

Eagle Feather NEWS

FREE

Drama games enhance health

Lacey Eninew engages young people in drama activities with the goal of enhancing their health. Here, she poses with Zander, a puppet she created this summer using simple materials like cardboard cereal boxes, fabric and bamboo sticks.



Drama games designed to break down walls

By Linda Mikolayenko
For Eagle Feather News

LAC LA RONGE – As part of her professional development over the summer, Lacey Eninew made a puppet. It's one more tool she intends to share with students at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band's Senator Myles Venne School when they come back to school this year.

In her role as Community Research Associate for a project funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF), Eninew engages young people in drama activities.

"The idea of these drama games is to break down walls and bring youth out of their shell," she says. "Their puppets can say things that they can't."

This is the second year of the two-year project, and Eninew, working with students from Grade 5-12, came away from last year with quite a few learnings.

"When I assumed something didn't work, I was often proved wrong. What I learned was to come in without any assumptions, or expectations, and a lot of trust," she says.

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JOB EXPERIENCE

Students fortunate enough to work for PotashCorp this summer got some valuable work experience. - Page 8



BORN TO TEACH

Lamarr Oksasikewayin chance encounter with a fellow student led him to a rewarding teaching career. Page 9



NAUGHTY AND NICE

Comedian Don Burnstick is promising a show fit for the whole family when he comes to Saskatoon. - Page 10



EDUCATION DEAL

Vice-Chief Bobby Cameron has signed an education agreement with the Province on behalf of the FSIN. - Page 13



FAMILY TRADITION

Young Isaiah Tootoosis is the latest Tootoosis family member to enter the acting world. - Page 15

Welcome to our
Back to School Edition

Coming In October - Role Models Issue

CPMA #40027204

STC, PotashCorp help inner-city students start school year on right foot

By Fraser Needham

For Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – With back to school upon us, the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Potash Corporation are doing their part to ensure students are prepared.

On Thursday, August 27, STC and PotashCorp gave away about 500 backpacks to students to help them start the school year off on the right foot.

The backpacks contain various supplies students will need for school.

Roughly 250 of the backpacks were given out to kindergarten to Grade 5 students and the other 250 to those in Grades 6 to 12.

Demand actually outstripped supply and some students are on a waiting list for the backpacks.

The event was part of STC's annual carnival at the White Buffalo Youth Lodge in Saskatoon.

PotashCorp director of Aboriginal strategy Leanne Bellegarde says the company believes it is important to try to eliminate as many barriers as possible to inner-city kids achieving an education.

"With PotashCorp and our partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Aboriginal participation in the future is about closing the education gap," Bellegarde says.

"And something as simple as a backpack full of school supplies really does empower young people and excite them about going to school. It's important that you start early and keep that excitement and enthusiasm going," Bellegarde explains.

"So, it's a big part of ensuring young people are making their way to the education system."

STC Chief Felix Thomas adds the tribal council recognizes many families in the core communities are living on limited incomes and any help they can get to ensure their children are prepared for the new school year is much appreciated.

"A lot of these people in the core communities do have a fixed income and a lot of times it adds to the stress of daily living," Thomas says.

"And, when it's back to school, they need these things and if their kids don't get them they are not properly equipped. So, we wanted to make sure that they do go back and that they have the same supplies as everyone else."

STC's daylong annual carnival included a number of games and activities for children and included participation by Saskatoon Police, Saskatoon Fire Department and SaskEnergy.



Close to 500 students received a back to school boost in the form of a Saskatoon Tribal Council back pack loaded with some school supplies. The gift was made possible by the Tribal Council and PotashCorp. The gifts were so popular that a waiting list was created to meet demand.



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U of S Aboriginal Students' Centre helps newcomers adjust to campus life

By Fraser Needham
For Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – The University of Saskatchewan resumed classes in the first week of September and this means back to school for a number of Aboriginal students who are both returning and coming to campus for the first time.

In recent years, the U of S has made a concerted effort to both attract and retain Indigenous students and it appears the strategy is working.

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

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

This fall, the U of S has 2,072 Aboriginal students registered for classes – also the highest number in the institution's history and up from just over 1,900 students last year.

Further, the new Gordon Oakes-Red Bear Student Centre is expected to be completed sometime this fall.

The impressive structure, designed by renowned architect Douglas Cardinal, will be a place where Indigenous students can study, relax and converse within a culturally sensitive environment.

On Sept. 1, the Aboriginal Students' Centre held its annual welcome back function at Louis' Pub.

Graeme Joseph is the centre's team leader of First Nations, Métis and Inuit student success.

"Aboriginal students do face unique challenges with respect to their cultural transition," he says. "So what we want to do at the Aboriginal Students' Centre is provide them with supports in order to make a successful transition.

"And what we do is provide individual support, social, cultural and some academic supports in collaboration with our partners across campus such as the library as well as the colleges."

Joseph says how negative or positive a new student's first few weeks on campus are can determine whether or not they drop out or go on to successfully complete their studies.

This is why the ASC tries to reach out to students early as a means of making them feel comfortable in what can be a daunting new environment.

"We know that students who struggle during that transition often have a lot more challenges throughout their studies and some of them will

drop out rather than continue," he says.

"So the purpose of this event is really to provide them with that opportunity to come and meet people in a very relaxed social setting.

"To try and break down those barriers that people may be putting up in order to reach out and just have a conversation."

Whitney Constant and Ronelda Robillard have both decided to pursue their studies at the University of Saskatchewan.

Both are 22-years-old and have children under the age of five.

Constant is a first year student in arts and sciences with plans of going on to nursing.

Robillard is a transfer student from the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology going into third year at the Edwards School of Business.

The two young women are also from small northern communities – Constant from Opaskwayak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba and Robillard from Wollaston Lake in northern Saskatchewan.

Constant has lived in Prince Albert before and Robillard has lived in Saskatoon for the past few years and as a result both say adjusting to life in a larger urban setting hasn't been such a big jump.

However, both say finding affordable childcare on a student budget is a major challenge.

"One of the daycares I tried to go to ... \$800 for two weeks," Constant says. "I'm a student, I can't do that, it's a lot."

At the same time, both women say some of the outreach activities the university does, and in particular the Aboriginal Students' Centre, certainly make the adjustment to campus life much easier.

"They make you feel comfortable and confident with yourself and what you are doing," Robillard says. "They encourage you, it makes you feel good, it's like home."

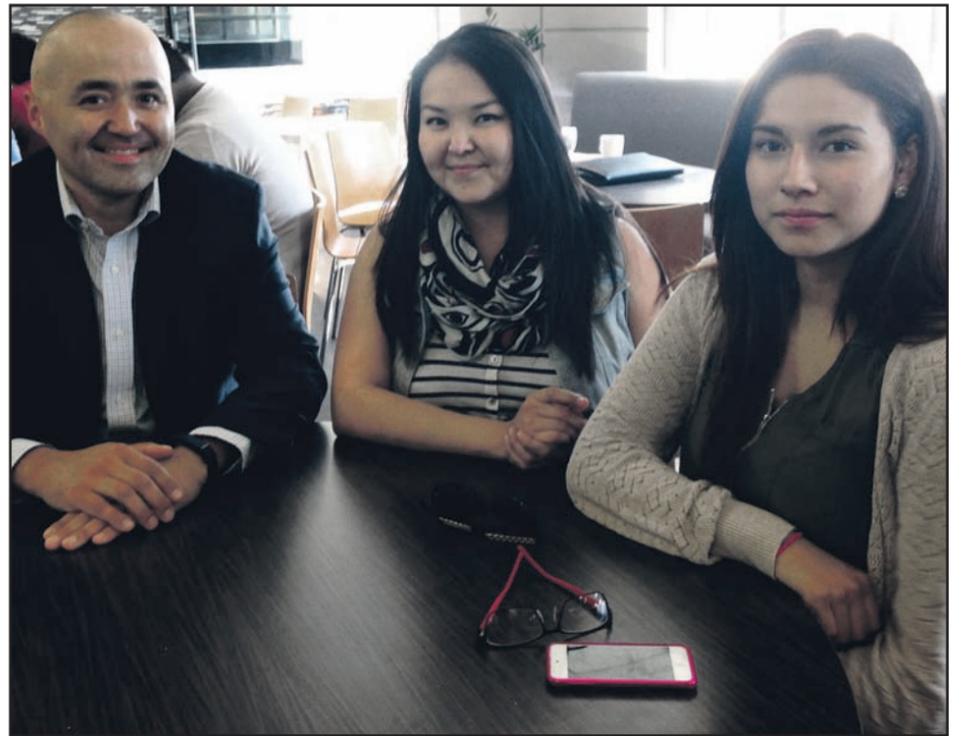
One of the advantages of some of the outreach events the ASC does is it provides the opportunity to meet new people in what can sometimes be an impersonal university environment.

Take Whitney Constant and Ronelda Robillard for example.

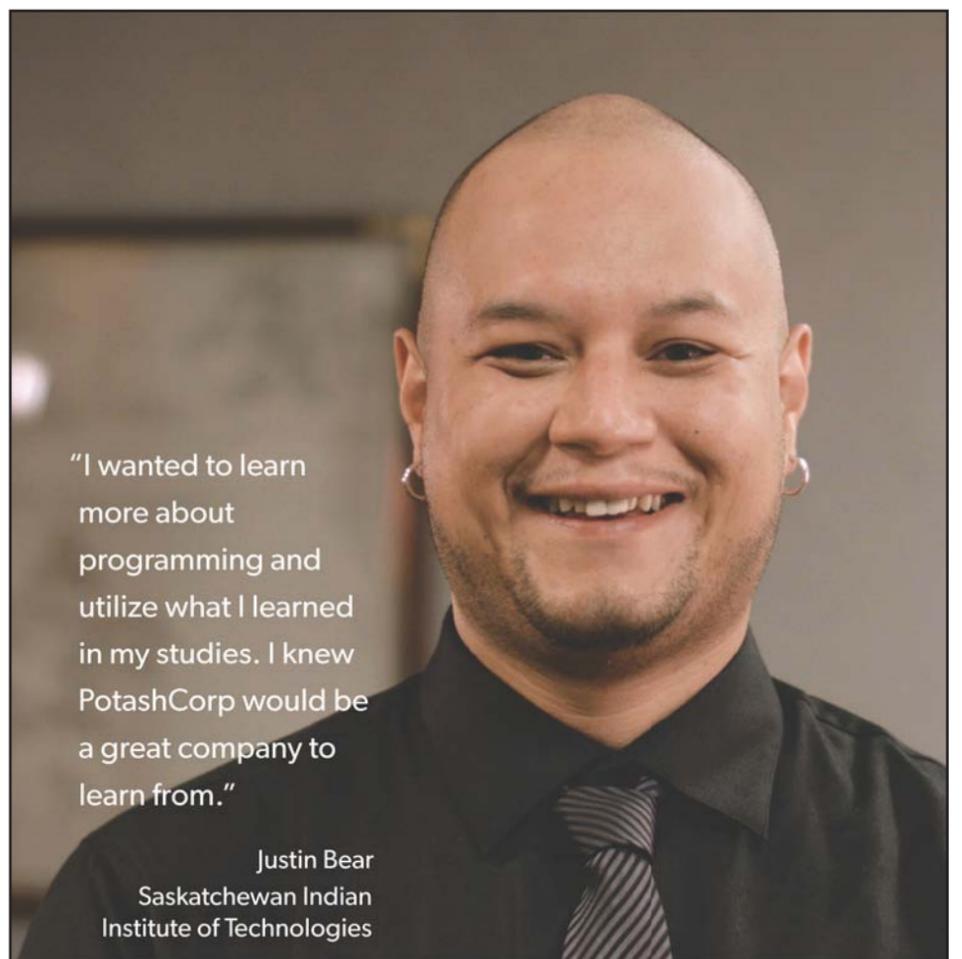
Prior to the first week of classes, they didn't know each other.

However, because they are both the same age and have young children, they are quickly on their way to becoming friends.

And, as we all know, it is often our good friends that give us the support we need to get through university and life in general.



Left to right, U of S Aboriginal Students Centre team leader of First Nations, Métis and Inuit success Graeme Joseph with students Ronelda Robillard and Whitney Constant.
(Photo by Fraser Needham)



"I wanted to learn more about programming and utilize what I learned in my studies. I knew PotashCorp would be a great company to learn from."

Justin Bear
Saskatchewan Indian
Institute of Technologies

Nourishing Dreams

Justin Bear is a student, a parent, a musician, a recreational basketball player – and a person with big dreams of a bright future.

This summer, Justin was one of 15 students selected to pursue their dreams as part of PotashCorp's Aboriginal Internship Program.

If you're a post-secondary student with a dream, learn about jobs and internships at PotashCorp at potashcorp.com/careers.

 facebook.com/PotashCorpaboriginalvoices

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Summer days fade into busy ... and silly ... season

There's something about September and back to school that is special. I'm not sure if it is just a Saskatchewan thing or not, but in July and August, business and life slow down and it becomes all about the kids and living and loving like a hippie in this beautiful province of ours.

Then it all changes and life gets back on schedule again.

We certainly notice it at the paper. In the summer press conferences are few and far between. There are no big gatherings for business ... the only happenings are Back to Batoche or the many powwows and other cultural events that occur over summer. It's kind of a nice break from the hectic life we lead the other ten months of the year.

But, inevitably, we see the rise of back to school in press releases in mid to late August. Renewed funding was announced for GDI so the SUNTEP program could continue. The FSIN and the Province signed an education protocol. The University of Saskatchewan says the Red Bear Aboriginal Students Centre will open this fall. FNUC and Parkland Regional College signed an agreement to deliver the four-year Bachelor of Indigenous Education program at Parkland College's Yorkton Campus and the University of Regina announced Aboriginal place names for the new dorms on campus.

The Saskatoon Catholic School Board will also be raising the Métis flag at St Michael's School to celebrate the start of the Métis program there. Then, with the first day of school, it is like a switch is flipped and we go fast forward into life and we welcome back our students as they return to learn and prepare for the real world.

The summer is great, but sadly, it doesn't repair many of the problems we face because there is still a lot of need out there. Some 500 backpacks

were given away at the White Buffalo Youth Lodge and they had to lock the doors and turn away families because the demand was so great.

These families need those donations to help their kids have the supplies for school.

We are also still struggling to get proper education resources to the students in our reserve schools. The recent protocol signed between the Province and FSIN is all good but it does not bring dollars.

The people who can change the education underfunding situation are part of government. And the only way to

make that happen is to vote (bet you thought this wasn't going to be a get out and vote piece, eh?). Current federal funding of education on-reserve is short by about 30 per cent. That's a lot. And the only way to get that funding up to par is to vote in a

government that commits to improving the situation.

Recently, we had some confusion on the voting front when Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde launched a campaign to get people to vote but wasn't going to vote himself. Now he has changed his mind and decided to vote.

He says he talked to Elders but we think he is hearing the message of Ashley (Burnham) Callingbull, the first Canadian and first First Nation woman to win the Mrs. Universe pageant.

The 25-year-old Enoch Cree Nation beauty is unbelievably gorgeous, smart and talented and apparently very outspoken. She has already raised the hackles of old Conservative war boots with her strong anti-Harper messages and her urging Aboriginal people to vote.

Her one tweet says it all: "I urge all First Nations people in Canada to vote in this upcoming election. We are in desperate need of a new PM. Fight for your rights."

This Tweet had over 1,000 re-tweets. How is that for reaching the masses?

Congratulations to Ashley, by the way. If you want to see more of her she is in the APTN show Blackstone and has a Facebook page with over 100,000 followers.

This officially makes her kind of a big deal. And with more role models like her in the community, our young students have more and more people to look up to and aspire to be.

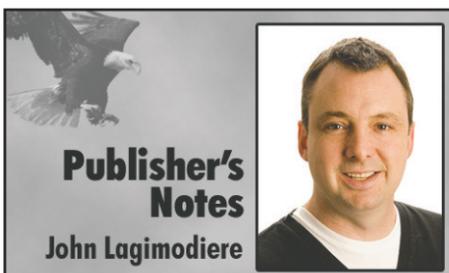
Next month

The October edition is always the role model edition and we will be profiling some people, businesses and organizations that are leaders in the community.

And if you didn't notice, silly season (politics) is upon us and in October we will elect a Prime Minister and the Chiefs and delegates of the FSIN will elect three new leaders, including the Chief.

We will have the lowdown on voting for you as well as the list of those brave enough to put their names forward for the FSIN positions.

And remember, breaking news and election updates are available on our website every day. And jobs, lots of jobs. www.eaglefeathernews.com



Publisher's Notes

John Lagimodiere



These tiny tots from the Wanuskewin Powwow were quick to pose for a photo and also eager to get on the floor and to show their dance steps. Their tie to their culture and community will certainly help them be better students as they head back to school. We just have to ensure they have the same resources and opportunities as every other Canadian child.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

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Dealing with the stress of the school supply list

Every summer, I'd daydream about going back to class with a Backstreet Boys backpack filled with every item on my school supply list. But budget constraints (i.e. my parent's stinginess) meant that it never turned out that way. Instead, my school list went something like this:

1 pair of Sneakers (white soles only.)

Because they were cheap, my mom bought dark-soled runners. One could make the argument that requesting only white soles was racist. But instead, I'd take my ebony soled shoes and spend the entire school year trying to hide them. In gym class, I'd run softly, "Like a gazelle," I would whisper, "like a light, graceful gazelle – leaving no black foot prints behind."

The teacher could have been a jerk and insist that every one with dark soles take off their shoes. But then she'd have the poor kids running through the gym in their socks and who wants the headache of writing up the inevitable broken arms?

Number 2 pencils

Somehow my parents found number one pencils and stuffed these in our pencil cases. I suspect they were made in Russia from wood harvested from the Chernobyl forests. They were flimsy, broke all the time and smelled of gasoline.

10 Notebooks

If the teacher had asked for lined notebooks, then without fail, my mom would buy us the unlined, "Just draw the lines in, for God's sake." If the teacher asked for unlined, then mom would tell us to white out the lines. No matter how many were requested, we never got more than five each. We were told to write smaller and be succinct, like Hemingway.

White Out

This was taken off the lists in the early eighties when kids discovered the high that you got from inhaling "the white gold" (as it was known around schoolyards.) I



never imbibed myself, although I was a fan of those markers that smelled like the colour. I had many happy moments with the grape flavor. Even though we never had the rest of our school list, for some reason, we always had white out. Apparently, my mom had some back alley, black market hook-up.

Crayons

Every year I fantasized about one of those 64 crayons boxes with the built-in crayon sharpener for those moments when you need precision point on your crayon. In addition to good ole racist "Indian Brown", the box had colours I never even dreamed of. But what did we get? A box of eight. "Mix them together," mom would advise. That may work with oil paints but with crayons, it just becomes a brown sludge, which oddly enough looked exactly like "Indian Brown."

The Protractor

In Grade 3, my mom had bought three by accident for my older sister who was in junior high and she gave the extra to me. I gratefully added it to my meager collection of supplies. On the first day, the students laid out our supplies on our desks so that our teacher, Mrs. Hatchett, could shame some kids for not having the required supplies and applaud others like Cindy Lecomber for having every item on the list, plus an eraser that smelled like bubble gum.

I put my protractor on top of my pile. I was so proud of it even though I had no idea what it was used for (cutting pizza?). When Mrs. Hatchett saw it, she said, "That's not on the list, Dawn, you will take that home."

But I didn't. I kept it in my desk and I would touch it from time to time. It made me feel special that metal pointy thing, because for once I had something that no one else had.

But it also made me nervous, having it right beneath the teacher's nose. It seemed to come alive in my metal desk and I was sure that everyone in the room could hear it, scraping inside as if saying, "Here I am, proof that Dawn is a liar."

And then the worst happened, Cindy Lecomber lost her bubble gum eraser. We all had to empty out our desks. (FYI: Elementary school teachers are notorious abusers of the Charter) All of my belongings were piled on my desk, except for the protractor.

I attempted to put it under my shirt but as it was sharp, I ended up shrieking. This gave me away. My teacher demanded to see what was behind my back. I still remember how my knees shook as I showed her the protractor. With it you could draw perfect circles around my shame and her anger and the protractor would be where those two circles intersected. She asked me why I didn't take it home, why I disobeyed her, why I was crying...

Before I could answer Cindy Lecomber proclaimed loudly that she had found her eraser, "in her pencil case, oops!" I was forgotten.

But as ordered, I took the protractor home and put it in my closet. I figured it would be there when I needed it. (It wasn't.)

So to all you students who are going to school with missing items from "the list," don't sweat it – I made it through just fine. Your teachers may not want you to know this, but most of the time, half-assed is good enough.

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Whither (Wither?) Canada?

'Whither' is an adverb that asks where is Canada going? 'Wither' is a verb that tells us something is drying up; in a state of decay and decline.

The 2015 election calls out the meaning of both words for Canadians generally and for Indigenous people particularly. Where is Canada going under the present government? What are Canada's values and how are they being upheld by the national government? Are state institutions doing what is right for Canadians?

For all Canadians, it must be realized that Canada has been changing into a dictatorship for decades, a process that has been accelerated by the rule of Prime Minister Harper.

You do not have to believe me.

Donald Savoie, an experienced federal bureaucrat and acclaimed political scientist concluded in his 1999 book, *Governing from the Centre* that the central agencies, Privy Council office, Treasury Board and Finance that were created to smooth federal planning processes have now been used to galvanize power in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and have weakened not only line departments and ministers, but Parliament itself, without contributing to more rational and coherent policy-making.

We all know that we can now add the Senate to that list. Savoie recently wrote a scathing indictment of the current centralization of power in the PMO, an issue that regularly makes the headlines of national media outlets. In the interests of non-partisanship I mention Jeffery Simpson's book "The Friendly Dictatorship" about the Chretien Liberal government.

As a recent participant in Facebook which I call 'Faceoff' I am bombarded every day by denunciations of everything that Mr. Harper, who has been given a wide and interesting list of nicknames, says and does. A political commentator called him the loneliest PM, one who takes no advice but his own and muzzles scientists. Never mind central agencies in such a case.

I know that Canada's image as an international boy scout has been tarnished by Harper's disdain for the United Nations and disregard for international human rights including the international human right of self-determination of Indigenous peoples in Canada which the government acknowledged in Geneva in October 1997.

Now we have a campaign to enlist the voting power of First Nations to dislodge the Conservative party from government, realizing that this vote can make a difference in the number of seats gained or lost. I had mentioned this option for change at a major conference in Prince Albert a few years ago in light of the expression of frustration by First

Nation leaders at the non-cooperative response to attempts to garner respect for the Treaties and other constitutional rights.



Comment
Paul Chartrand

The challenge for change in our federal system is the archaic electoral system that we have. Governments can gain a majority in Parliament and rule as they please, as have both Harper and Chretien, where over 60 per cent of the voters do not want them. What party will agree to change that? Whither Canada indeed.

Every vote will count nevertheless. Our voices must be heard at the election because we will all be voiceless after that.

...

Little Boy Dead on the Beach

The heart-wrenching photo of that little refugee boy in Turkey that everyone saw early this month surely made every parent and grandparent hug their children a bit tighter that day.

It calls to mind the iconic 1972 photo of the 12 year old Vietnamese girl, severely burned by napalm running on the road naked and screaming in pain. That was the Vietnam War. Will this picture of a little boy, who according to his aunt in Vancouver, wanted to have a bicycle, change anything other than the temporary focus in federal electioneering?

By the way, the little Vietnamese girl became a refugee in Canada and now lives in Ontario with her family, according to online reports.

We all know in the abstract, that innocent people die from horrible causes every day.

But it seems that there is something very personal about our humanity and how we express it. Seeing a photo of an actual person, or meeting strangers who become friends has a deep effect upon the way we see others.

In everyday life folks tend to like and favour their own people and their own ways. Humans tend to favour what is familiar and regard the unfamiliar with unease. This I believe is the basis for community formation.

Racism, on the other hand, is the dark side of community formation. Is it not better to acknowledge our humanity and its frailties and deal with it rationally?

Whither Canada? A little boy who wanted a bicycle has touched our compassion and helped us to think about the kind of country we want.



The newly wrapped busses are rolling out to communities. Here we have many of the friendly SIIT staff you may meet on one of the buses: Terri Davis, Burton O'Soup, Donna Pelly, Allison Rinas and Shelley Pinacie. (Photo by John Lagimodiere)

SIIT buses getting ready to roll

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) recently unveiled two newly wrapped Job Connections buses that are hitting the road to deliver career services to First Nations communities across the province.

This year, the Mobile Job Connection Service project has expanded its services and will be working closely with a number of employers to help them recruit First Nations people.

In partnership with Saskatchewan Indian Training Assessment Group (SITAG), SIIT began delivering services

in August.

"We have hit upwards of 70 communities in six months at times. We have hit every community we can with the bus except where we need to fly in," said Burton O'Soup Manager of Job Connections RV's for SIIT.

"The communities like the availability of having the Internet and being able to access the outside world. This provides the opportunities and our coaches provide answers to their questions."

The brightly decorated busses have several work stations in them as well as military grade satellite Internet access.



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U of R campus residences have new names

By Tiffany Head
For Eagle Feather News

REGINA – In keeping with the Strategic plan to indigenize the University of Regina, the names for the new residences reveal First Nations languages were used.

A few months ago, the University had a contest to name the new buildings as well as the existing North and South Residence buildings.

Braden Korschuh, Sports Information Officer in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, said the idea that he put forward was to have the residence towers named after Saskatchewan symbols.

“I went on the government site, I think the official bird is the grouse, crop is wheat, official flower is the prairie lily, and I just suggested they be named after those. They kind of took that concept and took it one step further and had it translated into Cree,” said Korschuh.

The names were not exactly what he had proposed but he is happy that he had taken a part in the project from his suggestions.

“It’s nice to know I had some sort of small role in naming a pretty big improvement in our campus,” said Korschuh.

The Residence naming committee recommended names that would contribute to the Indigenization of the University in keeping with the 2015-2020 strategic plan, Peyak Aski Kikawinaw.

The naming process was based on Korschuh’s input and the translations provided by Dr. Arok Wolvengrey of First Nations University of Canada.

Wolvengrey said the names were supplied were in Cree, Sauteaux (Ojibwe), Dakota and Nakota (Assiniboine), the four first languages recognized from Treaty four territory.

“The names that were chosen were: paskwaw (plains; Prairie in Cree), kišik (“sky” in Sauteaux), and Wakpa (river: creek” in Dakota and Nakota),” said Wolvengrey.

All three symbols: sky, prairie and



As part of the Indigenization of its campus, the University of Regina has used First Nation languages in naming their two new residences and two other existing buildings. (Photo by Tiffany Head)

river, are also on the Treaty 4 flag.

The First Nations received a request from the U of R and it was explained that they wished to honour these Nations and their languages by naming the important buildings on campus within those languages.

“I consulted with colleagues and available resources here at the First Nations University to compile the translations of a set of potential English words that have been suggested, and augmented this with additional vocabulary suggestions,” said Wolvengrey.

“The three names that were chosen to represent important features of the prairie landscape and allow for all four languages to be honoured.”

The new residence and daycare building will be named, Kišik towers (pronounced as KEE-zhick), the North Residence building will be renamed, Paskwaw Tower (pronounced pus-KWOW), and the South residence will

be known as WakpáTower (pronounced wak-pa).

The new residence, which is still under construction, will have a 606-bed residence and a daycare facility.

The campus dorms will welcome more students to live on campus and they will be able to develop life-long relationships with new people in the university’s diverse environment.

Saskatchewan Minimum Wage Increase

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PotashCorp offered summer jobs with practical experience

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – Remember those summer jobs during university when you worked in a warehouse or cut grass and went back to school with a wee bit of cash in your pocket and a sore back but no real skills to apply to your education other than learning you don't want to do that job again?

Well, PotashCorp turned that old process on its head this year with their Summer Internship Program that brought 14 university and technical students into their workplace for some real on the job practical experience.

Leanne Bellegarde is the Director, Aboriginal Strategy for PotashCorp and she sees the Summer Internship program as a win for the students and for her company.

"I think the students had a great summer experience, more so than they might have expected. And I think they go back revitalized as students and committed to their academic careers because they see how it applies to a job," said Bellegarde.

"I also think they go back with a new appreciation of PotashCorp whose been a long-time company in this province, in an industry they might not have been familiar with before."

Caitlyn Lahonen and Moshe Lawlor are engineering students and they spent their summer learning on the job at Cory Mine.

"I learned a lot of cool things that will be applicable in my classes. I feel like I will be ahead of all of my classmates for sure," said Caitlyn Lahonen who is also a student athlete at Queens University.

benefits, and employee engagement, the value of the work experience is immeasurable," said Lawlor a student at University of British Columbia.

"I would easily be able to recommend PotashCorp as an employer."

Talk like that is music to Bellegarde's ears when it comes to recruiting.

"Our commitment has always been to move to more Aboriginal inclusion in our workforce here at PotashCorp. Ultimately we are trying to become representative across all jobs and categories in our corporate office and at our sites here in Saskatchewan," said Bellegarde.

"In order to look across categories we have to draw talent that is capable at professional, technical, managerial and administrative levels. We've really tried to target this initial offering to engineering, geological, business admin and IT students. Those are expanded jobs that introduce them to us and us and them across all aspects of our operations."

Patricia Gardypie is an accounting student at the Edwards School of Business and she just found out her summer job at head office has been extended until December. She can accommodate that



Caitlyn Lahonen and Moshe Lawlor were able to practice what they have learned at engineering school during their summer at Cory Mine.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

SIIT, SIGA and the FSIN.

Gardypie and her fellow students even had a sit down with PotashCorp CEO Jochen Tilk and Vice Presidents Wayne Brownlee and Lee Knaflec.

"I was very impressed with Mr Tilk's response to my questions and he is intent on meeting or beating standards or even developing new environmental standards. Actually their corporate social responsibility was what convinced me to apply here."

The success of the Internship program has PotashCorp already beginning

the process to recruit for next year.

"This pilot worked out really well for us and the students. We have many great educational institutions with a strong showing of Aboriginal students and we are making a targeted effort to expand opportunities to them," said Bellegarde.

"It increases the education attainment and strengthens the attachment to the labour force and we should all be encouraged and recognize there is great talent out there in the Aboriginal community."



Patricia Gardypie spent time in accounting at the head office and was fortunate to have her posting extended until December.

(Photo by John Lagimodiere)

"My experience here has been amazing and I have loved coming to work every day. The workplace is so positive and the people here are so welcoming."

Both students were thankful for the technical teachings they received and were thoroughly impressed with the commitment that PotashCorp has made to the community. Their time on site was memorable.

"PotashCorp is able to offer an experience that most other employers are unable to offer. In addition to fair pay,

as her final class before graduating can be taken online.

But she thinks with her experience at head office, the class will be a snap.

"My last class is on cost accounting and we did that here as part of my work. I'm a better hands on learner than a text book learner so I'm going to be able to think about that when I am actually doing my class on accounting and have something in the back of my head to help me understand that trail," said Gardypie who was drawn to accounting after working in the finance departments at

Tom Mulcair NDP

Sandra Arias

for Battlefords—Lloydminster

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Lamarr Oksasikewayin helps students fit in at school

Moe Morin is a freelance writer and photographer and the co-founder of Humans of Saskatoon. She photographs and interviews people and run their stories on her highly popular Facebook page. This month she asked Lamarr Oksasikewayin, a Grade 7 and 8 teacher as an Aboriginal Educator, for advice for junior and high school students coming back to school. Below are his unedited words.

tânisi nitôtêmtik, asây mîna ê-kîskinohamâkisiyahk - In our culture, teachings and learning comes from within and you have to know who you are as a person.

A lot of Aboriginal youth (including myself back in high school, I didn't know who I was, nor did I fit in). I remember that, and there is a teaching about adolescence and people ask how is it that I can teach adolescents. You have to understand them, and in order to understand them, you have to define them.

I was told this by Phillip Whiteman Sr., who teaches that adolescents are contrary people. Give them a hat, and they'll put it on backwards, they wear clothes that are not appropriate to the weather, and they'll be talking constantly to one another but ask them to speak, and they

are quiet. So they do a lot of things that are contrary.

Their role in society is to reflect society, so when I look at young Aboriginal people, the high suicide rates, the high dropout rates, etc., I know it is reflective of society and it is not their doing. It is the environment that they're growing up in, so as I'm teaching them, I teach and want them to understand, "you matter, people care about you, you're an okay person, and anything that you do is a normal reaction to circumstances you have gone through."

I take an empathic approach to teaching, and it's what motivates me. They need the stability of walking into a



Lamarr Oksasikewayin took the ITEP program at the University of Saskatchewan.

classroom and know they are welcome there. I make it a point to say hello and making it a point to be polite and saying thank you. I believe in empowering students, it will benefit them, and they learn to heal themselves.

As a person, once they start to do this, they can then start learning about their community, the world around them, and see that the world around them is actually bigger

than what they believe it to be. I need them to also understand that culture is more than just powwows, or round-dances, that culture is a way of life.

For a while it was not okay because of residential school and such, it left a

bad taste. I'm here to get them to understand that it's OK to be upset, go ahead and be upset, I'm still going to be here for them and teaching.

I believe in education, and education is not just the school that these kids go to, as long as they're willing and their minds are open, they're life-long learners. My late Moshoom told me he was still learning and to me he was the walking Wikipedia. I'm actually still learning to be a teacher even though I've been teaching many years.

I attempt to pass this message onto the students and also that our culture teaches us love, empathy and compassion, treating each other in this way is important. I also want to say I didn't know I wanted to get into Education, and it was only when I went back to high school to upgrade my marks. I sat in a math class, and a fellow student from my community (Sweetgrass) was having difficulty with a question and asked me for assistance.

I turned around, and showed her at which time, she said, "you made this so easy ... you should become a teacher."

So I did and entered into the ITEP Program at the University of Saskatchewan in 1990.



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Liberals, NDP wage a battle for Sask. Aboriginal vote on Oct. 19

**By Fraser Needham
For Eagle Feather News**

In what has become a very competitive federal election campaign, both the Liberals and NDP are driving hard to court the Aboriginal vote in Saskatchewan.

As part of this effort, both parties have worked hard to recruit Indigenous candidates.

Saskatchewan resident Kevin Seesequasis is the male co-chair of the Liberal Party's Aboriginal Peoples' Commission.

He says the party has been working hard since the 2011 election to recruit as many Indigenous candidates as possible.

"We've been engaging across the country for the last three years. We began the process off right after the last election so I've been involved with the Aboriginal People's Commission going coast to coast attending AFN (Assembly of First Nations) assemblies, getting into communities, helping in by-elections where there's a strong Indigenous community."

Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River is perhaps the riding where either the Liberals or Conservatives have the best chance of unseating a Conservative incumbent.

This is because boundary redistribution makes the riding an even more Aboriginal one.

Former Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations leader Lawrence Joseph is running for the Liberals in the northern riding.

He says he believes changes to the riding's boundaries should work strongly in his favour.

"The realignment of boundaries was a big plus for that riding. Now 71 per cent is Indigenous and 25 per cent First Nations. A lot of Métis too – 17 per cent in total vote up there. I think the benefit there is it (the constituency) is actually going to be concentrated on these voters versus before it was farmers – a mixture of people who I really

don't think belong economically and socially to that riding."

For the first time, Saskatoon-West will be a solely urban riding, which should work to the advantage of either the Liberals or NDP as in the past the Conservatives have relied heavily on rural support to win the seat.

Liberal candidate Lisa Abbott, a human rights lawyer, admits her party and the NDP are engaged in a fierce competition for Indigenous votes.

However, she says she is convinced that most Aboriginal people will come around to the Trudeau Liberals because they have the best leader and best policies such as the party's First Nations education plan.

Right now, Abbott says she is focusing on trying to encourage as many of the riding's roughly 20 per cent Indigenous people to come out to the polls on October 19.

"It's only really the Liberal Party that has a clear plan for change and I think our platform is the best," she says.

"We can also thank Prime Minister Harper for being a very polarizing figure and a lot of people are wanting to vote in this election where they might not have in the past. So, the issue for me is not so much splitting the NDP vote as it is mobilizing and empowering First Nations and Métis people to get out and vote."

The Regina Qu'appelle riding has seen some changes due to redistribution but it remains an urban-rural constituency.

In this seat, Liberal candidate and respected academic Della Anaquod is squaring off against longtime Conservative incumbent and House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer.

She says with the constituency being roughly 22 per cent Aboriginal, like Abbott, she is working to encourage Indigenous voters to get out to the polls and make them aware of some of the new voter identification rules.

• Continued on Page 11



SANDRA ARIAS



GEORGINA JOLIBOIS



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Burnstick being naughty and nice in Sask.

By John Lagimodiere
Of Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – Coming back to Saskatchewan is always fun for Don Burnstick and in September he has a couple of really good reasons to visit.

First of all, Don will be the MC for Tanning Hides, a fundraiser put together by a committee in Saskatoon to raise money for evacuees from the northern forest fires this year.

“This will be a good all ages show and for a very important cause,” said Burnstick in an interview with Eagle Feather News.

“I like to help people and we are all in this together so let’s help each other out.”

Tanning Hides happens Sept. 17 at the Dakota Dunes Casino. This event will include a roast of several chiefs including Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief Tammy Cook-Searson and Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas. Other entertainers are expected, as well as a silent auction.

Burnstick is also bringing his Hall Pass tour across Saskatchewan with shows in Regina and Saskatoon in late Sep-

tember and Lloydminster and Prince Albert in early October. This show is a bit more adult themed according to Don.

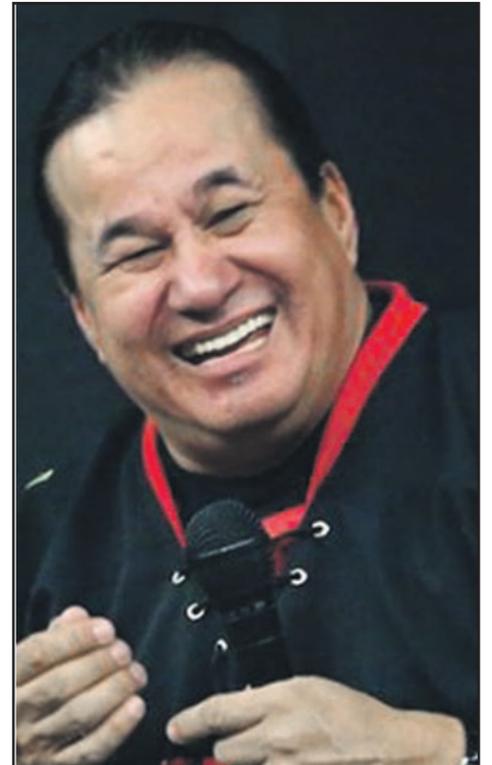
“Hall pass isn’t about school, it is from that movie where married people get to go out one time and you know, do their thing. My wife and I were talking about that movie and we were driving through Saskatchewan which has some really good names for towns,” said Burnstick.

“You are the only place that has Love, Climax and even a town called Indian Head. So we put together this story with all the towns and First Nation communities and we put together this phenomenal and fun story that has a lot of sexual innuendo.”

Burnstick is excited about the new material and even had one Chief come up after a show and asked that his reserve be included.

“Now we have to include Little Red,” laughed Don. “There is nowhere else I could do this type of story in Canada or in the States. Only in Saskatchewan. The people are really hearty folk with such a good sense of humour and can laugh at themselves.”

For info on the tour check out Don’s Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/DonBurnstickFanPage/events>



DON BURNSTICK

Preparing Aboriginal voters poses a challenge for parties

• Continued from Page 10

Doing all of this in a very large geographic constituency does pose challenges, Anaquod adds.

“Getting them out to ID clinics which is an issue in terms of that extra piece identification or hurdle or barrier you have to go through,” she says. “Getting them to register and vote and it’s a humungous territory to drive around.”

John Tzupa is the NDP’s regional director for Saskatchewan.

He says there are a number of reasons Aboriginal people should cast their ballots with the NDP in this election.

“First and foremost, we’re talking about building a nation to nation relationship with all Canada’s Indigenous peoples. We will also consult and take action on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and improve on-reserve housing, roads and drinking water.”

In the province’s northern riding, longtime La Loche Mayor Georgina Jolibois is the NDP candidate.

She says she hopes her years of experience in the constituency’s local politics will give her a leg up on both the Liberal and Conservative candidates.

She is also quick to point out neither Joseph nor Conservative MP Rob Clarke actually live in the riding.

“How can they represent us with our issues if they don’t live with us and, in my opinion, they don’t understand what it’s like to live in northern Saskatchewan.”

Lloydminster-Battlefords NDP candidate Sandra Arias, who is a former Red Pheasant First Nation band councillor, could not be reached for comment.



Aboriginal Liberal candidates in Saskatchewan are Lawrence Joseph, Lisa Abbott and Della Anaquod. (Photo by Fraser Needham)

BURNSTICK PROMOTIONS PRESENTS

HALL PASS

COMEDY TOUR

featuring



DON BURNSTICK

<p style="text-align: center; color: yellow; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.5em;">REGINA</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">TUE, SEPT. 29</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">DOORS-7:00PM SHOW-7:30PM THE PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE 1077 ANGUS ST. 306-779-2277</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: yellow; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.5em;">SASKATOON</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">WED, SEPT. 30</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">DOORS-7:00PM SHOW-8:00PM THE ROXY THEATRE 320 - 20TH ST WEST 306-665-0552</p>
<p style="text-align: center; color: yellow; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.5em;">LLOYDMINSTER</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">FRI, OCT. 02</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">DOORS-7:30PM SHOW-8:00PM VIC JUBA COMMUNITY THEATRE 2602 - 59 AVE 780-872-7400</p>	<p style="text-align: center; color: yellow; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.5em;">PRINCE ALBERT</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">SAT, OCT. 03</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">DOORS-6:30PM SHOW-7:30PM E.A. RAWLINSON CENTRE 142 - 12TH ST WEST 306-765-1270</p>

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Number of Aboriginal students continues to climb

We just learned that there are 2,072 self-identified Aboriginal students enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan this academic year.

Wow! This means that Aboriginal students now make up 10.4 per cent of the total student population at this university. This is the highest number of Aboriginal students on campus ever and it fills us with much pride and hope for our collective future. While we are still under-represented in post-secondary institutions, we have definitely come a long way in a relatively short period of time.

First Nation peoples did not start trickling in to universities until the early 1960s. Prior to that there were a handful of university students who received support from the churches and on an ad-hoc basis from Indian Affairs. But there were no post-secondary support programs in place until the mid-1960s when Indian Affairs created the Vocational Training Program (VTP).

This program mostly supported vocational training. In 1973 for example, 60 per cent of all First Nation students were enrolled in vocational programs, 30 per cent were in upgrading programs, and less than one per cent of sponsored students were in university. In 1960 there were only 200 First Nation students enrolled in colleges and universities across Canada. Between 1944 and 1977 there were only 134 status Indian university graduates in the prairie province region.

The greatest push for increased univer-

sity enrollments of First Nation students came in 1972 when the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) published a position paper "Indian Control of Indian Education." The NIB pushed for better education opportunities and lobbied the federal government to provide consistent and quality education support for K-12 and post-secondary.

After much lobbying and consultation, in 1978, the federal government implemented the Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program (PSEAP or Circular E-12) that provided funds and governed the allocation and distribution of funding.

Student enrollments increased dramatically after that. By 1986-87 there were 13,196 First Nation university students nationally, then in 1989 Indian Affairs capped the funding program.

Despite protests and rallies across the country to reinstate full funding, Indian Affairs maintained the cap. We argued that post-secondary education is a Treaty Right, many also argued that the cap was a strategy to ensure our people would not reach education parity with the rest of Canada, a way of keeping us down.

The federal government argued that post-secondary support was offered as a

matter of social policy and was not a Treaty Right. The funding cap resulted in a slow-down of First Nation student university enrollments.

Despite the funding cap, university enrollments continued to increase, though much slower than it had in the 1980s. By 2001 there were almost 30,000 First Nation students enrolled in colleges and universities across, and there are now a few thousand more than that.

In many ways Saskatchewan is leading the way in First Nation post-secondary enrollments, based on provincial population numbers, when we look at enrollments at each of the post-secondary institutions in the province. Hopefully I will be able to access these numbers and report on them in the near future.

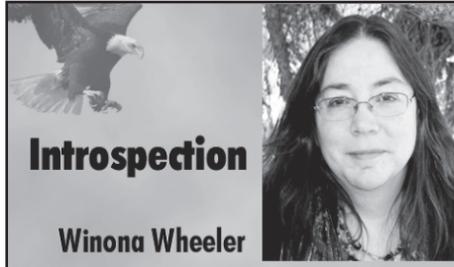
The post-secondary education attainment levels of First Nation peoples in Saskatchewan are due to a number of supporting factors: The increased number of on-reserve First Nation controlled schools and urban school support programs resulting in more high school graduates; increased access to post-secondary funding beyond Aboriginal Affairs including bursaries, scholarships, student loans, and on-campus part-

time employment opportunities; an increase in Aboriginal faculty and instructors (though we are still lagging WAY behind on producing First Nation post-secondary instructors); and an expansion of relevant Aboriginal academic programs—the teacher education, social work and Indigenous Studies programs have been joined by business, governance, agriculture, lands management, law, medical, nursing, engineering and other academic programs giving students a wide selection to choose from. Increased enrollments are also the result of universities implementing new policies and student support programs that strive to make the institutions more welcoming and relevant to Aboriginal students, and which strive to acknowledge, accept, and support Indigenous ways of knowing.

The work done so far to increase enrollments is paying off. While our numbers have increased dramatically in the last 45 years, we still have not reached education parity with the rest of the province.

It is also the case that we need to put more efforts towards increasing Aboriginal student retention rates. Always much to do.

To the 2,072 self-identified Aboriginal students at the University of Saskatchewan, and the thousands more at our other post-secondary institutions, we welcome you! You will face many challenges and have to push yourself harder than you ever have before, but believe us when we tell you, that every ounce of effort you put out is totally worth it.



Introspection

Winona Wheeler

Arts helps build students' confidence

• Continued from Page One

That trust paid off when she worked with a group of Grade 6, 7 and 8 students as they wrote a poem, and then successfully performed a dramatization of it at the Prince Albert Grand Council Fine Arts Festival in the spring.

For students in Grades 10 to 12, the drama program is a credited elective.

The ones that sign up for it are "usually those who don't want to take Phys Ed," she says, smiling because she was previously the Physical Education teacher at the school.

However, it is Eninew's background as a visual artist and actor, including performances with the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company, that suits her for her current role, says Dr. Linda Goulet, a professor with the First Nations University of Canada.

Goulet is the team leader for the La Ronge project, one of several teams in the province that the SHRF grant is funding that are using arts-based methods to enhance the health of First Nations and Métis youth. It is an extension of a research project that has been going on in the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council area for the past ten years.

"The arts really help students develop self-confidence; they help them develop positive relationships,"

says Goulet.

What distinguishes this community-based research from traditional research, says Goulet, is that it is co-directed.

"They are gathering research on their own lives," she explains, "rather than just us being the only ones reflecting on what art does for them, and how art helps them become healthier, or enhances their well-being."

Eninew has already seen this in her work.

"The simplest games teach them the most profound lessons," she says. "We'd have tennis balls and we would throw them in patterns around a circle. Sometimes we'd have five tennis balls going, but it would have the same pattern so you would throw to the same person. At the end they got so good at it, but at the beginning it was really rough."

What one of the students picked up from that small game, says Eninew, was "to have patience with yourself when you're learning something."

The following student journal entry is another illustration of the positive impact of the program:

"It's the games and warm-ups I think that turns our day around if we are having a bad morning. I'm looking forward to Monday to see what games we'll play."

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FSIN, Province sign education agreement

By Fraser Needham
For Eagle Feather News

SASKATOON – The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the provincial government have signed a memorandum of understanding that recognizes education as an inherent treaty right.

The agreement recognizes jurisdictional control of education falls under the authority of each elected chief and council in a given treaty territory.

Saskatchewan Minister of Education Don Morgan says although funding for on-reserve education is a federal responsibility, there are areas where the Province and First Nations governments can work together to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

He notes the early learning program with Whitecap Dakota First Nation, invitational shared services agreement with the Prince Albert Grand Council and the Microsoft software licensing agreement, which covers both on and off-reserve schools, are a few examples where both governments have successfully collaborated together.

“As a Province, we don’t want to invest capital in bricks and mortar on-reserve. But we’ve got a number of programs that function on-reserve and to the extent that we can partner with chief and council, and FSIN, we want to do that.”

FSIN Vice-Chief Bobby Cameron adds that by working together, the Province and Indigenous governments are helping to improve on-reserve graduation rates.

He points out Grade 12 graduation numbers from provincial on-reserve schools have increased from about 600 students in 2012 to roughly 750 this year.

“It’s slowly increasing, chipping away at the graduation rate is what we want to do. And everything and anything we can do to enhance that and give our treaty Indian students that opportunity is what we want to do as leaders, as educators, as people of Saskatchewan.”

The Harper government’s controversial Bill C-33, First Nations Control of First Nations Education

Act, currently sits in limbo after failing to gain the support of a number of elected chiefs across the country.

The bill proposes \$1.25 billion over three years for First Nations education beginning in 2016.

Former Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo, who supported a revised version of the bill, resigned over the dispute.

At an election campaign stop in Saskatoon on August 13, Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau said his party would commit \$2.6 billion over four years to First Nations education if elected to government.

In 2009, the Grade 12 graduation rate was 72.3 per cent for all students in Saskatchewan while only 32.7 per cent for Indigenous students.



FSIN Vice-Chief Bobby Cameron and Education Minister Don Morgan field questions after signing an education agreement.

The education memorandum of understanding does not add any new funding to the \$6 million the province already commits to on-reserve schooling.

It was signed at the FSIN’s Saskatoon offices on Wednesday August 26.

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To vote or not to vote, that is the First Nation question

John L.: A minor media storm is brewing in Indian Country over the positions taken by local and national First Nation leaders in federal politics. Here to comment is Eagle Feather News' most dangerous columnist, Dirk Dashing.

Dirk: Thank you, John. Assembly of First Nations Chief, Perry Bellegarde, created a stir when he encouraged all First Nation people to vote in the federal election, and then revealed he may not cast a ballot himself. He's since decided to cast his secret ballot after all.

John L.: Still, that appears to be quite the contradiction. How do you explain this, "Do As I Say, Not As I Do" philosophy?

Dirk: Well, John, there is a long standing tradition in Indian Country that the role of the Chief, any Chief, is never to take sides in another Nation's leadership campaign. Your role is to work with whoever gets in.

John L.: So, picking sides endangers your people's interests. But if you pick the winning side, wouldn't your people get all sorts of goodies? Some local Chiefs have made out like bandits, endorsing the Conservative or Liberal parties in the past.

Dirk: True enough, John. But if the favoured party loses the winning party remembers the who voted for

whom, and that community is left out in the cold until the next federal election.

John L.: Which would explain the uproar created by Acting Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Kim Jonathan, when she appeared on stage with federal NDP leader Tom Mulcair.

Dirk: You nailed it, John. For many First Nation leaders that was a big no-no. It prompted many to wag their fingers at her in a stern, nun-like manner.

John L.: I don't understand, Dirk. For years I have heard many people complain, "Why don't the Indians get involved, and pick a side?" What's wrong with Chief Jonathan picking a side and getting her people involved?

Dirk: For starters, it is not clear that she was picking a side. From what I hear, fourth-hand, from a cabbie who drove by the guy who was setting napkins in the room next door to the hotel down the street from where the event happened, Chief Jonathan was invited to speak about Missing and

Murdered Aboriginal Women. Tom Mulcair was innocently standing there, it being his event.

John L. It certainly appeared like Chief Jonathan was endorsing the NDP. How do you feel the other federal leaders will react.

Dirk: Well, I happen to know – and by "know" I mean this is a pure, wild guess – Liberal leader Justin Trudeau dusted off his

5000 comb and got ready for Chief Jonathan to make an appearance, 'cause, well, y'know, he's got nice hair. Stephane Harper on the other hand...

John L.: I believe that's Steven Harper.

Dirk: Alright, Stee-Vane Harper almost wet himself. He thought to himself, "Finally, a First Nation leader willing to step up and talk about an issue dear to my warm, beating heart!" He yelled, "Senator Duffy, get me your bunk-mate, Patty Brazeau to get me Kimmy's phone number. And a translator, for I know not her native lingo." That's how he talks.

John L.: Um, I really don't think that happened.

Dirk: You're right, John. Harper has no need of the Indian vote. Nor the environmental vote, or even scientists or veterans. He knows all he has to do is appeal to his hardcore constituency, who prefer simple answers to complex situations. They turn out in droves. Interesting phrase that, "droves."

John L.: Why do you say that?

Dirk: "Drove" is an Old English term that means to herd or "drive" animals or people to a certain destination. Today, it can imply having no need to know the destination. All that's required is a pleasant willingness to be herded.

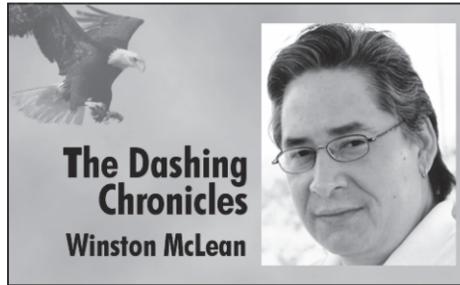
John L.: Um,...

Dirk: They turn out in droves, John. Meanwhile, students and Indians tend to stay away in droves ... I'm going to regret that last part, right?

John L.: Will you be voting?

Dirk: John, I am not a cattle. I am a bull unicorn-dragon, with a fantastic set of ... wings ... with dual mufflers for extra power. I will vote.

Dirk says, She asked, "How do you feel about toys in the bedroom." "Great," I said, "but I'll need your help getting all the Lego out of the bed sheets after."



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Arts Board Deadlines

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

- Independent Artists**
October 1
- Indigenous Pathways Initiative**
October 15
- SaskFestivals – Project***
October 15
- Creative Partnerships* – Explore and Develop**
Explore and Connect
October 15
- Culture on the Go – Touring**
October 19
- Access Copyright Foundation Grants – Events**
November 1
- ArtsSmarts Saskatchewan***
ArtsSmarts/GénieArts
TreatySmarts/GénieTraité
Artist in Residence I
November 1
- Saskatchewan Foundation for the Arts Artists Awards**
November 15

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

For applications, visit: artsboard.sk.ca/grants

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



create
collaborate
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Lights! Camera! Action! Isaiah following Tootoosis family tradition

By Tiffany Head
For Eagle Feather News

Acting runs in the family as Isaiah Tootoosis, great grandson of late Gordon Tootoosis had his first experience acting in a big production movie.

Seven-year-old Tootoosis, who was born in Poundmaker, Sask., got the break of his young lifetime when a casting crew called him up to audition in Calgary for the movie, "The Revenant", starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Tootoosis's mother, Rachel Berland, said when they got the call that he was chosen for the role they were ecstatic.

"Once I told him he was chosen, he screamed with joy. Afterwards we both screamed and jumped around with joy," said Berland.

It was not until after the audition that Tootoosis decided he wanted to be an actor and become famous when he grows up.

Tootoosis loved everything about the experience and going to Los Angeles to shoot the film.

"It was fun, I made new friends," said Tootoosis.

His character in the film is "young hawk" as Leonardo's son.

"He didn't know Leo was an actor until he came home, he did not really care about whom he was acting with until we put a movie on with Leo in it, his eyes lit up and instantly "Hey! I know that guy, he's my movie dad, boy he's such a good actor," Berland said of her son's reaction.

When asked how he liked Los Angeles Tootoosis responded, "It was hot."

He was in Hollywood for nine days to film his parts in the movie.

Berland describes her son, the eldest of a family that includes four sisters, as a dramatic boy.

Tootoosis said he is excited to go back to school this fall. His favourite movie is Jurassic World and he enjoys playing hockey.

Berland says that his auntie escorted him to L.A as she was unable to take him. They tell her that everybody loved him and he was a natural.

"He would like to continue his journey. He's more of a dramatic boy with loving action in his life so hopefully something comes up for him good in the filming industry," Berland said of her son's aspirations.

The Revenant is the story of an explorer, Trapper Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio) who withstands a brutal bear attack while exploring the uncharted American wilderness.

Glass is left for dead by members of his own hunting team and betrayed by his friend John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy).

He endures unimaginable hardships as he navigates a vicious winter in a relentless quest to live and find redemption. Determined to make it home to his family, Glass must use sheer will to survive against all odds.

Tootoosis did not have an agent when he went to go film but he came back home with one and now his agent will make sure he has every opportunity to get him into films.

His agent also advised that Tootoosis and his mother could not disclose any information of the movie and his parts in it.



Isaiah Tootoosis is living the dream, flying to Los Angeles and hanging with Leonardo DiCaprio.

(Photo supplied)



The Reason You Walk:
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author, journalist, hip hop artist

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