree Lash Collection.

"I'm still learning Cree. My hope is to be fluent someday. And that's kind of why I started. I took Cree classes in university and I remember learning how to count to 10. And so, through this lash line, I'd say I'm an expert at counting to 10 in Cree."

"A lot of the comments that I've gotten are, 'Wow thank you for the Cree lesson.'"



**Heather O'Watch wearing "Heather" lashes from the Resiliency Lash Collection by Daybird Beauty. (Photo by Heather O'Watch)**

The Resiliency Lash Collection recognizes the individuals who have made an impact in Akan's life and in the local community.

Heather O'Watch was surprised and humbled when Akan if she could name a pair of lashes after her.

"It's a really good feeling... When we talk about bringing community together, inspiring community, uplifting community - this is what it's about. It's about starting with your own community first," O'Watch said.

Akan said the February Resiliency donation would go to the Regina shelter, Awasiw: A Place of Hope.

Akan also plans to release a Nakoda Lash Collection that honors the Nakoda language because her fiancé is Nakoda and she wants to help revitalize the language, as many of the fluent speakers are passing on.

Three months after her initial launch, Akan continues to receiving amazing feedback and orders from all over the country.

"Seeing people tag me in photos, people from all over Indian Country, wearing my Daybird Beauty mask - male, female, non-Indigenous, youth, Elders - it's almost brought me to tears sometimes."

She is also thrilled to hear that her success has some young people excited to one day start their own companies.

"That's how I feel: if I can do this, anybody can."

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# Words from our Elders: Bernice Ta

By  
for Eagle Feather News

These words of wisdom by Bernice Taypotat, born May 29, 1939, are excerpts from the book *Kahkewistahaw Elders Nitohamwak*. The Elders were recorded, photographed and published by Ted Whitecalf and a team, including Vera Wasacase, Raymond (Zack) Isaac, Susan Dalen, Sharon Green, Carol-Jo Whitecalf, Gloria Lee, Marilyn Poitras, and the late Pamela Whitecalf for Sweetgrass Records. Check back monthly for words from our Elders.

I am Bernice Taypotat (nee Bear), originally from Ochapowace before I got married. I was married in August the 27th, 1960 to Louis Taypotat from Kahk. We've been married now for going forty-six years in August. It was a long tough road when we were younger.

...

I had a little old grandfather, my mom's mushom, Little Assinibione he was called, and he died when he was one hundred and eight. When I was a little girl, I used to follow him into the bushes to go and snare rabbits and he used to have those breach clothes, he used to wear, yeah. He used to wear that kind and I used to just follow him going to looking at our snares and I still remember that time. He had his own little bedroom, with those heaters, those pot-bellied heaters they call them. And we just lived in a big one-room house that time and we used to help my mom and dad mud. If the mud was coming off the building, we'd go and mix up straw and mud and splatter the house and after that we'd whitewash the outside. Whitewash.

Those are all the days, sometimes I just sit, when I'm home alone here, I just sit and think of all those days. Sometimes I wish it was still here. You know, I miss those fun days that I guess you'd call, without alcohol and drugs. But then as we grow older, there was that Moose milk or whatever it was they called, they used to make that (chuckling) I remember. The old guys used to make that. And then we used to go around New Year's Eve, dancing and visiting. Nowadays, nobody



Bernice Taypotat shared memories of her life for the book *Kahkewistahaw Elders* (calf)



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# Taypotat Ochapowace First Nation



goes around eating now. You know, it's totally lost. We used to get in the wagon, I mean in a sleigh with horses, and we used to go driving from house to house, eating, but now it's all lost.

And this is what I was telling the students at the school, all about this, and they'd just look at me and sometimes they'd laugh as to what we used to do. Cause I told them too, that we used to have those old wooden barrels and we'd take them apart and we'd use those for skis, I said. Tie them on our feet. But those were the good old days when we used to play.

...

*Nowadays, nobody goes around eating now. You know, it's totally lost. We used to get in the wagon, I mean in a sleigh with horses, and we used to go driving from house to house, eating, but now it's all lost.*

When I was in Round Lake school, I was hurt bad with my arm, my right arm is kind of crooked from the school and they didn't treat me. They didn't take me to the doctor. They just left me in the dorm with a sling on and I suffered so much with pain all the time. That's the only thing that was wrong with the school. I know at the Round Lake school, the boys used to steal to eat, to go and cook their food up in the hills. And when they did wrong, they used to get their hair shaved. Sometimes the girls would go around the back of the school trying to see boys, but when they'd get caught, they'd get a strapping. I know I've had a strapping several times on my arms and hit on the head with a ruler, but it didn't really matter much to me.

*Ed. Note: This Elder's Story includes excerpts from a longer piece that will be available on the Eagle Feather News website as of March 19, 2021.)*

...w Elders: Nitohamwak published by Sweetgrass Records. (Photo by Ted White-



## GET VACCINATED

*Protect your community! Protect your loves ones!*

*Vaccines create immunity without causing illness or resulting complications.*

*We need to continue keeping each other safe!*



# Mother's spirit inspired Senator to find inner strength

By Dr. Lillian Dyck  
for Eagle Feather News

Who am I? I am Eva's daughter.

I've been fortunate to have been born with a darn good brain. As my cousin, the late Ivan McNab, once said, "this is my pointy-headed cousin, Lillian." I was always the brain in school and my dad was so proud when I brought home my report card with straight A's. That brain enabled me to succeed in school, university, and even as a senator, but without knowing who I was, as my mother's daughter, I was vulnerable to racism and harassment.

During the 1990s there was an economic turndown and funds to support research at the university were cut. I was a research scientist and professor, and the only woman in our group. Though I was in the middle of the pack of our research group, my boss turned on me and said I didn't need a job because I had a husband. Meanwhile most of my male colleagues, most of whom had spouses who worked outside the home, were not targeted.

My boss tried to get rid of me, basically because he wanted my salary to supplement the supplies budget. I was subjected to veiled threats for years, left out of important meetings, left out of projects, and deserted by my male colleagues. All kinds of efforts were made to decrease my productivity. But it didn't work.

I was left traumatized by it all and, though I am a strong and resilient woman, I did get totally worn down and turned to the Employment Assistance Program. That was one of two best things I ever did. In the very first counselling session, I realized that the shame of my Cree Indian identity, which I had inherited from my mother, an

Indian Residential School survivor, made me vulnerable. It was my big secret. It made me fearful. It made me feel alone.

The second, best thing I did was to go to an Elder recommended by my cousins. There, I began learning spiritual practices. With this new way of being, of being proud of both my Chinese and my Cree roots, I became confident and resilient, and could continue to stand my ground and fight back against unfair treatment.

As I've said before, when I had given up all hope, my mom's spirit came to me and I said to myself: If my mother could do what she did, despite all the racism she faced in her life, then I'd be damned if I'd let some man push me out of my job simply because I'm a woman. I found my inner strength. I could Walk Tall, Walk Proud, Walk Strong.

My mom was Eva McNab from George Gordon First Nation. She died when I was 10 so her life is mostly a mystery to me. She married Yok Leen Quan (aka Happy), a café operator who was 22-23 years older than her, but a handsome fellow and a successful businessman. He was what you could call a "good catch."

Because she married a non-status man, mom's Indian status was revoked. But I think that marriage to my dad gave her a good way to get away from the reserve and hide her Cree Indian identity. She was running away from the dismal and oppressive conditions on reserves at the time - poverty, alcohol abuse and sexual abuse. She also was running away from the shame of being an Indian instilled in her at residential school. She couldn't pretend to be Chinese, but she did pretend to be Scottish (a nod to her great, great, great grandfather, John Mac-Nab.)

Mom had two sisters, Jenny and Carrie. Carrie actually introduced my mom to my dad. Carrie had married a Chinese restaurateur, Charlie Yuen, who ran a café in Paradise Hill. I think my mom waitressed there, before she met and married dad, who ran a café in Livelong.

At that time, Saskatchewan had a law which prohibited Chinese men from hiring white women. This was a way to make it more difficult for them to succeed in businesses like cafés, and was also meant to prevent them from having romantic relationships with white women. Ironically, this racist law provided an opportunity for Indian women to work for Chinese men. Perhaps without that law, my mom wouldn't have been hired as a waitress in a Chinese café, and thereby meet and marry Happy Quan, and then I wouldn't exist!

My dad, too, had enormous struggles in his life because of racism. But he lived up to his nickname, Happy. My mom's death left him with two youngsters to raise on his own. Hard times and debt left him working as a cook later in life. Sadly, alcoholism led to his passing when he was only 65.

The struggles my parents faced motivate me and give me the inner strength to never give up and to stand up against racism. They would not have believed it possible for their little girl to become a professor or a Canadian senator. The only regret I have is that they did not live long enough to share in my good fortune.

"I have seen, for their dead eyes, the fruits of their labor, I would tell them they can now close their eyes in sleep." from Denise Chong, *The Concubine's Children*.



Former Senator Dr. Lillian Dyck overcame racism, sexism and the imposed shame of her Cree identity to become a leading scientist and eventual Senator in the Government of Canada. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

**PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER – PRIVATE INDOOR GATHERINGS**  
**Effective December 17, 2020, all indoor private gatherings are limited to immediate households only, THIS MEANS NO VISITING, GAME NIGHTS, SOCIALIZING, OR PARTIES.**  
**An immediate household is a group of people who live in the home regularly.**

**RESTRICTED:**

- Adults sharing a home
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- Single parent family
- Extended family living in the home regularly

**ALLOWED:**

- Single individuals (a person who is living alone) is permitted to meet with one household of less than five (always the same household).
- Caregivers, support personnel and tradespersons is permitted
- Co-parenting is permitted

**Do not invite friends or extended family into your home. Stop the spread. We encourage all to stay home and stay safe.**



# Other people's opinions won't pay your bills

By Larissa Burnouf  
for Eagle Feather News

At 12 years old, I told my dad I was going to be a lawyer one day. More than 20 years later, I'll be able to finally tell him his little girl finished law school. A dream that I wanted to give up on more times than I can count. There has been blood, sweat, and tears. A LOT of tears. Aside from childbirth – twice, law school has been the hardest thing that I have ever done but as cliché as it sounds, if I can do it, anyone can.

My life detoured through a 15-year career in radio and television broadcasting before I decided to go back to school. I was told several times, by several people, that I was too old to go back. I was told that law school would be too hard for a mother of two young children. I was told that I would be 'lucky' if I made it passed the LSAT or my first year, especially working full-time.

I recall one of my closest friends telling me that law school was a terrible idea and that she was now truly concerned for my children. I even received a letter from a former program advisor stating that I would not be successful in law school because I "severely lacked civility and did not have the necessary skills needed" to succeed in law.

I cried for days after reading that letter and for weeks when I lost that 'friend'. I quickly realized that not everyone will support you or your dreams, but you can't pay your bills with the opinions of others and you will never succeed if you believe them.

First, I went back to university in my 30's and finished my bachelor's degree. I wrote the LSAT while breastfeeding my infant and I've even had to attend classes with my children in tow. I made sacrifices that I never wanted to make and lost countless hours of sleep, reading and studying until sunrise. I have worked hard to get to this last month of law school, but I have made it this far because I am truly blessed to have the support system that I do. I had to surround myself with family who believed in me and true friends who cheered me on, never once doubting my abilities, even when I doubted them myself.

With the right support, mindset and unrelenting determination, it can be done. There are many services, programs, and scholarships available for First

Nations people, women, single mothers and even people with learning disabilities.

For every person who doubts you, there are dozens more people who are willing to help and work with you to make sure your dreams become a reality. I am thankful for those people, and my family and friends who stuck by me through law school. I am thankful for the Canoe Lake Cree First Nation Chief and Council, FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron and the entire FSIN Executive and management for their support and belief in me. I am thankful to the Amiskusees Semaganis Worme Family Foundation, Inspire, Usask Awards and the College of Law for helping to relieve some of the financial burdens that come with pursuing an advanced degree.

I am also thankful for the wisdom of my Elders and teachings that I have learned throughout this journey. I am also thankful for Bang Muay Thai and the Modern Martial Arts Centre for saving my sanity on the hardest days.

If I can do it, so can you. Surround yourself with positive people and never give up on your dreams.



**Despite the naysayers, Larissa Burnouf juggled law school, full time work and parenting her children Bentley and Tatum, and is now one month away from graduating law school. (Photo by Sweetmoon Photography)**

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# Carrying a legacy forward

By *Sophia Lagimodiere*  
for *Eagle Feather News*

To celebrate International Women's Day, I sat down with my oldest sister to talk about her goals, our upbringing, and the importance of honouring our family name.

Born and raised in Saskatoon, Krista loves travelling, outdoor activities, the arts and baking. She is also a Geriatrician – a medical doctor specializing in the care of older adults. While some may know her as Dr. Lagimodiere, I've always known her as my sister, and one of the women I look up to the most.

Krista has always loved the performing arts and sciences, making it difficult for her to decide a path. Ultimately, she was drawn to medicine, as she felt it "truly married both the arts and sciences together."

"I am humbled by listening to patient stories and being able to help individuals and their families work through some of the toughest moments in their lives. I knew that medicine would provide me an opportunity to be challenged from an academic perspective while also giving back to the community," she said.

While she enjoyed many areas of medicine, she decided to pursue geriatric medicine, as she wanted to serve a population she felt deserved more attention. A lot of that stems from personal experiences navigating the health care system with our grandmother.

"It was heartbreaking to see her not get the holistic care she needed as she was developing a number of health issues after our grandfather passed away," Krista said. She hopes to "ensure that other people's grandparents receive exceptional health care when they need it most".

Our family values growing up also inspired her to specialize in geriatrics.

"I grew up with very inspiring grandparents. They were instrumental in my upbringing, and I look up to them in many ways," she said. "From a young age, I developed a deep respect for seniors in my life".

Krista believes that society needs to learn from Indigenous communities when it comes to valuing and respecting our elders and thinks they need to be included in roundtable discussions on policy development directly impacting them.

"We should look to our elders for guidance during these uncertain times, as they have important perspectives that we can learn from," she said.

Moreover, she believes that we should look to the medicine wheel's teachings when trying to move towards a more holistic approach to health care.

"Health and well-being is dependent on a number of bio-psycho-social factors, and how we as individuals fit within our community network," she said. "With social isolation and loneliness becoming more prevalent, we know that that is associated with poor health outcomes. So what can we do to change that? How can we learn from these teachings?"

Although she is married, Krista is proud to have kept her Lagimodiere name as a way to honour the legacy of our ancestors and their significant place within Métis history.

While she always knew where she came from, she credits her high school history teacher, Mr. Whelan from Evan Hardy, for encouraging her to delve more deeply into the meaning of our family legacy.

Our grandfather, Ron Lagimodiere, lived a traditional French-Métis, Catholic upbringing and grew up in a large loving family with 12 siblings. As a baby, his family moved to Pine Bluff (a Métis settlement) by dog team, and eventually, they settled in The Pas, Manitoba, where much of our family still resides.

We are grateful to keep his memory alive by coming together with over 100 relatives for family reunions and reading stories he documented of his life. He taught us the importance of honoring family traditions and values.

"He had strong faith, a heart of gold and a smile that lit up every room. I really miss his infectious laugh and storytelling," Krista said. "Our grandparents have taught us the

power of resilience and determination. Despite facing adversity in life, they continued to face each day with optimism and compassion".

Krista recognizes the importance role models in her life have played in achieving her goals. "My parents exemplify the epitome of love, compassion and support. They've given me and my sisters a supportive and loving household and have been instrumental in our success," she said. "I get strength from my husband, family and core group of friends that are always supportive and uplifting".

She encourages Indigenous girls and women to look for role models in their lives for inspiration.

"Find something that sparks joy, and you will always find a purpose in what you're doing. Speak to people in fields you are interested in and find a mentor," she said. "Never underestimate the power of perseverance and hard work in achieving your goals".



**Dr. Krista Lagimodiere is a Geriatrician in Saskatoon. She was inspired into medicine by witnessing the lack of holistic care her grandparents faced in their later years.**



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**Program Runs:** May 3rd – June 30th, 2021

**Application Deadline:** March 26th, 2021

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**Program start dates and delivery methods may be modified or adjusted to ensure that DTI programs and services follow the direction, advice and guidance of the federal and provincial governments and Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer during this period of uncertainty resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

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# Métis women, strong women

By Karon Lenore Shmon  
for Eagle Feather News

I frequently find I am explaining that the matriarchy so affiliated with the Métis doesn't mean women are in charge or that they make all the decisions. This worldview comes from elsewhere. To us, our traditional matriarchy means women's opinions and women's roles are highly regarded.

Métis women have always needed to be strong so their families could survive. When I think of the strength of the Métis women who came before me I am filled with wonderment and gratitude. My great-grandmother's story is one of challenge and triumph. As a girl of nine, Jane Mary Adams, who went by the name Jennie, walked all the way from Manitoba to Saskatchewan behind an ox cart. With nothing more than what the cart could carry, these Métis families re-established themselves from scratch, found a place to live, built a dwelling, and became part of a new community. Métis families had



**Darleen Lenore McLaughlin, the writers mom, atop a parade float at the Trappers' Festival in The Pas, MB, circa 1948.**

to be self-sufficient. Honing the skills to provide for yourself and your family was the primary education most needed and received.

Marrying at sixteen was common at the time and Jennie did just that when she married Michael McLaughlin in 1887. He was a Métis, also from Red River, with a story all his own. Jennie and Michael lived in the small community of Lindsay District, North-West Territories, an English Métis settlement just 10 km from Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. In my head, Prince Albert is called Isbister.

Just a year later in 1888, Jennie and Michael started their family with the birth of the first of their 24 children. The last child born, Daisy Lenore McLaughlin, my grandmother, was born in 1914. The genealogical record shows

that they had sixteen children, but in the oral history of our family, we hear Jennie had twenty-four children. We were told that some of them were miscarriages and stillbirths and that some were twins. Quibbling about numbers seems moot since having sixteen children survive is a remarkable feat unto itself. In those days, children were born at home, often with the help of very capable midwives. With the amount of work required to look after a family of this size, there was very little rest after each baby's birth. One of the sadder stories is that Jennie lost four children to diphtheria in one week. She had to build the coffins. She made one of them too short. This was a sign to her that she was going to lose another child to the deadly disease, and she did. I cannot really fathom the depth of the grief the family experienced over this loss.

Michael and Jennie began living separate lives after WWI. Jennie lived in Prince Albert for a few years and then made a home at Chitek Lake, SK. It was here that my mother, Darleen Lenore McLaughlin, had the misfortune of being separated from her mother. This brought her the good fortune of being raised by Jennie and her partner, Jim Barrett. She called them Granny McLaughlin and Daddy Jim.

Mom had the best time growing up in the one-room log cabin at Chitek Lake. She was proud of being able to snare rabbits and of having her own .22 rifle at age 9. Jennie was so resourceful that she made Darleen's clothing from adult clothing. Mom's favourite pants were those made from Daddy Jim's pants because Granny McLaughlin had left the man-sized pockets in the pants. This pleased Darleen to no end as those gigantic pockets held all her treasures.

Mom was the grateful recipient of all of Jennie's stories; about the long walk from Manitoba, the children lost to diphtheria, the plant medicines, the berries to pick, the food to make, and the skills to develop. Mom made sure

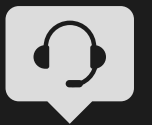
we grew to love Chitek Lake. Eight of us would stay in the cabin in which she grew up. It was a rare privilege and remains one of my fondest memories.

Jane Mary Adams – Jennie – gave my Mom a great work ethic and the drive to persevere. She enriched her life with Métis ways of thinking, Métis ways of doing things, and Métis ways to laugh and enjoy life. She taught her that real wealth comes from being loved and from feeling safe and happy. I also like to think we inherited the matriarchy. Mom was raised to have confidence in her own abilities and decisions. This made her leadership skills obvious and they were welcomed at a time when visibly Métis women were often without a voice. Thanks, Mom. I am your daughter and proud of it. Of course, an even bigger thank you goes to Granny McLaughlin for her love and influence. Like so many of our ancestors, to many she was an unremarkable woman. To me, she made a remarkable difference.



**"Granny McLaughlin with some of her many grandchildren. Darleen is the girl to her immediate right."**

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# Writing my heart's desire

By *Judith Iron*  
for *Eagle Feather News*

**Canoe Narrows** - I got an email invitation from my editor John. He said I could write anything I wanted for the March issue of Eagle Feather News. I was being given the opportunity to write a story on any subject that might be near and dear to my heart. My mind was blank. I had nothing.

I sat at my desk and opened my laptop thinking I would be inspired the moment my fingers touched the keyboard. Nope. I stared at the blank screen and tried to recollect unfinished story ideas.

I had previously started writing a story about what people might think a strong woman looks like. I asked people to give me examples of powerful, courageous, and resilient First Nations women. The responses were overwhelming because everyone knew more than one. I remember listening to their stories and thinking how proud I was knowing so many talented, creative, generous, and genuinely beautiful women walk among us.

I am in awe of women who live amazing lives doing unbelievable things while thriving and being their best selves. I couldn't write about just one or two of these women. I definitely couldn't go over my word count. So, I decided to write about something else. But, what?

I thought maybe I could write about my dream vacation when I traveled through Europe for a couple of months in the summer of 2015. It was an unforgettable trip. I sat in front of the Eiffel Tower, drove through wine country, played in the Vatican fountain, and swam in the Mediterranean Sea. But, I know I could never do France and Italy justice without at least 25 accompanying photos, so there went that idea.

I thought perhaps this was my opportunity to discuss politics and the issues of transparency and accountability in band offices. But, I didn't want my submission to be too heavy or argumentative, so there went another idea.

I hopped in the van and drove to the store to grab a chocolate bar. I came home with four chocolate bars, a package of mints, a bag of sunflower seeds, and a tub of ice cream.

As I ripped open a candy bar I thought maybe I should write about how I



**Judith Iron and her pocketful of chocolates. Photo by Dallas Iron.**

quit smoking cold turkey? How I am eating so much more. How I am spending more now on snacks than I was when I was smoking. Then I realized it sounded way too much like I was encouraging smoking over spending, so there went that idea.

As I drove home with my snacks I glanced at the community security gate at the end of our road like I usually do before I pull into our yard. I wondered how the weekend was for the security staff? Which led to me thinking of how so many people are suffering during this pandemic. I thought of how addictions and mental health issues appear to be worsening in so many remote northern communities since Covid -19 arrived. Maybe I should write about how and where someone might be able to get help? But, then I thought I don't want to seem like a know-it-all when I don't have enough information or the education to form a proper opinion, so there went that idea.

*I asked people to give me examples of powerful, courageous, and resilient First Nations women. The responses were overwhelming because everyone knew more than one. I remember listening to their stories and thinking how proud I was knowing so many talented, creative, generous, and genuinely beautiful women walk among us.*

I drove on enjoying my chocolate when it hit me. I had the perfect story. I could write about moving from the big city, where I lived for more than 40 years, back home to my reserve, where I have now lived for three. I could tell you about my experience and initial culture shock. Then I could tell you how I adapted and accepted life in the north. I could brag about the beauty of nature. I could tell you all what it feels like to live alongside the animals, trees, and water. I could try to explain the unbelievable scenery we are blessed with every single day, but that story would end up being a thousand words too long.

As my deadline loomed my anxiety grew. I became more and more frustrated. So, you know what? I gave up thinking about writing and decided to eat chocolate and play in the snow. I had no words. I'll write about something near and dear to my heart next month. Maybe.

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**If you or someone you know uses drugs:**

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- Know the signs. An overdose can look like sleeping: shallow or stopped breathing, unable to wake up.
- **CALL 911** if you think someone is overdosing. The Good Samaritan Act protects you from being arrested if illegal drugs are present.

For more information or to get a free Take Home Naloxone kit call Healthline 811 or visit [saskatchewan.ca/opioids](http://saskatchewan.ca/opioids)

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# My Căpăn

*By Jordyn Burnouf  
for Eagle Feather News*

Sometimes I daydream of my heros. I paint a picture in my head of a healer, a medicine woman. She is my Căpăn, my great grandmother. She passed before we had a chance to meet, but through memories I've collected from family and friends, I have met her.

She dances in my daydreams. I see her long dark hair gathered in a scarf. I see her strong hands, her soft eyes. The caribou shared their sacred medicines with her. She raised a family that learned many lessons from the land.

Like the tales of unimaginable heroics – the Greek myths of victories fought in the clouds, the Bible stories of prophets and healers, the heroes in my storybook are the land protectors, the medicine people, the renegades, the Căpăns.

The stories I like best usually begin on the water, with kohkums and mushôms surviving by the land, paddling the shores of the ancient highways in search of food and medicine. This is the greatest gift my Căpăn left us. Her legacy is in the land. The teachings remain, and our opportunity now is to pick up those gifts and to move forward together honouring those gifts by protecting the land that we learn and grow with.

*She dances in my daydreams. I see her long dark hair gathered in a scarf. I see her strong hands, her soft eyes. The caribou shared their sacred medicines with her. She raised a family that learned many lessons from the land.*

As I do work on energy and environmental initiatives, my inspiration and passion come from these stories. I am driven by the teachings and power I feel when surrounded by nature. So, as I shake my head out of this daydream to find a computer in my lap and a story at my fingertips, I am challenged with



**When Jordyn Burnouf participates in environmental and cultural initiatives, she is honouring the gift of land given to her by her Căpăn. (Photo supplied)**

a legacy I must continue to honour. I am reminded of my role in this story. I hope you take the time to see the value in the Earth, to feel the power of your ancestors' stories, but also in the story that is your life. You are the writer and the visionary.

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 nĭkănêyihtăkwan nakinam kiki  
 mitoni misi âhkosiwin.**



# Living history amid the pandemic

By Merelda Fiddler-Potter  
for Eagle Feather News

One of my earliest memories as a child is hearing a story about my great grandmother, Veronique (Gervais) Fiddler. The story was out of context, but I knew it was important.

During the 1885 Resistance at Batoche, great-grandma Veronique was frying up buckshot in a pan, prepping bullets for those trying to take their land. Veronique lived through the Resistance at Red River in 1869-70, and the new mother wanted to save her home and keep her family together.

These stories matter. These stories remind us of the sacrifices our ancestors made. In 2010, I completed my Master of Arts. The focus of that research was tracing Métis identity, using my own family. Starting at contact, I learned everything I could about each generation of my family.

I searched and searched for any photos or documents I could find in archives and libraries in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In addition to obtaining my masters, finding those documents - land records, marriage and death certificates, newspaper articles, photos, and other items - was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

The best way I can describe this is, I felt complete. This research helped me to finally put that story I heard about great grandma Veronique into context. I understood why my family had told stories without context. They wanted to rebuild quietly and keep their families safe.

Pandemic Life:

The pandemic has affected everyone differently. But it has affected everyone. For myself, I have felt quite cut off from community and family. I work from home these days, and it feels as though there are few opportunities to really connect.

Technology and online forums like FaceBook, texts, and phone calls help. But, I miss driving to see people most of all.

Then, something remarkable happened.

My daughter, Reese, began asking more and more questions about our history. Our kids know they are Métis, and have a sense of what that means. But my daughter started asking different questions.

In the book exchange, Reese found a book about the life of Sitting Bull. She read it and we had many conversations about what happened to Sitting Bull and his people, and why. She then started to ask if our family experienced similar things in the past.

I said yes, and showed her some of the historical documents I found when I was researching our family history. I talked about Red River and Batoche, and our family's role in those events. We pulled out books, family history shared with me by my uncle, and pictures. My office was a mess.

But, it was a beautiful mess. It was also a good reminder.

Even though this pandemic has changed how we interact, it's also a really



**Covid restrictions allowed Merelda Fiddler and her daughter Reese to dive into their Métis past and slow down and talk about who they are. (Photo supplied)**

good chance to slow down and talk about who we are.

*The pandemic has affected everyone differently. But it has affected everyone. For myself, I have felt quite cut off from community and family. I work from home these days, and it feels as though there are few opportunities to really connect.*

When I was my daughter's age, many families didn't have these conversations. But I realized sitting there with her, we have these opportunities now.

This has been a bright spot in the pandemic for me. As a Métis mom, I am able to share so much with my kids that many of our ancestors didn't discuss because of fear. I am able to do

freely, what other generations had to fight to do.

This is a hard time. But, finding these moments with my daughter, have made it very rewarding.

Finally, we created little family trees including ourselves. And now, we are looking to make this in to an art project, something we can share together.

Living History:

I was relaying the idea of this project to a Métis friend of mine. And she said, "That's a perfect project for you, you have always talked about living histories."

It's true. I believe that by documenting and sharing we keep our histories alive.

But my daughter has shown me that by including ourselves in the next phase, we become part of those histories, to share with all our future generations.

It's a small thing, but one that has helped me look forward.



## Workplace 101: Intro to Construction Trades

**Location:** Yorkton, SK  
**Program Runs:** Spring 2021  
**Application Deadline:** March 26th, 2021

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# Reconciliation Ally Jeannie Coe: Nurse Practitioner instigated shelter clinic

By Betty Ann Adam  
of Eagle Feather News

If reconciliation means changing systems to better serve Indigenous communities, then Jeannie Coe is a reconciliation ally.

Coe was just a couple years out of high school when she went to Baffin Island to be a nanny for an RCMP officer's child.

She fell in love with the north and became a nurse there. She was working in Yellowknife when she met her future husband, Matthew Coe, a Métis.

Coe says that during her nearly eight years in the north, she learned important lessons about herself.

"Early on, I had a pretty visceral need in myself that started to be met up there.

It was the connection to the land, how willing people were to help me learn," she said.

When her husband became an RCMP officer, they came south to Saskatchewan, and were stationed in northern Saskatchewan.

In 2014, they were living in Saskatoon, where Coe took a position with the Saskatoon Health Region.

As a nurse practitioner accustomed to working in remote communities, Coe was accustomed to seeing what needed to be done and doing it.

She saw a need for more health services to residents of the Lighthouse shelter and assisted living centre, where the people bear a disproportionate burden of mental health and addiction.

The Lighthouse leadership offered her space to see patients and residents were soon glad to stop in.



**Jeannie Coe spends many hours at the Lighthouse in Saskatoon, but escapes to the north for personal time and to work, serving the community in remote health clinics. (Photo supplied)**

As welcome as she was at the Lighthouse, it wasn't a formal part of Coe's job.

She saw the need for acute care for infections and pneumonia or to diagnose and manage chronic illnesses like HIV, Hepatitis C, and diabetes, as well as occasional urgent care, such as stitches.

Unfortunately, the little clinic didn't fit with the health region's plan.

Coe visited the deputy minister of health, who saw the benefit of a clinic at the shelter but didn't make any promises to keep it going.

Coe said she was ready to resign when she met with Cory Miller, who was then a vice president with the Saskatoon Health Region, but he supported the clinic and suggested steps to formalize it.

Coe said she learned the value of working with a vice president when, by the end of 2015 the directors and managers followed Miller's example and supported the clinic too.

Six years later, the Lighthouse direct-access clinic still serves the vulnerable residents of the inner city and has expanded beyond Coe's expectations – She is now one of three full-time nurse practitioners at the Lighthouse.

One of them also staffs a weekly day-long clinic at the YWCA women's shelter and a weekly half-day clinic at the Salvation Army men's shelter.

Two physicians, including Ryan Meili, visit patients there for a day each week.

"When (Miller) agreed, things just started to fall into place... That was the point when I was like, 'this will happen. I don't know to what extent.' And it has far surpassed what I thought."

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*Bernelda Wheeler was the first high profile writer for Eagle Feather News. Her leadership had major influence on the direction of the paper. She set a high standard. Her monthly column, Introspection, was a must read, and she also contributed Tapway, interesting bits of history and trivia to pique your interest and make you think. We went back in the archives to 2002 and 2003 and have brought a few of those knowledge artifacts to life for you.*

Some of the earliest evidence of native basketry was found in Utah and was dated around 8,400 B.C. making it over 10,043 years old.

On December 3, 2002, Grassy Narrows IR (Ontario) put up a blockade in protest of environmental damage done by Avitivi Logging Company. The damage from logging, flooding and herbicides messed up the entire ecosystem. Also in 2002, 86% of Grassy Narrows people were found to have some sort of mercury poisoning.

In 1967, ten young Aboriginal men were asked to run a torch from St. Paul, Minnesota, to the Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Once the runners arrived in Winnipeg, the torch was taken away and handed to non-Native runners to carry into the arena.

In 1999, 32 years later, the Pan American Games organizers asked the same Aboriginal men to carry the torch into the opening ceremonies. This time the torch was not taken away. To honour these men, the 2002 North American Indigenous Games in Winnipeg invited them to participate in their opening ceremonies.

## TAPWAY

*By Bernelda Wheeler  
(1937-2005)  
for Eagle Feather News*

Minquga is an Omaha word that refers to cross-gendered people. Minquga people lived as the opposite sex and married the same sex. They were accepted and considered strong medicine people by their tribe.

The first Native American music artist to earn a gold record was R. Carlos Nakai, a traditional flute player.

From 1971 to 1981 over 1,000 Native children from Manitoba were adopted into foreign families in other countries.

Four students in the Masters of Aboriginal Social Work program at SIFC are convocating in May in Regina. Congratulations to our first MASW graduates!

Among the Plains Cree people, fuel for fires was sometimes scarce. When this fuel could not be found, a buffalo skull was filled with grease and lit. The fire was hot and lasted for hours.

Anthropologist David Mandelbaum spent time with Fine Day who willingly shared stories. As a result of their time together, Mandelbaum authored a book "The Plains Cree". The book was published in 1940 by the American Museum of Natural History, but few Cree people have ever seen the book.

During the 17th century, there were approximately fifteen thousand courier de bois. They became successful at hunting and fur gathering but were declared criminals. The governor of New France passed a law forbidding all Frenchmen from travelling into Indian Territory.



continued from page 24 ...



**Bernelda and her writings.**

When the courier de bois began selling furs to the British and Dutch, the French governor granted amnesty to all outlawed French trappers, many of whom had Indian wives.

A government-released report in July 1867, claimed that the Métis people were on the verge of violent revolt against the injustices they were suffering. The report stated that relationships between Indians and non-Indians were severely strained and that a precarious and explosive situation existed between the two.

One of the laws of hospitality among Aboriginal people was that of gift giving. To violate this law was considered a crime.

During the 1973 siege of Wounded Knee, scores of spent bullets were found around the outside of the medicine tipi. However, there were no bullet holes in any of the lodges or the tipi.

1857: "Indian Hating still exists, and no doubt will continue to exist, so long as Indians do." Herman Melville



## COMMUNITY NOTICE

### ANNUAL VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Every year, CN is required to clear its right-of-way of any vegetation that may pose a safety hazard. Vegetation on railway right-of-way, if left uncontrolled, can contribute to trackside fires and impair proper inspection of track infrastructure.

For safe railway operations, CN will conduct its annual vegetation control program on its rail lines in the province of Saskatchewan. A certified professional will be applying herbicides on and around the railway tracks (primarily along the 16 feet graveled area/ballast). All product requirements for setbacks in the vicinity of dwellings, aquatic environments and municipal water supplies will be met.

The program is expected to take place from April to October 2021. Visit [www.cn.ca/vegetation](http://www.cn.ca/vegetation) to see the list of cities as well as the updated schedule.

For more information, contact the CN Public Inquiry Line at [contact@cn.ca](mailto:contact@cn.ca) or 1-888-888-5909.



"The University [of Regina] is comprehensive and accessible. It draws undergraduate and graduate students from around the world. It's connected to, and is really involved with, its community. It's young and young at heart. It's open to experimentation. I think it's a tremendously exciting place with an amazing future."

The University of Regina is proud to announce the appointment of Dr. Jeff Keshen as the eighth president and vice-chancellor in the institution's history.

Dr. Keshen has served as the vice-president of Memorial University's Grenfell Campus for the past three and a half years.

Previously he served as dean, Faculty of Arts at Mount Royal University in Calgary. He also served as chair of the Department of History at the University of Ottawa and was an adjunct professor in the Centre of Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

He holds a doctoral degree from York University with a research concentration in the history of war and conflict. He was the recipient of the Government of Ontario June Callwood Award for Outstanding Service in Volunteerism. He was double nominee for the 3-M National

Teaching Fellowship Award, and was awarded both the Ontario Leadership in Teaching Prize and University of Ottawa's Excellence in Education Prize.

In addition to being an accomplished teacher, researcher and administrator, Dr. Keshen has authored a number of works. His book, *Propaganda and Censorship in Canada's Great War* was awarded the best non-fiction book by the Writers Guild of Alberta and was shortlisted for the Humanities and Social Sciences Federation of Canada's Harold Adams Innis Prize for the best book in the Social Sciences. His book, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* was shortlisted for the Raymond Klibansky Prize for the best book in the Humanities.

Dr. Keshen's term begins July 1, 2021. He will make the move to Regina with his wife Deborah Moynes-Keshen, and children Jacob and Maddie, both of whom will attend the University of Regina.

For more information visit [uregina.ca](http://uregina.ca)



# Beadwork and Kitchen Table Stories

By Tenille K Campbell  
for Eagle Feather News

Beadwork, to me, has always been a little mystical, a little magical.

Beadwork was something that other women did and something that I admired. Beadwork was artwork that Setsuné Rose excelled at, but it was a tradition never passed down to me. Instead, I watched as my cousins and kin picked up needles and thread and, as beads spilled forth onto kitchen tables, started their own journeys with beadwork. But sometimes, we start a little late, and that's okay too.

My cousin, her house is hot. She has a wood stove that is constantly burning. The heat reminds me of my own house growing up on the rez, and how we always had to keep the fire going in the dead of winter and how nothing else will heat me in the same way.

Her kitchen table, like so many others, is also where she beads - tiny little glass beads sorted into pails and buckets, with little scraps of tanned moosehide gathered in a plastic bag - still sacred, no matter how small. When I sit across from her, taking off my jacket and helping myself to a cup of coffee with milk and sugar, she is already laughing at a story we started telling and only half remembered.

When I think of my life, I hear the echoes of her laughter within it. She has been laughing at me and with me and for me since we were babies together. Her laughter is a mark of her joy and I'm glad to hear it. She hands me a needle and a long white piece of thread and tells me to get on with it. I start by sketching out a feather that was originally supposed to be a leaf that also looks like a corn on the cob, and she lets me play - needle, thread, moosehide, carefully chosen beads glimmering in the

light. I'm worse to teach than her son, she tells me, because I don't listen, and I want to do it my way. My beadwork is definitely not something traditionally beautiful, I can admit this. As I string along the curve of a line, bead by crooked bead, I tell stories of the city that seem so distant right now. First kisses. Flirting with people on apps. One-night stands. She wipes tears from her eyes as I tell her I'm in love with him, but I don't know his name. She always cries when she laughs, and it's not home until she tells me I'm crazy.

That first night, after three hours, I have a messy outline with beads scattered facing up and down, round and round. But she smiles at me, and tells me I did an interesting job, and she's proud of me, but don't mention her name if I post it online. I call her an asshole as I leave, laughing. I smell of woodsmoke and tobacco, and it makes me grin.

We repeat this pattern for the next two days, and each day I learn something new. She teaches me how to fill, eyeing out the number of beads needed, stitching them into place, making sure not to pull too tight so the beads have room to breathe. She also tells me stories of what has been happening on the reserve, often reminding me who is who. I am now the Auntie figure, asking who the cousins are and the aunts and uncles. She is patient



**Beadwork was always something that Tenille Campbell admired but didn't do. Then she sat with her cousin, a beader, story teller and laughier. And now she has something to give away. (Photo by Sweetmoon Photography)**

but rolls her eyes as she tells me who our families are, yet again.

On the last day, she teaches me how to edge, and laughs when I start to go in the opposite direction, making it up, yet again. And as I focus on creating a clean and tight line, watching silver needle flashing in and out of tanned moose hide under the kitchen light, we talk in lower voices. The stories are told in unwavering flat tones describing some heartbreak, some pain, and many worried over raising children. We share our truths, unflinchingly and somehow still laugh together, because even in the dark, we can call in the joy.

*When I think of my life, I hear the echoes of her laughter within it. She has been laughing at me and with me and for me since we were babies together. Her laughter is a mark of her joy and I'm glad to hear it. She hands me a needle and a long white piece of thread and tells me to get on with it.*

As I start to get ready to leave, she is looking around for things to gift me, and I quickly tell her that I don't want a ribbon skirt, and she shakes her head at me, laughing. I don't want a gift of anything, I mean. She has given me hours of her time over the last few days, sharing food and beads and knowledge and kinship, so instead I will be the one to find something to gift her with. What she has already given me is immeasurable.

I'm back in the city now, a crooked feather keychain in hand, still smelling of woodsmoke and tobacco. I'm told I'm to give my first beadwork to someone and I'm reminded of how hard it is for me to fall into traditions, just because someone told me to. I know I will eventually gift this slightly textured, slightly off-key artwork to someone soon, but for now, I hold it in a safe place, sitting with it and the stories it holds.

**Virtual Heritage Festival of Saskatoon**  
*Moving Forward by Looking Back*  
**March 20 - 21, 2021**

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# Quit Acting Good: Police Abolition and Why Recognition Won't Save Us

By Erica Violet Lee  
for Eagle Feather News

I'm walking down 20th street when the police cruiser pulls over to the side of the road alongside me. A white officer jumps out and blocks my path on the sidewalk, hand on his belt. Time slows and my eyes instinctively search for an escape route if he tries to hurt me. I immediately memorize the car number, his badge number and his appearance.

"What's your name?" he insists.

"Why are you stopping me?" I reply, aware that I do not legally have to give him any information about me.

He trips on his words, "W-why are you resisting?" surprised that I know my rights and more surprised that I am actually using them.

I repeat: "What is your reason for stopping me?"

"We have reports of a person with long dark hair who tried to stab someone. You fit the profile."

I say that if he's looking for "someone with long dark hair" in the most Native neighbourhood in the city, he'll need more information, and that this action is racial profiling.

He spends the next five minutes telling me he's not a racist and he even has First Nations coworkers, that the police chief is Métis, that he once even dated a Native girl. He gives me his card, on which he writes down the number to his private line.

Finally, the officer gets back in his car and drives off. I continue my walk home and when I am finally out of his line of sight, I begin to cry and shake uncontrollably. I never report it.

I am an abolitionist. I believe in better possible worlds than police violence and imprisonment for Black and Indigenous people.

I grew up in the aftermath of the Starlight Tours, a reality that robbed prairie Native youth of the luxury of childhood innocence that white kids are afforded. I grew up in a neighbourhood where Native women were hunted and murdered by a serial killer in my youth, some used as actual bait by the RCMP in their investigations. I grew up not trusting cops because some of us don't have the option to trust them.

I think about Neil Stonechild wearing his jean jacket in the middle of winter. Tonight, I am dressed in that jean jacket, black jeans and a camo hoodie, with black vans in stark contrast to the dirty snow. It's the second day of spring in Saskatchewan, and it's freezing. I try to call for a ride home, but my phone battery lost its charge in the cold, and besides, it's probably out of minutes.

I ask the Macs cashier if I can use their phone because I needed to call for a ride home. The man said "No, store policy," and redirected me to a payphone down the street at the 7-11. It cost 50 cents, and I had no change. I went into the Sev and they didn't let me use their phone either. I got quarters somehow. Somehow is how these things usually happen around here.

A couple blocks away, the massive new police station has a bronze statue of a fancy shawl powwow dancer that they commissioned to commemorate missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Some mornings, the statue is covered in graffiti, pointing out the hypocrisy of the police in



**Erica Violet Lee captured in the moment on 20th Street by Tenille Campbell of Sweetmoon photography. Erica is often the voice of the unheard when speaking about issues facing Indigenous people in Saskatoon's inner city. (Photo by Sweetmoon Photography)**

killing us while commemorating us in an unmovable medium that cannot speak back to their brutality. Some mornings it is covered in flowers. I admire both forms of resistance and especially the courage to wheatpaste a sign of protest right in the front of the cop HQ. Just as grief and joy coexist in our lives every day, many things can be true at once.

I learned early on how the way I appear affects the way racism manifests. I know fetishization and what it means to be gazed upon with hatred and desire in the same glance. I've been called "pretty for an Indian," and "not like the rest of them," enough times to know that being "pretty" or "good" do not exempt me from violence.

White progressives love good, pretty NDNs because they think we're non-threatening. They love to watch us dance and sing – from a safe distance – at Canada Day celebrations, and they love to watch us speak articulately, dressed up in blazers at reconciliation events. They want to hear stories about "overcoming" and "sobering up" and "pulling up our bootstraps" and finding our lost culture, but

only in ways that don't require them to give back land or money.

What, then, is culture without land? What is culture without self-determination? I do not want recognition from Canada on being a Good NDN, and I do not want inclusion to the realm of whiteness: I want to be *n̄hiyaw* and free.

There's something about the jean jacket that remains a truly Native symbol of refusing respectability. I wrap my faded black thrift-store-special around my shoulders tighter against the wind and I feel safe, despite the odds. Many nights, that feeling is enough to get by.

When I am home, I light a joint as ceremony and take a moment to mourn all the Native folks on the prairies who have ever been denied the use of a telephone, a bathroom, a glass of water, a meal, a ride, shelter, a warm jacket, or any form of safety and dignity that makes a life-or-death difference. A moment of celebration for those who survive anyway.





**“I registered as a  
Métis Citizen to  
be able to connect  
and contribute  
to a greater  
community.”**

**Anita** / Citizen &  
Advanced Education  
Professional

# Now is the Time.

The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) Government works to preserve Métis culture and ensure Métis rights and interests are respected. We are furthering Métis language, culture, health, housing, education, business, and employment.

[metisnation.sk.com/citizenship](https://metisnation.sk.com/citizenship)



“Métis means a person, who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and is accepted by the Métis Nation.”  
Métis Nation–Saskatchewan Constitutional definition of Métis